

2016
DRAFT

Comprehensive Plan: Primary Report
Town of Westerly, Rhode Island



*A plan for vitality and
sustainability*

Comprehensive Plan Town of Westerly, Rhode Island

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Welcome to the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Westerly. First and foremost, the Plan strives to achieve an appropriate balance between conservation and development. Managing growth and protecting cultural and natural resources are complex and delicate tasks; this Plan is intended to help ensure both are accomplished in a way that enhances the quality of life for all the citizens of Westerly. The community encourages development that recognizes the Town's assets and enhances economic opportunity. It is important to residents that Town policy and actions address local needs while protecting and restoring the natural environment upon which they and the local economy rely.

This community Comprehensive Plan includes policies, goals and objectives, and specific actions which express the commitment of the Town of Westerly to these objectives. The Plan was developed by the Town of Westerly's Planning Board, Planning Department and the consulting firm of Mason & Associates, Inc. with the assistance of the Citizens Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, public officials and local leaders. The Plan was the subject of a public hearing held by the Planning Board on [name date or dates of public hearing]. On [date] the Planning Board transmitted the Plan to the Town Council with its recommendation to adopt the Plan as an ordinance of the Town of Westerly. Following its public hearing on [date or dates] the Town Council took official action to incorporate this Plan into the Code of Ordinances.

1.1 Vision

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

The vision for the Town of Westerly is to preserve Westerly's quality of life for all generations as a safe and friendly community with a distinctive heritage, extraordinary cultural and natural resources and a vital economy.

The Comprehensive Plan is the yard stick against which all future proposals and initiatives – whether for conservation, development or infrastructure uses – shall be measured. Each proposal or initiative will be evaluated based on whether it advances the vision of the future as expressed in the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan itself is a document that changes only upon careful evaluation and with the deliberate intent that the needs and conditions which affect the public interest require adjustments in public policy. While the Comprehensive Plan is not a fluid document, the need for regular and disciplined evaluation of the progress and appropriateness of the Plan is integral to realizing the vision for the future of Westerly.

The future vision for the Town of Westerly is entirely consistent with *Land Use 2025: Rhode Island Land Use Policies and Plan* which articulates a robust vision for the state's future that

includes a strong economy, a healthy environment and a rich quality of life. *Land Use 2025* is the guide to all planning and development in the State of Rhode Island. In Chapter 4 of this Primary Report, the Town describes its long-term priorities and relates them directly to the Goals of *Land Use 2025*.

1.2 Purpose and Intent of this Document

The Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act of 1988 requires each community in the state to adopt and maintain a comprehensive community plan that provides the basis for rational decision-making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality, avoiding conflicting requirements and reactive land use regulations and decisions. According to RIGL §45-22.2-5, Rhode Island cities and Towns must “*prepare, adopt, amend, and maintain comprehensive plans, including implementation programs, that relate development to land capacity, protect our natural resources, promote a balance of housing choices, encourage economic development, preserve and protect our open space, recreational, historic and cultural resources, provide for orderly provision of facilities and services and are consistent with the goals, findings, intent, and other provisions of this chapter and the laws of the state..*” RIGL §45-22.2-6 states this Plan is to be “*internally consistent in its policies, forecasts, and standards*” and must include assessments and discussion in those planning areas enumerated in that same section. The purpose of this document is to satisfy this state mandate.

This Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Westerly is the third comprehensive plan adopted by the Town Council. The first iteration of the Comprehensive Plan was adopted on January 13, 1992 in response to the State’s first mandated long-range planning initiative included in the 1988 Act. The 1992 Plan was amended in January of 2007 through an update of data, goals, policies and actions. The 1992 Plan was subsequently repealed and replaced upon the legislative adoption of a new Comprehensive Plan in February of 2010. With the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan document by the Westerly Town Council, the intent is to repeal the 2010 Comprehensive Plan and replace it with this updated twenty-year vision for the Town of Westerly. The 2016 Plan is intended to satisfy the requirements of the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act as amended through 2011.

Through the Town Council’s incorporation of this Plan into the Code of Ordinances as Chapter 10, the Plan becomes not only an official statement of Westerly’s future direction and guiding document, but it is legally binding on all future land-use decisions made within the jurisdiction. After approval by the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program for its consistency with the goals, findings, and intent of state land-use policy, state agency activities and projects will also be required to adhere to the terms and conditions outlined in the Westerly Comprehensive Plan.

1.3 Summary of the Plan

The complete Comprehensive Plan ordinance for the Town of Westerly consists of three components, as follows:

1. *The Primary Report.*
2. *Appendices I & II.*
3. *Mapped Figures*

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

- Chapter 2: Community Character. This chapter describes the make-up of the community, some of the concerns of its citizens, its history and its diverse neighborhoods. With a focus on resiliency planning, this Chapter explains the importance of maintaining the distinct character of Westerly and the need for careful planning to allow Westerly to grow and prosper while preserving the quality of life that all enjoy.
- Chapter 3: Inventory Summary with Findings & Implications. This chapter provides a brief summary of each of ten foundational planning components of the Plan and the associated findings and implications that shaped the overall direction of the Plan. A complete inventory of current facts, figures and conditions related to those planning components as of [date of final draft] is provided in Appendix I to the Plan.
- Chapter 4: The Future — “Where do we want to be in 2036?” The answer is provided in this chapter by way of a summary of local priorities in the context of *Land Use 2025*, a build-out analysis based on existing zoning, a Future Land Use Plan, and a discussion of the financial implications of implementing the Plan.
- Chapter 5: Implementation Plan. A plan is only as good as the quality of its implementation. This chapter details the goals, policies and specific actions necessary for successful implementation. It also includes responsibilities and timeframes to ensure clear accountability and tracking of progress over time.

Appendices I & II to the Comprehensive Plan contain important background information and documentation to support the priorities and policies in the Plan.

Appendix I – Inventory is central to the Plan’s development and provides a detailed snapshot of Westerly’s “as- built” condition and resources. It consists of the following ten planning components:

- Existing Land Use and Zoning

- Housing Opportunity
- Economic Vitality
- Natural Resources
- Infrastructure
- Services and Facilities
- Transportation Network
- Open Space and Recreation
- Historic and Cultural Resources
- Natural Hazards and Resiliency

This Inventory documents local characteristics and trends regarding resident population composition, land use, housing, the natural environment, economic development and provision of services. It reveals future conservation, development, services and infrastructure needs and provides a comprehensive source of current information that can be used by the Town, its citizens and businesses in their daily activities. Empirical data required by state planning standards and with state planning guidance are included in the Inventory. This Inventory is made to meet the standards for the Comprehensive Plan approved by the Rhode Island State Planning Council in January 2016.

Appendix II – Public Input

During the initial stages of the 2016-2036 Plan development, a newly constituted Comprehensive Plan Citizens' Advisory Committee (CPCAC), with the assistance of the Town of Westerly's Planning Office, created an initial work plan and schedule including target dates for public meetings of the Advisory Committee and its several subcommittees. Visioning sessions and policy discussions began when a consultant was retained. The Town staff and consultant prepared for and attended no fewer than twenty (20) public meetings - including four public workshops with the full CPCAC; weekly or biweekly coordination meetings with topical subcommittees, Westerly staff and public officials; a day-long stakeholder's review workshop and overview of the comprehensive plan; a stakeholder meeting specifically to discuss housing and social service needs of the community, and town staff/public workshop addressing Natural Hazards. In August 2015, the CPCAC had revised the goals, policies and actions contained in the 2010 Plan and had begun consideration of new land policies in answer to the new expectations of the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulation Act and in anticipation of the release of Standards and Guidance from the Rhode Island Division of Planning. Public meetings resumed in March 2016, following the reengagement of the planning consultant. Further discussion of public outreach including media involvement is described in Appendix II.

Mapped Figures are collected together and included at the end of the Plan with a general description of each map provided with reference to the planning area in focus. Maps may be used for information and guidance as well as illustrative purposes. As noted on each map, no warranty can be made relating to their spatial accuracy, reliability or completeness as none were the product of a professional land survey. Similarly, each map is a contemporary visual which means it may become less current over time. A wide collection of datasets made available from departments and offices of the Town including the Engineering Division, Information Technology Department, Planning and Zoning Office and Tax Assessor's Office, as well as through Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS), were used to produce the maps through an ArcGIS program. Several datasets are layered and included within each map to create visualizations which can be relied on to make inferences. All maps included in this Plan meet the mapping standards for the Comprehensive Plan approved by the Rhode Island State Planning Council in January 2016, including titles, legends and distinguishable symbology.

Using the Plan

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

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

and natural resources, appealing for financial or legislative support, and evaluating the effectiveness of local government and elected officials.

1.4 A Final Word

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

Town Council 2014-2016(2018)

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 Christopher A. Duhamel
 Louis P. Sposato, Jr.



Town Administration & Staff

Derrick M. Kennedy, Town Manager
 Marilyn R. Shellman, Town Planner
 Jason Parker, Zoning Official

Amy Grzybowski, Director of Development Services
 Blanche Higgins, Assistant Town Planner
 David Thompson, Town Assessor

Planning Board

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Comprehensive Plan Citizens’ Advisory Committee

Faith Bessette-Zito
 Nancy N. Richmond
 James J. Federico, III
 Barbara Cardiff
 Julie Cardinal

Stuart G. Blackburn
 Gail E. Mallard
 Joseph T. MacAndrew
 Gina Fuller

Consultant

Mason & Associates, Inc.
 Christopher O. Mason, PWS
 David R. Westcott, AICP

Nancy E. Letendre, Esq., AICP
 Benjamin R. Delaney

Chapter 2. Community Character

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

2.1 Community Make-up and Concerns

The residents of Westerly, whether life-long or recently arrived, have a strong affection for their Town. They see it as a special place, with a character all of its own. This character reflects its unique geography – its spectacular location along the Pawcatuck River, Little Narragansett Bay, salt ponds and the Atlantic Ocean – as well as the charm and history of its busy urban and quiet rural areas.

The rich mix of old settler families (many of which have recorded histories in the area as far back as the seventeenth century), the large groups of immigrant families who came to work in the town's mills and quarries during its industrial boom in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the families who summered along the shoreline and ultimately became year-round residents provides a stimulating diversity. All, however, are united in the pride they feel for the elements which give the Town its special character.

There is universal appreciation of the architecturally and aesthetically significant downtown core, centered around its park, including on Broad, Canal and High streets, largely preserved 19th and early 20th century streetscapes and the ambiance of a small, but prosperous, community of an earlier age. Its sensitive renovation in the late 20th century is a source of great civic pride. Its shoreline communities – their magnificent beaches (the first open-ocean beaches along the New England coast as one travels east from New York) and marine waters, which are enjoyed by beachgoers as well as boaters, together with their largely residential architectural treasures – are another source of pleasure and pride for all residents of the Town. The residents speak of the Town as a place where they feel comfortable and safe, and as a family-friendly town. Yet there are concerns about Physical and climate changes which could erode the landscape and quality of life in the Town.

The high cost of housing raises questions about affordability, and the availability of high quality employment for area residents, especially for the young of the community, is a major concern. There is a recognition that commercial sprawl has turned a significant portion of Route 1, including Granite and Franklin Streets and the Post Road, into a generic strip of highway that could be anywhere in the country. There is a strong desire to reverse this trend and refocus on development with a sense of place. Traffic and congestion during the summer tourist season months regularly clog the gateways into the Town, and parking is not always available in

popular destinations such as the commercial waterfront of Bay Street, Watch Hill, and even at the Misquamicut State Beach. While Route 78 is advantageous to the mitigation of traffic in the summer season, it divides several of Westerly's neighborhoods and diverts commerce from Downtown in the longer off-season.

Residential development, especially in the shoreline communities, raises concerns about loss of open space and scenic views, as well as the degradation of the salt ponds. There is a concern that unchecked development will erode the character of the community and a widespread commitment expressed for the preservation of open space and the protection of the Town's natural resources. Natural hazards are a major concern to the Town of Westerly, a community which witnessed major flooding in 2010 and storm surges from Super Storm Sandy 2012.

2.2 History

Prior to European colonial settlement, the area of modern-day Westerly was within the territories of the Pequot, Niantic, and Narragansett tribes and was then known as Mishquamicuk (anglicized as Misquamicut), the Narragansett word meaning "land of red fish," referring to the salmon which today appear on the Town's seal (see Table 2-1). The first European settlers arrived in 1648. By 1660 the Native Americans had conveyed to the colonists a tract of land twenty miles along the coast and ten miles deep into the interior, which included what is now Westerly and parts of Charlestown, Hopkinton and Richmond. The Town of Westerly was incorporated in 1669 and the current legal boundaries were established in 1757, by which time Charlestown, Richmond, and Hopkinton had been separated from Westerly. The Town's boundaries are the Pawcatuck River, which separates Westerly from Connecticut on the west and from Hopkinton on the north, Fisher's Island Sound and Block Island Sound on the south and the boundaries of Charlestown on the east.

Farming and fishing were the major occupations in the early days of Westerly. The Town's location along a navigable river and the coast also destined it to play an important maritime role. A thriving shipbuilding industry grew up along the banks of the river in the 1700s and 1800s. Textile mills also developed along the river in the early 19th century. By 1850, steamboats were being built and making runs between Westerly and Stonington and Groton. In 1837 the construction of the Stonington and Providence Railroad provided Westerly with a rail connection between New York and Boston.

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

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

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

2.3 Climate

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) places the Town of Westerly within the humid continental climate zone, described as having mild to warm summers and cold winters. Recorded temperatures are indicative of this, ranging from an average January low of 19.6 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) to an average July high of 80.0°F. While there is a slightly greater annual accumulation of rainfall (48.1 inches) in Westerly than in Providence and Newport (44.9 inches and 45.4 inches, respectively), Westerly comparatively experienced about one to three more sunny days (203 days, or 55.6 percent of the calendar year) and one to seven fewer precipitation days (117 days, or 32.1 percent of the calendar year) throughout the year. Annual snowfall is reported at about 24.3 inches.¹ While major storm events are not common to the area, Westerly has been impacted by several cyclones, blizzards and nor'easters including the Hurricane of 1938, Blizzard of 1978, 2010 Nor'easter and Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

2.4 Westerly Neighborhoods

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

¹ Sterling's Best Places

The **Neighborhoods map (N-1)** is a record of Westerly's local neighborhoods as identified through the involvement of residents, neighborhood association representatives and Town staff. Through this input process, a total of 29 neighborhoods were recognized. Using available information through RIGIS, the Town's parcel records and other maps and information while receiving further input, these neighborhoods evolved into the 19 planning areas indicated in the **Neighborhood Planning Areas map (N-2)**. These neighborhood planning areas are used to facilitate the discussion of the Town's future land use.

2.4.1 Downtown Westerly

Downtown Westerly has developed as the commercial and civic center of Westerly. The area is divided into four (4) neighborhoods – Downtown and Main Street, Wilcox East, Granite-and-State, and the North End. Downtown and Main Street is anchored by a green core area, Wilcox Park, and is defined by commercial streets (Broad Street, High Street and Main Street) and a residential roadway (Grove Avenue). Along Broad Street are massive late 19th and early 20th century eclectic masonry structures, including Christ Church, Westerly Library, the Town Hall and Municipal Court House, a United States Post Office and the headquarters of the Washington Trust Company. The former Industrial Trust Bank building and the Ocean Community YMCA are on High Street and the United Theatre (currently undergoing restoration) the Martin House (nearing completion of restoration and also known as the Savoy) on Canal Street. Along High Street, two-story brick commercial buildings have storefronts with office and/or residential space above. Other significant structures downtown include the Westerly Armory and Westerly Station on Railroad Avenue. Main Street, which runs from Broad Street and the Pawcatuck River Bridge to Beach Street and Margin Street, is largely commercial (a significant portion of it was planned to be redeveloped through the Westerly KeepSpace program). Wilcox East, located on the hill to the east of Wilcox Park, is also a mix of professional and residential uses with an active neighborhood association.

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

Generally north of the railroad is the North End, a late nineteenth century neighborhood which became the home of successive waves of European immigrants who came to Westerly to work on the railroad and in the textile mills and granite quarries. The former village of Stillmanville once crossed the Pawcatuck River (the Stillmanville Bridge still exists today) into the village of Pawcatuck. Today, its portion in Westerly has been largely supplanted by the North End (as well as the southern extent of Potter Hill). In recent years, the Town, together with multiple private and governmental funding sources, has made a concerted effort to revitalize the North End while preserving its historic character. These efforts are most visible on Pierce and Pond streets, where there has been restoration of buildings and landscapes.

2.4.2 Mill Villages

Along the northern bounds of Westerly, bounded by the Pawcatuck River as it flows west and south, are the mill villages which developed as distinct clusters of workforce housing, each with its own iconic mill – Bradford, Potter Hill and White Rock. Typical land uses in the mill villages include industrial, residential, park/conservation land, vacant land and undevelopable land. The area has a significant number of nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings

Most homes in these neighborhoods are two or two-and-a-half story single-family or duplex structures. Zoning in this district varies between low, medium and high density residential, industrial and open space/recreation. As in the Downtown area, some of the existing traditional and residential architecture in this area would not be allowed by the current zoning code because the setbacks are smaller than the code allows. The street pattern in this area includes concentrations of irregular grid surrounded and connected by winding roads. While not defined by its own mill, the Boombridge neighborhood also shares some of these characteristics due to its location between White Rock and Potter Hill.

2.4.3 Shore Communities

Along Route 1A, there are the coastal communities of Avondale, Chin Hill, Haversham, Misquamicut, Sea Glen, Shelter Harbor, Watch Hill and Weekapaug and Weekapaug Terrace. Each of these areas has its individual distinctive character. But all have the common element of seasonal and summer homes and two (Watch Hill and Misquamicut) attract large concentrations of summer visitors to their commercial areas. In recent years, large areas of farmland surrounding these communities have been preserved from subdivision and development by the Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation as well as by the Audubon Society and Westerly Land Trust.

Avondale, which lies along the Pawcatuck River and north of Watch Hill, was primarily a fishing and boat-building village originally named Lotteryville. Now largely residential, but still including three boatyards, it retains its quaint waterfront character. To its west are the neighborhoods of Chin Hill and Sea Glen. Also bounded by the southern extent of Dunn's

Corners to the east, Chin Hill and Sea Glen are more recently developed neighborhoods dominated by residences and containing small numbers of primarily tourism- and recreation-oriented businesses.

Watch Hill in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries transformed itself first into a colony of grand hotels and soon after a community of large summer cottages, mostly in Shingle Style, Arts and Craft, and Colonial Revival, but also including an eclectic mix of Norman, Mediterranean and even Bermudian designs. Watch Hill's Bay Street has always been a vibrant commercial center along its harbor in Little Narragansett Bay. Napatree Point, which extends westward from the Village, is a 1.5 mile barrier beach containing the Napatree Point Conservation Area and is enjoyed by summer beach-goers and naturalists, who know it as one of the prime shore bird and migratory bird preserves in the northeastern United States. Watch Hill's Flying Horse Carousel is arguably the oldest carousel in the nation. The Watch Hill Lighthouse has served as a beacon at Watch Hill Point since the colonial era.

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

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

2.4.4 Downtown Periphery

To the east of Tower Street and Granite Street (Route 1) are the Boiling Springs, Indian Hills (not to be confused with the Indian Hills development in the Dunn's Corners neighborhood) and Tower Street neighborhoods, all largely residential with businesses lining Route 1. Where Granite Street becomes Franklin Street, the roadway becomes more intensely commercial with larger structures and developments. This commercial neighborhood, which does include pockets of residential development, is bounded in the east by Airport Road (so named for the adjacent Westerly Airport) and Route 78.

South of Granite-and-State are the neighborhoods of East Avenue, Riverbend and the Yacht Club. These areas lie between the Pawcatuck River and Mastuxet Brook and have built environments which serve as a transition between the urban character of downtown and the more rural character of the shore communities.

Within the central portion of town (located north of Route 1 and east of Route 78) is a largely undeveloped area of Town dominated by swamplands (Aguntaug, Chapman, and Crandall). While the northern segment of Pound Road is lined by numerous homes. Much of this centrally-located neighborhood is either preserved for habitat protection or too wet to be developed. A small concentration of state and municipal facilities exist within the Transfer Station area to the northwest of the swampland and at the foot of Exit 5 on Route 78.

2.4.5 Dunn's Corners (Route 1 Corridor)

North of Shore Road and many of the coastal communities, Route 1 is lined by commercial strip development similar to the sprawl which has inundated portions of other historic East Coast communities. Based on typical post-World War II zoning ordinances, this area is not characteristic of the rest of Westerly. Typical land uses in the Route 1 corridor include commercial, residential and vacant. The area is characterized by more recent development including subdivisions and small shopping centers. Residential structures range from single family to multi-family units including condominiums. Commercial structures include large regional and national chain stores such as Walmart, Dunkin' Donuts and Ocean State Job Lot as well as several small businesses (including motels). Typical architectural styles for residential structures range from modern to post-modern to new urbanism styles. Commercial structures typically are consistent with national trademark forms commonly referred to as "box stores."



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

Along Dunn's Corners-Bradford Road, one of the major roads in this area and leading to Bradford, there is some sparse residential development and the Town's largest concentration of remaining working farmland. The other major road in this area is Route 91 (Westerly-Bradford Road) which connects downtown to the rural areas in the east. This entire area presents environmental challenges for development and has the lowest density zoning in Westerly. Neighborhoods in this area include McGowan Corners and Woody Hill.

2.5 Westerly Facts and Statistics

Table 2-1 below provides a basic summary for the Town of Westerly.

Table 2-1 Facts and Statistics

Municipal Flag	Municipal Seal
	
Establishment	Form of Government
<p>Westerly was first inhabited by the Narragansett tribe as a fishing ground named Misquamicut (anglicized) for its salmon. Parts of Misquamicut later came under control of the Pequot tribe before English settlement began in 1661. The Town was incorporated on May 13, 1669 with its original land also including the present-day towns of Charlestown, Hopkinton and Richmond.</p>	<p>The Town Charter establishes a Council-Manager system of municipal governance. The Town Council, headed by a Council President, is comprised of seven elected members and regularly meets twice monthly. The Town Manager is appointed by the Town Council and oversees administration of the Town's departments and execution of the Town's Charter and Code of Ordinances.</p>
Land and Water Resources	
<p>Westerly is comprised of nearly 31.5 square miles of land and seven linear miles of beach along Block Island Sound. Water, including coastal ponds such as Winnapaug Pond and the portion of Quonochontaug west of the Charlestown-Westerly town line, account for slightly less than 4 percent of the total area. Efforts by the Town and others, both private and public, have protected over one-fifth of Westerly's land.</p>	
Finances	Housing
<p>Moody's bond rating: Aa3 S&P bond rating: AA- Property tax rate: \$11.36 per \$1,000 assessed value Grand List: \$6,250,339,070¹ FY2017 Town budget: \$33,682,941 FY2017 School budget: \$54,781,801 FY2017 Enterprise funds: \$8,398,734</p>	<p>Total housing units: 12,320 Occupied housing units: 9,666 Owner-occupied: 65.4% Renter-occupied: 34.6% Single-family residences: 7,434 Median total assessed value: \$286,600 Average total assessed value: \$447,246.15</p>

Employment

The three largest non-governmental employers in Westerly include L+M Westerly Hospital, Washington Trust Company and Wal-Mart. Overall, annual employment is concentrated in the accommodation and food services, health care and social assistance and retail trade industries.

Education	Population and Income	
High school enrollment: 851 students	Silent generation (70 years and over): 3,074	
Middle school enrollment: 867 students	Baby boomers (50 to 69 years): 6,204	
Elementary schools enrollment: 1,152 students	Generation X (35 to 49 years): 4,786	
Educational attainment (25 years and older):	Millennials (20 to 34 years): 3,517	
High school diploma or equivalent: 28.3%	Generation Z (19 years and under): 5,206	
Some college or Associates degree: 28.2%	Median age: 44.3 years	
Bachelor's degree: 19.6%	Median household income: \$62,381	
Master's degree or above: 12.3%	Median family income: \$73,132	
Community Services	Town Facilities	
Westerly Public Library: 44 Broad Street	Town Hall and Municipal Court: 45 Broad Street	
Westerly Ambulance Corps: 30 Chestnut Street	School Department: 15 Highland Avenue	
Senior Center: 39 State Street	Public Works Department: 35 Larry Hirsch Lane	
L+M Westerly Hospital: 25 Wells Street	Utilities Division: 68 White Rock Road	
The Y: 95 High Street	Police Department: 60 Airport Road	
Bradford, Dunn's Corners, Misquamicut, Shelter Harbor, Weekapaug, Westerly and Watch Hill fire districts	Animal Shelter: 33 Larry Hirsch Lane	
	Transfer Station: 39 Larry Hirsch Lane	
Transportation Services	Geographic Proximity	Climate
RIPTA 95x and Rural 301 routes	Providence: 38 mi	January average low: 20°F
Westerly Station (Amtrak)	New Haven: 57 mi	July average high: 80°F
Westerly Airport	Worcester: 61 mi	Sunny days: 203
T. F. Green Airport (regional hub)	Boston: 79 mi	Precipitation days: 117
Roadways: 219.7 miles	New York: 123 mi	Rainfall: 48.1 inches

Sources: RIHPHC, 2010 US Census, 2010-14 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, RIDLT Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, RIGIS, Sterling's Best Places and Town of Westerly

¹ Pending certification as of June 8, 2016

2.6 Regional Considerations

This Comprehensive Plan encourages regional solutions that take advantage of opportunities to improve economic competitiveness, infrastructure, transportation, communications and emergency preparedness. To accomplish this requires collaboration and cooperation among all neighboring governments and Westerly. The Town desires to work in partnership, on a regional basis, to coordinate future development efforts with existing infrastructure and ensure appropriate growth patterns which enhance the character of the region. The Town will support coordination of municipal services and departments on a staff level even identifying areas where improved coordination between the states of Rhode Island and Connecticut will leverage state and federal funding opportunities. The Town should promote coordination with Stonington on issues of mutual interest, for example Pawcatuck River quality, downtown Westerly-Pawcatuck revitalization, shared water systems, the Westerly train station, emergency management, and economic development. The Town may identify resources that could be mutually shared and funded with neighboring Rhode Island communities such as has been accomplished with use of the transfer station by both Westerly and Hopkinton.

2.7 Conclusions

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

Westerly was originally formed around the river crossing, the mills and the oceanfront. Citizens of the Town were once primarily employed by fishing and farming, shipbuilding and the marine industry, textile mills, and the granite quarries. These industries are all still a part of the community; however, Westerly today is also an important center in southwest Rhode Island for commercial and professional services, the arts and education. In addition to jobs in Town, some residents commute to New London or Providence or use technology to become self-employed or to work at some distance from their company's home bases. In the future, jobs that require advanced training and specialized skills are likely to become a bigger share of the employment mix. To achieve continuing economic growth, Westerly will need to focus on providing a quality

education at all levels and actively encouraging companies with high-value jobs to locate here. Westerly will also need to work to improve commuting opportunities so that residents have access to jobs located in other areas of Rhode Island and in neighboring states.

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

The same river crossing and ocean front that brought settlers to Westerly now provide some of the biggest challenges to the sustainability and vitality of the quality of life developed here.

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

Chapter 3. Inventory Summary with Findings & Implications

A thorough understanding of Westerly's current status is a necessary basis for planning for the future. This chapter of the Primary Report consists of summaries of inventories of current (2015) conditions and trends. The complete inventories, which contain additional information and analyses, are in Appendix I of this Plan. This summary contains information of interest to Westerly residents, businesses, and Town government as well as providing documentation to support the Plan. The topics covered in this chapter are:

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

In addition to facts and figures, each of the inventories contains a set of findings and implications derived from the inventory process.

3.1 Existing Land Use & Zoning

In the Town of Westerly, land use planning is a deliberative process that requires collaboration between regulators (the Town and state agencies) and consumers (developers, businesses and residents). The land use planning process, in the spirit of serving the public interest, is guided by the goals, policies and actions of this Comprehensive Plan.

3.1.1 Existing Land Cover

The current use of land in Westerly is illustrated in the **Land Cover 2011 map (LC-1)**, so named for the year in which the orthophotography (from which this most recent land cover/land use dataset is rooted) was captured. The land use classifications in the dataset were based on the same Anderson Level III coding as preceding datasets and indicate the most apparent use of property within the Town of Westerly as identified from the 2011 orthophotography (for a more in-depth description of this dataset or any other datasets made available through RIGIS, visit www.rigis.org).

Summarized in Table 3-1 below are categorical uses shown on LC-1 as well as the percent they cover of the total combined area: Land cover is an oversimplification of categories of uses and

not a true snap shot of actual physical occupation of land by use. The land cover analysis does provide an adequate view of the overall development pattern of the community.

Table 3-1 Existing Land Cover, 2011

Land Cover	Acreage	Percent of Total
Agriculture includes active farm lands (croplands, pastures and orchards) and idle farm lands (abandoned or inactive croplands, pastures and orchards)	656.4	3.4
Commercial includes all commercial uses consisting of retail, services and professional uses	543.0	2.8
Community Facilities include schools, places of religious worship, government buildings, community safety facilities, hospital, the airport, railroads, roadways, other transportation uses, public utilities and the transfer station	641.8	3.3
Conservation, Recreation and Open Space includes cemeteries, developed recreation uses, brushlands, deciduous, softwood and mixed forests and beaches	10,220.6	52.7
Industrial includes manufacturing and quarrying operations	332.3	1.7
Residential includes all residential uses	5,482.6	28.3
Vacant includes vacant land, visible wetlands, sandy areas, rock outcrops and transitional (urban open) areas	1,020.9	5.3
Water includes all open water bodies with the exceptions of Winnapaug and Quonochontaug ponds	483.7	2.5

Source: RIGIS

3.1.2 State Land Use Policy

In April 2006, the Rhode Island Department of Administration completed a statewide land use plan titled *Land Use 2025*. The goal of *Land Use 2025* is to eliminate sprawl and protect the natural resources of the state. The state plan encourages an urban/rural model that concentrates new development into established areas and some rural centers. It identifies urban service boundaries within which are areas that either provide public sewer and water, or are planned to do so in the near future, and where higher density and infill development might be considered. The state plan encourages the conservation of natural resources through cluster development, conservation development, or transfer of development rights in areas that have development potential. In Chapter 4 of this Primary Report, the Town describes its long-term priorities and relates them directly to the Goals of *Land Use 2025*.

3.1.3 Existing Zoning

The Town of Westerly last comprehensively updated its Zoning Ordinance in 1998. There have been multiple updates since including the Affordable Housing Amendment in 2007. The Zoning Ordinance is a critical tool for controlling the type, density, and appearance of development within the Town. The Town of Westerly implements the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan through the diligent application and enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance of the Town of Westerly, as adopted, codified and from time-to-time amended by the Westerly Town Council should be consulted for the legal definition associated with each of the various zoning districts.

The official Zoning Map of the Town of Westerly, “Town of Westerly, R.I. — Official Zoning Key Map Sheets 1 - 188; Scale 1 inch equals 1,200 feet, Date: October, 16, 1998, Cherenzia and Associates, LTD,” shows the locations and boundaries of zoning districts as established by Chapter 260 in the Town’s Code of Ordinances. It is filed in the Town Clerk’s Office at the Town Hall and was established for purposes of determining the rights and interests of property owners. The official Zoning Map is to be used for all planning and zoning related reviews and approvals unless amended by official action of the Town Council or until it be replaced in accordance with the then current provisions of the Rhode Island Zoning Enabling Act of 1991.

For convenient reference in this Plan, datasets were provided by the Zoning Office to illustrate existing zoning districts and overlays in the **Zoning map (Z-1)**. The following are general category descriptions for these zones:

- Residential districts make up 56.2 percent of the land area of the Town. The lowest density area is rural residential (RR-60) which has lot sizes of 60, 000 square feet (about 1.4 acres) on land that is currently agricultural, contains wetlands or other severe soil constraints, or other sensitive environmental characteristics. These areas have neither public water nor public sewers. The highest density areas (HDR-6, HDR-10 and HDR-15) with lot sizes of 6,000- 15,000 square feet are all served by public water. HDR-6 and HDR-15 are served by public sewers.
- Commercial districts make up 3.6 percent of the land area of the Town. Land uses in these areas include professional office, downtown center, neighborhood business, highway commercial (along Route 1), general commercial, shore commercial, and marine commercial. Some areas include the potential for mixed commercial and residential uses.
- Industrial districts make up 6.2 percent of the Town’s land area but much of the land in these districts that is not already developed is protected by conservation easement.

- Special districts protect parks and open space or areas dedicated for commercial recreation such as golf courses. Over one-third of the Town’s area falls into one of these zoning districts.
- [Additional description based on final illustration]

As noted above, soil constraints can often impact the development potential of a property. **The Soil Constraints to Development map (SC-1)** offers a visualization of areas within Westerly where development is constrained due to the soil present. Severe constraints, as indicated in SC-1, include hydric soils (soils which are permanently or seasonally saturated), subaqueous soils (soils under a permanently flooded area), bedrock and/or slopes (bedrock is rock lying below the land’s surface while slopes are considered constraining if at a grade of more than 15 percent) and others. As indicated through this map, all land within the Town has at least a moderate constraint to development.

3.1.4 Findings and Implications

- Industrial and commercial growth is limited to the areas in which it currently exists; therefore the town should focus on redevelopment of underutilized opportunities for commercial and industrial development.
- Further residential development is restricted in areas developed beyond carrying capacity and limited in areas that support significant water resource. As the town is predicated to approach build-out within the twenty-year horizon of this Plan, a careful analysis of the town’s future capacity for residential development must be undertaken to ensure that local needs for housing will be met.
- A shore community subject to catastrophic storm surges, an urbanized downtown located on a coastal estuary, and an inland river subject to flooding require this community to include resiliency planning as part of any future land use discussion.

Complete based on final analysis.

3.2 Housing Opportunity

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

- Westerly’s senior population has been steadily growing since 1990 and is likely to continue based on projected regional and statewide trends.
- Westerly’s young adult and school-aged populations are both declining, with public school enrollment projections to continue falling until at least the 2025-2026 academic year.

- A significant seasonal population supported by 15.3 percent of Westerly's total housing stock (or 71.2 percent of the total vacant housing stock) in 2010 greatly increases Westerly's population in the summer months.
- Of occupied units in 2010, over one-third were occupied by a renter and just under two-thirds were occupied by owners.
- There were 12,320 total housing units in Westerly in 2010, with 21.5 percent identified by the US Census as vacant year round.
- The Town adopted its affordable housing plan, *Affordable Housing Plan to Achieve 10 Percent Low & Moderate Income Housing*, in 2004 with the intent to help meet the housing needs of all Westerly residents by providing an adequate supply of diverse housing choices

3.2.1 Demographics

The Town of Westerly had a year-round population of 22,787 in 2010, which was a 0.8 percent decrease from 2000. Between 1990 and 2000 the population grew by 6.3 percent. According to population projections prepared by the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, Westerly's population is expected to increase slowly but steadily through 2035, to 23,518, and drop slightly to 23,466 in 2040, a 3.0 percent increase from 2010.

An important statistic for planning purposes is the age distribution of Westerly's residents. As Table 3-2 below illustrates, the percentage of the population 55 years old and over grew by 21.6 percent from 2000 and was nearly a third of the total population in 2010. In contrast, the Town's school-aged population has declined over the past 10 years. For example, public school enrollment dropped by 163 students from 3,071 in fiscal year (FY) 2012 to 2,908 in FY2016. Public school enrollment is projected to be 2,764 students in FY2026, which would be a 5.0 percent decrease from FY2016.

Table 3-2 General Demographics, 2000-2010

Population	2000		2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	22,966	100.0	22,787	100.0
Sex				
Female	11,889	51.8	11,874	52.1
Male	11,077	48.2	10,913	47.9
Age				
Ages 17 years old and under	5,406	23.5	4,787	21.0
Ages 18-34 years old	4,543	19.8	3,936	17.3
Ages 35-44 years old	3,883	16.9	2,881	12.6
Ages 45-54 years old	3,043	13.3	3,777	16.6
Ages 55 years old and over	6,091	26.5	7,406	32.5

Race				
American Indian and Alaska Native	130	0.6	158	0.7
Asian	457	2.0	567	2.5
Black or African American	164	0.7	222	1.0
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0	3	0.0
White	21,857	95.2	21,171	92.9
Some Other Race	77	0.3	204	0.9
Two or more races	281	1.2	462	2.0
Ethnicity				
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	270	1.2	651	2.9

Sources: 2000 and 2010 US Censuses

3.2.3 Housing Characteristics

In 2010, there were 12,320 housing units in Westerly. Of these, 9,666 (78.5 percent) were occupied – split between 6,322 (65.4 percent) owner-occupied units and 3,344 (34.6 percent) renter-occupied units – and 2,654 (21.5 percent) were vacant. Of these vacant housing units, more than two-thirds (71.2 percent) were for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. Over 70 percent of the total housing units in Westerly in the time period 2010-2014 were estimated to be in single-family attached or detached structures.

3.2.4 Westerly's Rental Housing

In the Town of Westerly, “meeting local housing needs” means a long standing commitment to the preservation of its traditional rental housing stock. The number of year-round renter-occupied housing units in the Town of Westerly has been consistent from 2000 to 2014 at approximately 3,400 units at an average of 35.4% of its entire year-round housing stock. Income level statistics for renter-occupied units are available from the 2000 U.S. Census and the 2010-14 ACS 5-year estimates. Rentals in Westerly are also affordable. In 2000, 2,060 renters in Westerly were reported to be at or below 80%AMI. That number increased in the 2010-14 period to 2,174 renters. Since 2000, renters at or below 80%AMI have made up 60 to 64 percent of the renter-occupied units. Approximately 20% more of the available rental units are occupied by residents with incomes between 80%AMI and 120%AMI.

According to the Town Assessor's Office, the median total assessed value of single-family homes as of the 2006 revaluation was \$253,000 and the average total assessed value was \$377,329. The general economic downturn which began nationally in 2008 had an extended impact on the housing market throughout both Rhode Island and Westerly (Westerly's total assessed value fell -3.9 percent between the 2009 and 2012 revaluations). More recent evidence has shown improvement however; while RI Living reported Westerly's single-family home sale prices were at the same value between 2012 and 2015, as compiled using information provided by State-wide Multiple Listing Service, Inc., the number of total annual sales increased 7.4 percent and the average number of days listed on the market fell from 147

to 111. Between the 2012 and 2015 revaluations, the median total assessed value for a single-family home in Westerly grew by 1.7 percent (it should be noted the 2015 revaluation is pending certification as of June 8, 2016).

3.2.5 Housing Conditions

The quality, safety and general state of housing units has significant impact on the well-being of residents and on the livability and desirability of a community. Neglect, deterioration, and aging housing stock represent issues related to housing conditions. The Town of Westerly will encourage improvements in the quality of housing conditions through Neighborhood Plans and with the involvement of its housing partners. The recent economic recession, having taken its toll on the quality of the region's housing stock, it is time to focus attention on the upgrading and improvement of pre-1970 homes.

Homes in decline due to age of electrical and plumbing systems are significantly more likely to be converted nonresidential uses, to become vacant, or to be permanently lost from the inventory of housing options. With the local economy and housing market gradually recovering, investment in the town's existing housing inventory could be encouraged with some success. The Town of Westerly's focus on a rehabilitation program supported by a revolving fund is well placed to be an integral part of a neighborhood revitalization effort. The Town of Westerly is in need of more tools to effectively address housing quality and get out ahead of such issues as aging plumbing and electrical systems, flood and wind damage, and demolition due to neglect.

Older homeowners can retrofit their homes to accommodate their future needs and "age in place" as opposed to relocating. Households can increase their investment with environmentally sustainable improvements. Property owners can reduce their insurance costs by utilizing new reconstruction techniques certified by the Insurance Institute of Business and Home Safety (IBHS) FORTIFIED Home project.

3.2.6 Affordable Housing

High and stable housing prices and rental rates reflect the desirability of Westerly as an attractive community for both year-round and seasonal residents; however, prices have a significant impact on housing affordability. Affordable housing needs also stem from residents who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing, which causes a significant cost burden. 41.0% of total households in Westerly are \leq 80% HMI according to 2014 ACS 5-year estimates, a number greater than the state's threshold 10 percent of the Town's year round housing (1,043) and an indicator of a greater demand for affordable housing.

3.2.7 Low and Moderate Income Housing

The State of Rhode Island, through the *Rhode Island Consolidated Plan 2015-2019* (prepared by Rhode Island Housing, through a process involving the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program which is, in part, meant to succeed the *Rhode Island Five-Year Strategic Housing Plan* of the State Guide Plan), defines the state's objective to have 10% low and moderate income housing distributed among the State's 40 municipal jurisdictions. "Low and moderate income housing" is narrowly defined as subsidized units subject to resident income restrictions for at least 30 years. Through the 2004 amendments to the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act (at RI General Laws Title 45, Chapter 53), the Town of Westerly is required to develop a plan to produce certified low and moderate income housing at the rate of 10 percent of all year-round housing within the jurisdiction. To accomplish this, the Town of Westerly proposes two approaches to assisting the state in meeting housing needs.

3.2.7.1 Providing Housing Opportunity through Affordable Rental Units

Town of Westerly is meeting housing needs through its substantial contribution to the rental market. The Town of Westerly has developed several programs and initiatives to ensure the preservation of its robust rental housing stock. The number of year-round renter-occupied housing units in the Town of Westerly has been consistent from 2000 to 2014 at approximately 3,400 units and an average of 35.4% of its entire year-round housing stock. In 2000, about 2,060 renter households in Westerly were reported to be at or below 80 percent HMI. That number increased in 2014 to 2,174 renter households. Since 2000, renter households at or below 80 percent HMI have made up 60 to 64 percent of total renter-occupied units. Approximately 20 percent more of the available rental units are occupied by residents with incomes between 80 percent HMI and 120% HMI. Of the 3,404 renter occupied units in Westerly only 13% are subsidized (LMI qualified), allowing the local regulatory environment to provide more than 2,900 rental units without subsidy or income restrictions.

3.2.7.2 Providing Housing Opportunity through LMI Units

The Town of Westerly will continue to participate in state efforts to meet housing need through the adoption and implementation of a housing production plan for certified LMI housing units.

LMI housing amounts to 5.22 percent of Westerly's year-round housing stock. The total qualifying units in Westerly, as of January 2016, number 549. This means that Westerly currently requires a production plan for an additional 499 LMI units to meet the state's objective. In *Affordable Housing Plan to Achieve 10 Percent Low & Moderate Income Housing*, the Town proposed several strategies to develop certified LMI units. With the assistance of the Affordable Housing Committee, the Town has adopted the following ordinances, implementing the plan:

- Affordable Housing Ordinance (§260-50)

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

Under these strategies, the Town approved 140 LMI units, of which, 63 have been constructed. These units include single family homes, units in multi-family structures, and units for residents with special needs, constructed by both for-profit and non-profit developers. These projects are listed in Table 2-15 of the Appendix.

As part of the 2016 update of this Comprehensive Plan, the Town reviewed the success of its affordable housing strategies and has revisited some. The following list illustrates the changes made from the 2004 LMI production strategies to those adopted as part of the current LMI production plan.

- Revolving loan fund has been established. This program can be valuable in revitalizing older neighborhoods with multi-family buildings. Both renters and home owners with low and moderate incomes will be targeted and incentives to include as LMI units are being explored.
- Other changes made to 2004 strategies
- Mention which regulatory strategies were not implemented and subsequently dropped.

Some strategies proposed in 2004 have yet to be implemented and the Town will continue to move these forward as part of the 2016 LMI production plan. These strategies include:

- Affordable Housing Overlay District is proposed but not implemented. Current affordable housing ordinances apply Town-wide. The overlay district is associated with mixed use development perhaps restructuring incentives to encourage development in an overlay district rather than in environmentally sensitive area.
- The Comprehensive Permit Ordinance allows density bonuses in eight residential zones, ranging from 20 to 66 percent. These increases in density may result in significant impacts on existing residential neighborhoods. The ordinance needs to be reassessed.
- The Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance provides alternatives to the on-site development of affordable units through payment-in-lieu of development and construction or rehabilitation elsewhere. In light of a legislative amendment, the payment-in-lieu option must be revisited. To support this ordinance, guidelines for off-site development need to be adopted.

The 2016-2036 LMI production plan for the Town of Westerly is described in Section 2.7 of Chapter 2 in Appendix I. Table 2-19 demonstrates how the strategic implementation of the LMI production plan will assist in achieving the state's threshold 10% for certified LMI units.

3.2.8 Findings and Implications

- Over half of the housing units in Westerly are more than 40 years old. This contributes to the character of the Town but also requires extensive upkeep and maintenance.
- The implications of the changing age demographics in Town will need to be addressed in the future.
- Since 2004, the Town has focused the development of affordable housing units through new construction; however, the Town intends to refocus on preservation of existing housing and neighborhood revitalization.
- The Town needs to refine current strategies to develop affordable housing and look to find new approaches that are in keeping with Town character and environmental constraints.
- The Town of Westerly is “meeting local housing needs” through its long standing commitment to the preservation of its traditional rental housing stock. The Town should continue to seek legislative action that will allow the community to focus on the rental market as the vehicle to address the state need for affordable housing.

The Town of Westerly recognizes that Rhode Island has quantified the state need for subsidized, income restricted housing and has adopted a policy for the provision of certified LMI units. The Town provides a 10 percent LMI plan in this chapter and proposes strategies to achieve this state plan.

3.3 Economic Vitality

3.3.1 Economic Overview and Distinctions

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

Westerly, as reported by the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT), traditionally has had an unemployment rate approximately 20 percent lower than the statewide rate. For example, the average unemployment rate for Westerly in 2005 was 4.2 percent while Rhode Island's average rate was 5.1 percent. During the economic downturn which corresponded and continued after the global recession of the late 2000s however, local and state unemployment grew respectively to 11.4 percent and 11.2 percent. As of 2015, Westerly's unemployment figures remained elevated (7.4 percent) and were above the statewide rate (5.6 percent). Median household income for the 2010-2014 five year period was estimated by the American Community Survey to be \$62,381.

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

- In 2002, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named Westerly one of its —Dozen Distinctive Destinations
- In 2006, Money Magazine named South County, R.I. as one of the Top 12 Places to Vacation in North America (The Town of Westerly is part of Washington County, also commonly known as South County)
- More recently, on June 30, 2008, Forbes' online website named Washington County, RI as 12th on its list of Best Places in America to Raise a Family

3.3.2 Employment

Rhode Island based employers of significance include the State of Rhode Island, the University of Rhode Island, General Dynamics Electric Boat (Quonset Point) and a diversified group of employers in the health care, financial services, education, defense and manufacturing sectors. Due to its location, Westerly's economy is also vitally linked to southeastern Connecticut and significant employers at the US Naval Submarine Base, General Dynamics Electric Boat, Pfizer, Yardney Electric Battery Company and Davis-Standard. All of these industries provide high-value research and technical jobs and also provide business for smaller companies in the area. The Westerly tourism industry is also linked to numerous entertainment and visitor venues in southeastern Connecticut, including Mystic Aquarium, Mystic Seaport, Foxwoods Resort Casino and Mohegan Sun.

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

The travel and tourism sector is particularly important to Westerly. Tourism industry wages in Westerly in 2002 were seventh highest among the state's cities and towns, generating \$27.88 million in wages. Tourism is also a significant factor in the general local economy with estimates that for every one dollar of wages generated by tourism, \$3.64 in economic activity is generated. Despite the global and national economic downturn, comparisons of actual state grant in aid for hotel and meal taxes since FY2009 has indicated a general growth in this sector in Westerly.

An important component not included in economic impact studies is the impact of second homes and part time residents. In Westerly, residents living in seasonal and beach properties (which accounted for \$600,754,900 in total assessed value, or 13.9 percent of total assessed residential property) in 2015 contributed about \$6.4 million to property tax revenue for Westerly.² In addition to helping to increase the tax base of the community, seasonal residents actively participate with full-time residents in funding amenities such as the Westerly Library, L+M Westerly Hospital and numerous charities. They also provide additional business for local retailers and restaurants, as well as for construction and skilled trades related to residential maintenance.

3.3.3 Economic Development Initiatives

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

- \$16 million in new residential construction and \$5.9 million in commercial construction has been approved in 2015 and is currently underway.
- Westerly Landing, located along Main Street and the Pawcatuck River, and Westerly Depot, near Westerly Station, feature river access and development and redevelopment of undeveloped and underutilized sites.
- The revitalization plan for the North End of Westerly provides for housing rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of existing commercial and industrial properties.
- The Westerly Tax-Free Arts District, located in the historic downtown, provides sales and personal tax exemptions for artists who live and work in the district or sell their original art in the district.

3.3.4 New Economies and Agriculture

New economic strategies that are focused on helping locally-owned businesses prosper and encourage entrepreneurial activities are part of Westerly's future plans. A broader range of

² All calculations based on the total assessed values of single-family residences, two- to five-family residences, apartments, seasonal and beach property and residential vacant as recorded in the 2015 Grand List, pending certification as of June 7, 2016

permitted uses may be necessary as customary home occupations and telecommuting opportunities become a larger portion of the economy and “new economies” are discovered. Aquaculture is a growing part of the local economy. In addition to supporting traditional agriculture the Town should explore alternatives to traditional farming practices to produce and use plants for food, fuel, and fiber.

While agriculture is not a significant employing industry in the local economy itself, the food system in Westerly is a critical component of the local quality of life enjoyed by residents and visitors and its relation to accommodation and food services is important to recognize and support. According to a 2015 snapshot by the Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC) and Rhode Island Agricultural Partnership (RIAP), agricultural and related economic activities were identified within all four components of the food system, including production and harvesting, processing, distribution and consumption. Three aquacultural farms and 47 commercial fishers are also present within the town.

3.3.5 Resort Community

Westerly is comprised of four key components – seasonal homes and residents, a year-round residential community, a short-term tourist destination and a regional service and retail center. These elements are often in competition with each other and require management that is balanced. While Westerly embraces its past, its future as a resort community depends on better planning, growth management and encouraging positive visitor experiences. While making the opportunity to enjoy Westerly’s attributes available to tourists and visitors, the Town must also protect the interests of local residents and taxpayers in using and enjoying the community’s natural and cultural resources. Any strategy intended to extend the length of stay of vacationers and tourists (and thereby increasing their positive economic contribution to the community) must not result in negative impacts on infrastructure and municipal services. When encouraging an economy that appeals to a broad spectrum of seasonal visitors, Westerly must also provide a range of housing alternatives and value and help to maintain the significant seasonal-resident tax base.

For several years the Town of Westerly has struggled with the review and revision of ordinances and regulations that would accommodate mixed-use, “planned resort” development as a strategy to promote longer stays by visitors and tourists while limiting impact on the environment and local neighborhoods. As seasonal tourism continues to be a major contributor to a vital economy, the discussion of an appropriate mix of uses should continue.

The Sustainable Tourism Eco-certification Program, or STEP, is a suite of online tools established by Sustainable Travel International. STEP is composed of three steps – an online self-assessment for businesses to identify and measure key impacts, receiving bronze certification by submitting an application with required documentation for assessment and receiving silver,

gold and platinum certification through on-site assessments.³ The Town should consider addressing sustainable tourism as an added benefit of doing business in the community and advancing its brand as a resort community through such a program.

3.3.6 Economic Resiliency

The Town's existing emergency permitting system goes a long way to ensure Town readiness and effective administration in the time period after a catastrophic event. Yet, a viable economy for Westerly requires a condition of economic resilience to natural and man-made events. The town will strive to anticipate the impact of catastrophic events on the local economy through study and strategic planning to reduce threats to public infrastructure, forecast loss of property revenues, mapping areas vulnerable to economic impacts. Alignment of town activities with the state strategic plan on reduction of impact from climate change hazards will also help Westerly reduce fiduciary risk.

3.3.7 Findings and Implications

- Dependence on three major industries leaves the regional economy vulnerable to shifts in the pharmaceutical, defense, and hospitality and tourism industries.
- There has been no systematic evaluation of the accommodations available in Westerly to determine whether modern markets for seasonal vacationers, year round visitors, and business travelers are being adequately served.
- Sites for new businesses are needed; redevelopment of existing commercial areas can meet much of this need.
- Westerly State Airport offers aviation maintenance, commercial passenger and charter service but not freight service. The airport has the potential for a larger role in the economy although proximity to developed areas presents challenges to any expansion of services.
- Westerly has the opportunity to promote economic development based on features such as its location midway between Boston and New York City and near leading academic institutions, access to Interstate 95, and a train station with the potential for expansion of Amtrak and introduction of commuter rail services.
- New economies, including the food sector, are
- A viable economy for Westerly requires a condition of economic resilience to natural and man-made events.

³ http://sustainabletravelinternational.org/documents/sustainabletourismcertification_businesses.html

3.4 Natural Resources

3.4.1 Overview of Natural Resources

Westerly's natural resources help to make Westerly a wonderful place to live and are critically important to the Town's future development. The Pawcatuck River, ocean beaches, coastal salt ponds, inland forests and abundant fresh water resources provide important ecosystem and habitat functions. They are an important factor in the quality of life for residents and a prime recreational attraction for tourists. Westerly's groundwater resources exist within three aquifers – Ashaway, Bradford and Westerly. These aquifers are located within the Pawcatuck River Aquifer Region, which is the sole source of drinking water for the town. Wetlands along the rivers and streams and the shore and salt ponds, as well as Crandall Swamp and other interior wetlands, remove nutrients, pollutants, and sediments from surface water runoff, recharge water supplies, reduce shoreline erosion and flood risks and provide fish and wildlife habitat. Farmlands provide food and economic activity and, together with forest lands, provide important open space as well as wildlife habitat. The location of many of these natural features is illustrated on several of the maps described in the Appendices.

An overview of the current status of many of Westerly's natural resources, their issues and problems, and stressors is provided in Table 3-3 below. This table is abstracted from Appendix I which contains extensive background information and references to laws and regulations and organizations that have management and regulatory authority for natural resources. A detailed description of natural resources in Westerly is provided in the Natural Resources chapter of Appendix I.

Table 3-3 Overview of Natural Resources

Resource	Water Quality Status	Issues	Stressors	
Coastal Ponds	Quonochontaug	Good	Increasing bacteria and nutrients; low DO	Failing or substandard septic systems, stormwater runoff, development, siltation
	Winnapaug	Somewhat impaired	High bacteria and nitrate concentrations	Failing or substandard septic systems, stormwater runoff, development, siltation
	Maschaug	Unknown	Unknown	Failing or substandard septic systems, stormwater runoff, development, siltation
Pawcatuck	Upper (from Route 216 bridge to Route 3)	Impaired	High bacteria, elevated lead and nitrate concentrations	Failing septic systems, stormwater runoff, farm and wild animals

Groundwater	bridge)			
	Lower (tidal)	Impaired	High bacteria, lead levels, heavy metal pollutants, low DO and no shellfishing	Urban runoff, stormwater runoff
	Wetlands	Unknown	Large wetland areas protected by conservation groups, small wetland areas are subject to encroachment by development	Stormwater runoff
	Westerly Aquifer	Good	Localized contamination, elevated levels of nitrates and bacteria, spills	Development in recharge zones, failing septic systems, road salt
	Ashaway Aquifer	Good	Localized contamination, elevated levels of nitrates and bacteria, spills	Development in recharge zones, failing septic systems, road salt
	Bradford Aquifer	Good	Localized contamination, elevated levels of nitrates and bacteria, spills	Development in recharge zones, failing septic systems, road salt
	Beaches	Not available	Storm erosion, flooding	Population pressure, cyclonic storm events

Source:

3.4.2 Findings and Implications

- The Comprehensive Plan recommends changes to the existing Zoning Ordinance and subdivision regulations to comply with the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) Salt Pond Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) which specifies maximum development density, establishes setbacks, buffers, and requirements for nitrogen-reducing technologies for onsite wastewater treatment, and requires CRMC participation at an early stage of municipal land-use regulatory review.
- Westerly has implemented a Phase II Storm Water Management Plan that places controls on land clearing and implements measures for the control of stormwater discharges to surface waters.
- Westerly continues to protect extensive tracts of important property. The acquisition of significant natural communities, habitats, and other highly vulnerable undeveloped areas by state, municipal and private groups is one of the most effective means of protecting their natural functions.
- Appropriate development and regulations can protect open space from fragmentation and reduce sprawl, both of which will prevent potential negative impacts on the aesthetic character of the Town and its natural resources.

3.5 Infrastructure and Energy

3.5.1 Water System

Westerly's water system is owned by the Town and operated by the Water Department, a division of the Public Works Department. The budget for the Water Department is prepared as an enterprise fund to incorporate all department operating costs and the water rates are established so that users fund all activities of the department. There is a small portion of town (approximately 6 percent) that depends on private wells.

The sources of Westerly's public water supply are wells which tap groundwater resources. The quality of the water is good and the Town previously implemented an updated and improved disinfection system. The Town undertook a comprehensive assessment of its groundwater resources that concluded its existing sites in White Rock, Bradford and Crandall Swamp provided sufficient capacity. To enhance the Town's reserves however, a new well (Bradford IV) was developed and became operational in October 2013. The Town also continues to acquire land for aquifer protection. As required by the State of Rhode Island, Westerly has prepared a plan for drought management that includes procedures for addressing sustained periods of dry weather.

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

3.5.2 Sanitary Sewer System

The Town of Westerly owns and operates a wastewater collection and treatment system that services approximately 45 percent of the Town. The rest of the Town is served by individual wastewater treatment systems such as septic tanks with on-site infiltration. In terms of residential parcels only, 39 percent have public sewers and 61 percent use individual septic systems. There are areas within the Westerly Sewer District to which sewer service has not been extended; these include the residential developments in Avondale and Misquamicut, around Springbrook Elementary School, Apache Drive, Ledward Avenue and Winnapaug Road. Westerly has one wastewater treatment plant that discharges effluent into the Pawcatuck River as regulated by RIDEM. The plant went through a major upgrade in its biological nutrient removal capability in 2003. The plant is near the threshold of its treatment capacity; however, it has capacity for all currently proposed and approved subdivisions. The Town is working to limit the amount of groundwater that infiltrates the system, which will reduce the amount of water

currently being treated. The plant is designed so that its capacity can be increased by the installation of additional components.

3.5.3 Stormwater System

The Town of Westerly owns and maintains a stormwater sewer system flowing primarily into the Pawcatuck River or wetlands rather than Block Island Sound. There are no combined sewer overflow connections between the sanitary sewer and storm sewer systems. There are several new residential and commercial developments that have created storm retention basins or ponds in order to comply with newer stormwater regulations. After these basins are privately installed, the Town then assumes the responsibility for their maintenance.

The **Impervious Cover map (IC-1)** identifies all land in the community which is covered by impervious surface, such as pavement. The inability for these surfaces to absorb precipitation results in overland flow which requires proper drainage to mitigate the potential for flooding.

The Town has an ongoing maintenance program for the stormwater system that includes cleaning catch basins and pipes and replacing aging pipes and structures. In 2007, the Town received approval from CRMC to install a municipal storm drainage collection and treatment system serving the Misquamicut area to address serious flooding problems during moderate to heavy storms. Phase I became operational in 2009.

3.5.4 Electricity and Natural Gas

Electric and natural gas services are provided privately by National Grid, which owns and maintains the electric lines, gas lines and utility poles throughout town. Gas service is available in some areas of Town though the main transmission line is not adequate to provide town-wide service.

3.5.5 Alternative Energy Production

In 2010, EA Engineering was contracted by the Town of Westerly to conduct a wind energy study, preliminary site screening and pre-feasibility assessment. The study was funded through a \$25,000 loan from the RI Economic Development Corporation (now the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, or Commerce RI), and the consultant was selected by the Alternate Energy Study Committee (AESC). EA Engineering, included several factors in a site analysis for wind turbine installation and identified seven potential locations. With the information collected in the study, EA Engineering then developed a score matrix which selected the top three sites. The second-highest ranked site, the transfer station (Larry Hirsch Lane) was ultimately selected the most advantageous due to its non-proximity to existing residences.

In autumn 2011, Westerly issued a public request for solar and/or wind energy proposals. Several responses were received and the proposal review committee selected rTerra to look at

the closed landfill and 78 White Rock Road (next to the Utilities Division building) for solar energy installation. Issues with both sites defeated any potential in their development.

Appendix I include a discussion of recent efforts at promoting alternative energy generation in Westerly, including solar and wind energy proposals, and considers the potential future of those proposals for Westerly. This report provides goals, policies and recommended actions to assist the community in implementing renewable energy generation in the future. This section of the Comprehensive Plan, and the discussion of public facilities' energy efficiency, was funded by a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).

3.5.6 Communications

Several private telecommunications providers offer services to residents and visitors in Westerly which are considered to be provided in generally good quality. The Town and the School Department seek fiber optic connections (transmitting information as light impulses through optical fibers) across Westerly by installing the necessary infrastructure.

3.5.7 Findings and Implications

- The Westerly School Committee and Town Council must continue to work together to develop and maintain appropriate school facilities for the community.
- Water distribution deficiencies have caused use restrictions in the past. On-going improvement projects have mitigated this problem to a large extent; however, drought planning and water-supply protections remain as issues.
- The wastewater treatment plant in Westerly is nearing its capacity. Design plans for plant expansion exist; however, funding and implementation remain as issues.

3.6 Services and Facilities

Since the adoption of its first Comprehensive Plan in 1992, the Town of Westerly has undertaken a concerted effort to upgrade and modernize its municipal services and facilities. Examples from the last decade include improvement of the water treatment and distribution system, the construction of new facilities for the Police Department and Public Works Department, a new middle school, the establishment of a new community center (converted from an elementary school) and the renovation of the high school. In addition, there have been privately-funded renovations of L+M Westerly Hospital (at the time, Westerly Hospital) and Westerly Library while constructions of a new Animal Shelter and headquarters for the Westerly Ambulance Corps have also taken place. Several private, public and quasi-public agencies are located in Westerly and provide social services to its residents.

The **Public Facilities Map (PF-1)** shows all structures which contribute to Westerly's ability to provide a broad range of services including emergency response, medical services, education,

waste disposal, library services and social support. These facilities are gathered from several Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS) datasets which have been modified to indicate their contemporary statuses.

3.6.1 Emergency Services

The Westerly Police Department has 55 staff members, 44 of whom are sworn officers. The new police headquarters on Airport Road houses all police operations and serves as a regional emergency operations center. The department has recently been approved for funding necessary to update its dispatch center.

The Town of Westerly was divided into seven fire districts as of June 2016 – Bradford, Dunn’s Corners, Misquamicut, Shelter Harbor, Watch Hill, Weekapaug and Westerly,. Each fire district is incorporated to provide services within its boundaries and has taxation powers allowing for no reliance on appropriations from the Town. Their respective fire departments are staffed primarily by volunteers with the exception of one or two paid employees in the Dunn’s Corners and Westerly fire departments. The departments have established working relationships that allow them to provide back up support to each other as needed. Bradford and Shelter Harbor have a mutual aid agreement with Dunn’s Corners and Weekapaug has a mutual aid agreement with Misquamicut.

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

L+M Westerly Hospital has been serving residents since 1925 and was acquired by the Lawrence + Memorial Medical Group in 2013. With a total active medical staff of over 130, the hospital provides medical and surgical care to a service area which includes Washington County and New London County in Connecticut. Similar to other hospitals in the state, major issues impacting the hospital are uncompensated care and issues related to low reimbursement rates. During recent years, the hospital has had operating losses.

In addition to the hospital, Westerly is also served by South County Health through South County Home Health (formerly Visiting Nurse Services Home Health Services of Rhode Island) and its second Medical and Wellness Center in the state. The center provides several services and also contains space for the Center for Women’s Health. There are four nursing homes located in Town which provide a total of 292 beds and there is one assisted living facility with a 75 person capacity.

3.6.2 Schools

The majority of Westerly's school-aged population (93.8 percent) is enrolled in public school. At the conclusion of the 2008-2009 academic year, Westerly Public Schools closed one of its five elementary schools and moved all fifth grade students to Westerly Middle School due to a decade long trend of declining enrollment. October 2015 enrollment recorded 2,871 students within the district's six schools, including 851 at Westerly High School, 867 at Westerly Middle School and 1,153 in the four elementary schools. St. Pius X School in Westerly, a private Roman Catholic school for kindergarten through eighth grade, had an enrollment of approximately 178 students.

During the 2014-15 academic year, the district had a classroom teacher-student ratio of 1:13, a 95 percent attendance rate and a student drop-out rate of 2.9 percent. The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) established a classification system in various educational performance areas. The 2015 classification summary shows schools ranged between 39.39 (Bradford Elementary School) to 59.68 (Westerly High School) points, with none being designated as either focus or priority schools.

3.6.3 Solid Waste Disposal

The Town of Westerly owns and operates a solid waste transfer station which also has a recycling facility. At the transfer station, the Town compacts, loads and hauls waste to the state's central landfill. The Town does not provide curbside pickup and residents may either bring their waste to the transfer station in special designated bags sold by the Town or pay private haulers to pick up their waste for delivery to the transfer station. Information on the number of persons or households served is not available or tracked. While Westerly has not yet achieved a 35 percent recycling rate and 50 percent overall diversion rate, it has made improvements since the previous comprehensive plan and is currently at 30 percent and 39.8 percent, respectively.

3.6.4 Public Library

Westerly Library and Wilcox Park are located on approximately 14.7 acres in the core of downtown Westerly. Both the park and the library are owned and operated by the non-profit Memorial and Library Association of Westerly. In 2016, 61.9 percent of the library's funding came from non-public sources, 13.5 percent came from the state and 24.6 percent came from local sources (Westerly and Stonington, Connecticut). As of spring 2016, the library was beginning its most recent renovations with a new circulation desk following a private foundation grant. The grant would also fund a new space for teenagers, a modernized technology lab and a makerspace.

3.6.5 Social Services

A survey conducted by the Basic Needs Network (BNN) of Washington County through its agency members in 2011 found 34 percent of agency clients were from Westerly. In the 2010-2014 period, the American Community Survey estimated Westerly has the lowest median household income and median family income of any town in Washington County. These and other statistics indicate many residents in town experience personal financial and/or social struggles. Numerous agencies and programs have established a presence in Westerly as a result, offering a wide variety of services to individuals and families in need.

3.6.6 Energy

The Town of Westerly previously contracted Johnson Controls, Inc. (JCI) to conduct an energy audit of non-school municipal buildings which took place over a six-month period from May to October 2011. The audit involved an investigation of specific energy conservation measures. From these findings, JCI offered several recommendations which were projected to offer a 9.3-percent reduction in energy costs. In 2014, The Town of Westerly then contacted JCI to assist in decreasing the Town's energy costs over a twenty-year period to end in August 2034. Thirteen Town-owned buildings will be monitored over the two decades and annual reports will be issued analyzing the cost savings and increased efficiency achieved over time. In the first annual report issued, JCI identified a \$1,210 operations and maintenance cost avoidance and a \$54,458 utilities cost avoidance. Future years are targeted to achieve a fixed percentage increase to keep pace with inflation.

Appendix I includes a discussion of the results of energy audits of public buildings and facilities and the efforts the Town and School Department have made to reduce energy consumption through improvements to buildings, replacing lighting and making management and control changes to heating, air conditioning, and ventilation (HVAC) systems. This section of the Comprehensive Plan, and the discussion of alternative energy generation, was funded by a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).

3.6.7 Findings and Implications

- Emergency services in the town both individually and in cooperation with one another are able to cooperate effectively and are supported by continued upgrades to their respective facilities as needed
- Steady improvement in the healthcare sector and overall economy, in combination with certain demographics such as age, is resulting in an expansion of health, hygienic and well-being services provided throughout the town
- The Westerly Town Council and School Committee must continue to work together to develop and maintain appropriate school facilities for students and the community

- Significant improvement has been made towards achieving the 35-percent recycling rate and 50-percent overall diversion rate goals, with the reported recycling rate more than doubling in the past five years
- A significant number of support agencies operate and/or are located in Westerly to serve a notably large population requiring financial and social assistance

3.7 Transportation Network

3.7.1 Roads and Motor Vehicles

The largest single commuter group in Westerly is composed of those driving a motor vehicle alone to work and motor vehicle ownership has increased steadily since at least 2000. Traffic congestion is a notable problem in Westerly, especially in the summer when the population swells with seasonal residents and visitors to the beaches. At times, traffic volume approaches gridlock along Airport Road and Winnapaug Road, connecting Routes 1 and 78 to Atlantic Avenue. Periods of congestion also occur in the downtown area and the Granite Street segment of Route 1 has recorded the highest traffic volume in the town. While some traffic safety statistics have slightly increased or remained unchanged, the number of vehicle collisions has declined in recent years and no vehicle-related fatalities occurred in fiscal year 2015.

3.7.2 Parking

Parking is an important concern for many residents and visitors, particularly in the downtown and coastal areas. Strategies to decrease demand for on-street parking in the downtown area may include encouraging walking and bicycling and exploring opportunities for shuttle bus service and alternative parking facilities. As downtown redevelops and its most vital areas increase in popularity and visitor numbers, people may be more willing to walk longer distances – particularly when opportunities for engaging, passive activities such as window shopping can take place along the way. Parking shortages in other areas of town include Misquamicut and Watch Hill.

3.7.3 Public Transportation

The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) provides public transportation service throughout Rhode Island. Within Westerly, service is limited with connections to Narragansett, Providence, Richmond and South Kingstown available through three different routes, two of which operate each weekday and none of which operate on weekends. ADA compliant service is also available by request. Westerly Station serves as a Park-n-Ride lot for the route to Providence.

Built in 1895 and renovated in 1999, the station provides Amtrak service and is being studied for potential commuter rail service through expansions of two separate lines – the Connecticut Department of Transportation’s Shore Line East and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation

Authority's (MBTA) Providence line (operated by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation [RIDOT] south of Providence). Shore Line East currently extends as far east as New London, Connecticut and the Connecticut Public Transportation Commission (CPTC) officially recommended expansion to Westerly in its 2015 annual report. Discussions have also taken place between MBTA and Amtrak regarding expansion to Westerly Station. RIDOT previously determined that Westerly Station is in a walkable location, making it suitable as a commuter rail station. Additional shared vehicle parking spaces may also become available following the completion of a new academic and job training facility adjacent to the station.

The rail line between New London and North Kingstown is the only segment of the Northeast Corridor between Boston and New York not used by commuter rail.

Residents who provided input to the development of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan through a survey agreed that commuter rail accessibility should be a high priority for transportation improvements within Westerly. This input was received again in the development of this plan as well as at a public hearing in May 2015 in Norwich, Connecticut. Community members and transportation agencies have also indicated that beyond commuting to and from work, commuter rail service would provide a convenient connection between Westerly and the InterLink at T.F. Green Airport.

3.7.4 Pedestrians and Walkability

While motor vehicle operation is the dominant means of travel in town, walking is steadily becoming a more viable option for residents as they seek a more active lifestyle and the Town seeks to build upon its strong pedestrian infrastructure foundation established prior to the automobile. The downtown, Misquamicut and Watch Hill are arguably the most walkable neighborhoods in Westerly due to their historical development and roles in the community. Safety is a common concern which limits the number of people who do walk however, including those aided by wheelchairs and other wheeled mobility devices. Many sidewalks are narrow and in poor condition and the clearing of snow and ice accumulation in the winter months is often not sufficient. Continued enforcement of sidewalk clearing and funding for the maintenance and expansion of pedestrian infrastructure will be important aspects contributing to Westerly's progress towards being a walker-friendly community.

3.7.5 Cycling and Bikability

In an effort to promote biking (which may improve public health and reduce traffic congestion and its subsequent air pollution) as a viable travel option, the Town has endorsed a regional approach to construction and financing of a safe bike network that serves the recreational and transportation needs of residents and visitors. The Town has focused on the implementation of recommendations of the three existing bike path studies for South County as a beginning. RIDOT has conducted studies of a shoreline bikeway that would include roadways within the

towns of Charlestown and Westerly. The roadways would be signed to remind both drivers and cyclists that roadways are to be shared. The plan has not yet been implemented.

3.7.6 Transportation Improvement Projects

The Engineering Division has been proactive in designing and implementing programs for the rehabilitation and maintenance of local bridges, roadways and sidewalks. There is a comprehensive pavement management plan determines specifically where money is to be used for resurfacing of roadways and there is bond money available for roadway reconstruction, roadway drainage, and overall improvements to Town roads.

3.7.7 Water and Waterfront Access

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

3.7.8 Air Service

Westerly Airport is state-owned and operated by the Rhode Island Airport Corporation to serve the aviation needs of Westerly and nearby communities. The airport serves private and corporate aircraft and New England Airlines which provides important commercial passenger and cargo service between Westerly and Block Island. Recreational flying is the most frequent activity at the airport; however, corporate and business activity and training and flight instruction are also supported at the airport. In the summer, the airport serves seasonal residents and vacationing visitors in addition to its regular year-round commercial and general aviation traffic. The *Rhode Island Airport System Plan* defined Westerly Airport's future role as being general aviation/commercial service and projected enplanements at WST to be between 11,536 (low-growth model) and 13,900 (high-growth model) in 2029.

3.7.9 Findings and Implications

- Shared use of driveways should be considered for adjacent uses to minimize impacts to traffic flow currently experienced as a result of numerous access points along short stretches of roadway
- Innovative methods to address parking issues in Town are needed.
- Extension of commuter rail services to Westerly Station should be encouraged.
- Improvements to Westerly Station are part of state transportation plans. Additional parking is needed to support these plans

- Continued improvements to and expansions of the existing walking and biking networks are needed
- According to the *Rhode Island State Airport System Plan* as adopted in September 2011, Westerly State Airport enplanements (the number of passengers boarding departing flights) are expected to increase by 2.5 percent per year through 2030. Therefore, it is important to the Town that measures necessary to ensure continued safe and efficient airport operations are implemented.

The **Transportation map (T-1)** offers a visual overview of the many components which support the town's circulation and mobility. These include boat launches and ramps, bike paths, harbors, ports, public transit routes and stops, railroads, roadways (including evacuation routes, local roads and state roads) and transportation facilities (Westerly Airport and Westerly Station). Much of this information was contributed by datasets made available through RIGIS.

3.8 Open Space and Recreation

Open space and recreation resources play a critical role in the quality of life Westerly offers, serving as important natural resource protection areas and providing opportunities for leisure and exercise which contribute to good health and well-being.

- Since the adoption of Westerly's first Comprehensive Plan, there have been many changes to the Town's open space and recreation resources. The following are selected highlights of accomplishments of the Town of Westerly: Acquisition and protection of several hundred acres town-wide by the Town and several non-profit organizations
- Purchase of an additional boat to patrol Westerly's shoreline and river
- Provision of picnic facilities at Cimalore Field, Gingerella Sports Complex and Craig Field
- Creations of Rotary Park, Wuskenau Beach and a community center
- Clearing of hiking trails and provision of signage at the Town Forest
- Upgrades to school and town playground facilities
- Establishment of the Recreation Department
- Expansion of the Westerly Senior Citizens Center
- Approval of a \$3 million open space bond in 2006

3.8.1 Open Space

In addition to the Town, a variety of public and private organizations preserve open space in Westerly. This combination of preservation efforts has protected over 4,600 acres of conservation land, translating into over 23.1 percent of the Town. Approximately 78.3 percent of the Town's conservation lands have either full or limited public access. Major owners of conservation land in Westerly include the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, Memorial and Library Association of Westerly, Nature Conservancy, Nopes Island Conservation Association,

Shelter Harbor Fire District, State of Rhode Island, Town of Westerly (including the Westerly Municipal Land Trust), Watch Hill Conservancy, Watch Hill Fire District, Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation, Weekapaug Fire District, Westerly Land Trust and various foundations and private owners.

The **Conservation Land map (CON-1)** offers a visual overview of all conserved lands in the Town of Westerly by one of two RIGIS datasets contributed by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management – non-state conservation lands and state conservation lands. Non-State conservation lands include conservation by municipalities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which permanently protect their lands through one or more processes. Some properties may be alternatively identified by such process(es) as protected by their owners against future development (known as ‘Conservation Intent’). Lands identified at the state-level have likewise been protected from future development through one of these processes, except conservation intents.

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

3.8.2 Recreation

A variety of recreational opportunities exist in Westerly. Major water-based recreation includes the state and Town beaches and marinas and access points for launching boats and fishing. Non-water based recreation facilities are summarized in Table 3-4 below. In addition, recreational opportunities are available at nearby facilities including Burlingame State Park, Ninigret Park, Quonochontaug Breachway, and Barn Island Wildlife Management Area.

Table 3-4 Non-water based Recreation Facilities, Public and Private

Facility	Location	Description
Bowling Lane Playground	Bowling Lane	1 playground
Bradford Elementary School	15 Church Street	1 basketball court, 1 gymnasium, 1 playground, 1 softball field and 2 tennis courts

Bradford Preserve	Bradford Road	1 general field
Camp Quequatuck (Boy Scouts of America)	Boy Scout Drive	4.5 acres containing 3 camp sites and 1 general field
Cimalore Field	Wilson Street	1 baseball field, 2 basketball courts, 1 playground, 4 softball fields
Craig Field	Mountain Avenue	1 baseball field, 1 basketball court, 1 playground
Department Office	93 Tower Street	See 93 Tower Street (Table 6-4)
Dunn's Corners Elementary School	8.5 Plateau Road	1 basketball court, 1 general field, 1 gymnasium, 1 paved playing area and 1 playground
Gingerella Sports Complex	White Rock Road	1 basketball court, 1 playground, 1 skate park, 8 soccer fields, 1 tennis court
Grills Preserve	198 Bowling Lane	482 acres containing cross country path and walking trails
Misquamicut Club	60 Ocean View Highway	1 golf course and 7 tennis courts
Ocean Community YMCA (The Y)	95 High Street	1 fitness center, 2 gymnasiums, 1 playground, 2 swimming pools and 1 tennis court
Pond View Racquet Club	252 Shore Road	5 tennis courts
Rotary Park	Airport Road	2 playgrounds, 6 tennis courts, 2 volleyball courts
Saint Pius X School	32 Elm Street	1 general field and 1 playground
Shelter Harbor Golf Club	1 Golf Club Drive ¹	1 golf course
Shelter Harbor Inn	10 Wagner Road	Outdoor Paddle Club
Springbrook Elementary School	39 Springbrook Road	1 basketball court, 1 general field, 1 gymnasium and 1 playground
State Street Elementary School	35 State Street	1 general field, 1 gymnasium and 1 playground
Tower Street School Community Center	93 Tower Street	1 general field, 1 gymnasium and 1 playground (1 basketball court and 1 tennis court adjacent)
Trombino Sports Complex	Moorehouse Road	3 baseball fields and 2 softball fields
Washington Trust Skating Center	61 Main Street	Skating rink in winter and sand court in summer
Weekapaug Golf Club	265 Shore Road	1 golf course
Weekapaug Tennis Club	24 Chapman Road	8 tennis courts
Westerly Girl Scout Center		2 floor building with 4 meeting rooms and a kitchen
Westerly High School	23 Ward Avenue	2 general field, 2 gymnasiums, 1 multi-

	15 Highland Avenue	sport fields and 1 track
Westerly Middle School	10 Sandy Hill Road	1 baseball field, 1 gymnasium and 1 multi-sport field
Westerly Pee Wee Football	60 Old Hopkinton Road	1 football field
Westerly Senior Citizens Center	39 State Street	12,500 square foot center containing activity room, cafeteria game room and lounge
Wilcox Park	44 Broad Street	Arboretum containing benches, a fountain, 5 monuments, a pond and walking paths
Winnapaug Country Club	184 Shore Road	1 golf course

Sources: Google Earth, Pond View Racquet Club, Ocean Community YMCA (The Y) and Town of Westerly

¹ Address located in Charlestown, Rhode Island

The **Recreation map (REC-1)**, like the Conservation Lands map, also shows conservation lands. In addition however, it also includes boat launches and ramps, bike routes, hiking trails, recreation sites, and scenic landscapes and roadways. The recreation sites included are those on the most up-to-date State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) Inventory of Facilities as contributed by RIDEM and include both water based and non-water based sites.

3.8.3 Findings and Implications

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

3.9 Historic and Cultural Resources

Westerly was incorporated in 1669, following first settlement by the Narragansett Tribe and later settlements by other American tribes and European colonists. In succeeding decades, and particularly those surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, Westerly grew into its present

role as hub of commerce and recreation in southern Rhode Island and southeastern Connecticut. The abundance of historic resources has not gone unnoticed. In 2002, the Town was designated as a Distinctive Destination by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

3.9.1 Historic Places

Westerly has a large collection of distinct neighborhoods, homes and structures which provide glimpses into the town's historic past. Many of these are listed as historic districts and historic sites on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Babcock-Smith House, Bradford, Downtown, the Flying Horse Carousel, George Kent Performance Hall, Lewis-Card-Perry House, Main Street, the North End, Nursery Site RI-273, Ram Point, the US Post Office on High Street, Watch Hill, the Weekapaug Inn, Westerly Armory and Wilcox Park. Numerous other places have also been identified by the Westerly Preservation Society, Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHP&HC) and others.

The **Cultural Resources map (CR-1)** identifies all historic districts and sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Perry Homestead which is pending register listing. In addition to these, it also shows the districts determined eligible included in the Westerly Preservation Society's 2006 report as well as 1992 candidate sites.

3.9.3 Regulatory and Administrative Programs

To support Westerly's wealth of nationally-recognized historic resources, RIHP&HC and other local organizations have actively worked to ensure these places are recorded and preserved. The Town has codified ordinances to support preservation efforts. In recent years, many private developers have successfully been awarded funding through numerous sources to rehabilitate historic structures throughout town. The Town will continue to support the maintaining of these programs for future projects.

3.9.3 Cultural Resources

There are a variety of non-profit cultural institutions and events which are important to the community and its tourism industry. Performing arts include the Chorus of Westerly, which has programs year round in its concert hall (George Kent Performance Hall, noted above) and a Summer Pops concert in Wilcox Park; the Granite Theatre; and the Shakespeare-in-the-Park series of summer plays. The Westerly Armory houses the oldest civic band in the country. The Town contributes to several of these programs and sponsors other music programs in the summer both in downtown and at its beaches in Misquamicut. Westerly is also home to many performing and visual artists who live and work in the state-designated Westerly Arts and Entertainment District overlaying downtown. Special benefits are provided to artists and art facilities at these specially designated areas of downtown Westerly.

The Memorial and Library Association of Westerly owns and operates Westerly Library, itself built as a Civil War memorial, and the surrounding 14-acre Wilcox Park. Although Westerly is a considered a medium-sized community in the state, Westerly Library's collection is one of the most actively used in the Ocean State Libraries system. Wilcox Park, originally designed in 1898 and expanded in two subsequent phases, is arguably the single most character-generating feature in Westerly's downtown and is the site of numerous community activities throughout the year.

3.9.3 Findings and Implications

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

3.10 Natural Hazards and Resiliency

Because of its geographic characteristics, its extensive shoreline on Rhode Island Sound, and its location on the Pawcatuck River, Westerly is subject to a wide range of natural hazards with the potential to adversely affect public health and safety. Resiliency requires identifying all of the hazards that potentially threaten Westerly and analyzing them individually to determine the degree of threat posed by each.

3.10.1 Westerly's Hazard Mitigation Plan

Westerly has developed a hazard mitigation plan to help allocate finite resources, determine what actions are feasible and appropriate to address local vulnerabilities, and to enhance community resiliency. Analysis of the threat recognizes that some events, such as flash flooding, may occur frequently, but may also have impacts that are less severe than events that occur infrequently, such as coastal storms and hurricanes. The appropriate mitigation actions to address these threats are then established based on the probability of events and of significant impacts. Addressing risk and vulnerability through hazard mitigation measures is an effective way to reduce societal, economic and environmental exposure to natural hazards impacts (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014).

As part of the Hazard Mitigation Plan, natural hazards have been classified and listed in order of frequency and impact. Results are shown in Table 3-5 with the most frequently occurring natural hazards, and those with the highest potential to result in adverse impacts, listed first. A

detailed description of each of these natural hazards may be found in Chapter 10 of the Comprehensive Plan Appendices.

Table 3-5 Summary of Natural Hazards

Wind-related	Winter-related	Flood-related	Geological-related	Others
Storm surge	Snow	Riverine flooding	Earthquakes	Wildfires
Tropical cyclones	Ice	Flash flooding		Droughts
Tornadoes	Extreme Cold	Coastal flooding		Extreme heat
High winds		Climate change and sea level rise		
		Coastal erosion		
		Dam breaches		

As presented above, Westerly is particularly vulnerable to wind-related hazards, winter-related hazards and flooding. Several significant storm events have impacted Westerly and the region since the Comprehensive Plan was last updated. Most notable are major flooding events (March 2010), Hurricane Irene (August 2011), blizzards (January 2011 and February 2013) and Hurricane Sandy (October 2012; often called Superstorm Sandy). These storms caused significant damage in Westerly, served as warnings to the community and have led to the establishment of goals and policies relative to natural hazards.

3.10.2 Findings and Implications

- Emergency services in the town both individually and in cooperation with one another are able to cooperate effectively and are supported by continued upgrades to their respective facilities as needed.

Chapter 4.0 The Future

4.1 Vision and Values: Where do we want to be in 2036?

As stated in Chapter 1, this Comprehensive Plan envisions Westerly as a friendly and safe community that has preserved its quality of life for all generations, protected its distinctive heritage and extraordinary cultural and natural resources, and dedicated itself to a vital economy. Looking forward to 2036 evokes an image of what the future holds.

A Vision for Westerly

- ❖ Westerly of 2036 will remain a unique and special place, retaining its distinctive neighborhoods, history, traditions and natural beauty, while growing in a way to meet its residents' needs for a vibrant place to live, raise and educate families, and work.
- ❖ Westerly will have contained sprawl, and the development of housing and commerce will have been thoughtfully managed to meet the needs of residents of all generations and to promote a prosperous economy.
- ❖ Downtown Westerly will be a premier center for people, culture and transportation, and will be well-connected to its shoreline and inland neighborhoods through programs and services of community-wide interest.
- ❖ Westerly will have secured its water supply for the 21st century and carried out its extensive programs of infrastructure revitalization including water, sewer and stormwater management systems and upgrading of town facilities.
- ❖ The shoreline, Pawcatuck River, salt ponds and greenspace will remain Westerly's trademark, carefully managed to sustain their uses while preserving their health and natural beauty for future generations to enjoy.
- ❖ Westerly will promote a condition of economic and physical resilience to natural and man-made events.

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

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

consideration.

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

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

4.2 Long-term Priorities

4.2.1 Introduction

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

Westerly has been at the forefront of regulating land use and providing infrastructure to accommodate land development. In 1897, the town of Westerly purchased the private Westerly Water Works to create its own municipal water system. By the mid-1920s, acting on authority from the Rhode Island General Assembly, the town adopted a Zoning Ordinance. In the last

quarter of the twentieth century, it substantially increased the area served by municipal sewer disposal and upgraded its treatment plant not only to increase its capacity but to enhance the level of treatment. In the last decade, the town has substantially revised its Zoning Ordinance and other land use regulations while acting flexibly to accommodate development it has deemed desirable. Throughout the public outreach activities conducted in support of this Plan, citizens overwhelmingly expressed love for Westerly while stressing the importance of continually improving its infrastructure and related public services. Consistent with these sentiments, this Plan's vision for the future is grounded in respecting Westerly's history and traditions, cherishing its natural resources, and thoughtfully managing growth and development.

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

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

4.2.2 Build the Greenspace and Greenways System

4.2.2.1 Protect Open Space and Important Land Features

Long-term Priority Continued from 2010 Plan

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

Since the adoption of Westerly's first Comprehensive Plan in 1992, substantial areas of open space for preservation and recreational use have been acquired or otherwise protected. Charitable entities such as the Westerly Land Trust and Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation have been active and successful in both acquiring ownership of open space land or development rights. The Town of Westerly has acquired multiple sites for well head and aquifer protection and for recreational use.

The Town and its charitable organizations will continue to use traditional means of property acquisition, but it must also continue to employ other techniques to achieve its objectives without direct expenditure of taxpayer and water-user revenue. Especially in uncertain

economic times, federal, state and local government contributions to such acquisition and protection efforts are likely to be reduced. The lessons of Westerly's experiences will need to be employed to continue the success of the past, preserve the images and appearance of Westerly, and yet allow sustainable vibrant growth.

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

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

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

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

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

Other efforts of the Town of Westerly have contributed to a system of greenways including cluster subdivision and conservation subdivision.

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

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

Additional Long-term Priority for 2016-2036

The Town of Westerly must promote physical resiliency by conserving areas of open space and important natural land features.

Full discussion needed here on long-term conservation of open space and natural resource areas. And specifically discuss sea level rise and storm inundation.

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

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

Long-term Priority Continued from 2010 Plan

The Town of Westerly must connect greenspace, recreational land and commercial areas by [means and methods other than automobiles].

The public outreach which occurred in relation to the 2010 Plan indicated widespread support for the creation of bike and walking trails and paths. The state of Rhode Island's initiatives to create such facilities for the East Bay and South Kingstown–Narragansett have been wildly successful. While the 2010 Plan called for the establishment of such facilities generally, it prioritized the creation of a discrete specific scenic coastal loop. **What happened with this idea? Is this still the one priority today or is it the first of many? - Describe this fully in the 3.7.**

In the development of the 2016-2036 Plan, this sentiment remained strong. **Continue the discussion of alternative forms of transportation. Describe fully in 3.7**

4.2.3 Achieve Excellence in Community Design

The Zoning Ordinance adopted in 1998 to implement the 1992 Comprehensive Plan initiated Development Plan Review by the Planning Board for all uses other than one- and two-family homes. It also introduced General Development Standards and Development Standards for Particular Uses. In the interim 11 years some refinements and additional provisions have been added.

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

Long-term Priority Continued from 2010 Plan

The Town of Westerly must make the Downtown, the traditional core of Westerly, the focus of its redevelopment and revitalization efforts.

The *Land Use 2025* plan encourages the identification of an urban services area in which higher density infill development and revitalization or retrofitting are encouraged. The Westerly 2010 Plan responded by identifying a Downtown Revitalization Area which principally encompasses the Downtown Commercial Districts and some surrounding HDR-6 and HDR-15 district land, including properties within and adjacent to the core of Westerly. The area is serviced by municipal water and sewer. Sidewalks in various states of condition exist in most of the Downtown Revitalization Area, while streetscapes are less prevalent and spotty. Its entire western boundary is the Pawcatuck River. Wilcox Park is the most prominent greenspace

feature in this area. “Implemented in [year], the Downtown Revitalization District principally ...”

The 2010 Plan committed to focus redevelopment, revitalization and growth initiatives in this historic urban center, while preserving the best attributes of the traditional core of Westerly that contains vital residential, municipal, commercial, institutional and school activities. The approximate area identified in the 2016-2036 Plan is not co-extensive with the entire area referenced in the state *Land Use 2025* plan because of the Town’s commitment to preservation of the municipality’s unique values and existing character of its different constituent neighborhoods and the importance of evaluating each neighborhoods specific needs before redevelopment and revitalization. In the 2016 update of the Comprehensive Plan the Town has returned to its commitment to this effort and in pursuit of its commitment to the revitalization of Downtown has [taken what action].

Additional Long-term Priority for 2016-2036

The Town of Westerly must preserve the unique character and existing values of its constituent neighborhoods and evaluate the special needs of each to inform its choices and efforts for redevelopment and revitalization.

In addition to Watch Hill, there are five other Westerly neighborhoods listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Excellence in design requires a study of each of these areas and the development and adoption of standards for redevelopment and revitalization for each as was achieved in the SC-WH district. The character of Westerly is already substantially defined by existing structures and uses, many of which are facing challenges which require redevelopment, renovations and revitalization.

Again recent experience should be a strong signal that Westerly officials appreciate both the values and challenges presented in neighborhood revitalization and will work cooperatively to achieve preservation of iconic places while using the means at their disposal to accommodate the financial challenges such undertakings present.

The Town Charter was amended to establish an Architectural Review Board. The scope of its reach and the standards to be applied are yet to be determined by the Town Council. As in other first time initiatives the limits of public support and acceptance will be a challenge; however, the new charter provision offers a new opportunity to contribute to excellence in community design. Provided ... resulting in ... And discuss any financial challenge presented

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

The successful revitalization of the historic Westerly downtown area and the enhanced development of the Downtown Revitalization Area which encompasses and surrounds it will require the same spirit of cooperation, creativity and flexibility. Transforming the appearance of the Route 1 commercial corridor from —everywhere US Route 1 to a distinctive, inviting, safe, commercial, professional and residential area will similarly require new efforts including incentives to property owners. The preservation of the unique character of each planning area in the community and recognition of its distinct values requires thoughtful evaluation and community engagement to inform the Town’s choices and efforts for redevelopment and revitalization.

4.2.4 Maintain and Develop First-class Supporting Infrastructure

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

The 2010 Plan’s priority of maintaining and developing high quality infrastructure and coordination of private utilities is still relevant to the 2016-2036 Plan. However, based on the

Town's experience with natural hazards, storm surges and future conditions anticipated because of climate change, this priority has taken on even more significance.

Long-term Priority Amended for 2016-2036 Plan

The Town of Westerly must maintain and develop first-class supporting infrastructure that will be resilient when the community is faced with climate hazards and other catastrophic events. .

4.2.4.1 Water

The availability of a high quality and abundant municipal water supply for industrial and domestic use and fire suppression is essential. This requires protection of our water supply sources. Continued concentration on the maintenance and enhancement of the water distribution systems is essential. The prioritized program of assessment and replacement of the mechanical and distribution elements of the system needs to remain at the forefront. The vulnerability of the municipal water supply and private wells to climate hazards must be part of any assessment. Point source and non-point sources pollutants must be identified and water quality issues reconciled.

4.2.4.2 Sewer

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

For Westerly, the first step toward achieving a first-class wastewater system is a firm commitment to eliminate the excessive stormwater and groundwater infiltration into the system. The certainty of future flooding and sea level rise makes it essential that the capacity of existing sewer treatment be evaluated to avert catastrophe. The construction of the additional components of the plant to its design capacity and identification of areas of system expansion need to be part of a periodically updated facilities plan. This will enable the Town to be ready to obtain any and all federal, state and/or private funds available for such purposes. It will also allow these needs to be part of the Town's prioritized long-term capital investment program.

4.2.4.3 Stormwater

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

4.2.4.4 Solid Waste Disposal

Capacity at the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RISCC) Facility in Johnston is limited and the State encourages cities and towns to reduce waste generation and recycle more to meet the 35 percent recycling goal and 50 percent diversion rate. Because municipalities are charged by the ton to dispose of municipal waste at the facility, reducing waste brought to the landfill saves the community money. Less waste in the landfill reduces the likelihood of environmental impacts such as groundwater contamination. Many of the everyday items that are thrown away from homes, schools, hospitals, and businesses can be recycled or reused, including product packaging, grass clippings, furniture, clothing, bottles, food scraps, newspapers, and appliances. The town needs to reduce waste generation and increase recycling in not only municipal operations, but also among residents and businesses. Currently, the number of households that use the transfer station is not tracked and commercial and residential trash is collected in the same fashion. According to RISCC, the actual total solid waste received from Westerly yields a recycling rate of about 30 percent and an overall diversion rate (all items diverted from the landfill) of 39.8 percent, below the state's goals and an improvement from rates cited in the preceding plan.

4.2.4.5 School Facilities

Meeting all the public works and private utility infrastructure needs outlined above are necessary for the future vision of Westerly. However, if the town neglects to achieve a first-class educational system by providing adequate, clean and comfortable school facilities offering superior educational opportunities for each student, the vibrant place to live, work, raise and educate a family cannot be achieved. Current demographic data and projections suggest that the town is at a unique time to reassess its student mix and needs, educational objectives and delivery systems. Several improvements to existing schools have been made over the last decade and one school, Tower Street Elementary School, has been converted to a community center as a result of declining enrollment. Renovations to Westerly High School (WHS) resulted in several improvements including a new science and technology wing, new art classrooms, installation of Smart Boards and new flooring, windows and ceilings. Currently, the Town is also

considering the closure of a second elementary school (State Street Elementary School) as district-wide enrollment is projected to decline further over at least the next decade.

4.2.4.6 Community Services

Numerous community services are provided in addition to Tower Street School Community Center. Improvements continue to be made to Westerly Library, allowing it to expand beyond the traditional function of book loaning by improving its space, technology, diversity of materials and cultural and social contributions to Westerly. In the coming years, the community is also anticipated to become a more active location within the regional healthcare industry as new medical groups and programs expand in town to meet the needs of Westerly's projected future demographic profile. Currently, social and financial indicators already identify a large population which requires or can potentially require social assistance both in the short-term and for extended periods of time. Along with physical health and mental hygiene, social service agencies and programs operate actively in Westerly to advocate for and provide basic living needs, educational resources and transportation to those experiencing financial and/or social hardships.

4.2.5 Implement the Vision

[LandUse 2025]

Implementing the Vision

- ❖ Discuss develop excellent land-use information and technology systems (Tax Assessor Data, Land Evidence Records and GIS)
- ❖ Train and support municipal planning officials including administration, staff and boards
- ❖ Update existing, zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations and other town ordinance to implement the comprehensive plan and encourage the pursuit of innovative and flexible land use planning tools.
- ❖ Commit Town resources and solicit financial assistance to accomplish plan objectives and achieve priorities of this plan.

4.3 Build-out Analysis

4.3.1 Capacity Analysis

A potential capacity analysis was performed based on the current land cover. See section 3.1.1.

A capacity analysis estimates the amount of development that could occur based on a set of assumptions. This analysis is limited to the amount of new development that can occur on developable vacant and agricultural land and include the amount of development that would occur as a result of infill and redevelopment to the extent that parcels are not developed to full capacity based on zoning and to the extent that natural resource constraints are not present.

The analysis was performed using a Geographical Information System (GIS) program. The current zoning layer was combined with the land cover layer so that the resulting layer had attributes of both existing land use and existing zoning districts. A constraints layer was created consisting of existing developed land, wetlands, floodplain and all land under permanent conservation. A 50 foot buffer for wetlands, a 200 foot buffer from the shoreline and the Pawcatuck River and any applicable 100-foot or 200-foot riverbank wetland and areas with severely constrained soils were considered undevelopable and removed from the calculation. The constraints layer was combined with the zoning/land use layer and the constraint areas were removed. The GIS program calculated the areas of each polygon within this combined layer. The areas remaining are considered potentially developable and suitable to new development. At this point, the areas could be summarized by land cover and zoning district. Based on the zoning district, calculations were performed on the resulting areas to establish the potential number of residential units, commercial space and industrial space that could be developed. The districts Open Space/Recreation and Commercial Recreation are considered unavailable for future development and have been excluded from this analysis.

The methodology used for this analysis has limitations. The method does not account for the possibility of new residential development in non-residential zoning districts such as apartments on the second floor of businesses (so called mixed-use). The method assumes wetlands mapped by the state and federal government are accurate, even though actual wetland boundaries on a lot can only be determined through on-site investigation. It is assumed new development will occur at the maximum density allowed by zoning, although lower density development might occur in response to market needs. Despite these limitations, the method is considered suitable for estimating potential new development magnitude and location.

Residential Districts

Residential units are based on the minimum lot area per unit permitted in each of the residential zoning districts. The following calculations were used for residential districts:

RR-60	Area÷60,000 = Residential Units
LDR-43	Area÷43,560 = Residential Units
LDR-40	Area÷40,000 = Residential Units
MDR-30	Area÷30,000 = Residential Units
MDR-20	Area÷20,000 = Residential Units
HDR-15	Area÷15,000 = Residential Units
HDR-10	Area÷10,000 = Residential Units
HDR-6	Area÷6,000 = Residential Units
Any District in CRMC SAMP	Area÷87,120 = Residential Units

Commercial Districts

The commercial districts did not specify a floor area ratio or maximum building coverage. Maximum impervious surface was used to control the size of buildings. This analysis assumes that half of the impervious surface specified in the Westerly Zoning Ordinance is used for building and half for parking. The summarized areas were multiplied by half of the impervious surface percentage to get the amount of commercial space. The following calculations were used on commercial districts:

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

Industrial Districts

Maximum impervious surface was used to control the size of buildings in the industrial districts. This analysis assumes that half of the impervious surface specified in the Westerly Zoning Ordinance is used for building and half for parking. The summarized areas were multiplied by half of the impervious surface percentage to get the amount of industrial space. The industrial space assumes only one floor of development. The following calculations were used on industrial districts:

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

The results of the capacity analysis are summarized in Table 4-1 below. The numbers presented are rounded off to the nearest whole number.

Table 4-1 Capacity Analysis Results

Zone	Undeveloped "Suitable" Area (acres)	Residential Units	Commercial Space (square feet)	Industrial Space (square feet)
RR-60	912.91	487	-	-
LDR-43	92.69	46	-	-
LDR-40	344.84	275	-	-
MDR-30	733.39	395	-	-
MDR-20	248.26	171	-	-
HDR-15	113.52	196	-	-
HDR-10	.01	0	-	-
HDR-6	61.90	298	-	-
Residential	2,507.52	1,868	-	-
P-15	10.41	-	108,837	-
NB	2.31	-	24,164	-
DC-1	-	-	-	-
DC-2	-	-	-	-
GC	1.80	-	23,551	-
HC	21.34	-	278,854	-
MC	.03	-	0	-
SC-G	3.82	-	36,576	-
SC-WH	-	-	-	-
Commercial	39.72	-	471,981	-
ORAT	0.64	-	-	7,267
LI	45.16	-	-	393,399

GI	223.94	-	-	2,731,360
Industrial	312.43	-	-	3,132,026

Source: Mason & Associates

4.3.2 Build-out Analysis Implications

4.3.2.1 Residential

The build-out analysis estimates that under the existing Zoning Ordinance approximately 1,868 additional residential dwelling units can be built in Westerly. With an average of 85 new dwelling units being constructed per year since 2000, it is estimated that the year by which residential build-out is likely to occur is 2038.

The 2010 Plan recommended that the residential zoning districts within the town remain essentially unchanged. This recommendation considered the rate of growth which has occurred in the ten-year period following the adoption of the current Zoning Ordinance map and text. During the ten-year period of January 1, 1999 to December 31, 2008, 1,266 residential dwelling units were constructed. The ordinance marked a significant departure from prior ordinances which had allowed, as of right, duplex buildings including units with unlimited bedrooms, on lots which did not require twice the land area as required for a single-family home. There was significant community concern expressed with respect to these provisions. The ordinance responded with provisions which limit the districts in which duplex buildings are allowed; require a special use permit in the residential district in which they are allowed; and require twice the land area as necessary for a single-family home. The result is that in the ten-year time period only 31 duplex buildings with 62 units were built. During the ten-year period from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2015, 851 residential dwelling units were constructed including 29 duplex buildings accounting for 58 units.

Simultaneously, the 1998 zoning ordinance adopted new regulations with respect to multi-family dwellings. The regulations allow for the number of bedrooms in a multi-family complex to reflect the predicted number if the site were built out as single-family homes, but limits each individual unit to two bedrooms. Studies suggested the number of school age children would be relatively small in such complexes. The number of two-bedroom units constructed in the ten-year period January 2006 to December 2015 was 208, or more than 24.2 percent of new housing stock.

Despite the increase of 858 dwelling units, the total public school population in the community has dropped from 3,436 in October 2006 to 2,908 in October 2015 – a 15.4 percent decline. Current and projected enrollment suggests this trend will continue, falling 7.3 percent between fiscal years 2012 and 2022. Beyond 2022 however, a comparison of fourth grade (the Class of

2024) and first grade (the Class of 2027) enrollments in the 2015-2016 academic year (217 students and 216 students, respectively) suggests enrollment may have stabilized.

It is therefore deemed not necessary to further change the zoning districts or the regulations applicable within each district to control future growth. Comparison of the estimated additional residential unit capacity (1,868 units) and the historic building growth over the last ten years (858) demonstrates a relatively small capability for growth under the traditional subdivision development approach. This Plan's recommendation with respect to generally not increasing density is a deliberate attempt to responsibly limit such further development. However, the Plan encourages and provides accommodation for future growth including density intensification within the Downtown Revitalization Area, where public utilities and infrastructure are in place. Mixed-use and in-fill development at increased densities together with revitalization and retrofitting of existing properties are all strategies identified for use with the Neighborhood Plan application.

With school enrollment stable, as new information becomes available and disaggregated Town officials must address the future implications for services required by an overall aging population and concerned with the interaction of social and economic factors. I

4.3.2.2 Commercial

The build-out analysis estimates a total of 471,981 square feet of commercial space over 39.72 acres can be added in the town. This includes commercial space with current land zoned neighborhood business (24,164 sq ft), highway commercial (278,854 sq ft) and professional (108,837 sq ft) and excludes commercial recreation and South Shore General. This Plan recognizes that Westerly has historically been the regional center for commercial and professional services. Sufficient area exists to continue in that role, though its notable decrease from the analysis used in the 2010 Plan should be considered.

This Plan specifically provides that this district should not be enlarged. The commercial areas are underutilized and in need of redevelopment. It is intended that a limit on the amount of commercial development and revised development standards for new commercial development on vacant property will control commercial sprawl. By such limitation it is also intended that renewed interest in renovation, restoration and redevelopment of existing highway commercial properties will be achieved.

4.3.2.3 Industrial

Available industrial land is extremely limited. However, areas which have the infrastructure available for industrial development but which are also isolated enough to be compatible with existing residential development are not apparent. The lack of industrial land also means that Westerly must participate in regional economic development initiatives. This recognizes new

job opportunities in the region not only provide job opportunities for Westerly residents but also for the larger regional population. Such opportunities contribute to the vibrant commercial and professional service sectors in Westerly. Town officials necessarily must therefore encourage the expanded use of underutilized industrial facilities provided that doing so is consistent with environmental considerations.

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

The build-out analysis estimates a total of 3,132,026 square feet industrial space over 312.43 acres can be added in the town. This includes commercial space with current land zoned Light Industrial (393,399 sq ft) , General Industry (2,731,360 sq ft) and ORAT (7,267 q ft).

4.4 Future Land Use Plan

[Revisit this entire section when policy choices have been firmed up.]

4.4.1 Introduction

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

In this section some of the major characteristics of the Comprehensive Plan are reviewed with an emphasis on how the goals, objectives, policies and actions will affect future land use, transportation, infrastructure, and services and with a focus on the first ten (10) years of this Comprehensive Plan's implementation. The Future Land Use Plan should be viewed as a whole because, taken together, its various elements reinforce each other and present a comprehensive and coherent view of Westerly's land use policy. After the priorities presented in the implementation plan are achieved, another group of actions will be developed for the next ten (10) years. In this way, Westerly will move steadily and incrementally towards achieving the long-term goals and objectives outlined in this Comprehensive Plan.

The **Future Land Use map (FLU-1)** and its details are discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.4.2 Zoning Inconsistencies

Several inconsistencies between the current zoning ordinance and zoning map and the Future Land Use Plan require changes to current zoning districts, land use regulations and land use.

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

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

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

- Current zoning allows growth in residential land use, as covered under the build-out analysis in the previous section of the Plan.
- This growth could result in the loss of some land that is used for agriculture or is currently open space (for example, forest land) because the underlying zoning allows for residential or commercial use.
- Modern development methods such as conservation development and cluster development should be used to protect the most valuable aspects of development sites. Additional increases in residential density may be allowed in certain specified areas (for example, the urban core) and as incentives for certain kinds of development (for example, affordable housing) except in these areas , intensification of residential zoning will not be allowed.
- Regulations required for the Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) near the Salt Ponds will be included in the Westerly Zoning Ordinance.
- Redevelopment of existing commercial and residential areas is encouraged.
- Extension of the highway commercial zone will be prohibited.
- Zoning provisions in commercial and residential areas may be needed to encourage additional green space and improve aesthetics.

4.4.3 Residential Density and Neighborhood Planning

As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, the build-out analysis for Westerly under current zoning indicates a capacity of an additional 1,868 housing units and the town will approach residential build-out within the twenty-year time period addressed in this Plan. In the 2016 Plan, the Town also recognizes the need to address residential density based on the unique qualities and needs of discreet planning areas. As a result, residential density shall be particularly addressed through the Town's neighborhood planning initiatives.

The 2010 Comprehensive Plan called for adoption of conservation development regulations for major subdivisions as an alternative subdivision methodology. The recommendation was for all applications for major subdivisions be required to include cluster development, conservation development, and conventional subdivision as alternatives for consideration by the Planning Board. Conservation development in areas of low to moderate residential density is still considered an appropriate tool to provide an increase in residential density while continuing to preserve open space and natural resources. Inclusionary zoning must be part of this conversation.

A new zoning ordinance is called for increase in present zoning density on land that is within the Downtown Revitalization Area. This area, has both public water and sewer services. Other areas of Westerly outside the Downtown Revitalization Area where increased residential density could occur are areas that are currently zoned There can be no increase in zoning density in the RI Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) Salt Ponds Special Management Area.

4.4.3.1 Affordable Housing

The difficult economic conditions of the State and region impacted development in Westerly through 2012. In the 2010 Plan projecting future housing development beyond five years was difficult because how soon Rhode Island would recover economically relied on many factors. Home sales remained low and unemployment rates high; and the State continued to struggle with its budget. All these factors influenced overall public and private investment in the State and its communities, including the housing market. However, it was anticipated that the economy would eventual improve and development opportunities and interest in the region would increase.

In the 2016-2036 Plan the future of residential development buildout by 2038.

New homeowners of single-family houses will continue to take up residence in Westerly taking advantage of a few new housing starts along with a loosening resale market.

Multi-family development ...

4.4.3.2 Rental Housing

4.4.3.3 LMI Housing Production Plan

The Town projected that with the use of LMI production strategies set out in the 2010 Plan, 528 units would be created by 2040– more than enough to meet the state threshold of 10% LMI. These numbers relied heavily on the use of inclusionary zoning and the comprehensive permit expedited process. The projections fell well short. How much and mention we don't really know how well these are working because of tolling.

4.4.4 Commercial and Industrial

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

Reuse and revitalization of existing commercial and residential space as an alternative to new development is one of the themes of the Plan. For example, it calls for modification of zoning land use regulations to support adaptive reuse of vacant and underutilized industrial and commercial buildings and associated areas in town. Examples of these areas are the mill villages of Bradford, White Rock, and Potter Hill.

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

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

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

4.4.5 Natural Resource Protection, Open Space and Recreation

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

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

4.4.6 Agriculture

Agriculture as a category of land use will focus on farm production and agro tourism. Farm production is dependent on site specific conditions. The most important factor for consideration is the suitability of the land for agricultural uses. In the inventory and assessment

of natural resources, this Plan has identified important agricultural soils (see the Natural Resources chapter, which includes a description on the **Farm Soils map [FS-1]**). The locations of these soils were not limited to undeveloped areas as it possible new agricultural operations such as farms may be established in the future on land which may currently be used residentially. The map also shows lands actively used for agricultural activity through inclusion of RIGIS' land cover/land use dataset based on spring 2011 orthophotography. The most suitable types of land use are in areas accommodating agricultural activities, including proximity to housing and water resources must also be considered. Farming operations can cause disturbances for abutting residences, even without farm retail, and agrotourism commercializes agricultural uses even more. An assessment of the proximity and density of housing in relation to agricultural activities should be made in any assessment before "Agriculture" is introduced as its own land use category. **With this assessment** the Town could incorporate agriculture into its pattern of future land uses more effectively.

4.4.6 Special Districts

Introduction

resiliency

Salt Ponds Overlay District: The 201 Plan called for adoption of the Salt Ponds Overlay District (SPOD) specified by the CRMC Special Area Management Plan (SAMP). Like the SAMP, the SPOD adopted in [year] is designed to protect the quality of water in the ponds which provide important habitat for wildlife and are key natural features of Westerly's shoreline. The SPOD reflects the SAMP maximum density, setbacks, buffers, requirements for nitrogen-reducing technologies for onsite wastewater treatment, and provides for CRMC participation at an early stage of municipal land-use regulatory review. The area included within the SPOD is illustrated on MAP XX.

River Corridor Overlay District: The 2010 Plan called for development of an overlay district and zoning ordinance provisions that would provide protection to the Town's supply of drinking water, encourage appropriate redevelopment and economic growth and provide important recreational opportunities in town. Westerly needs a special river corridor overlay zoning district because the Pawcatuck River is vital to the continuing prosperity of the town. First, the river is connected to and provides water to the underground aquifer that is the primary source of water supply for Westerly. Second, land fronting on and near the Pawcatuck River in the downtown area will have an important role in continuing renovation and revitalization in Westerly. Third, the river provides important recreational opportunities for residents and tourists and affects the quality of habitat for fish and shellfish and other wildlife in the river and in Little Narragansett Bay.

The proposed river corridor overlay district (illustrated on MAP XX) is composed of three parts:

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

Development Standards for Historic Districts: The 2010 Plan called for the town to continue to enact development standards for historic districts that are appropriate for each district, similar to what was adopted for the Shoreline Commercial Watch Hill zoning district. Current National Register designated historic districts (see MAP XX) are Bradford Village, Main Street, the North End, Westerly Downtown, Wilcox Park, and Watch Hill.

4.4.7 Transportation, Infrastructure and Services

Add energy to this section .

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

An important set of recommendations in the Plan relate to improving the area around the train station and increasing its use. The Plan specifies increasing parking, safe access, and redevelopment planning at and near the railroad station. The Plan also calls for more daily

stops by Amtrak at the Westerly station and support for commuter rail, both of which could improve rail connections for visitors and residents. A second major transportation recommendation is to initiate a parking shuttle system for under-utilized or new parking space at major retailers. A shuttle bus loop would include transportation centers (train station and airport), the river and shoreline business districts, and beaches. This shuttle could have a beneficial effect on businesses in Westerly and relieve traffic congestion, particularly during the summer season.

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

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

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

4.5 Facing Challenges: Investing in our Future

To achieve our vision for 2036, the Town must anticipate challenging issues related to sustainability and redevelopment and ensure the specific actions called for in the Comprehensive Plan are implemented to meet those challenges. While support from the State of Rhode Island is necessary, a disciplined local management approach and investment policy that recognizes the community's critical priorities will be essential to the success of this Plan.

The Town's annual budgeting and capital improvement plans must direct appropriate financial resources, consistent with the Plan and the Town's overall needs, to the highest priority initiatives. The Town cannot fail to implement the Plan due to financial constraints but neither can the Town jeopardize its strong financial condition.

4.5.1 Town Financial Position

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

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

4.5.2 Cost of Plan Implementation

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

Funds are necessary to support analyses, research, technical studies and possibly expert consulting advice in areas needed to ensure successful implementation of the Plan. To that end, it is recommended that a specific line item for —Comprehensive Plan Implementation be incorporated in the municipal operating budget and funded in the amount of approximately \$25,000 annually to be deployed based on priorities identified during the annual budget process. This amount should be adjusted year-to-year depending on the priority of projects planned for each budget year.

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

To assist in the Plan implementation effort, it is recommended that the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee be established as a subcommittee of the Planning Board. The Advisory Committee should continue to meet at least twice a year to assess status of recommended actions, advise on priorities, and identify emerging issues and trends that may impact the Plan. The Planning Board should also consult the Advisor Committee prior to making recommendations for the Capital Improvement Program.

Chapter 5.0 Implementation Plan

5.1 Introduction

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

- **Short-term** Some major actions will be accomplished in a relatively short period of time since they will signal early success and are critical to the overall implementation of the Plan;
- **Mid-term** Many other actions will be implemented over the ten (10) year term of this Comprehensive Plan because they may require further study, coordination with others, or involve the commitment of financial resources beyond the time frame of the current capital improvement program and associated fiscal budgets;
- **Long-term** A few actions are long-term in nature and will require continuous attention over the twenty (20) year horizon of this Plan but beyond the ten (10) year term of the Plan.

At the heart of this implementation is a well-defined structure of goals, objectives, policies and actions developed based on broad public input and a thorough inventory of the town's assets and characteristics described in Appendix I. The various goals give clear direction as to the type and extent of conservation and development the community desires. The objectives further define the goals and provide the foundation for development of policies and actions required to realize the goals. Goals and objectives are long-term and may take a decade or more to achieve.

Specific actions have been developed to implement each policy and achieve associated goals. The actions are focused and measurable and are intended to be accomplished within five years, begun in five years yet accomplished in ten years, or monitored throughout the ten years of this plan and accomplished sometime within the plan's twenty-year horizon. Responsibilities and timeframes have been assigned to the actions to make it possible to track progress and determine degree of completion, ensuring accountability for future success of the Plan. It is anticipated that new actions will be developed during the required five-year plan update to replace those that have been successfully implemented.

5.2 Goals, Policies and Actions

More than 700 Westerly residents provided their thoughts about Westerly and its future through the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee (CPCAC), public meetings, focus groups, letters, email messages, and a statistically-based mail survey during the 2010 planning process. Citizen input during the 2016 update continued through the involvement of the

CPCAC, public workshops and website comments. Several points were very clear from this input. These points form the basis of the goals, policies and actions:

- People love Westerly. They describe it as a friendly and safe community and a good place to raise a family.
- People are concerned that Westerly's character is in danger of changing too quickly because of development pressure. They want some development but without urban and commercial sprawl.
- Westerly's natural resources are extremely important to its citizens. They say development should be planned to preserve the waterfront, beaches, and water quality, and to protect open space.
- Traffic and transportation issues need to be addressed. Citizens are concerned with the volume of traffic and traffic safety, the need for additional parking in town, and pedestrian safety. Residents want access to commuter rail service and more bike lanes and trails.
- Westerly must continue to maintain its infrastructure including water and sewer systems, roads, sidewalks, and schools.
- The town should promote specific strategies for economic development, quality education and affordable housing for all ages and income levels.
- [Resiliency]

Discussing the goals of the State of Rhode Island as they relate to the Town of Westerly at once prompts a multi-faceted discussion of interrelated planning issues and solutions. For this reason, several key issues have been identified as priorities in Westerly over the next 20 years. The following is a report of the Town's goals, a series of public policy recommendations with implementation strategies for addressing them. The purpose of this section is to codify the Town of Westerly's statement of public policy, to direct the Town and all actors seeking town permits or approvals towards conservation and development in a manner consistent with this Comprehensive Plan.

Housing Opportunity

GOAL Provide a broad range of safe and affordable housing options that satisfy the needs of all income and age levels and allow citizens to live, work and retire in the community.

Policy 1. Foster housing rehabilitation programs in combination with neighborhood revitalization including owner-occupied and renter-occupied property.

Policy 2. Continue support for initiatives providing housing for homeless and persons with special needs.

Policy 3. Encourage a broad range of housing options adequate to meet the needs of underserved middle and lower-income households and individuals.

Policy 4. Support the development of low and moderate income-qualified housing that meets local housing needs in a manner that is compatible with Westerly's neighborhoods and within the capacity of the natural environment.

ACTIONS

Action 1 Develop and implement a program to focus and coordinate affordable housing initiatives and funding as an integral part of Westerly's efforts in neighborhood revitalization and rehabilitation with priority given to existing housing over new construction.

Action 2 Target neighborhoods for revitalization efforts through the development of neighborhood plans and link implementation with other affordable housing strategies.

Action 3 As part of any neighborhood revitalization plan, identify concentrations of substandard housing within the community, assess programs for best means to eliminate substandard and unsafe housing and create a program for rehabilitation or redevelopment in those areas.

Action 4 Establish a comprehensive approach for inspections and correction of minimum housing and building code violations, including policies and procedures for working with absentee landlords of rental housing to maintain and upgrade properties.

Action 5 Create housing and neighborhood design standards for new development, infill and redevelopment, publicize these standards, and revise zoning and other regulation with the intent of preserving and improving the character of existing neighborhoods and integrating new development with existing neighborhood or district features.

Action 6 Coordinate with regional, state and federal agencies to leverage local resources by bringing outside expertise and funds to community initiatives that support affordable housing.

Action 7 Investigate management agreements for housing supported by public funds and/or operated by non-profits, as a means to maintaining existing housing options and monitor same as part of economic development program.

Action 8 Continue to promote the Westerly Revolving Fund and create additional support through public and private partnerships.

Action 9 Coordinate with neighborhood associations on the type of activities best suited to repair and maintenance of existing housing stock.

Action 10 Determine viability of a tax credit for property owners undertaking substantial rehabilitation of existing structures and accessory apartments.

Action 11 Provide support and administrative assistance to those organizations that address the short-term needs of the homeless and provide temporary and/or transitional housing options for persons with special needs.

Action 12 Review zoning and subdivision regulations for multi-family housing in redevelopment areas, with the intent of providing additional housing units in areas within walking distance of employment opportunities and transportation options.

Action 13 While continuing to maintain existing qualified low and moderate income housing units, continue to work with non-profit and public agencies in creating other affordable housing opportunities in Westerly and regionally.

Action 14 Review housing and demographic data every two years to determine whether local housing needs are being met.

Action 15 Support efforts of housing groups to secure and use rehabilitation and redevelopment funds through state and federal tax programs to create low and moderate income-qualified housing.

Action 16 Address the State need for low and moderate income housing, as defined in RIGL 45-53, through a reasonable production plan.

Action 17 Evaluate and revise inclusionary and comprehensive permit ordinances to ensure neighborhoods are not impacted by density bonuses and environmental integrity is not compromised.

Action 18 Prepare and provide the Office of Housing and Community Development a report regarding the characteristics of the Town's rental housing base, and an assessment of local housing need based on reliable demographic data.

Economic Vitality

GOAL: *A vital and sustainable economy focused on job creation and business recruitment.*

Policy 1. Enhance the local economy through the activities of the Economic Development Commission.

Policy 2. Foster adaptive re-use of existing underutilized structures and areas.

ACTIONS

Action 1 Develop and adopt a comprehensive economic development program with the intent to recruit businesses and create local jobs. Begin with a fundamental understanding of the potential of redevelopment of areas such as the Route 1 corridor, Airport Industrial Park and Bradford Dye Associates former site, and conclude with well-reasoned and community supported actions for intelligent and sustainable economic growth.

Action 2 Provide the Economic Development Commission with the technology and technical assistance needed to effectively address local economic needs, including: the oversight of a comprehensive economic development program; continued interaction with higher education institutions and large employers; consulting with the Westerly Public Schools on the development of "satellite schools" and a diverse school curriculum to promote job training; and the promotion of tax benefits and other financial incentives that encourage economic development.

Action 3 Create a staff position for an economic development specialist to administer the economic development program, facilitate business development activities and assist the town's Economic Development Commission.

Action 4 Develop and adopt a planning program for revitalization based on the neighborhood plan model. Encourage neighborhood planning efforts that coordinate neighborhood revitalization efforts with Town of Stonington along shared riverfront districts, and between similar situated neighborhoods within Westerly. Through neighborhood plans

investigate new zoning and regulatory tools to support adaptive reuse of vacant and underused industrial and commercial buildings and associated areas (for example, mill villages).

New Economies

GOAL: *Promote new **economic** strategies that are focused on helping locally-owned businesses prosper and encourage entrepreneurial activities.*

Policy 1. Support traditional agriculture and aquaculture principles and practices, and explore alternatives to traditional farming practices to produce and use plants for food, fuel, and fiber.

Policy 2. Anticipate that a broader range of permitted uses may be necessary as customary home occupations and telecommuting opportunities become a larger portion of the economy.

Policy 3. Encourage entrepreneurial activities and knowledge-based jobs in the community.

ACTIONS

Action 1 Review the regulations of zoning districts in which agriculture is a permitted use for restrictions on related agricultural uses, such as of farm stands, farm enterprise uses, processing and distribution of agricultural products, marketing, signage, and parking standards, and determine whether any changes can be made to better support agricultural operations.

Action 2 Review local event permitting procedures and requirements, such as fees, parking regulations and signage restrictions, to determine if alterations can be made to better accommodate entrepreneurial activities.

Action 3 Review the regulations of residential zoning districts in which home occupations are a permitted use for restrictions on home offices, studios, and small unit manufacturing, such as signage requirements, parking standards, loading and unloading requirements, and determine whether any changes can be made to better support home businesses.

Action 4 Review zoning requirements to determine the best manner to support home businesses and live-work spaces in any revitalization zone including in the Downtown.

Economic Resilience

GOAL: *Establish and sustain a condition of economic resilience to natural and man-made events.*

Policy Anticipate the impact of catastrophic events on the local economy.

ACTIONS

Action 1 Develop a strategic plan to reduce threats to information technology and public infrastructure that determines appropriate development and construction methods for infrastructure adaptation and resiliency and includes a cost analysis for the upgrade and maintenance on these systems.

Action 2 Undertake a study that will forecast loss of property revenues due to sea-level rise and storm events and mitigate damages, including 1) Quantifying local revenue and cumulative value generated through inventory of property tax value, hotel tax, sales tax and meals tax and other significant local government revenue streams; 2) Creating an overlay map of areas vulnerable to economic impacts, including their aggregate revenue values, with direct correlation to corresponding climate change hazard mitigation areas; 3) Research incentives for businesses and residents to undertake adaptation and resiliency measures to climate change hazards such as flooding and sea level rise.

Action 3 Work with RIEMA, Statewide Planning, Commerce RI and other State agencies on shared objectives, and align with the state strategic plan on reduction of impact from climate change hazards to reduce fiduciary risk.

Action 4 Continue to evaluate the Town's existing emergency permitting system to ensure Town readiness and effective administration.

Sustainable Natural Resources

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

Policy 1. Protect and conserve the natural beauty of Westerly's setting and a quality natural environment.

Policy 2. Promote land use decisions that encourage the protection and sustainable use of the town's natural resources.

Policy 3. Foster awareness of and protect and develop appropriate access to the community's natural resources for enjoyment and recreation.

Policy 4. Support a comprehensive groundwater protection strategy including conservation of Westerly's existing groundwater sources and investigation of future potential sources.

ACTIONS

Action 1 Create new zoning and regulations with the intent of implementing CRMC's Salt Pond Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) and increasing the natural resiliency of areas vulnerable to storm surge and sea-level rise.

Action 2 Consider conservation development subdivision regulations applicable to major subdivisions as an alternative subdivision methodology, with the intent of protecting natural features and mitigate impacts from stormwater.

Action 3 Coordinated efforts to control non-point source pollution, including enforcement of stormwater control and sediment-control ordinances; the extension of stormwater and sediment-control ordinances to include single and two-family houses as part of the building permit process; monitor the effects of these steps; and modify pollution-prevention actions as necessary.

Action 5 Provide all local land-use decision makers at least one in-service program each year addressing new developments related to contemporary preservation and conservation issues for their consideration and possible implementation.

Action 6 Continue with the systematic prioritized plan and secure funding for open space acquisition for water resource protection, habitat protection, farm and forest preservation, and water-dependent recreation.

Action 7 Review the zoning ordinance with the intent of identifying and correcting incompatible uses in aquifer protection zones.

Action 8 Prepare materials to educate visitors and seasonal residents about the unique environment of Westerly and environmentally sustainable practices.

Action 9 Explore opportunities for the development of natural history trails in Westerly's conservation areas.

Safe Circulation

GOAL: *Promote a variety of circulation strategies that ensure safe and efficient access within Westerly and enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors.*

Policy 1. Explore strategies that support access to shore, river, and local businesses.

Policy 2. Provide safe alternatives that reduce dependency on motor vehicles and promote a healthy lifestyle.

Policy 3. Ensure that traffic safety and safe, efficient access are necessary considerations in approval of any development plan.

Policy 4. Prepare for occurrence of extreme weather events and develop mitigation policies and procedures which best reduce fiduciary risk.

Policy 5. Ensure that roads bridges and culverts are resilient and adequate to meet local transportation needs

Policy 6. Promote bicycle transportation to reduce traffic congestion, reduce air pollution, and improve public health.

ACTIONS

Action 1 Revise development standards in the zoning ordinance to require shared access to roads for new and redeveloped projects.

Action 2 Enact an ordinance that regulates the use of the unimproved portion of town streets except for right of access and other permitted uses to reduce unsightly appearance and dangerous traffic situations.

Action 3 Revise the intersection of Airport Road and Winnapaug Road to improve safety and traffic flow.

Action 4 Continue to fund a program of roadway drainage and sidewalk replacement and maintenance.

Action 5 Provide good pedestrian connections through densely-built neighborhoods and nonresidential districts through public projects and revised development standards. Work towards a town-wide network of connected sidewalks and trails.

Action 6 Advance quality of life and public safety through improved pedestrian right-of-ways, landscaping, lighting and signage.

Action 7 Continue sidewalk replacement and infill program in the Town budget.

Action 8 Evaluate projected sea level rise and prepare for occurrence of extreme weather events and develop mitigation policies and procedures which best reduce fiduciary risk.

Action 9 Evaluate evacuation routes and stormwater outfalls.

- Action 10 Develop an emergency water taxi service.
- Action 11 Prioritize replacement of outdated infrastructure and design replacements with capacity to prevent road flooding and decrease washout potential.
- Action 12 Remove hazardous trees and limbs overhanging public rights-of-way.

Transportation Assets

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

- Policy 1.** Facilitate the ease of rail travel.
- Policy 2.** Promote and enhance use of waterways for recreation and transportation.
- Policy 3.** Study and implement strategies by which the Westerly airport increases the town's economic development opportunities.
- Policy 4.** Enhance the resiliency of Westerly's transportation system by developing programs and projects that improve maintenance, protection and redundancy.

ACTIONS

- Action 1 Work with state and federal officials to increase parking, safe access, and redevelopment planning at and near the railroad station.
- Action 2 Work with Amtrak and elected officials to increase the number of daily stops in Westerly during the summer months. Publicize the availability of current Amtrak service.
- Action 3 Initiate a parking shuttle system for under-utilized or new parking space at major retailers for a shuttle bus loop that will include transportation centers (train station and airport), river and shoreline business districts, and beaches.
- Action 4 Develop and implement a strategy that better utilizes the existing capacity of Westerly State Airport and adjacent Airport Industrial Park to enhance commercial business activity and increase job opportunities.
- Action 5 Work with RI, MA and CT state agencies and federal officials to support commuter rail service for Westerly.

Action 6 Adopt an Airport Protection Overlay District to control potential airport hazards in the vicinity of the airport.

Action 7 Work with state officials to encourage extension of commuter rail service to the Westerly railroad station.

Action 8 Work with private transportation providers (e.g. Uber) to develop transportation links between the downtown, railroad station, the beach and the airport.

Action 9 Encourage water transportation as an alternative means for access to Westerly's business and tourist attractions.

Action 10 Implement the Downtown and River Center parking/park/kayak launch plans.

Action 11 Develop land banking strategy for property around Westerly Airport for runway expansion (to support action 3.4) and budget money in a restricted account.

Action 12 Encourage visits to Westerly by air and rail and build incentives for biking and walking – alternatives to the automobile.

Action 13 Repair existing bridges that are in disrepair and elevate above flood stage and create permanent secondary access connection to Route 78.

Community Wide Services

GOAL: *Ensure **community services** critical to Westerly's future growth, health, safety and prosperity are generously supported and sustained.*

Objective Achieve 35 percent recycling and 50 percent diversion rates by reducing solid waste generation and increasing recycling opportunities for municipal operations, residents, and businesses.

Policy 1. Recognize that Westerly's school system, hospital, the library, and its volunteer ambulance and fire departments are critical to Westerly's future.

Policy 2. Ensure future school facility decisions are based on intensive student population forecasts and consideration of the capacity and condition of all current facilities, and operating costs.

Policy 3. Continue to support the activities of non-profit organizations which contribute to Westerly's quality of life.

Policy 4. Support a quality public school system where enhanced performance by students is sought and monitored.

Policy 5. Upgrade the town's technological capabilities across all school and municipal departments for greater employee productivity and public accessibility.

Policy 6. Ensure that land-use decision makers who address new developments are adequately trained and up-to-date.

ACTIONS

Action 1 Partner with training providers to deliver training and technical advancement to town officials and staff.

Action 2 Plan at least one mandatory in-service learning program each year for land-use decision makers who address new developments related to contemporary preservation and conservation issues for their consideration and possible implementation

Action 3 Develop and fund a risk mitigation program.

Action 4 Develop town fiber loop to increase electronic niche for businesses, government, schools, and the library (would be first one in South County)

Action 5 Permit cyber cafés in DC, DCII and HC zoning districts.

Action 6 Coordinate grant writing between non-profit institutions and the municipality to leverage and enhance total return and mutual benefit.

Action 7 Complete a comprehensive review of all town annual subsidies to insure that the funds are directed to institutions that address the highest-priority needs.

Action 8 Coordinate and consolidate services between the town and critical institutions, especially those supported by tax dollars to share expertise and achieve economies of scale.

Action 9 Require that the Westerly Town Manager meet at least annually with the Westerly Hospital Board of Trustees to determine what municipal efforts are necessary to support the hospital.

Action 10 Establish and fund an annual appropriation to the Westerly Hospital to assist in reimbursement for uncompensated services for Westerly citizens who were unable to pay, to be reviewed and approved annually during the budget process by the Westerly Town Council.

Action 11 The town's elected and appointed officials should assist the Westerly Hospital and the local medical community in advocating for their needs; for example, achieving parity and equality in private insurance and Medicare/Medicaid rates in comparison with facilities in Rhode Island and southeastern Connecticut and increasing transparency in the contract negotiations processes.

Action 12 Hold an annual public meeting, attended by the Town Council and School Committee to review progress in improving student performance. Review actions underway in the highest-performing school systems in Rhode Island and Connecticut to determine best practices that appear to be working elsewhere.

Action 18 Ensure that adequate recycling opportunities are available for both day trippers and overnighters.

Infrastructure

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

Policy 1. Promote approaches to growth management to better conserve infrastructure, land and natural resources.

Policy 2. Provide wastewater treatment to prevent unsanitary conditions and carefully prioritize expansion of the service area of the existing plant.

Policy 3. Consider the investment in all forms of infrastructure as a means to foster economic development.

Policy 4. Match demands associated with new development and redevelopment with available or planned capacity for which financing is certain.

Policy 5. Maintain, update, or replace older (50 years plus) stormwater drainage treatment and conveyance systems.

Policy 6. Enhance the resiliency of Westerly's infrastructure by developing programs and projects that improve maintenance, protection and redundancy.

ACTIONS

Action 1 Ensure the town's program to reduce groundwater infiltration into sewer lines is supported on an annual basis.

Action 2 Recognize that the existing wastewater treatment plant has a finite capacity as detailed in the December 27, 2007 report by the Beta Group.

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

Action 3 Review and revise local land use regulations where necessary for the long term protection of water quality including Aquifer Protection Permit, zoning uses within recharge areas, Source Water Protection Map, and enforcement within the aquifer zone.

Action 4 Develop and implement a plan to better protect White Rock #1 well site from the possibility of physical damage or contamination by leaks or accidental spills from motor vehicles.

Action 5 Review the adequacy of security measures (including cameras, lighting, and information technology security) for protection of well heads, pump stations, and water tanks and take appropriate actions.

Action 6 Map the entire stormwater system in concert with the implementation of new GIS capability. Within the next phase of Westerly GIS development, integrate the water, sewer, and stormwater systems into existing GIS coverage.

Action 7 Develop a plan to minimize the effect of drought on public health and safety, economic activity, and environmental resources.

Action 8 Study and develop strategies to address potential sea-level rise, storm surge, and other climate-change impacts on Westerly's infrastructure.

Action 9 Adopt a recycling ordinance to encourage residents and businesses to recycle more to meet state recycling and diversion goals for municipalities.

Action 10 Continue annual mailings from Water Department informing residents about actions they can take to improve water quality.

Action 11 Undertake study to evaluate current stormwater system conditions, establish replacement program and fund line item in the town budget for stormwater system upgrades with the intent to increase capacity.

Action 12 Reduce use of de-icing chemicals by eliminating un-necessary existing pavement and by revising zoning to encourage reduction in new impervious surfaces.

Energy Alternatives

GOAL: *Develop permanently sustainable energy resources that are environmentally benign and economically feasible.*

Objective: The town will achieve at least 15% of its total municipal energy consumption in the form of renewable energy by 2025.

Policy 1. The Town of Westerly will encourage development of renewable energy and promote policies to allow the town and residents' access to and the utilization of renewable energy.

Policy 2. Decrease Westerly's dependence on petroleum-related energy sources through a municipal strategy of conservation and renewable energy generation.

ACTIONS

Action 1 Renewable energy benefits will be recognized and incorporated in the implementation of any pollution mitigation program of the Town.

Action 2 All town departments will exercise leadership by making it a priority to obtain energy derived from renewable resources wherever possible.

Action 3 The town will seek partnerships with energy providers, and the State of Rhode Island that will facilitate renewable energy initiatives while not burdening the taxpayer with higher costs.

Action 4 Reactivate the Alternative Energy Study Committee (AESC) and continue to investigate opportunities and constraints to use renewable and sustainable energy for the town.

Action 5 Regulatory processes and transmission grid improvements associated with renewable energy shall be encouraged and expedited.

Action 6 Metering options and interconnection requirements that simplify usage of renewable energy and reward its distributive generation benefits will be encouraged in all developed sustainable energy resources.

Action 7 The town will encourage renewable energy development and usage through planning, zoning, property tax treatment and other incentives.

Action 8 Identify and replace electrical infrastructure that is vulnerable to natural hazards.

Energy Efficiencies

GOAL: *Make more efficient use of energy to reduce energy costs and environmental impacts.*

Policy 1. Implement an energy efficiency policy to guide municipal decision-making.

Policy 2. Reduce community emissions of carbon dioxide (a.k.a. carbon footprint).

ACTIONS

Action 1 All town departments will continue to reduce energy consumption by applying sustainable measures in the management, operation, and maintenance of facilities and infrastructure consistent with the budget and mission requirements.

Action 2 The Town will continue to seek out solar, wind, hydropower (river, tidal, and wave), and geothermal sources of energy for new and retrofitted municipal facilities.

Action 3 Require all future municipal building plans be Energy Star® rated, include efficient appliances, utilize water saving devices to the largest extent practical, and incorporate provisions for roof top installations where possible

Action 4 Consider fuel efficiency when purchasing municipal vehicles and equipment.

Action 5 Consider the carbon footprint of products procured by municipal and school operations when selecting vendors.

Action 6 Encourage local agriculture and food availability.

Action 7 Protect carbon sinks such as forests and fields and require re-vegetation of areas disturbed through site development.

Action 8 Adjust parking requirements and incorporate street trees and parking lot landscaping to reduce surface solar heating, provide shade and reduce wind velocities.

Natural Hazards

GOAL: *Be prepared for sea-level rise and natural hazards.*

Objective: *Minimize exposure of people, property and infrastructure to the effects of natural hazards.*

Policy 1 Prioritize and protect at risk properties.

Policy 2 Plan for retreat in especially vulnerable areas.

ACTIONS

Action 5 Amend zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations to determine how best to minimize opportunities for new development in vulnerable areas.

Action 6 Add natural hazards to criteria for open space acquisition with the intent of replant vulnerable areas with native vegetation and managing vulnerable areas as wildlife and aquatic habitat.

Action 7 Enforce existing building and zoning codes that restrict development in hazard prone areas and review building and zoning codes to determine changes needed for better protection of beach areas.

Character and Heritage

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

Policy 1. Promote aesthetic qualities of residential and commercial development consistent with the town’s history and culture.

Policy 2. Ensure that Westerly’s historic districts develop in accordance with superior design that reflects the historic character of each.

Policy 3. Foster design principles where appropriate to improve housing choices, transportation, & commuting availability.

Policy 4. Respect and support the special character and viewpoints of Westerly’s constituent neighborhoods.

Policy 5. Encourage sustainability.

Policy 6. Discourage further commercial sprawl and promote alternative approaches to mitigate existing sprawl patterns through redevelopment.

Policy 7. Work with land owners and other stakeholders to identify and preserve, as appropriate, cultural, archeological, and historic resources.

Policy 8. Promote the Town’s historical and cultural assets.

ACTIONS

Action 1 Continue to enact development standards for historic districts that are appropriate for each district, similar to what was adopted for the Shoreline Commercial Watch Hill zoning district.

Action 2 Protect the structures within existing federally-designated historic districts and other buildings with National Register of Historic Places status with zoning ordinance language similar to that enacted for Watch Hill (260-87.6(B)(5)).

Action 3 Work with existing commercial property owners in the Route 1 corridor to enhance landscaping and green space through incentives such as reduction in parking area.

Action 4 Develop recommendations for implementation of the Architectural Review Board recently added to Westerly’s Town Charter, including review of structures, landscapes and appurtenances.

Action 5 Increase and maintain urban and community green space in the built areas of town, particularly through street trees; landscaping and buffers in commercial, industrial and multi-family developments; and selective park development to be accomplished through public and private projects and revised development standards.

Action 6 Develop a marketing strategy to promote historic home tours, garden tours, and cultural bus tours.

Action 7 Explore development of an art iconography trail downtown.

Action 8 Investigate the construction of educational and interpretive signs and exhibits in historic districts and in open space areas.

Action 9 Support special events that celebrate heritage and/or provide cultural and recreational opportunities.

Action 10 Develop a marketing strategy to promote culinary tourism, programs, classes and other foody events.

Action 11 Encourage the expansion of educational offerings and institutions, such as the Tomaquag Museum and a Children's Museum.

5.3 General Implementation Policies

In addition to the goals, policies and actions generated for each element of planning, general policies for the Comprehensive Plan guide the overall Plan implementation. These are the recommended administrative or management guidelines necessary to facilitate the successful implementation of the Plan. General policies establish the governmental framework for the Plan's actions to be carried out.

Policy 1. The town's conservation, development and annual and long-term financial choices shall be guided by the basic principle of balancing economic prosperity for all its citizens and preserving its irreplaceable natural and cultural resources.

Policy 2. Insure that land-use regulations and decision making consider the implications and potential impacts upon the four key elements of our community (tourism, seasonal residents, year-round residents, and regional service and retail) and upon Westerly's quality of life and economy.

Policy 3. The town's ordinances must clearly identify the specific responsibilities of the Town Planner, the Planning Board and the Town Council for developing, implementing and updating the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 4. The Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee shall continue to meet at least semi-annually to assess status of recommended actions, advise on priorities, and identify emerging issues and trends that may impact the Plan. The committee shall report, with the Town Planner, to the Planning Board on at least an annual basis.

Policy 5. The GIS mapping capability currently being developed by the town should be integrated into the Comprehensive Plan process as soon as possible; and the town must continue to allocate adequate resources annually to maintain and improve this capability which is essential to the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 6. There should be a person within town government charged with executing an economic development strategy, leading an aggressive business development effort, and acting as the single point of coordination for all economic development activities in Westerly.

Policy 7. On an annual basis, the Town Council should convene a meeting of officials of the seven fire districts to discuss fire district issues and activities with implications for the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 8. Recognize that implementation of the Comprehensive Plan requires that the town maintain a sound financial condition and that decisions regarding conservation, development, facility construction and maintenance, and infrastructure shall always be evaluated for future financial impact.

Policy 9. The town shall encourage on a continuing basis the recycling and conservation of energy, water and other environmental resources.

5.4 Implementation Matrix

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

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

The matrix consists of actions which comprise the essential core of this Comprehensive Plan: actions are short-term in nature; actions are medium-term; and actions are long-term. Describe intention and commitment as intended by legislation. See spp.

Table 5-1 DEFINITIONS OF IMPLEMENTATION PLAN MATRIX TERMS

Responsibilities			
Responsibility	The “Responsibility” column indicates the position or agency (board, commission or committee) that has the lead responsibility for ensuring the action is carried out	Support	Most actions require the cooperation of and action by the Town Council, Town staff and other local boards and commissions for successful completion; the “Support” column defines those supporting, contributing or approving agencies
Timeframes			
ST	Short-term (ST) indicates completion within years 1 to 5 after Plan approval	ST&O	Short-term and Ongoing (STO) indicates initial activity in years 1 to 3 of Plan approval and ongoing attention thereafter
MT	Medium-term (MT) indicates completion within years 6 to 10 after Plan approval	LT	Long-term (LT) indicates completion beyond year 10 of Plan approval
Responsibility/Support Codes			
AESC	Alternate Energy Study Committee	POTF	Peak Oil Task Force
BF	Board of Finance	PWC	Public Works Committee
BO	Building Official	PWS	Public Works Superintendent
BR	Board of Recreation	RIDOT	Rhode Island Department of Transportation
CC	Conservation Commission	SC	School Committee
DSS	Development Services staff	SoS	Superintendent of Schools
DDS	Director of Development Services	TA	Tax Assessor
EDC	Economic Development Commission	TC	Town Council
EMC	Emergency Management Coordinator	TE	Town Engineer
FD	Finance Director	TM	Town Manager
GIS	GIS Implementation Committee	US	Utilities Superintendent
HMC	Harbor Management Commission	WHA	Westerly Housing Authority
PB	Planning Board	WMLT	Westerly Municipal Land Trust
PZS	Planning and Zoning staff	ZB	Zoning Board of Review

Table 5-2 Implementation Plan Matrix

HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

№	Action	Responsibility	Support	Timeframe
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				

ECONOMIC VITALITY

№	Action	Responsibility	Support	Timeframe
1				
2				
3				
4				

NEW ECONOMIES

No	Action	Responsibility	Support	Timeframe
1				
2				
3				
4				

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

No	Action	Responsibility	Support	Timeframe
1				
2				
3				
4				

SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCES

No	Action	Responsibility	Support	Timeframe
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				

SAFE CIRCULATION

No	Action	Responsibility	Support	Timeframe
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				

TRANSPORTATION ASSESTS

No	Action	Responsibility	Support	Timeframe
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				

COMMUNITY WIDE SERVICES

No	Action	Responsibility	Support	Timeframe
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				

INFRASTRUCTURE

No	Action	Responsibility	Support	Timeframe
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				

ENERGY ALTERNATIVES

No	Action	Responsibility	Support	Timeframe
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				

ENERGY EFFICIENCIES

No	Action	Responsibility	Support	Timeframe
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				

NATURAL HAZARDS

No	Action	Responsibility	Support	Timeframe
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				

CHARACTER AND HERITAGE

No	Action	Responsibility	Support	Timeframe
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				

2016
DRAFT

Comprehensive Plan: Appendix I
Town of Westerly, Rhode Island



*A plan for vitality and
sustainability*

1 Existing Land Use and Zoning

Land is a limited and precious resource. Land use planning and regulations seek to find an appropriate balance among the rights of property owners, their neighbors and protection of this valuable resource. Land use planning and regulations determine how a community will look, what uses will be allowed and how those uses will be arranged to best meet the needs of the community. This chapter examines the physical characteristics of the land in Westerly, how the land is currently being used, and the environmental qualities and constraints affecting the land. The analysis of existing conditions forms the basis for the future land use plan for the community, the goal of which is to strike the appropriate balance between conservation and development and focus on resiliency. Land policies that protect, preserve, rehabilitate and redevelop existing built resources will address the vision of this Comprehensive Plan - a friendly and safe community that has preserved its quality of life for all generations, protected its distinctive heritage and extraordinary cultural and natural resources, and dedicated itself to a vital economy.

This Comprehensive Plan seeks to maintain the distinctions between urban and rural development patterns within the town. To that end, growth is encouraged within the Town's urban service area which includes neighborhoods such as Downtown and the North End as well as Potter Hill, Watch Hill and others along the Pawcatuck River and Route 1. The urban service area is characterized by having a full array of utilities, including public water and sanitary sewer systems, as well as telecommunications services. Higher density development is found within these areas. In areas outside of the urban services area, Westerly neighborhoods are distinctly rural. Neighborhoods including Bradford, much of Dunn's Corners, Haversham and Weekapaug rely on private wells and onsite wastewater treatment systems. Development at a much lower density is encouraged in these areas which are home to critical resources such as the Town's public drinking water supply.

In addition to local regulation, land use and development in substantial areas of Westerly is also subject to other state regulatory authorities (e.g. Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and Coastal Resources Management Council), as well as federal regulatory authorities such as the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

1.1 Existing Land Use

This existing land use inventory was completed using the Rhode Island Geographical Information System (RIGIS) dataset contributed by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), the Statewide Planning Program and Photo Science, Inc. and is visualized in the **Land Cover 2011 map (LC-1)**, so named for the year in which the orthophotography (from which this most recent land cover/land use dataset is rooted) was

captured. The land covers in the dataset were based on the same Anderson Level III coding as preceding datasets and indicate the most apparent use of property within the Town of Westerly as identified from the 2011 orthophotography (a more in-depth description of this dataset is available on the RIGIS website and relevant metadata). This analysis combined the existing land uses in Westerly, as identified, into the following land use categories:

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Community Facilities
- Conservation, Recreation and Open Space
- Industrial
- Residential
- Vacant
- Water

These categories combined contain an area of approximately 30.3 square miles (19,381.4 acres). Of this, 92.2 percent (17,876.7 acres) is categorized as agriculture, commercial, community facilities, conservation recreation and open space, industrial or residential. Land cover is an oversimplification of categories of uses and not a true snap shot of actual physical occupation of land by use. The land cover analysis does provide an adequate view of the overall development pattern of the community.

Table 1-1 Existing Land Cover, 2011

Land Cover	Acreage	Percent of Total
Agriculture includes active farm lands (croplands, pastures and orchards) and idle farm lands (abandoned or inactive croplands, pastures and orchards)	656.4	3.4
Commercial includes all commercial uses consisting of retail, services and professional uses	543.0	2.8
Community Facilities include schools, places of religious worship, government buildings, community safety facilities, hospital, the airport, railroads, roadways, other transportation uses, public utilities and the transfer station	641.8	3.3
Conservation, Recreation and Open Space includes cemeteries, developed recreation uses, brushlands, deciduous, softwood and mixed forests and beaches	10,220.6	52.7
Industrial includes manufacturing and quarrying operations	332.3	1.7

Residential includes all residential uses	5,482.6	28.3
Vacant includes vacant land, visible wetlands, sandy areas, rock outcrops and transitional (urban open) areas	1,020.9	5.3
Water includes all open water bodies with the exceptions of Winnapaug and Quonochontaug ponds	483.7	2.5

Source: RIGIS

Agriculture

The agricultural land cover category includes four (4) large and several small actively farmed lands within the town. Agricultural covers include croplands, pastures, vineyards, dairies and orchards. There are 608.6 acres of actively farmed land in Westerly, which accounts for 3.1 percent of the combined total area. The largest concentration of agricultural land is located along Dunn’s Corners-Bradford Road just east of the central portion of the town. There are also several areas of farmland along Shore Road and additional farmland can be found west of the airport. In the northern portion of the town, several smaller areas of land are currently used for agriculture. These areas could potentially be used for other purposes. Under Rhode Island’s land use policy however, the preservation of farmland is encouraged. About 129.6 acres of active farmland are being conserved through acquisition of development rights or conservation easements. Most of the farmland so preserved is in the southern portion of the town.

Commercial

Westerly has 543 acres of commercially developed land cover. Large scale development is located predominantly in two areas:

- a. Along the Route 1 corridor (Granite Street and Franklin Street) from Tower Street to Route 78 (Westerly Bypass or Veteran’s Way)
- b. Around the intersection of Route 1 (Post Road), Dunn’s Corners-Bradford Road and Langworthy Road

There is also a defined historic downtown area bounded by the Pawcatuck River and encompassing portions of Main Street, Broad Street, High Street, Canal Street and Railroad Avenue. Two other substantial mixed-use commercial areas exist along the shore; one is on Bay Street in the Watch Hill section and the other is on portions of Atlantic Avenue in the Misquamicut section. Smaller commercial areas are scattered throughout the town.

Community Facilities

Community facilities include schools, places of religious worship, government buildings and hospitals. Also included are land use areas dedicated to transportation networks, roads, public utilities and landfills. These uses cover 641.8 acres or 3.3 percent of the town’s covered area.

The airport just south of Post Road (Route 1) and east of Airport Road is the largest of these areas. The landfill, located between Westerly Bypass (Route 78) and Chapman Pond, the rail yards, Westerly Bypass itself and electrical transmission lines are others of significance. Places of religious worship and schools exist throughout the town.

Conservation, Recreation & Open Space

This category includes cemeteries, developed recreation uses, brush lands, deciduous, forests and beaches. The largest single conservation area is the Woody Hill Wildlife Management Area. Other land has been acquired and preserved by the Westerly Municipal Land Trust and private conservation organizations. Beaches are located along most of the town's shoreline. There are four golf courses in town and all are located in the southerly portion. Eight marinas are located along the Pawcatuck River. The rest of the parks are located throughout the town. This land use category accounts for 10,220 acres of land or 52.7 percent of the town's area.

Industrial

Industrial uses include manufacturing establishments and quarrying operations. There are 332.3 acres of land dedicated to industrial uses in Westerly. The majority of this area is made up of quarrying operations. The largest of these areas are in White Rock and the lower portion of Potter Hill while additional operations are present in Bradford. Manufacturing operations are located in the Airport Industrial Park and Bradford and along Canal Street and Beach Street.

Residential

Residential land use occupies 5,482.6 acres of land representing 28.3 percent of the town's area. These uses are primarily concentrated in the western and southern portions of the town. There is also a pocket of residential development in Bradford. The highest densities of residential development are found south and west of Westerly Bypass, which developed as the historical town center. Along the southern shore area, much of the residential development is a combination of year-round and seasonal housing, with an increasing trend toward year-round use. The greatest density along the shore is located in Misquamicut, between Maschaug and Winnapaug ponds.

Vacant

Along with land classified as abandoned without use as another land use, this category also includes land that would be difficult to develop such as wetlands, inland sandy soils, and rock outcrops. Over five percent of the town, 1,020.9 acres, falls into this vacant category. Vacant land that is not preserved and has development potential is located north of White Rock and south of Bradford, surrounding the Woody Hill Management Area.

Water

Areas classified as water include open water bodies other than Quonochontaug and Winnapaug Ponds (the Pawcatuck River and Little Narragansett Bay are not included). These water bodies cover 483.7 acres within the town. The largest of these areas are the inland freshwater Chapman Pond with contiguous wetlands in Newton Marsh and Aguntaug Swamp and Maschaug Pond, saltwater body near the coastline.

1.2 State Land Use Policy

In April 2006, the Rhode Island Department of Administration completed a statewide land use plan titled *Land Use 2025*. The goal of *Land Use 2025* is to eliminate sprawl and protect the natural resources of the state. The plan encourages an urban/rural model for the state that concentrates new development into established areas, together with some rural centers, and identifies urban service boundaries. Within the urban service boundaries are areas that either provide public sewer and water or are planned to do so in the near future, and where higher density and infill development might be considered. The Town of Westerly's existing land use pattern follows this core-periphery pattern encouraged by State policy, at a microscale.

The *Land Use 2025* plan also designates centers throughout Rhode Island where concentrations of development, surrounded by rural areas, could be supported. Bradford was designated as one of these centers. The plan encourages the conservation of natural resources through cluster development, conservation development, or transfer of development rights in areas that have development potential.

The preservation and expansion of agriculture are goals of the State of Rhode Island. State guidance on agriculture as both a consumptive use of land and as a contributor to the local economy requires municipalities look at agriculture and the components that contribute to the agricultural system – production, processing, distribution, purchasing, marketing, retailing and agritourism. The goals and policies of the State support the importance of planning for, preserving, and supporting agricultural land and operations. Agriculture is an industry and a source of economic activity. Often, farmers supplement their income through on-farm activities that cause people to make a special trip to the property, adding farms to the state's robust inventory of places that visitors and tourists can experience. **The Town of Westerly...**

Land Use 2025 describes a future with efficient use of energy, the availability of energy-efficient transportation options and the development of sustainable energy resources. *Energy 2035*, Rhode Island's state energy plan, looks to a future in which energy service improvements are found in the electrical, thermal and transportation sectors. The Resilient Rhode Island Act of 2014 has set two carbon emission reduction goals for the state that are within this plan's

twenty-year timeframe – 90 percent of 1990 levels by the end of 2020 and 45 percent of 1990 levels by the end of 2035. **The Town of Westerly...**

Natural Hazards.....see guidance.

Airport Zoning

The current use of land in Westerly is illustrated in the **Land Cover 2011 map (LC-1)**, so named for the year in which the orthophotography (from which this most recent land cover/land use dataset is rooted) was captured. The land use classifications in the dataset were based on the same Anderson Level III coding as preceding datasets and indicate the most apparent use of property within the Town of Westerly as identified from the 2011 orthophotography (for a more in-depth description of this dataset or any other datasets made available through RIGIS, visit www.rigis.org).

1.3 Existing Zoning

Westerly's last comprehensive update of its Zoning Ordinance was enacted in 1998. There have been multiple updates since, including the Affordable Housing Amendment in 2007. The Zoning Ordinance establishes permitted uses, minimum lot sizes, minimum front, side and rear setbacks for principal and accessory buildings, maximum building heights, maximum building and lot coverage and minimum floor areas. The Zoning Ordinance is a critical tool for controlling the type, density and appearance of development within the town.

Westerly adopted its first Zoning Ordinance in 1925 after receiving authority to do so from the Rhode Island General Assembly in 1922. As its provisions evolved over the years, residential lot sizes increased. New minimum lot sizes and setbacks consistent with those lot sizes were provided even for already developed land. For example, the Misquamicut area was fully developed under a predominant lot size of 10,000 square feet. Over time, the Zoning Ordinance increased the lot size to 30,000 square feet with required building setbacks appropriate to that size.

The result was the creation of substantial areas of predominately non-conforming lots and buildings. The Zoning Board was besieged by requests for those dimensional variances necessary to permit reasonable use of the land. The 1998 ordinance addressed this issue by creating multiple residential zoning districts which reflect the development which occurred under earlier zoning ordinance provisions. It also provided lot sizes for areas not already developed which reflect the availability or lack of municipal water and/or sewer and natural constraints upon the land.

Similarly, there were only two commercial zoning districts prior to the 1998 ordinance. This did not reflect the unique issues presented by commercial development in discrete areas of the town.

The 1998 Zoning Ordinance established a total of 22 districts: eight residential districts, nine commercial districts, three industrial districts and two special districts. In addition to these districts, there are nine overlay districts (three of which are reserved) created to protect resources, reduce hazards and permit certain types of prescribed developments which would otherwise not be allowed. The code also contains provisions for the establishment of planned developments (see subsection 1.3.5 Planned Developments).

The following table, generated using a Geographic Information System (GIS) program, presents a breakdown of the zoning districts by land area.

Table 1-2 Zoning Districts, 2016

Zoning District	Acreage	Percent of Total
Residential	9,822.4	56.1
(RR-60) Rural Residential	2,634.2	15.0
(LDR-43) Low Density Residential	686.5	3.9
(LDR-40) Low Density Residential	798.5	4.6
(MDR-30) Medium Density Residential	2,367.8	13.5
(MDR-20) Medium Density Residential	1,306.5	7.5
(HDR-15) High Density Residential	930.5	5.3
(HDR-10) High Density Residential	330.4	1.9
(HDR-6) High Density Residential	768.0	4.4
Commercial	628.4	3.6
(P-15) Professional Office	117.1	0.7
(DC-1) Downtown Center	33	0.2
(DC-2) Downtown Center	30.6	0.2
(NB) Neighborhood Business	32	0.2
(HC) Highway Commercial	253.2	1.4
(GC) General Commercial	60.8	0.3
(SC-WH) Shore Commercial Watch Hill	29.3	0.2
(SC-G) Shore Commercial General	64.5	0.4
(MC) Marine Commercial	7.9	0.0
Industrial	1,079.3	6.2
(GI) General Industrial	850.8	4.9
(LI) Light Industrial	208.3	1.2
(ORAT) Office, Research, Assembly and	20.3	0.1
Special	5,961.4	34.0
(OS/R) Open Space and Recreation	5,707.5	32.6

(CR) Commercial Recreation	253.9	1.4
Planned Development	21.4	0.1
Planned Unit Development	21.4	0.1
Other	3.4	0.0
Not Available	3.4	0.0
Total	17,516.3	100

Source: Zoning Office, GIS information.

1.3.1 Residential Districts

Residential districts make up 56.1 percent of the land area of the Town of Westerly. There are 8 residential districts ranging from rural low density (1 unit per a minimum 60,000 square foot lot size) to high density (1 unit per a minimum 6,000 square foot lot size) residential development. Density is increased through the inclusionary zoning and comprehensive permit process.

Rural Residential-60 (RR-60)

The Rural Residential-60 Zoning District is intended for residential areas characterized by very low density development and comprised mostly of land that is currently used for agriculture and/or contains wetlands, other severe soil constraints or other sensitive environmental characteristics. The rural residential districts are designed to protect many of the town’s most valuable natural resources (it is important to note that within the watershed of the salt ponds, a maximum density of one dwelling unit per two acres is required by the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Special Area Management Plan). Rural Residential-60 is designed for those areas which do not have access to municipal sewers or municipal water. The zone encompasses 2,634.2 acres.

Low Density Residential-43 (LDR-43)

The Low Density Residential-43 Zoning District is intended for residential areas in Watch Hill which are comprised predominantly of large single-family homes on large lots and which are served by municipal water but not by municipal sewer systems. The minimum one acre (43,560 square foot) lot size is designed to preserve the existing character of the neighborhoods. The zone encompasses 686.5 acres.

Low Density Residential-40 (LDR-40)

The Low Density Residential-40 Zoning District is intended to protect and preserve areas of prime agricultural soils for continued agricultural and agriculturally-orientated uses. The standards and densities prescribed for this district are intended to preserve the open character of the area and thereby to protect the business of agriculture. Residential use in this district is restricted to

a minimum lot size of 40,000 square feet. While the intent of the district is to protect agriculture, very little of the zone is used for agriculture. Much of the LDR-40 zone is located north of Route 1 (Post Road) and east and north of Route 78 (Westerly Bypass). The zone encompasses 798.5 acres.

Medium Density Residential-30 (MDR-30)

The Medium Density Residential-30 Zoning District is generally intended for single-family neighborhoods adjacent to high-density areas. This zoning district is designed to conform to existing development patterns rather than encourage major expansion beyond defined neighborhoods. Most areas within this district are connected to municipal water but not to municipal sewers. Specific provision is provided for alternative residential development of certain property of substantial size in the MDR-30 Zoning District. The MDR-30 zone is located mainly along Post Road (Route 1), Shore Road (Route 1A) and Watch Hill Road (also Route 1A). Most residential areas in Bradford are also zoned MDR-30. The zone encompasses 2,367.8 acres.

Medium Density Residential-20 (MDR-20)

Like MDR-30, the Medium Density Residential-20 Zoning District is generally intended for single-family neighborhoods adjacent to high density areas and designed to conform to existing development patterns rather than encourage major expansion beyond defined neighborhoods. Most areas within this district are connected to municipal water but not to municipal sewers. Minimum lot size in this district is 20,000 square feet. The largest areas zoned MDR-20 are located broadly around Dunn's Corners Elementary School and between Ashaway Road and Potter Hill Road. Other properties in the MDR-20 district exist in Avondale, Bradford and Shelter Harbor. The zone encompasses 1,306.5 acres.

High Density Residential-15 (HDR-15)

The High Density Residential-15 Zoning District is intended primarily for areas of existing residential development. This zoning district is designed for areas where existing densities are high – close to saturation. These areas are situated on the outer edges of the town center. The district permits a variety of housing types with a minimum lot area of 15,000 square feet per dwelling unit. These areas are served by public water and sewer. The zone encompasses 930.5 acres.

High Density Residential-10 (HDR-10)

The High Density Residential-10 Zoning District, like HDR-15 is intended primarily for areas of existing residential development. This zoning district is designed for

areas where existing densities are high – close to saturation – and include a variety of housing types. It is located in Misquamicut and Weekapaug, areas served by public water but not by sewer. The zone encompasses 330.4 acres.

High Density Residential-6 (HDR-6)

The High Density Residential-6 Zoning District is also intended primarily for areas of existing residential development. These zoning districts are designed for areas where existing densities are high – close to saturation – and include a variety of housing types. The zone covers established neighborhoods around the core of the Westerly's urban area. The area is serviced by public water and sewer. The zone encompasses 768.0 acres.

1.3.2 Commercial Districts

There are nine commercial zoning districts which collectively occupy 3.6 percent of the land area within the Town of Westerly. These districts vary by types of uses permitted, lot sizes and setback requirements.

Professional Office (P-15)

The Professional Office Zoning District is intended to establish areas within which the town encourages a concentration of professional office and related uses. Property in this district often serves as a transitional area between more intensely developed districts and residential districts.

Downtown Center-1 and -2 (DC-1, DC-2)

Downtown Center Zoning Districts are intended for areas comprising the downtown business core and immediately surrounding areas characterized by mixed uses, high-density residential uses and retail shops. The Downtown Center zones are intended to preserve the distinct character of the downtown, which has special needs related to its historic industrial origins – particularly, the preservation of historic buildings and facades.

Neighborhood Business (NB)

The Neighborhood Business Zoning District is intended for areas characterized by small retail and personal service operations but surrounded by residential areas. Properties in this district are small. They are scattered around the town, with most of them in the urban core.

Highway Commercial (HC)

The Highway Commercial Zoning District is intended for areas which are primarily motor vehicle-oriented because of their location along major roads. An

objective of this commercial zoning category is to address existing traffic safety problems associated with excessive curb cuts and to prevent further traffic problems from occurring with future development. This district is located along Route 1 (Franklin Street, Granite Street and Post Road). Large lot sizes and 50-foot setbacks are required in this district.

General Commercial (GC)

The General Commercial Zoning District is intended for areas of historic commercial activity outside of the Downtown districts. Minimum lot sizes are smaller than the Highway Commercial District and the Downtown Center 2 District. These areas are located throughout the town.

Shore Commercial-General (SC-G)

Shore Commercial-General Zoning District is intended to promote the use of waterfront locations for servicing local and seasonal businesses and water-related activities. The district also provides for both direct and indirect access to the water by the general public. The zone is intended to allow uses in a manner which limits their impact on abutting residential areas. Most of these areas are located along the coast between Misquamicut and Weekapaug. Some of these areas are not located on the water but on routes 1 and 1A.

Shore Commercial- Watch Hill (SC-WH)

Shore Commercial- Watch Hill Zoning District is intended to promote the use of waterfront locations for servicing local and tourist seasonal businesses and water-related activities. The district also provides for both direct and indirect access to the water by the general public. The zone is intended to allow uses in a manner which limits their impact on abutting residential areas. There is one SC-WH District, which is located at the western end of the Watch Hill area, primarily along Bay Street. Since this district is located entirely within a historic district, any new development must undergo additional review to ensure it conforms in style and mass with existing structures surrounding it.

Marine Commercial (MC)

The Marine Commercial Zoning District is intended to establish an area dedicated to marine (water-dependent) and marine-related uses. Uses proposed for the portion of the river designated as Class 3, High-Intensity Boating, in the Rhode Island CRMC Program, are consistent with that program. The district is located on the river side of Margin Street between Greenman Avenue and Clark Street.

1.3.3 Industrial Districts

Industrial districts make up 6.2 percent of the town's land area, and much of the land in these districts is protected by conservation easements. There are three industrial districts which vary in intensity and type of use:

General Industrial (GI)

The General Industrial Zoning District is intended for industrial and manufacturing uses which must be segregated because of their incompatibility with other land uses and is designed to provide for the infrastructure and operational requirements necessary for such uses. Stone quarries, landfills, the airport, and large factories are uses currently located in the GI zone.

Light Industrial (LI)

The Light Industrial Zoning District is designed for areas which have historically been the location for industrial development in proximity to businesses and residences and which would be incompatible with more extensive industrial use. There are two LI locations in the urban core north of Railroad Avenue and Oak Street. Additional LI zones, including the largest tract, are located in Bradford.

Office, Research, Assembly, and Technology (ORAT)

The Office, Research, Assembly and Technology Zoning District is designed to provide for office research, assembly and technology uses that do not require extensive infrastructure, sewer, water or site development or present a threat to sensitive environmental resources. There are two ORAT districts; one located on Canal Street and the other west of Westerly Airport.

1.3.4 Special Districts

Special districts are those districts which do not fall into any of the previous categories. These districts protect areas for parks and open space or dedicate areas for commercial recreation. Over one third (34.0 percent) of the town's area falls into one of these zoning districts.

Open Space and Recreation (OS/R)

The Open Space and Recreation Zoning District is intended for areas in use as open space and recreation. This district covers a variety of uses including the town's well fields, major parks and recreation areas, portions of the barrier beaches and cemeteries. This zone covers 32.6 percent of the town. These districts are scattered across the town. Aside from parks and cemeteries, nearly all of these land areas are protected through state- and town-acquired conservation easements.

Commercial Recreation (CR)

The Commercial Recreation Zoning District is intended for areas that have historically been the location for commercial/recreational facilities, although adjacent to residential areas in order to allow their continued existence subject to reasonable regulations and limitations on future expansion. These areas include the three golf courses along Route 1A (including the portion of Post Road shared with Route 1), a fourth course on Ocean View Highway, Westerly Yacht Club and River Bend Cemetery.

1.3.5 Planned Developments

The Rhode Island Zoning Enabling Act of 1991 specifically permits modern zoning tools such as Planned Development. Planned development districts become mapped for a particular area of land by a zone change granted in conjunction with approval of a master plan of development for that particular area of land which includes requirements and regulations specific to that land. While Westerly once had a process for Planned Unit Development (PUD), it was repealed in 1998 because of the mixed-use possibilities in such districts and political sensitivities at that time. The existing ordinance has a place reserved for such reintroduction. Such a provision could be the mechanism for development which implements the *Land Use 2025* plan, including its mixed-use elements if limited to areas within the urban services boundary. The planned developments that are identified on the existing zoning map are residential communities which were developed during the period that the PUD provision existed.

The current Zoning Ordinance also has an option for Planned Resort Facilities Development. The Planned Resort Facilities Area concept is intended to recognize the town as a tourist resort area and permit the growth of the industry, provided that such facilities are located on substantial tracts of land so as to minimize any impact on neighboring property. This type of planned development has not yet been used.

For convenient reference in this Plan, the dataset provided by the Zoning Office was used to illustrate existing zoning districts and overlays in the **Zoning map (Z-1)**.

2 Housing Opportunity

2.1 Overview

The availability, variety and affordability of housing is a major factor in the livability and prosperity of a community. The diversity of the housing stock in terms of the mix of unit types as well as ownership and rental opportunities are important factors that can help to identify problems and opportunities in the local housing market. These serve as a basis for recommendations to guide housing in the community over the planning horizon.

The Housing Chapter of the Town of Westerly Comprehensive Plan, guided by the State Guide Plan Element 421, provides a framework for developing the policies and implementation strategies to meet the requirements of the state and to preserve and enhance the quality of life for present and future residents of Westerly. This chapter provides an analysis of housing trends. Along with the other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, it will help to inform and define strategies to:

- Promote diversity of housing types and affordability
- Protect historic and other positive characteristics of neighborhoods,
- Prevent displacement of residents that sometimes follows gentrification
- Promote sound water protection and watershed management
- Support the best use, maintenance and improvement of the housing stock
- Identify locations for new housing units
- Promote housing affordability, sensitive neighborhood development and growth management.

The inventory and analysis included in this section is primarily based on demographic data from the 2010 U. S. Census and 2010-2014 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates with supplemental information from other sources. These include – but are not limited to – information supplied by the Town of Westerly, housing data collected by federal and state governments, and on additional desktop research.

2.2 Population Size and Age Characteristics

The Town of Westerly had an estimated year-round population of 22,775 in 2015, a -0.8 percent change from 2000 and -0.1 percent change from 2010 based on 2013 RI Statewide Planning projections. As indicated in Table 2-1, the town shrank at a slower rate than the state between 2000 and 2015 while the county grew by 2.0 percent.

Table 2-1 Population Change, 2000-2015

	1990	2000	2010	2015
Town of Westerly	21,605	22,966	22,787	22,775
Washington County	110,006	123,546	120,554	123,029
Rhode Island	1,003,464	1,048,319	1,052,567	1,046,327

Sources: 1990 Census, 2000 Census and RISPP 2013 projections

Westerly’s population is expected to increase slowly through 2035, according to population projection figures prepared by the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program (Table 2-2). A 3.0 percent population increase is projected between 2015 and 2040 that would result in a population of 23,466 by 2040. The rate of growth for the town is slow and is predicted to continue to be slow. Its 10 year, 1990-2000 change of 6.3 percent reversed to -0.8 percent between 2000 and 2010 and is projected to be just 0.4 percent from 2010 to 2020. During the period between 2010 and 2020, the county is expected to grow by 4.5 percent and the state by -0.3 percent.

Growth across the state and northeast has slowed significantly. However, Rhode Island is the only state in New England estimated to have had less than a 2.5 percent change in population growth between 2000 and 2015, according to the US Census Bureau.

Table 2-2 Population Projections 2015-2040

	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Town of Westerly	22,775	22,876	23,186	23,417	23,518	23,466
Washington County	123,029	125,939	130,044	133,449	136,171	138,036
Rhode Island	1,046,327	1,049,177	1,061,796	1,070,677	1,073,799	1,070,104

Source: RISPP 2013 projections

A statistic of at least equal and even possibly greater concern to the community than a declining/stagnant population may be the age distribution of its residents. As housing prices have risen in Westerly, so has the population aged. Most significantly, the proportion of the population over age 65 is growing. It was predicted to comprise 19 percent of the population in 2012. ACS 5-year estimates show it reached 20.1 percent in 2014. Likewise, the proportion of the population over 50 was predicted to comprise 39 percent of the total population in 2012. This population actually grew to 42.5 percent by 2014, similar to neighboring communities including Charlestown, Hopkinton and Stonington, Connecticut. The growth of the senior and elderly population is contrasted with a loss of population among younger persons. These characteristics are summarized in Table 2-3. Based on the numeric change from 2000 to 2010 (1,710), by 2020 Westerly’s population over the age of 50 is estimated to be 48 percent of its

total. This growth can be contributed to several factors, including greater life expectancy, a growing trend of aging-in-place and decreased family sizes.

Table 2-3 Age Composition of Population 2000-2014

	2000		2010		2010-14	
0-19 years	5,902	25.7%	5,206	22.8%	5,079	22.3%
20-34 years	4,047	17.6%	3,517	15.4%	3,883	17.1%
35-44 years	3,883	16.9%	2,881	12.6%	2,550	11.2%
45-54 years	3,043	13.3%	3,777	16.6%	3,225	14.2%
55-64 years	2,176	9.5%	3,165	13.9%	3,416	15.0%
65-74 years	1,802	7.8%	2,035	8.9%	2,356	10.4%
75-84 years	1,504	6.5%	1,401	6.1%	1,382	6.1%
85+ years	609	2.7%	805	3.5%	836	3.7%
Total	22,966		22,787		22,727	

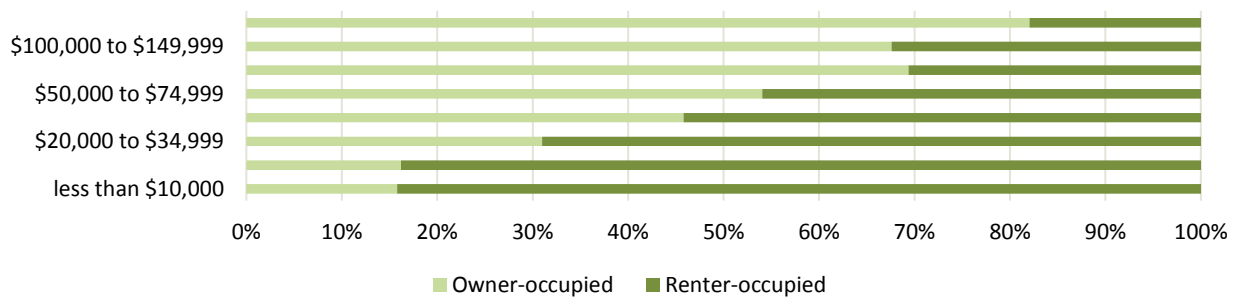
Sources: 2000 US Census, 2010 US Census and 2010-2014 ACS 5-year estimates

2.3 Household Characteristics

Median Incomes

Based on ACS information from 2005 to 2009, Westerly’s median household income was estimated to be \$55,662 compared to the county’s median household income of \$69,828.¹ The high number of elderly persons living on fixed incomes contributes to Westerly’s lower median household income, which the 2010-14 ACS estimated was \$62,381 (85.7 percent of Washington County’s median).² Figure 2-1 indicates that households with higher incomes are disproportionately homeowners and those with lower incomes are primarily renters. Many of Westerly’s lower-income homeowners are elderly with limited incomes.

Figure 2-1 Owner and Renter Households by Income, 2010-2014



Source: 2010-14 ACS 5-year estimates

¹ 2005-09 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

² 2010-14 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

From 2000 to 2010, the average household size fell slightly from 2.4 to 2.33 persons, primarily due to an increase in 1- and 2-person households. The number of non-family households (households which may have only one individual or two-or-more individuals who are not related) has grown from 3,272 (34.8 percent) to 3,589 (37.1 percent) while single-parent families increased from 23.0 percent in 2000 to 25.9 percent in 2010.

2.4 Housing Availability

Between 2000 and 2010, the number of total housing units in Westerly increased by 9.1 percent, slightly below Washington County's 9.5 percent increase, to 12,320. Of this total, 78.5 percent were occupied and 65.4 percent of all occupied housing units were owner-occupied. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of owner-occupied units in the town increased by 5.5 percent. In the same period, vacancy rates in Westerly for homeowners increased from 1.2 percent to 2.4 percent. Statewide, the homeowner vacancy rate increased from 1.0 percent to 2.0 percent within the same time period.

Between January 2006 and December 2015, 659 building permits for 871 new residential housing units were issued. Of these, 592 were for single-family residences and 67 were for multi-family residences. At least 50 were for low- and moderate-income (LMI) units.

2.4.1 Year-Round Occupied Housing

In 2010, the town had 2,654 vacant units and 71.2 percent of those units were seasonal housing units (15.3 percent of total housing units). It is important to note that most of these units characterized as vacant are seasonal units occupied by owners for summer and year-round weekend and holiday activity and therefore not vacant as the term would typically imply. "Vacant" in the traditional sense represents approximately 6.2 percent of total housing units. Comparable towns such as Charlestown and Narragansett also had significantly higher percentages of seasonal housing units than the State as a whole.

Using Westerly's 2010 average household size – 2.33 people – and assuming all seasonal housing units are occupied, the seasonal population increase of 4,404 people results in the Town's 2015 peak population to be between 27,179. This is an increase of 19.3.³

2.4.2 Units in Structure

31.2 percent of Westerly's households are within multi-family structures, the highest proportion of this housing type found in any Washington County town. Of the existing multi-family units, 3,097 or 25.1 percent are in structures containing 2 to 9 units. 68.6 percent of

² Calculations based on 2010 Census data and 2013 RISPP population projections

Westerly’s households are either attached or detached single-family homes, with development and construction trends of the last ten years favoring the latter.

Table 2-4 Units in Structure by Structure Type, 2000-2014

Structure Type	2000		2010-14	
1 unit, detached	7,269	64.4%	8,250	66.6%
1 unit, attached	338	3.0%	466	3.8%
2 units	1,698	15.0%	1,531	12.4%
3 or 4 units	1,045	9.3%	1,237	10.0%
5 to 9 units	357	3.2%	329	2.7%
10 to 19 units	144	1.3%	177	1.4%
20 to 49 units	45	0.4%	50	0.4%
50 or more units	380	3.4%	339	2.7%
Mobile home	16	0.1%	9	0.1%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	11,292		12,388	

Sources: 2000 Census and 2010-14 ACS 5-year estimates

As noted previously, Westerly issued 659 permits for new housing units between January 2006 and December 2015; however, all but 69 of these permits were for single-family homes.

Table 2-5 Residential Building Permits, 2006-2015

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Single	77	89	52	46	51	57	48	73	56	43
LMI	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	2	3	3	4	1
Multi	27	22	3	0	1	3	1	5	1	4
LMI	12	13	4	0	1	1	1	1	0	3
Total	104	111	55	46	52	60	49	78	57	14

Source: Town of Westerly Department of Development Services

There is some prospecting in the development of new multi-family units, particularly for seniors. Existing multi-family units are composed disproportionately of Westerly’s older housing stock, with more than one-third (34.8 percent) built prior to 1940 and more than half (55.4 percent) built prior to 1960. Furthermore, the local construction market is fueled in part by demand for seasonally occupied second homes – in 2004, about 12.5 percent (1,468) of all housing units were second homes. In 2010, the number of housing units used seasonally, occasionally or for recreation was 1,890, or 15.3 percent, reflecting the town’s continuing status as a shoreline resort.

2.4.3 Rental Housing

Table 2-6 Town of Westerly Renter-Occupied Housing Units, 2000-2014

Year	Occupied units (#)	Renter-occupied units (#)	Renter-occupied units (%)
2000	9,402	3,403	36.2
2010	9,666	3,344	34.6
2010-14	9,579	3,404	35.5

Sources: 2000 Census, 2010 Census and 2010-14 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Table 2-6 demonstrates that the number of year-round renter-occupied housing units in the Town of Westerly has been consistent from 2000 to 2014 at approximately 3,400 units and an average of 35.4 percent of its entire year-round housing stock.

Table 2-7 describes renter household incomes based on percent of the median household income (MHI). In 2000, about 2,060 renter households in Westerly were reported to be at or below 80 percent HMI. That number increased in 2014 to 2,174 renter households. Since 2000, renter households at or below 80 percent HMI have made up 60 to 64 percent of total renter-occupied units. Approximately 20 percent more of the available rental units are occupied by residents with incomes between 80 percent HMI and 120% HMI.

Table 2-7 Town of Westerly Income of Renter-Occupied Housing Units, 2000-2014

	Renter-occupied Housing Units, 2000 ¹		Renter-occupied Housing Units, 2010-2014 ²	
	Units	Percent	Units	Units
≤30% HMI	≈842	≈24.7	≈853	≈25.1
≤60% HMI	≈1,487	≈43.7	≈1,627	≈47.8
≤80% HMI	≈2,060	≈60.5	≈2,174	≈63.9
120% HMI	≈2,699	≈79.3	≈2,735	≈80.3
Total	3,403		3,404	

Sources: 2000 U.S. Census [sample data] and 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

¹ 2000 Census household income data is for 1999 (1999 USD)

² 2010-2014 ACS household income data is in the past 12 months (2014 USD)

The Town of Westerly has developed several programs and initiatives to ensure the preservation of its robust rental housing stock:

- The Town has had a twenty-five (25) year history of housing rehabilitation financed by Community Development Block Grant funds in designated neighborhood revitalization target areas such as Bradford and the North End.
- The Town’s 2015 CDBG application requested and received approval to establish a Town Housing Rehabilitation Revolving Loan Fund. A majority of the town’s rental housing is located in the older neighborhoods which surround the downtown and historic mills along the Pawcatuck River. The new Town program will address the significant need for housing rehabilitation now and in the future, the LMI status of low to moderate income households (41.0% of total households are ≤80% HMI according to 2014 ACS 5-year

estimates) and the difficulties faced by property owners when trying to obtain conventional rehab loans. The Town program will offer rehabilitation loans, with repayment options suitable to LMI properties while making individual consideration of circumstances. The new program will aim to help with emergency repairs and upgrades of multi-family housing to keep properties financially viable and to preserve the Town's rental housing stock.

- The community based non-profit corporation known as the Westerly Revolving Fund (WRF) is a separate fund for housing rehabilitation for Westerly's historic multi-family neighborhoods. The Town's Planning and Zoning Office advocated for and led establishment of the fund in response to the current Comprehensive Community Plan goals and policies. The WRF provides advocacy, lending and technical assistance to property owners looking to renovate existing structures when they are not able to secure adequate funding from traditional sources.
- Town plans and policies also included the 2003 North End Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. The North End Plan was designed on key planning concepts which include the provision of a range of affordable housing options, comprehensive code enforcement, improved neighborhood amenities, and the integration of a broad array of social services to support the needs of North End residents. Through a series of neighborhood revitalization plans, the Town of Westerly intends to apply these same concepts to other areas of Town.

2.5 Housing Conditions

The quality, safety and general state of housing units has significant impact on the well-being of residents and on the livability and desirability of a community. Neglect, deterioration, abandonment and foreclosures represent issues related to housing conditions. Housing conditions can be addressed by neighborhood involvement and Neighborhood Plans.

2.5.1 Age of Housing

In 2000, Westerly had a housing stock that was relatively newer than the state as a whole but older than the county and most comparison towns. The median year for homes built in the town was 1965, compared to 1958 in the state and 1971 in the county. Following the pace of development occurring in Westerly between 2000 and 2006, the median year built remained 1965. According to the 2010-14 ACS, 8.9 percent of total housing units to date were built in the new millennium.

Table 2-8 Age of Housing, 2000-2014

	2000		2010-14	
1990 to most recent	1,414	12.5%	2,187	17.7%
1980 to 1989	2,195	19.4%	1,833	14.8%
1970 to 1979	1,465	13.0%	1,541	12.4%
1960 to 1969	1,226	10.9%	1,394	11.3%
1950 to 1959	1,443	12.8%	1,569	12.7%
1940 to 1949	639	5.7%	507	4.1%
1939 or earlier	2,910	25.8%	3,357	27.1%
Total	11,292		12,388	

Sources: 2000 Census and 2010-14 ACS 5-year estimates

In addition to the 2014 information in Table 2-8, we know an additional 20 units were authorized between January and June 2015. With the addition of these units to Westerly’s overall housing stock, 6,827 units will still have been built prior to 1970.

2.5.2 Condition of Housing Stock

During the decades of a thriving market of new single-family home starts and the subsequent decline in construction through the recent economic recession, there was no measurable increase in home improvement spending. Having taken its toll on the quality of the region’s housing stock, it is time to focus attention on the upgrading and improvement of pre-1970 homes. The Town of Westerly’s focus on a rehabilitation program supported by a revolving fund is well placed to be an integral part of a neighborhood revitalization effort.

According to national trends, homes in decline due to age of electrical and plumbing systems are significantly more likely to be converted to nonresidential uses, to become vacant, or to be permanently lost from the inventory of housing options. Available home repair and improvement programs in the State include Rhode Island Housing home improvement loans and the 2-1-1 Infoline for home improvement program information and loan referrals. Rhode Island Affiliates of Habitat for Humanity are active in both new construction and substantial rehabilitation and Habitat for Humanity ReStores, located in Charlestown, provide discounted used and surplus furniture and building materials. Other organizations including Rebuilding Together, Inc., Veterans Affairs Regional Loan Center, USDA Rural Development Office assists local low-income, elderly and disabled homeowners.

With the local economy and housing market gradually recovering, investment in the town’s existing housing inventory could be encouraged with some success. Lenders and new owners are rehabilitating properties. Older homeowners can retrofit their homes to accommodate their future needs and “age in place” as opposed to relocating. Households can increase their investment with environmentally sustainable improvements. Property owners can reduce their

insurance costs by utilizing new reconstruction techniques certified by the Insurance Institute of Business and Home Safety (IBHS) FORTIFIED Home project.

The Town of Westerly is in need of more tools to effectively address housing quality and get out ahead of such issues as aging plumbing and electrical systems, flood and wind damage, and demolition due to neglect.

2.5.3 Minimum Housing Enforcement

The State Housing Maintenance and Occupancy Code establishes minimum standards governing utilities and facilities and other physical conditions essential to make dwellings safe, sanitary, and fit for human habitation. Enforcement of these conditions and proper maintenance of housing as a public health and safety matter is delegated to local government. The Building Office is the Town's code enforcement office. In order to ensure that no violations exist, routine, daily, on-site inspections are made while new construction or renovation work is in progress. For existing structures, Inspectors enforce State Codes designed to safeguard buildings and their contents from hazards. Between both 2015 and the 2016 year-to-date, most related code violations involve sanitation and an accumulation of rubbish or garbage.

In 2015, the Town received 125 complaints regarding property maintenance codes for non-commercial use properties. 64 of those complaints (51.2 percent) involved an owner whose address was not the same as the property. The majority of these properties belong to landowners outside the Town of Westerly. In the first four months of 2016, 38.6 percent of received complaints regarding property maintenance concerned absent-owner properties and 47.1 percent of these were owned by individuals whose addresses were outside the Town. The Town of Westerly should take a pro-active approach to the housing condition maintenance particularly in regards to the more than 3,400 rental units in the community. Addressing improvements in electrical and plumbing systems through inspections and interacting with absent property owners in more substantial ways is essential. The Town should continue to seek CDBG funding for the creation and administration of its Housing Code Enforcement program.

The Certificate of Apartment Occupancy (CAO) is one tool utilized for housing code enforcement of non-owner occupied residential units in the State of Connecticut. The main purpose of the CAO is to provide apartment renters with the same protections as homebuyers by allowing for an inspection process that is municipally sanctioned and which prohibits rentals of units which are sub-standard. The CAO process requires that the owner of a rental unit, register each unit with the municipality, usually the building or housing code office. Then as each unit is vacated, subsequent rental cannot occur until the unit is inspected and determined to be decent, safe and sanitary. This allows for identification and correction of any housing

code violations. Then, the CAO is issued and the unit may be re-rented. This process ensures that the tenant is getting a unit that conforms to all state and local housing code requirements. Registration and inspection of each unit are subject to a fee to help offset the administrative cost to the municipality. The Town of Westerly may need to seek legislative authority to enact a local ordinance and enforce such a strategy.

2.6 Affordable Housing Availability

There are many factors limiting affordable housing availability in Rhode Island. The Town of Westerly has been experiencing the following influences on this sector of the housing market.

- High land and construction costs
- High sale prices
- Low vacancy rates
- Deterioration of older housing stock
- Elimination of housing stock by conversion to seasonal or second homes
- Elimination of funding through federal and state housing programs

2.6.1 Housing Costs

Through the early part of the current century (2000-2006), high and rising property values reflected the desirability of Westerly as an attractive community for both year-round and seasonal residents. Prior to 2008 and the housing and credit market crashes, the housing market was characterized by vibrant construction activity in both new homes and renovations as well as strong appreciation of assessed home values which, combined with rising property taxes and energy costs, significantly impacted affordable housing availability.

Construction activity fell with the 2007 economic downturn and has been focused almost entirely on single-family units since 2008. According to Statewide Multiple Listing Service data provided by Rhode Island Living, single-family and multi-family median sale prices have also not yet recovered to pre-recession values. According to the 2015 HousingWorksRI Fact Book, the median monthly housing payment for a homeowner was just over \$2,000 and excludes utilities and maintenance and repair costs. The 2010-14 median owner-occupied household income identified by the ACS fell short of the income needed to afford the median home price by \$1,909.

High and rising rent has also been an issue impacting both the Town and the State. The Year End (YE) 2006 Rhode Island Rent Survey found the average monthly rents for a one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom apartment in Westerly were \$920, \$1,104 and \$1,306 per month, respectively.⁴ All three averages were above their 2006 Westerly-Hopkinton-New

⁴ 2006 Rhode Island Rent Survey, as compiled by Rhode Island Housing

Shoreham, RI HUD Metro Fair Market Rent (FMR) Area counterparts, which were \$650, \$760 and \$908 per month for a one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom apartment, respectively.

Rents have continued to rise and the averages listed in the YE 2014 RI Rent Survey were \$955 for a one-bedroom apartment, \$1,167 for a two-bedroom apartment and \$1,451 for a three-bedroom apartment. Comparatively, these were \$245 more for a one-bedroom, \$207 more for a two-bedroom and \$243 more for a three-bedroom apartment than the 2014 HUD Area FMRs. Assuming no more than 30 percent of annual income was spent on rent and related expenses, a renter would have needed an annual income of \$46,680 to afford the average two-bedroom apartment. This was close to \$9,000 more than the 2010-14 ACS median renter-occupied household income. While the YE 2016 RI Rent Survey is not yet available, the 2016 HUD Area FMRs are \$799 for a one-bedroom apartment, \$1,069 for a two-bedroom apartment and \$1,419 for a three-bedroom apartment.

Home Values

An analysis of housing in Westerly from the standpoint of its market value, as determined by the Westerly Tax Assessor’s Office through several revaluations, shows how volatile property values have been in Westerly over the last decade. Table 2-9 below, from the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, summarize the 2000, 2003 and 2006 valuations for single-family homes in Westerly by fire district. Over the six years, the average value among the range of single-family homes located in Westerly went from a town-wide average of \$210,250 in 2000 to more than \$500,000 in 2006, a 141.0 percent increase. Assessed valuation of the homes in the Westerly Fire District increased 120.9 percent while homes in Weekapaug increased by 218.7 percent. Single-family homes in two of the fire districts, Watch Hill and Weekapaug, had averaged assessed values in excess of \$2.2 million. These outlying values were due to their districts’ characters as coastal villages with high numbers of second homes and seasonal populations. Most notably, the 2006 revaluation recorded a difference in value of more than \$2 million between the fire districts with the lowest (Bradford) and highest (Watch Hill) averaged values.

Table 2-9 Property Revaluations, 2000-2006

	2000		2003		2006	
	Homes	Averaged Value	Homes	Averaged Value	Homes	Averaged Value
Bradford	408	\$115,625	425	\$183,754	434	\$267,431
Dunn’s Corners	1,567	\$193,988	1,670	\$326,593	1,723	\$450,649
Misquamicut	361	\$257,620	536	\$479,340	558	\$680,924
Shelter Harbor	147	\$370,676	151	\$730,581	155	\$943,277
Watch Hill	195	\$953,396	208	\$1,779,511	210	\$2,347,795
Weekapaug	96	\$701,298	112	\$1,587,494	118	\$2,235,121

Chapter 2 – Housing Opportunity

2016 Draft Comprehensive Plan

Westerly	3,725	\$164,976	3,816	\$267,333	3,899	\$364,511
Town-wide	6,499	\$210,250	6,918	\$369,880	7,097	\$506,792

Source: 2010 Comprehensive Plan

In 2009, the Town of Westerly completed a full revaluation as required by State statute. There is evidence that the general economic downturn which began in 2008 affected the value of housing in Westerly. For example, 57 percent of the houses sold in 2008 were sold for less than the assessed value; in the first half of 2009, 83 percent of houses sold for less than the assessed value. These housing transactions over the 19-month period represent approximately six percent of the total number of single-family units in the town. The 2009 full revaluation documented the extent of the shift in median and average housing values compared to 2006 levels.

The recent recession's protracted effects in Westerly are evident in the overall decrease in average total property values as recorded in the 2012 revaluation. The 2006 revaluation, which was done prior to the economic downturn, collected a town-wide average total property value of \$506,792. In 2012, the end of the recession, the average value had fallen by \$61,628, to \$445,164. The most recent revaluation, 2015, shows a slight rise in total assessed values across the Town's seven fire districts, although these have not recovered to pre-recession values.

Tables 2-11 and 2-12 summarize the 2006, 2009, 2012 and 2015 revaluations for single-family homes in Westerly by Fire District. Over nearly a decade, the median value of single-family homes located in Westerly went from \$253,000 in 2006 to \$286,600 in 2015, an increase of about 13.3 percent.

Table 2-10 Property Revaluations, 2009-2015

	2009		2012		2015 ¹	
	Homes	Averaged Value	Homes	Averaged Value	Homes	Averaged Value
Bradford	440	\$253,424	475	\$226,928	495	\$229,709
Dunn's Corners	1,743	\$410,274	1,758	\$381,220	1,774	\$385,903
Misquamicut	565	\$630,168	584	\$583,698	583	\$589,459
Shelter Harbor	160	\$867,189	162	\$857,188	164	\$866,399
Watch Hill	217	\$2,292,507	222	\$2,237,077	222	\$2,253,087
Weekapaug	126	\$2,160,399	131	\$2,073,620	133	\$2,077,692
Westerly	3,931	\$333,582	4,014	\$309,960	4,063	\$311,166
Town-wide	7,182	\$473,740	7,346	\$445,164	7,434	\$447,246

Source: Town of Westerly Tax Assessor's Office

¹ pending certification

Table 2-11 Change in Averaged Assessed Values, 2009-2015

	2009-2012	2012-2015 ¹	2009-2015 ¹	2006-2015 ¹
Bradford	-10.5%	1.2%	-9.4%	-14.1%

Dunn’s Corners	-7.1%	1.2%	-5.9%	-14.4%
Misquamicut	-7.4%	1.0%	-6.5%	-13.4%
Shelter Harbor	-1.2%	1.1%	-0.1%	-8.2%
Watch Hill	-2.4%	0.7%	-1.7%	-4.0%
Weekapaug	-4.0%	0.2%	-3.8%	-7.0%
Westerly	-7.1%	0.4%	-6.7%	-14.6%
Town-wide	-6.0%	0.5%	-5.6%	-11.7%

Source: Town of Westerly Tax Assessor’s Office

¹ pending certification of the 2015 revaluation

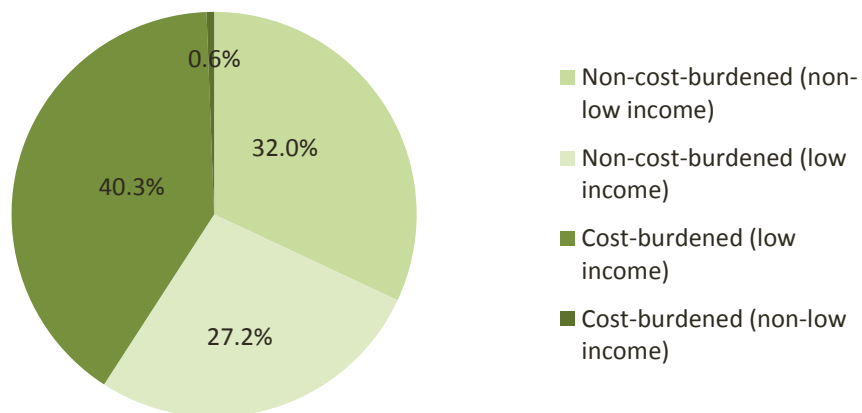
2.6.2 Unmet Affordable Housing Needs

Affordable housing needs are determined from demographic data available from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) database, among other sources. The unmet need for affordable housing can be calculated based on the current number of LMI units and the demand for LMI units based on the available data. In addition to LMI production goals discussed later, which are based on current housing stock, the specific needs of the low and moderate income populations are also evaluated based on the availability and distribution of the affordable housing types that should be targeted.

Households with Rental Cost Burdens

Figure 2-2 illustrates the extent to which housing cost burdens are felt by renter-occupied households in Westerly.

Figure 2-2 Housing Cost Burden for Renter Households by Income, 2008-12

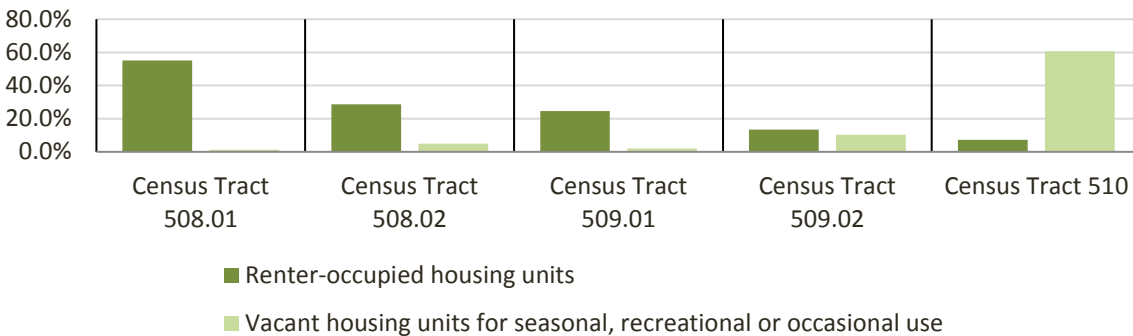


Source: HUD CHAS Data Query Tool, 2008-12 data

Approximately 40.3 percent (1,329) of Westerly’s 3,300 renter households earn 80 percent or less than the HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI) and spend more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing costs (CHAS Data Query Tool, 2008-12).⁵ As previously noted, average rents in Westerly (YE2014) were \$955 for a one-bedroom apartment and \$1,167 and \$1,451 respectively for two- and three-bedroom apartments. The household income needed to afford a rent of \$1,167 is approximately \$46,680.⁶

Rental housing opportunities in Westerly are also constrained by the market for vacation homes, as shown in Figure 2-3 below.

Figure 2-3 Select Occupancy Statuses as a Percent of Total Housing Units per Census Tract



Source: 2010 Census

Seasonal rentals contribute to the diminishing of the year-round stock of affordable homes and disruption of potential long-term rents because landlords often impose nine-month lease restrictions to allow for summertime rentals. Also, the high proportion of upper income (\$50,000 and above) renter-occupied households in Westerly is likely related to the desirability of its seaside location, regardless of the time of year, and its aging population, which may be less interested or able to maintain a home.

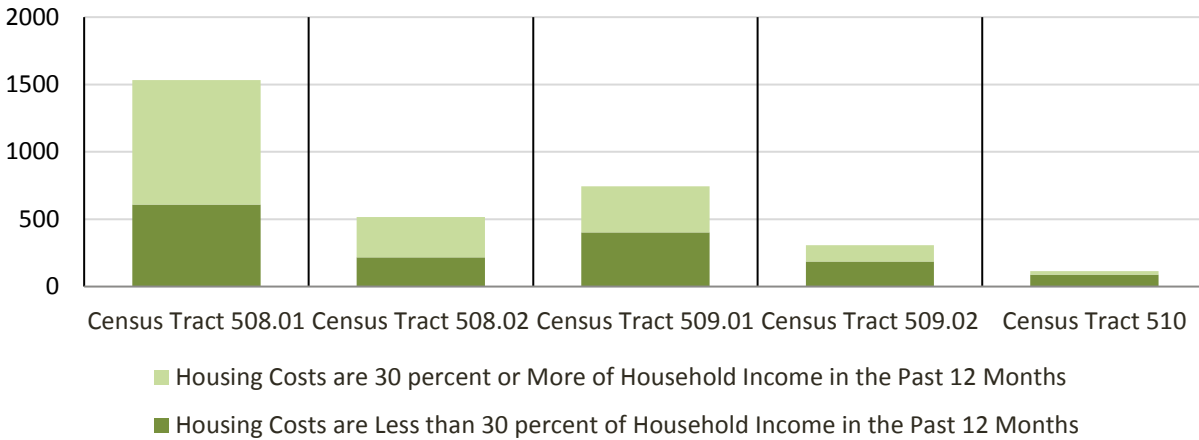
Rental housing is most concentrated in Census Tract 508.01 where vacant seasonal housing is minimal. The percentage of renter-occupied housing units is reduced when further removed from the town’s urban core. Overall, there are positive correlations between the percentage of renter-occupied housing units and several characteristics common in urbanized areas, such as greater racial diversity and a larger young adult (18 to 34 years) population. 2010 US Census data and ACS 2010-2014 estimates support this conclusion.

⁵ https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp/CHAS/data_querytool_chas.html

⁶ HousingWorks RI Fact Sheets. <http://housingworksri.org/cities-towns/westerly> Obtained March 15, 2016.

Another correlation, as presented in Figure 2-4 below, is the cost burden of occupants. Census Tracts 508.01 and 508.02 together contain 1223 cost burdened, renter-occupied households, which is 38.1 percent of all renter households with a rent and positive income (an income greater than \$0.00) in Westerly. In Census tracts 509.01, 509.02 and 510, a majority of renter-occupied units are not cost burdened

Figure 2-4 Distribution of Cost Burdened Renter-occupied Households, 2010-2014



Source: 2010-14 ACS 5-year estimates

Households with Homeownership Cost Burdens

Using information from 2010, the HousingWorksRI 2011 Fact Book calculated the average homeowner would require a \$78,181 income to afford the monthly costs (excluding maintenance, repair and utility costs) of a single-family home at the median sales price of \$276,750.⁷ Four years later, the 2015 Fact Book identified the median single-family home sale price was \$282,000, increasing the required income by \$2,071.⁸ This outpaced the \$1,474 increase in median owner-occupied household income in the past 12 months estimated by the 2006-10 (\$76,869) and 2010-14 (\$78,343) ACS. As of YE 2015, the median sales price was \$285,000 for a single-family home.

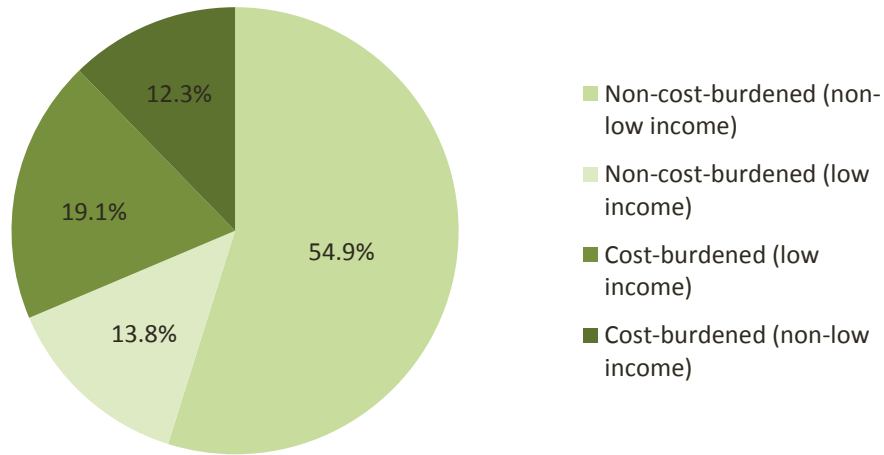
Sales of existing multi-family housing units have been stable following the 2008 economic downturn, while the median sales price experienced greater fluctuation. The median sales price of a multi-family home structure in Westerly increased from \$187,450 in 2010 to \$220,000 in 2015, with growth uninterrupted since 2012.

Figure 2-5 below illustrates cost burdens felt by owner households in Westerly. Approximately 19.1 percent (1,220) of Westerly’s 6,395 owner households earn 80 percent or less than the

⁷ 2011 HousingWorksRI Fact Book, p.50.
⁸ 2015 HousingWorksRI Fact Book, p. 59.

median household income and pay more than 30 percent of their incomes towards housing costs (CHAS 2010).

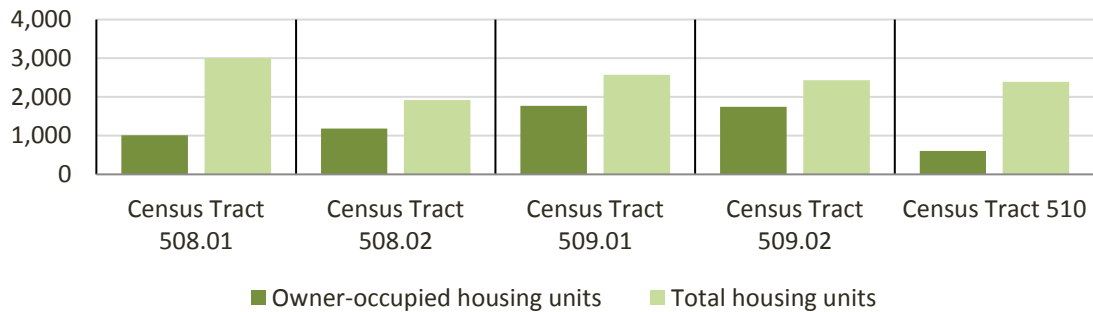
Figure 2-5 Housing Cost Burden for Owner Households by Income, 2008-12



Source: CHAS Data Query Tool, 2008-12 data

In contrast to renting, Figure 2-6 below shows the prevalence of owner-occupancy in Census Tracts 509.01 and 509.02. The comparably high portions of owner-occupation in these tracts may be influenced by the time period in which their general development occurred, which was the mid- to late-twentieth century. As noted previously, the built environment of Census Tracts 508.01 and 508.02 are more historic and urban while Census Tract 510 contains a high number of seasonal housing units due to its coastal location.

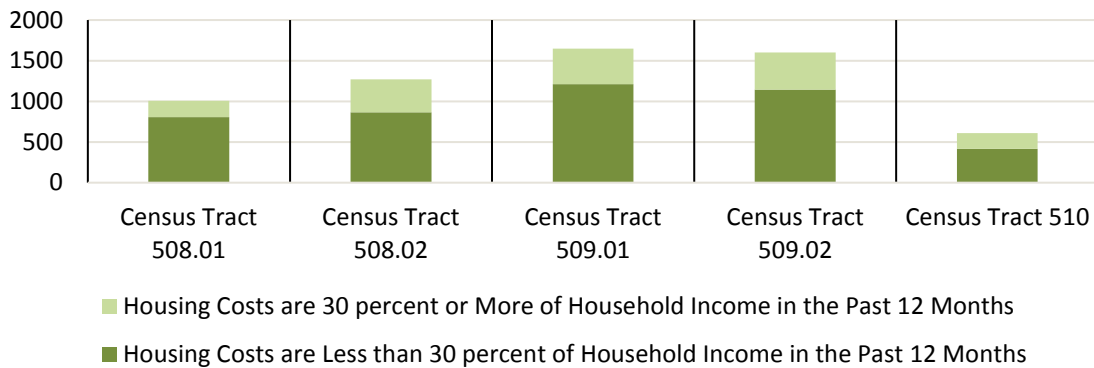
Figure 2-6 Owner-Occupancy, 2010



Source: 2010 Census

In contrast to renter-occupied households, no Census Tract contained a cost-burdened majority of its total owner-occupied units with a positive income. In fact, Census Tract 508.01, which contained the largest number and percent of cost-burdened renters, contained the second smallest number and percent of total positive income owner-occupied homes in the Town. The largest numbers of cost-burdened households were located in Census Tracts 509.01 and 509.02 (440 and 457, respectively).

Figure 2-7 Distribution of Cost Burdened Owner-occupied Households, 2010-2014



Source: 2010-2014 ACS 5-year estimates

Population with Disabilities

Disability is defined by federal law as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities,” which may include “walking, talking, hearing, seeing, breathing, learning, performing manual tasks, and caring for oneself.”⁹ The US Census Bureau, in a 2012 report on Americans with disabilities, identified 8.7 percent of the 41.5 million people who had disabilities in the physical domain required wheelchairs and 28 percent required a cane, crutches or a walker in order to be mobile.¹⁰ Based on this information, actual housing needs of persons with physical disabilities is significantly larger than the number dependent on wheelchairs, canes, crutches or walkers. For example, some individuals have physical disabilities which limit their ability to walk more than a quarter mile without resting, which is the Census Bureau’s definition of a mobility impairment, but are ambulatory and do not require wheelchairs or other mobility devices.

The 2000 Census collected a sample civilian non-institutionalized disabled population of 3,636. Estimates provided by the 2010-14 ACS indicated a decrease in the population, to 2,436. Among the civilian non-institutionalized population 5 years of age and over, there were 480 individuals with a hearing difficulty, 257 with a vision difficulty, 953 with a cognitive difficulty, 1,078 with

⁹ http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/disabilities/inhousing
¹⁰ <http://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p70-131.pdf>

an ambulatory difficulty and 554 individuals with a self-care difficulty. Those aged 65 years and over made up 47.6 percent of the total civilian non-institutionalized disabled population, indicating that disabilities are also a notable concern with aging.

The ACS provided economic data for the population with a disability status only at a national, state and county level. It is nonetheless reasonable, based on earnings and employment estimates which were available, to conclude persons with disabilities experience the same level of need for affordable housing as persons with no disabilities in Westerly. Indeed, a 2014 report by the Technical Assistance Collaborative identified Rhode Island as having the fourteenth-highest percentage (92 percent) of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) needed for an efficiency apartment.¹¹

Westerly Area Rest and Meals, Inc. (WARM), which will be discussed in greater detail later on, provides housing for 6 individuals and 2 families with disabled adult individuals through its Supportive Homes program.¹²

In 2014, Operation Stand Down RI (OSDRI) completed its first housing project in Westerly and in southern Rhode Island. Three buildings on Pierce Street contain a total of 10 apartments and 14 bedrooms for disabled, low income veterans and their families in support of OSDRI’s mission to end homelessness among veterans in Rhode Island.¹³

Homeless Population

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council notes there is no one legal definition for homelessness. In specifically discussing housing needs in Westerly however, this plan recognizes a portion of the US Housing and Urban Development Department definition as being reflective of the most common forms of homelessness in the town, which include individuals “who [lack] a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence” and individuals and families “living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing).”¹⁴

The National Coalition for the Homeless and the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless (RICH) both identify a lack of affordable housing as a primary contributor to homelessness.¹⁵ In 2014,

¹¹ <http://www.tacinc.org/media/51752/Table%202.pdf>

¹² http://warmcenter.org/?page_id=26 and confirmed 03/17/2016

¹³ <http://osdri.org/housing/>

¹⁴ <https://www.nhchc.org/faq/official-definition-homelessness/>

¹⁵ <http://www.rihomeless.org/AboutHomelessness/Whyarepeoplehomeless/tabid/265/Default.aspx>

RICH estimated the number of individuals experiencing homelessness to be 4,067. Of this population, 84.1 percent were living in an emergency shelter.¹⁶

As noted in an earlier section, WARM and OSDRI have provided housing for several low-income and homeless individuals with disabilities. In addition to this, the WARM Center, operated by WARM and located on Spruce Street since 1990, includes one of the three emergency shelters in Washington County. To assist individuals experiencing homelessness and housing crisis, the WARM Shelter offers 19 beds (13 for males and 6 for females) and 5 rooms of long-term transitional housing through its WARM-Up program. 13 families are additionally served by the Harvest Homes program.¹⁷ WARM also offers supportive housing in its 811 project completed in 2014 – 6 one-bedroom apartments are located on Spruce Street and 2 two-bedroom units are provided on Pierce Street.

2.7 LMI Housing Production

2.7.1 Housing Production Requirements in Rhode Island

The Rhode Island Comprehensive Housing Production and Rehabilitation Act of 2004 (General Laws 45-128-8.1) and the Rhode Island Low and Moderate Income Housing Act (General Laws 45-53) are the statutory origin of the requirement that 10 percent of each municipality's year-round housing stock be "affordable" with the further provision that the units be subsidized (Federal/State/Local) and subject to other restrictions to assure they will remain affordable for a minimum of 30 years. The LMI Act also provides a process for the review and approval of eligible LMI housing developments known as a 'comprehensive permit'. In accordance with Statewide Planning policy, ten (10) communities are "exempt" from the comprehensive permit process. Five (5) communities are exempt because they currently have more than **10 percent** Low and Moderate Income Housing as defined by the Act and have a plan to maintain that 10 percent. Another five (5) communities are "exempt" under an alternative calculation for municipalities having at least **5,000** occupied rental units and where those units comprise **25 percent** or more of all housing units. The communities also have at least **15 percent** of the rental units affordable to persons of low and moderate income and are required to adopt a housing production plan that will maintain this type of rental housing stock.

2.7.2 A Plan for Meeting Local Needs for Affordable Housing

All of Rhode Island's 39 municipalities are required to develop and adopt a production plan for low and moderate income housing that would either reach/maintain the 10 percent threshold or, alternatively, 15 percent of a community's rental housing stock. An LMI production plan of

¹⁶ <http://www.rhomeless.org/AboutHomelessness/HomelessnessStatistics/tabid/248/Default.aspx>

¹⁷ http://warmcenter.org/?page_id=16 and confirmed 03/17/2016

this nature is one of the required elements of the local comprehensive community plan under RIGL 45-22.2-6(b)(6).

In accordance with the July 7, 2015 tabulation by Rhode Island Housing, the Town of Westerly currently meets its local housing needs by providing 544 units which qualify as low and moderate income (LMI) housing under the following definition:

““Low or moderate income housing” means any housing whether built or operated by any public agency or any nonprofit organization or by any limited equity housing cooperative or any private developer, that is subsidized by a federal, state, or municipal government subsidy under any program to assist the construction or rehabilitation of housing affordable to low or moderate income households, as defined in the applicable federal or state statute, or local ordinance and that will remain affordable through a land lease and/or deed restriction for ninety-nine (99) years or such other period that is either agreed to by the applicant and town or prescribed by the federal, state, or municipal government subsidy program but that is not less than thirty (30) years from initial occupancy.” RIGL §45-53-3(9)

In accordance with Rhode Island Housing calculations, the LMI housing amounts to 5.22 percent of Westerly’s year-round housing stock. The total qualifying units in Westerly, as of January 2016, number **549**. These are listed in Table 2-13 found on the next page.

Table 2-12 Current LMI Inventory

Population	Development	Tenure	Location	Total Units
Elderly	Babcock Village	Rental	Cross Street	150
	Chestnut Court	Rental	Chestnut Street	50
	Merchant’s Village	Rental	Clark Street	99
	Park View	Rental	Park Avenue	60
	Covington Court	Ownership	Covington Court	4
Family	Arlington Street	Rental	Arlington Street	2
	Bowling Lane	Ownership	Bowling Lane	1
	Fairview Drive	Rental	Fairview Drive	2
	Gardner Street	Rental	Gardner Street	1
	Grove Avenue	Rental	Grove Avenue	3
	Joseph Street	Rental	Joseph Street	2
	Kent Avenue	Ownership	Kent Avenue	1
	Knight Street	Ownership	Knight Street	1
	Knight Street	Rental	Knight Street	3
	Lewis Lane	Rental	Lewis Lane	4
	Lilac Street	Ownership	Lilac Drive	1
	Lilac Street	Rental	Lilac Drive	1
	Merchant’s Village	Rental	Clark Street	16
	Pierce Street	Ownership	Pierce Street	2

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	Pierce Street	Ownership	Pierce Street	1
	Pierce Street	Rental	Pierce Street	1
	Pierce Street Habitat	Ownership	Pierce Street	2
	Pierce Street North End	Ownership	Pierce Street	2
	Pierce Street North End	Rental	Pierce Street	2
	Pond Street	Ownership	Pond Street	1
	Pond Street	Rental	Pond Street	1
	Roma I	Rental	Byron Drive	22
	State Street	Rental	State Street	2
	Summer Street	Rental	Summer Street	2
	Sunrise Drive	Rental	Sunrise Drive	2
	Thomas Lane	Ownership	Thomas Lane	1
	Westminster Street	Ownership	Westminster Street	2
	Spinnaker Landing	Ownership	Post Road	9
	North Glen Townhouses	Ownership	Pierce Street	10
	Fieldstone Estates	Ownership	Fieldstone Way	12 ¹
	Group Home beds	-	-	42
Special Needs	Spruce Street	Rental	Spruce Street	5
	Westerly Courts	Rental	Beach Street	10
	Spruce Street 2013	Rental	Spruce Street	6
	Pierce Street OSDRI	Rental	Pierce Street	10
Total			549	

Source: Rhode Island Housing Tabulation as of 7/7/2015

¹ Revised by Westerly from 4 as of 3/17/2016

Westerly's progress toward the State's 10 percent threshold and LMI production strategies will address the affordable housing gap demonstrated in Table 2-14. The forecasted deficit of 652 LMI units is projected at buildout in the year 2038 when the total number of year-round housing units in the town is projected to be 14,188.

Table 2-13 10 Percent Threshold Assessment for Town of Westerly

	Most Current Data
Existing LMI housing units	549
Existing LMI housing units by population served	Family: 124 22.6% Elderly: 359 65.4% Special Needs: 73 13.3%
The 10% threshold	1,043
The existing deficit	1,043 - 549 = 494
The existing deficit, by population served	Family: 494 x 22.6% ≈ 110 Elderly: 494 x 65.4% ≈ 322 Special Needs: 494 x 13.3% ≈ 62
The forecasted 10% threshold	(14,188 [buildout] x 84.66% [% of year-round units] x 10% = 1,201
The forecasted deficit	1,201 - 549 = 652

Sources: Rhode Island Housing Tabulation as of January 1, 2016; 2010 Census and the Buildout Analysis this Comprehensive Plan (+1,656 units)

2.7.3 Additional Affordable Units Projected

Table 2-15 lists projects that contain LMI units authorized by the town since 2004 and their current construction status. Between January 2004 and June 2015, 140 LMI units were authorized and 63 were constructed, although 12 remain vacant. Of the remaining units, 18 units are in projects that have been abandoned, 33 units are tied up in an appeal and another 22 are expected to be constructed at some point.

Table 2-14 Authorized LMI Units, 2006 to 2015

Development	LMI Units Authorized	LMI Units Completed to date
Westerly Court	10	10 (remain vacant)
79 Pierce Street	2	2
6 Lilac Drive	2	2
48 Pierce Street	2	2
69 Pierce Street	2	2
66 Pierce Street	2	2
71 Pierce Street	2	2
North Glenn	10	10
Spinnaker Landing	10	10
Pleasant Street Court	17	4
WARM Shelter	6	0
Napatree Point	2	0 (project abandoned)
Fieldstone Estates	13	13
Iroquois Hills	33	In appeal to SHAB
Luzzi	2	2
Westerly Heights	4	0 (project bankrupted)
Brown Building	16	0 (projected abandoned)
White Rock Inn	4	4
Covington Court	4	4 (1 vacant)
	140	65

Source: Town of Westerly Planning and Zoning Office

2.7.4 How Is the Town Of Westerly Meeting Local Needs For Affordable Housing?

In conjunction with the 2016 update to the Town of Westerly’s Comprehensive Plan, the Town endeavors to address factually supported estimates of housing needs based on actual market statistics unique to Westerly. The Town of Westerly believes it exceeds the overall contribution of affordable housing anticipated under the Act through its robust stock of sustained year-round rental housing. The Town of Westerly also recognizes that State approval of its plan is dependent upon its compliance with the mandate for a 10 percent LMI production plan. While the Town provides a 10 percent LMI plan in this chapter, it is also advancing its local cause for housing needs by pursuing a statutory alternative to the 10 percent requirement.

During the 2016 session of the Rhode Island General Assembly, the Town of Westerly pursued legislative changes that would provide it an exception to the Low and Moderate Income

Housing Act as an “urban” community that is meeting affordable housing needs through its continued commitment to the provision of rental units for residents \leq 80% AMI. House bill No. 8014A and Senate bill No. 2876A will change the threshold requirement for low or moderate income rental units in a community to 12% where there is at least three thousand (3,000) rental units occupied year-round. As of June 7, 2016 this legislation was still pending.

Westerly’s 2010 Comprehensive Plan Housing Goals

Westerly’s 2010 Comprehensive Plan was very clear about the need for affordable housing and not necessarily or exclusively as meeting it through new single-family construction. What the Town aspires to are strategies that preserve its existing housing stock as affordable.

“Action 5.5: Develop and implement a program to focus and coordinate affordable housing initiatives and funding as an integral part of Westerly’s efforts in neighborhood revitalization and rehabilitation with priority given to existing housing over new construction, and;

Action 5.16: Target neighborhoods for revitalization efforts through the development of neighborhood plans and link implementation with other affordable housing strategies.”

In the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, the first action item towards the town’s goal of maintaining a broad range of housing options stated “Review housing and demographic data regularly to determine whether stated goals are being met and revise as necessary to achieve goals.” In conjunction with the 2016 Update, data collection work has been completed to give the town a clear picture of the current affordable housing makeup in the town. This data analysis has assisted the Comprehensive Plan Citizens’ Advisory Committee (CPCAC) in its recommendations for housing and forms the basis for discussions and recommendations on planning issues such as residential density and services and facilities for Westerly’s neighborhoods and planning areas.

The Town of Westerly is approaching build-out projected for 2036; the remaining land available for development is scarce and generally has environmental constraints to its development. Increased housing density in established neighborhoods that are built-out is impractical and may adversely affect neighborhood character and environmental integrity. Parking requirements alone will result in vast expanses of asphalt and increased surface water runoff, which will require investment in improved drainage facilities.

New concepts for housing goals and policies discussed by the CPCAC include:

- Supporting the development of a variety of housing types so that residents can continue to live in Town even as their housing needs change.
- Planning all residential projects with the intent of preserving and improving the character of existing neighborhoods and well-integrated with neighborhood or district features.
- Establishing programs to assist low and moderate-income owner-occupants of residential properties to repair and maintain their houses so that they can continue to reside in their homes.
- Continuing a community-based housing rehabilitation program

Proportionality of Cost-Burdened Households

The U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) work together to make available data that tracks the extent of housing problems and housing needs in communities, particularly for low income households using American Community Survey (CHAS) data. CHAS data for Westerly are provided in the table at the end of this chapter.

Unfortunately, these estimates have to be used with caution. Most of the estimates have a margin of error greater than 25% of the estimate and are shown in the attached CHAS table in red. These include almost all of the data provided by the CHAS. In many cases, the margin of error (MOE) is several times the estimate. Rhode Island Statewide Planning says of these estimates: “An estimate with a margin of error greater than 25% of the estimate should be used only if there are no suitable alternatives, and with the understanding that its accuracy may be less than desired.” The Town of Westerly will be seeking a more suitable alternative to the estimate of housing need provided by the CHAS. But in the meantime, the discussion of housing need will proceed based on the information provided to the town.

According to CHAS data using the 2008-12 ACS, Westerly had 1,034 households at or below 80 percent of the HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI) with a severe housing cost burden (more than 50 percent of income spent on housing costs). Of these, 44.4 percent (459) were renters and 55.6 percent (575) were homeowners. This is an indication that there is a demand for more affordable housing, whether meeting the mandated definition or otherwise. The most consistent finding in Westerly’s CHAS data is that nearly one-third of households pay too large a percentage of their gross monthly income for housing.

In terms of proportionality, as shown in Table 2-16 below, the CHAS indicates Westerly’s current need is foremost for single units targeted towards the family population with another third for residents in the category with special needs (ie. Single-bedroom elderly, living

assistance, handicapped and communal living). The existing housing supply is providing much of the needed housing for seniors.

Table 2-15 Housing Need by Household Type, 2015

Population	Proportional Need (All Low Income Owners and Renters)	Proportional Supply at 10% Goal	Existing Supply	Supply needed
Elderly	40.8%	426	359	67
Families	35.8%	373	112	261
Special Needs	23.4%	244	73	171
Total	100.0%	1,043	544	499

Source: RI Statewide Planning CHAS 2006-2010 Calculation

Annual Affordable Housing Production Goals by Household Type

An effective housing production plan ensures that the different types of Westerly’s cost-burdened households are each provided a fair and representative proportion of affordable housing units to be constructed through 2036. It is the underserved segment of Westerly’s LMI households which must be targeted, including both family and other non-family households. Table 2-17 shows the number of units intended to serve each household type which should be constructed each five-year period between 2016 and 2036 in order to achieve a fair and appropriate demographic balance. Units approved since the implementation of the Affordable Housing Plan (AHP) of 2004 but not yet constructed is the starting point in 2016.

Table 2-16 LMI Housing Goals by Household Type, 2016-2036

Population	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	Supply needed
Elderly	30	10	10	10	7	67
Families	20	65	65	65	46	261
Special Needs*	5	40	50	50	26	171
Total	55					499

*Special Needs population includes residents with and without disabilities in single-occupant households and other households with non-relatives.

While it will not be possible to ensure these exact numbers are met in a given five-year period, it is imperative that the Town uses its authority under inclusionary zoning and the comprehensive permit process for the production of qualified LMI units to prevent gross imbalances from occurring, such as construction of an excessive number of age-restricted units at the expense of units dedicated to family households of differing sizes.

2.7.5 Affordable Housing Strategies Analysis and Status

The Westerly Affordable Housing Committee meets semiannually and works with municipal staff to implement affordable housing strategies identified in the Comprehensive Community Plan.

Strategy #1: Inclusionary Affordable Housing

This strategy relies on private sector development and affects single-family subdivisions, multi-family residential developments, and mixed-use projects. This market-based tool for producing affordable housing without using tax dollars has produced thousands of housing units across the United States. Its purpose is to integrate affordable housing in development throughout a community by requiring developers to set aside a certain percentage of housing units which are affordable to residents with incomes up to 80 percent of the area's median income.

Westerly's approach is to use mandatory inclusionary zoning when for-profit developers propose market rate housing in residential zoning districts. Mandatory inclusionary zoning also applies when for-profit, market rate housing is proposed for mixed-use developments located in commercial zoning districts, or when adaptive re-use of an historic mill contains market rate housing. In all cases, the Town's incentive-based approach will offer for-profit developers a density bonus for market rate units if they also agree to build a certain percentage of 30 year minimum, deed-restricted units for low and moderate income households earning 80 percent or less of median income. This strategy also applies to non-profit entities whose residential development projects contain market rate units.

It is an objective of the Town to ensure potential middle income homebuyers – the segment of the population earning too much money to be eligible for a subsidy and who must instead rely on conventional mortgage financing – are not excluded from the local housing market.

Strategy 1.1 Inclusionary Zoning – To provide more affordable homeownership opportunities, the Town adopted an Inclusionary Zoning ordinance requiring all new developments with five or more residential units in any zoning district to set aside 20 percent of total units as LMI restricted (Section 260-50.2). A density bonus equal to the percentage of qualified LMI units in the development is provided.

Density bonuses of any type are disallowed in developments which do not provide the requisite minimum number of qualifying LMI units under R.I.G.L. 45-53- 3, which stipulates a minimum 30 year commitment by the developer – enforced by deed restriction – that the units be sold or rented to low or moderate income households.

For cases in which it may not be feasible to develop the affordable units on site, Section 260-50.4 as adopted allowed the developer the option of paying a fee-in-lieu, which is deposited in

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the Town’s Municipal Affordable Housing Fund. Following a change in State law on the administration of the funds from the fee-in-lieu, the Town of Westerly must revisit this option.

Moving forward in this Plan inclusionary zoning is still considered a productive strategy. The town’s inclusionary zoning provisions should be reviewed and revised to produce the type of housing for which there is the strongest need (i.e. family rental units and single-occupant households). The Planning Board should revisit the inclusionary zoning ordinance to evaluate the density bonuses offered and their impact on neighborhoods and environmentally sensitive sites.

There are [number] buildable acres in the RR-60, LDR-40, MDR-30, and HDR-15 zoning districts of which [lower number] are undeveloped. The undeveloped land will support approximately [number] units under the current zoning requirements and inclusionary zoning ordinance. To account for land required for other strategies, it is assumed that 67 percent of the undeveloped buildable land remains in those residential zones. This strategy, based on these assumptions, may provide up to [number] LMI units.

Strategy 1.2 Comprehensive Permit Ordinance – The Town passed a Comprehensive Permit Ordinance (Section 260-50.3, Amended 9-24-2007 by Chapter 1616) in compliance with the State mandated “fast track” review and approval process. Local approvals are given to qualified projects contingent on state approvals and a substantial density bonus is allowed as of right.

Per the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act (45-53-4), comprehensive permits are only available for proposals in which at least 25% of the housing to be developed is restricted for occupancy by low or moderate income households. The Act also requires that all low and moderate income housing units proposed are integrated throughout the development. A state mandated housing production strategy, a comprehensive permit application must produce qualified LMI units, therefore the *fee-in-lieu* is not an option provided as a basis for a comprehensive permit application.

Examples of developments which have been approved through this process include:

- Westerly Courts, Beach Street 10 units, all LMI – South County Mental Health
- North Glen, Pierce Street, 10 units, all LMI – RI Housing & WCCDC
- Spinnaker Landing, Post Road, 42 units, 10 LMI
- Pleasant Street Courts, Covington Court, 17 units, 4 LMI
- WARM Shelter, Spruce Street, 6 units, all LMI

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- Fieldstone Subdivision, Fieldstone Way, 52 units, 13 LMI
- Iroquois Hill, Iroquois Ave., 86 units, 33 LMI – In appeal at SHAB

In 2010, the Town identified in its Comprehensive Plan the need to review this ordinance. As with the inclusionary zoning ordinance, the Town was concerned the number of density bonuses allowed will have impacts associated with lot coverage, design, and environmental protection. An alternative would be to incorporate more appropriate guidelines to ensure quality development with minimal impacts on the community. The approval of projects before they have been reviewed by state or federal agencies, particularly considering the extra density allowed and development on environmentally sensitive land remain a concern. The Town does not consider this a desirable planning approach particularly in the area of the Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) which the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) has determined is already “built beyond carrying capacity” and the RR-60 zoning district surrounding Newton Marsh, Chapman Pond and Aguntaug Swamp, all of which is protected land in an aquifer and is predominantly freshwater wetlands.

The Town’s zoning ordinance not only adopts the comprehensive permitting process; it also provides for increased density intended to aid in the production of qualified low and moderate income housing units. Density bonuses available to developers range from 20 to 66 percent.

However, issues continue to arise with applications for residential development at these rates. The density increases allowed by ordinance do not take into consideration the location or carrying capacity of a development property. The relevant issues vary by zoning district and are briefly discussed here.

HDR-6 – 20 percent density bonus: This is a densely populated district with some of the area in the Pawcatuck River flood hazard area where historic settlement patterns used the river in a very different manner than we do today. This zone is within the Urban Services Boundary, an area which has both public water and sewer which may support additional residential development. The neighborhoods are predominantly rental and small single-family residential on small lots. In many cases, increased density, which requires more parking and pavement, eliminates front yards and other green space. Under these circumstances density bonuses should be limited. The town should review and revise density bonuses and opportunities for infill development using a neighborhood plan approach.

There are 61.9 undeveloped buildable acres in the HDR-6 zoning district. The undeveloped land may support approximately 298 units under the current zoning

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requirements but the capacity for an increase in density through the comprehensive permit process appears limited by the size of the existing lots of record.

HDR-10 – 66 percent density bonus: This district is located in the area of the Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) which the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) has determined is already “built beyond carrying capacity” and where state regulations require 87,120 square feet per dwelling unit. The 2016 buildout analysis forecasts a maximum of six (6) units can be developed in this entire district. This density bonus is impractical for this beach community. This zoning district has public water and private septic and, with the continued threat of storm surge and sea level rise, additional residential development should be discouraged. There should be no density bonus in the HDR-10 zoning district. This change should be made immediately. There are .01 undeveloped buildable acres in the HDR-10 zoning district outside the SAMP and now room for additional residential development.

HDR-15 – 50 percent density bonus: This zoning district is quite stable but is not contiguous. This district can be found in areas as diverse as East Avenue, properties in the flood hazard area along the Pawcatuck River, Springbrook Road (abutting the White Rock Quarry) and Bowling Lane. In this district, vacant land is most likely impacted by freshwater wetlands. This zoning district has both public water and sewer which may support some additional residential development.

There are 113.52 undeveloped buildable acres in the HDR-15 zoning district. To account for land required for other strategies, including inclusionary zoning, it is assumed that 30 percent of the undeveloped buildable land remains in this residential zone for this strategy. The undeveloped land available for this strategy will support approximately **197** units under the current zoning requirements with the available density bonus.

MDR-20 – 33 percent density bonus: This zoning district is scattered across the town in areas with public water and private septic. With further study, the Town may be able to identify available sites appropriate for the development of affordable housing. Where this zoning occurs in the area of the SAMP, further study is needed to determine if this density bonus is practical.

There are 248.26 undeveloped buildable acres in the MDR-20 zoning district. The undeveloped land may support approximately 171 units under the current zoning

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requirements but the capacity for an increase in density through the comprehensive permit process appears limited by the carrying capacity of the built environment.

MDR-30 – 50 percent density bonus: This zoning district is predominantly within the neighborhoods of Avondale and Weekapaug and along Shore Road. Also within the SAMP, further study of this area is needed to determine if a density bonus is practical. With public water available, appropriate sites for the development of multi-family housing might be identified in time, but these units may not be affordable to low and moderate income residents.

There are 733.39 undeveloped buildable acres in the MDR-30 zoning district. The undeveloped land may support approximately 395 units under the current zoning requirements but the capacity for an increase in density through the comprehensive permit process appears limited by the carrying capacity of the built environment.

LDR-40 – 33 percent density bonus: This zoning district is the area on both sides of Route 91 and at McGowan Corners. At White Rock, the land is large lots where the Morrone Trucking Company makes its home. This is predominantly a family compound. This zoning district has private water and septic.

There are 344.84 undeveloped buildable acres in the LDR-40 zoning district. To account for land required for other strategies, including inclusionary zoning, it is assumed that 30 percent of the undeveloped buildable land remains in this residential zone for this strategy. The undeveloped land will support approximately **172** units under the current zoning requirements and with the 33% density bonus currently allowed for a qualified application.

LDR-43 – 33 percent density bonus: LDR-43 is Watch Hill, a coastal area yet outside the SAMP. This district has been exempted from affordable housing under the ordinance even though a density bonus has been assigned to the district. LMI units in a remote part of town that lacks year-round services (a seasonal district) is not practical. There are 92.69 undeveloped buildable acres in the LDR-43 zoning district.

RR-60 – 37 percent density bonus: This zoning district surrounds Newton Marsh, Chapman Pond and Aguntaug Swamp, all of which is protected land in an aquifer and is predominantly freshwater wetlands. Increased residential development in an aquifer and adjacent to a pond creates negative impacts on water quality. The Haversham area

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is also in this zoning district and has historically been farmland with conservation easements. Haversham and those areas along Quonochontaug Pond zoned RR-60 are not appropriate for increased density as they are lands built beyond carrying capacity according to CRMC. In this zone, parcels need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

There are 912.91 undeveloped buildable acres in the RR-60 zoning district. To account for land required for other strategies, including inclusionary zoning, it is assumed that 30 percent of the undeveloped buildable land remains in this residential zone for this strategy. The undeveloped land will support approximately **248** units under the current zoning requirements and with the 37 percent density bonus currently allowed for a qualified application.

This strategy, based on the assumptions discussed above, may provide up to **617** LMI units over the next 20 years.

Moving forward in this Plan comprehensive permitting of qualified LMI units is still considered a productive strategy. The town should apply GIS and other planning tools to collect data and information on the overall potential for future residential development in the Town and identify parcels most suitable for comprehensive permits. The town should realign density bonuses with the prevailing need – family rental units (1 to 3 bedroom) designed in 2 to 4 unit structures. The town should consider changes to the comprehensive permit process that would facilitate efficient and effective review. Sometimes considered “friendly comprehensive permits”, a negotiated or collaborative process can be a vehicle to meeting local housing needs. This more flexible approach can ensure that all low or moderate-income housing units are consistent in quality of construction and design with market rate units, have appropriate site plan design and reasonably address local impacts.

Strategy 1.3 Mixed Residential & Commercial Use – Westerly’s zoning permits mixed residential and commercial use in non-residential zoning districts, including Neighborhood Business (NB), Highway Commercial (HC), General Commercial (GC), Professional Office (P-15), and Downtown Commercial (DC-1 & DC-2). This type of use is defined as:

“The use of any structure or group of structures on a single lot of record for both residential and commercial purposes . . . Residential uses shall not be permitted on the first floor and basement.” (Westerly Zoning Ordinance, Section 260-9)

However, this ordinance has no maximum limit placed on the number of residential units allowed in such developments rather, the upward limit is determined when the developer runs out of space for additional parking stalls. To both remedy this weakness in Westerly’s existing

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ordinance and to promote affordable housing, the 2010 plan recommended several amendments to the zoning regulations, including an Affordable **Housing Overlay District**.

In order to diversify the tax base and preserve employment opportunities, the 2010 Plan recommended housing should always be considered a secondary or ancillary use in Westerly's commercial zoning districts. Hence a residential component would not be required for any proposed development comprised exclusively of commercial, retail or office uses currently permitted by zoning. It also recommended the minimum 20 percent affordable housing component be mandatory if residential units are to be proposed as part of a commercial development (that is, meeting the zoning ordinances definition of mixed **residential and commercial use**).

Furthermore, it was recommended that a maximum net Floor Area Ratio (FAR) be established for mixed residential and commercial use, such that retail and commercial uses always remain paramount, and not placed in a secondary role to residential uses. Buildings in the Downtown Commercial zone would be allowed greater residential FAR's because historically they have been built to greater heights (i.e., 50 feet in DC-1 vs. **35 feet in HC**).

In [year] the Town evaluated these mixed use tools. The Planning Board found The result was... The current recommendation is ...

Moving forward in this Plan mixed residential and commercial development is still considered a productive strategy. [discuss how it will be used.]

There are 35.9 buildable acres in the Neighborhood Business (NB), Highway Commercial (HC), General Commercial (GC), Professional Office (P-15), and Downtown Commercial (DC-1 & DC-2) zoning districts of which **[lower number]** are undeveloped. The undeveloped land will support approximately **[number]** units under the current zoning requirements and a residential component **[number]**. This strategy, based on these assumptions, may provide up to **[number]** LMI units in mixed use development on undeveloped acres.

The 35.9 buildable acres in these zoning districts also includes **[lower number]** subject to redevelopment. The redeveloped parcels will support approximately **[number]** units under the current zoning requirements and with a residential component of **[number]**. This strategy, based on these assumptions, may provide up to **[number]** LMI units in mixed use development on redeveloped parcels.

Other Inclusionary Zoning Issues – Although beyond the scope of this plan, it is essential that the following issues are addressed, preferably with the assistance of RIH and RI Statewide Planning, prior to issuance of any for-profit Comprehensive Permits:

- Qualifications of applicants for low and moderate income units, adjusting for different household sizes;
- Calculation of rent and sales prices for low and moderate-income units;
- Controlling the resale of low and moderate income units over time to ensure conveyance to qualified households; and
- Addressing the increase in a property’s value and equity at the time low and moderate-income unit is sold or transferred.
- Environmental constraints of the property are considered with added density.

Strategy #2: Affordable Housing by Non-Profit & Public Agencies

Non-profit organizations and public agencies are encouraged to pursue affordable housing as site-specific opportunities present themselves. Since 2004, the comprehensive permit process has been used successfully for the approval of LMI qualified housing by non-profit and public agencies.

The Washington County Community Development Corporation (WCCDC) provides and promotes decent affordable housing to low- to moderate-income people within Washington County and surrounding towns. Westerly works with this non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation for the purpose of creating affordable housing to meet regional needs. A board of directors with representation from each participating municipality will define programs and activities, and identify and secure funding resources. Creation of additional local CDC’s specific to the geographic boundary of Westerly alone is not recommended, since the town already hosts both the Westerly Housing Authority and the North End Crime Watch & Community Development Corporation.

The Town of Westerly will continue to work with non-profit organizations and public agencies to target housing to local needs of the population and to ensure consistency with the goals of this Plan. Since there are only limited amounts of state or federal financial subsidies available to non-profit and public housing agencies, a collaborative and negotiated process should be explored.

In such a collaboration the Town will utilize, to the extent possible, either the inclusionary zoning ordinance or the comprehensive permit processes example of density bonus and incentives. In particular there are [number] sites which the town has identified as potential for such collaboration. The [name] Plat x, Lot # [describe] lot/parcel size and numbers of units] of

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which 100 percent are to be LMI restricted. The [name] Plat x, Lot # [describe] lot/parcel size and numbers of units] of which 100 percent are to be LMI restricted. This strategy, based on these assumptions, may provide up to [number] LMI units.

Strategy #3: Historic Mill Adaptive Re-Use & Mill Village Revitalization

This comprehensive strategy calls for adaptive re-use of historic mills for mixed-use or residential purposes, designating state-sanctioned growth centers to target infrastructure and redevelopment grant funding, and leveraging private-sector financing through use of historic preservation tax credits, should the program become available again in the future.

Strategy 3.1 Historic Mill Overlay District – In 2011, the Town adopted its Historic Mill Overlay District. This District allows for the redevelopment of existing mills into multi-use structures to encourage renovation and adaptive re-use of historic mills and neighboring multi-family dwellings. In addition to promoting affordable housing, these zones can also accommodate commercial, retail or office use where such mixed-use is deemed appropriate. The objective is to retain the historic architecture while adapting obsolete or underutilized structures 21st Century needs. Since 2011, ...

Westerly has historic mills located in the North End, White Rock, Potter Hill, and Bradford, the latter two fall within the Historic Mill Overlay District. Each mill is surrounded by numerous multi-family dwellings originally constructed to house mill employees. It is fair to say that each neighborhood has seen better days and that a decline in the town's manufacturing base has led to a deterioration of housing stock surrounding these mills.

In May 2003, the Town adopted a revitalization plan for the North End neighborhood. This plan encourages for-profit affordable housing development, since it is expected that at least 80 percent of the units would actually be sold to middle income households who must qualify for conventional mortgages, and thus reestablish a property-owning middle class in a neighborhood now dominated mostly by absentee landlords. It is believed a similar strategy would also work in White Rock, Potter Hill, and Bradford. The North End Revitalization Plan

Strategy 3.2 Locally Designated "Growth Centers" – Mill villages are identified by the state as potential Growth Centers, which according to a report by the Governor's Growth Planning Council (August 2002), "... are dynamic and efficient centers for development that have a core of commercial and community services, residential development, and natural and built landmarks and boundaries that provide a sense of place." In an era of fiscal constraint, the state has targeted much of its infrastructure and redevelopment grant funding towards locally designated Growth Centers, which in turn, could help Westerly revitalize mill villages when targeted by affordable housing developers. Low and moderate income housing development

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by non-profit organizations and public agencies also rely on state and federal financing which favor development in locally designated Growth Centers. As part of the community's future land use strategies the Town of Westerly will study Bradford as a potential Growth Center along with the potential for the construction and rehabilitation of affordable (if not LMI qualified) housing.

Strategy #4: Downtown Arts District Affordable Housing Demonstration Project. In Westerly, the term “struggling artist” is not an exaggeration. Many artists earn little if any money in the early stages of their career, and finding affordable housing is one of the most serious problems they face. By developing a demonstration project providing affordable housing specifically geared toward low-income artists, Westerly has an opportunity to use the incentives provided by the General Assembly to attract artists into its downtown area. R.I.G.L. 44-18-30B allows tax incentives for artists who live and work in specific districts, including downtown Westerly. This law states:

“The development of an active artistic community, including _artists in residence’, in [these districts] would promote economic development, revitalization, tourism, employment opportunities, and encourage business development by providing alternative commercial enterprises.”

Two kinds of tax incentives target artist housing: (1) for artists who live and work within a specified district, any sale of work created within the district is exempt from state sales tax; and (2) for artists who live and work within a specified district, any income they receive from the sale of work they have created within the district is exempt from state personal income tax.

It is noteworthy that Westerly's Downtown Arts District is contained fully within a State and National Register Historic District, which as noted above, offers additional state and federal tax credits for certified rehabilitation projects. Furthermore, Strategy #5 below outlines a proposed local rehabilitation tax credit, which also could be used to assist this endeavor.

In early 2004, a group of artists, arts administrators, and housing professionals met to discuss affordable artist housing, particularly artist live/work exhibition/performance space, resulting in a coalition led by Rhode Island Citizens for the Arts, the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, and the Housing Network of Rhode Island. The RI State Arts Council has made a three-year funding commitment to this effort by awarding \$15,000 annually to the Housing Network of Rhode Island, for the purpose of hiring a consultant to manage this process, including developing an affordable artist housing demonstration project. **This program has ...**

It is recommended that the Town look at the successes of the ArtSpace project in Norwich, Connecticut and Hygienic Arts in New London for inspiration and approach the statewide

artist’s housing coalition in search of opportunities that may exist in downtown Westerly’s Arts District, including available properties, grant funding and tax incentives, focusing on potential live/work spaces over existing storefronts. The result was... The current recommendation is ...

There are [number] acres in the Downtown Commercial (DC-1 & DC-2) zoning districts subject to redevelopment. The redeveloped parcels will support approximately [number] units under the current zoning requirements and with a residential component of not more than 25 percent. This strategy, based on these assumptions, may provide up to [number] LMI units in mixed use development on redeveloped parcels.

Strategy #5: Local Rehabilitation Tax Credits, Revolving Loan Fund & Accessory Affordable Apartments By bundling together three related programs, it is believed the incentive to individual property owners would be substantial enough to result in creation of additional affordable housing units. These would principally be “accessory affordable apartments” which are secondary to a principal residential or commercial use. Since they would not substantially alter the exterior appearance of an existing structure or generate much additional traffic, this type of dwelling unit should be permitted throughout the entire town, and not confined to just the Affordable Housing Overlay District.

Strategy 5.1 Local Rehabilitation Tax Credits – In 2010, it was recommended that Westerly adopt a tax credit for property owners undertaking substantial rehabilitation of existing structures and accessory apartments, provided that they are willing to keep rehabilitated or new housing units affordable for at least 30 years for persons earning 80 percent or less than AMI. A recommended minimum threshold is an investment of at least \$20,000 in building code or safety improvements (including lead paint removal), with a resultant property tax credit for 20 percent of the cost of improvements up to a maximum of \$5,000, to be spread over a period of five years. If used in conjunction with other state or federal tax credits described above, or with grants that may be available from RI Housing or the CDBG program, LMI qualifying units might be produced. Since affordable units created through this strategy are contained within existing structures, they would not require additional infrastructure or zoning changes eliminating these costs. The town must commit to evaluating the viability of a local rehabilitation tax credit.

Strategy 5.2 Revolving Fund -- In conjunction with a tax credit, the Town considered establishing a revolving fund. This fund would provide short-term low interest loans for renovations; when the loan is repaid, the capital can then be loaned to another project, thus it —revolves. By targeting this effort in a concentrated area, such as the North End neighborhood,

a revolving fund can have a tangible and highly visible impact on neighborhood revitalization. This is consistent with the overall goal of the Comprehensive Plan to preserve existing historic apartment housing in the Town’s traditional neighborhoods.

Many communities seed a revolving rehabilitation loan program with CDBG funds and use it to address a variety of housing issues, including heating systems, lead-based paint, and emergency repairs. The Town could design a program which focuses on low- and moderate-income home owners and tenants, if rental properties. To target the neighborhoods, programs can prioritize multi-family and historic buildings and have affordable housing incentives and requirements.

The private Westerly Revolving Fund was incorporated in 2013, seeded by private donations and seeking to reproduce the success of the Providence Revolving Fund. The Town is now working with the Westerly Revolving Fund to assist with management and administration of the Town’s CDBG rehabilitation program.

There are [number] of housing units inventoried by [name] in need of rehabilitation and eligible for revolving loan funds. The rehabilitation of these units with the associated LMI restrictions may provide up to [number] LMI units through this program.

Strategy 5.3 Accessory Affordable Apartments – Westerly’s zoning ordinance currently permits accessory or in-law apartments in all residential zoning districts, as well as the P-15, DC-2 and NB zones. They are considered a secondary dwelling unit established in conjunction with and clearly subordinate to a primary dwelling unit (or in case of commercial zones, the principal retail or office use). It is recommended that zoning be modified to also permit accessory apartments in all of the Town’s remaining commercial zones, provided that occupancy would be restricted to low or moderate-income households for a period of not less than 30 years. In [year] the Town The Planning Board found The result was... The current recommendation is ...

Developed single family houses in all residential zoning districts, as well as the P-15, DC-2 and NB zones total [number]. If one percent of these single-family homes use this provision to create accessory or in law apartment, this strategy could create up to [number] new affordable units.

Strategy #6: Neighborhood Revitalization

Westerly’s traditional neighborhoods are Bradford, Downtown, North End, White Rock, Wilcox East and Granite-and-State. These six neighborhoods contain an estimated 2,500 rental apartments, which have provided de facto (but not rent-controlled or deed restricted)

affordable residences to the Town as well as Washington and New London counties. They are serviced by public water and five of the neighborhoods have public sewer service. Built mostly between 1840 and 1917, these neighborhoods contain a variety of single- and multi-family housing options near commercial and industrial uses. They are also near community facilities and public amenities and infrastructure like an extensive sidewalk network.

Unfortunately, the well-integrated mixture of land uses and housing types may mask some of the problems facing these neighborhoods. It is well-accepted that the overall financial strength of Westerly is based on property values in the beach areas. The households in the six traditional, multi-family neighborhoods have lower incomes and require additional social services. One recent study reported that in both the Bradford and Springbrook Elementary Schools (serving the Bradford, White Rock and North End neighborhoods), approximately 47 percent of the children are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Other issues facing these neighborhoods include a large number of absentee landlords, some vacant underused commercial and professional units along Route 1, and debris-strewn areas, all of which have led to deteriorating properties and blighted sections.

Neighborhood revitalization is a comprehensive approach that involves more than affordable housing and should include land use, infrastructure, urban design, and community building. Addressing each neighborhood with a Neighborhood Revitalization Plan can guide reinvestment. Integrating affordable housing into these neighborhoods can be part of these plans as an effort to rehabilitate existing structures and increase rental units for LMI eligible households.

To begin the revitalization process, the following will be explored:

- Develop incentives to target the development of LMI units in the Town's traditional neighborhoods as rental units
- Rehabilitate key landmark structures as important stabilizing factors for traditional neighborhoods and important additions to the LMI supply.
- Use payment-in-lieu funds to restore houses in traditional neighborhoods.
- Expand the role of the Westerly Housing Authority to oversee the development, ownership, and management of rehabilitated properties in traditional neighborhoods.
- Pool and coordinate housing funding from all appropriate sources, including Comprehensive Permits and Inclusionary Zoning ordinances, Community Development Block Grant funds, Neighborhood Opportunities Program and Building Better Community funds, and HOME funds, as well as upcoming KeepSpace projects.
- Research the legislation and implementation of a registry of non-owner occupied rental housing units, creating a local requirement that , as each unit is vacated, it cannot be

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rented again until it is inspected and given a Certificate of Apartment Occupancy. This will ensure such units are maintained as decent, safe and sanitary.

Neighborhood revitalization is linked with Strategy 5 to take advantage of the Revolving Loan Fund and other programs that support housing rehabilitation.

Strategies Summary

Table 2-19 lists the projected number of affordable units that could be created by the Town’s proposed LMI housing strategies for the next twenty (20) years. The total projection of affordable units from these strategies over twenty (20) years is _____, exceeding the [#] required to meet the State’s 10 percent threshold.

Table 2-18 Projected Number of LMI Units Created by Proposed Strategies, 2016- 2036

	2021	2026	2031	2036	Beyond 2036
Strategy 1.1					
Strategy 1.2					
Strategy 1.3					
Strategy 2	0			0	0
Strategy 3	0	0	0	0	0
Strategy 4					
Strategy 5.1	0	0	0	0	0
Strategy 5.2					
Strategy 5.3					
Strategy 6	0				
Total					At least 499

Source:

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

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

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

Table 2-19 CHAS Data Table, 2006-10¹

	All Low Income (<80% HAMFI)											
	Renters						Owners					
	Cost burden 30-50%				Cost burden >50%		Cost burden 30-50%				Cost burden >50%	
	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE
All	2,075	330	805	216	395	195	1,995	289	600	166	580	154
Elderly Family	120	77	10	180	35	188	470	138	105	143	95	55
Elderly Non-Family	480	129	195	87	75	137	585	158	90	53	170	88
Small Family	760	214	315	186	135	157	600	146	235	152	200	90
Large Family	40	184	15	181	25	183	55	48	15	181	40	42
Other	670	180	270	128	125	147	280	119	155	96	75	41
	Extremely Low Income (<30% HAMFI)											
	Renters						Owners					
	Cost burden 30-50%				Cost burden >50%		Cost burden 30-50%				Cost burden >50%	
	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE
All	720	200	170	102	335	138	375	150	30	27	265	119
Elderly Family	65	62	0	127	35	54	20	25	0	127	20	25
Elderly Non-Family	210	85	75	49	65	49	225	118	20	23	125	81
Small Family	150	96	0	127	110	85	55	52	0	127	55	52
Large Family	40	39	15	25	25	34	20	32	0	127	20	32
All Other	255	110	80	83	100	69	55	38	10	13	45	34
	Very Low Income (30-50% HAMFI)											
	Renters						Owners					

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	Cost burden 30-50%				Cost burden >50%				Cost burden 30-50%				Cost burden >50%			
	Estimate		MOE		Estimate		MOE		Estimate		MOE		Estimate		MOE	
	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE
All	645	178	365	143	60	53	550	124	155	87	135	61				
Elderly Family	35	36	10	14	0	127	200	83	70	59	25	30				
Elderly Non-Family	155	69	45	32	10	18	180	72	50	42	30	27				
Small Family	220	112	165	99	25	36	105	64	25	28	50	44				
Large Family	0	127	0	127	0	127	10	21	0	127	10	21				
Other	235	112	150	92	25	28	55	48	10	21	20	18				
Low Income (50-80% HAMFI)																
	Renters						Owners									
	Cost burden 30-50%				Cost burden >50%		Cost burden 30-50%				Cost burden >50%					
	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE		
All	710	193	270	126	0	127	1,070	213	415	139	180	76				
Elderly Family	20	28	0	127	0	127	250	108	35	31	50	39				
Elderly Non-Family	115	69	75	64	0	127	180	76	20	23	15	23				
Small Family	390	155	150	93	0	127	440	120	210	78	95	59				
Large Family	0	127	0	127	0	127	25	29	15	25	10	18				
Other	180	89	40	33	0	127	170	102	135	93	10	13				
All Non Low-Income (> 80% HAMFI)																
	Renters						Owners									
	Cost burden 30-50%				Cost burden >50%		Cost burden 30-50%				Cost burden >50%					
	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE		
All	965	239	10	128	10	129	4,460	302	245	105	35	31				
Elderly Family	20	25	0	180	0	180	835	135	30	33	20	25				
Elderly Non-Family	155	106	10	128	10	129	285	105	40	39	10	17				
Small Family	350	149	0	180	0	180	2,340	267	60	50	0	127				
Large Family	40	59	0	180	0	180	370	107	15	24	0	127				
Other	405	145	0	180	0	180	630	167	105	81	0	127				
80-100% HAMFI																
	Renters						Owners									
	Cost burden 30-50%				Cost burden >50%		Cost burden 30-50%				Cost burden >50%					
	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE		
All			10	13	0	127			355	101	80	45				
Elderly Family			0	127	0	127			65	38	45	36				
Elderly Non-Family			10	13	0	127			10	15	0	127				
Small Family			0	127	0	127			165	73	10	16				
Large Family			0	127	0	127			15	22	15	31				
Other			0	127	0	127			100	52	4	16				

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	>100% HAMFI							
	Renters				Owners			
	Cost burden 30-50%		Cost burden >50%		Cost burden 30-50%		Cost burden >50%	
	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE	Estimate	MOE
All	0	127	10	22	600	146	115	55
Elderly Family	0	127	0	127	95	50	65	44
Elderly Non-Family	0	127	10	22	50	42	10	128
Small Family	0	127	0	127	225	88	10	128
Large Family	0	127	0	127	30	33	15	131
Other	0	127	0	127	205	96	4	128

Source: 2006-10 ACS 5-year estimates

¹ Formatted by Statewide Planning in conjunction with RI Housing, accessible at <http://www.planning.ri.gov/geodeminfo/data/chas.php>

3 Economic Vitality

3.1 Introduction

The economic vitality of the Town of Westerly was greatly impacted by the global recession which took place in the later 2000s and its prolonged effects on Rhode Island and southeastern Connecticut. A summary of current local and regional economic development initiatives, a local and regional employment overview, the size of the labor force, industries of employment and occupation types of residents, resident income and business activity are included in this section. The information serves as the foundation for identifying appropriate policies, programs and projects to foster continued economic development and growth.

3.2 Regional Economic Overview

Rhode Island

Likely a benefit of its geographic size, a majority (54.1 percent) of Rhode Island's largest employers identified by RI Commerce is headquartered within the state. Their range of primary activities often reflect the industries identified as state strengths in *Rhode Island Rising: A Plan for People, Places and Prosperity* (State Guide Plan - Economic Development Element, Report 121), which include agriculture and fishing, manufacturing, transportation, professional services, health care, food services and education. Along with the Westerly residents who are employed by these companies throughout Rhode Island, 11 also have offices or stores located in town. Many of these businesses will be discussed for their local economic contributions later in this chapter.

Rhode Island earns its nickname the 'Ocean State' from its miles of coastline along Narragansett Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. A tourism satellite account (TSA) used by IHS, Inc. to overview Rhode Island's tourism in 2013 found just over 19.0 million visits were made to the state, of which nearly 9.2 million originated from more than 50 miles away. Tourism comprised 5.3 percent of the gross state product and generated 9.6 percent of total employment in Rhode Island for 2013.

One additional area of significance, particularly for southern Rhode Island (including Newport County), is defense. According to a June 2014 report on the influence of the defense sector in Rhode Island's economy, 6.2 percent of the state's total employment and \$1.9 billion in its household incomes was attributable to the defense sector.¹ Many of these employers contributing to this impact in the state are also present in New London County in neighboring Connecticut.

¹ Tebaldi, Edinaldo. "The Economic Impact of the Rhode Island Defense Sector." *Bryant University* June 2014. <http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Reports/2014%20-%20Defense%20Report%20-%20Final%20-%2007072014.pdf>

The Resilient Rhode Island Act was passed by the General Assembly in 2014 and is meant to ensure the state and its economy will be resilient in the face of the impacts brought about by climate change by offering a framework for planning for and managing such anticipated effects through adaptation, mitigation and institutional design. To do this, the act targets reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from all economic sectors and authorizes the use of economic diversification, among other actions.

Southeastern Connecticut

Westerly's economy is vitally linked to southeastern Connecticut through its local history and geographic location. The 2000 Census estimated 39.1 percent (4,320) of all workers aged 16 and over in Westerly were working outside Rhode Island. While this fell to 35.4 percent (3,747), according to 2010-2014 five-year estimates by the American Community Survey (ACS), Westerly continues to be one of only two municipalities in Rhode Island falling outside the Providence-Warwick New England City and Town Area (NECTA). Moody's estimated that in 2007, nearly 11 percent of Rhode Island's workforce (63,000 individuals) commuted to Connecticut for employment.

General Dynamics Electric Boat (GDEB), a subsidiary of General Dynamics Corporation, is a major defense contractor for the United States Navy through the design, construction and lifecycle support of submarines. Located in Groton, Connecticut, GDEB also has in-state locations in Newport and North Kingstown (Quonset Point) as well as New London, Connecticut. Along with the Virginia-class submarine program, for which it serves as the design yard and prime contractor, GDEB's involvement in the Ohio Replacement Program comes at a time of generational turnover for the company, resulting in projected employment peaks taking place in 2018 and 2027 (the company projects hiring several thousand new employees between 2016 and 2031 to keep pace). Recognizing Westerly as an important source of this future workforce, GDEB will establish a training facility at the Westerly Higher Education and Job Skills Center upon its completion (construction is currently underway and the Community College of Rhode Island will also be an occupant of the center, which includes 17 classrooms). Other employers related to the defense sector include the US Coast Guard and Navy themselves. The US Coast Guard Academy in New London and the Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton together employ over 11,000 workers. The Naval Underwater Warfare Center in Newport also employs many civilian workers from the region.

Notable portions of Westerly's labor force are also employed at Foxwoods Resort Casino (Ledyard, Connecticut), owned and operated by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, and Mohegan Sun (Uncasville, Connecticut), owned and operated by the Mohegan Tribe. Both resorts feature several gaming, entertainment and hospitality facilities as well as numerous retail shops and restaurants. Along with providing employment to Westerly residents, they also

support the town as a prime location for visitors. Other attractions include the Mystic Aquarium and Mystic Seaport.

A research facility for Pfizer, Inc., located in Groton, is a major healthcare industry employer for the town's labor force. The facility employs about 6,000 total workers from several communities and assists in the research and development of numerous healthcare products and treatments. Another notable employer, the New London-based Lawrence & Memorial Corporation, now has a direct presence in Westerly and will be discussed further on.

Dependence on healthcare, defense and tourism leaves the regional economy somewhat vulnerable to shifts in these sectors.

3.3 Town Economic Overview

3.3.1 Financial Health and Economic Indicators

Westerly's credit rating was enhanced in 2007 when the two largest and most prominent bond rating agencies raised the rating on the Town's General Obligation (GO) debt. On August 30, Moody's issued a decision raising the rating of Westerly's existing G.O. debt of \$69.3 million from A1 to Aa3 and at the same time assigned a rating of Aa3 to \$8 million in new bonded debt. Standard & Poor's (S&P) issued its AA- rating for the Town's new bonds and affirmed its AA- rating of the existing debt, characterizing the town's debt-worthiness as stable. The AA- rating is roughly analogous to the Aa3 rating. Both ratings were maintained throughout the economic downturn taking place in the following years and were most recently reissued in May 2014.

In making their determinations, both agencies cited a number of favorable aspects of Westerly's economy. These included the town's good financial position, reserves, modest existing debt burden, recent property appreciation resulting in an expanded tax base and market value of homes. S&P noted the town's tourism-based economy slightly constrains the Town's rating while the financial outlook for the town's economy is stable. A discussion of Town and School finances appears in the Services & Facilities discussion.

3.3.2 Distinctions

A 2012 report by the Economic Development Commission (EDC) recognized strong fiscal management as an asset of the town, along with other advantages including a low tax rate, diversification in the local economy and an active business community.

The local economy is arguably led by the Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce (often referred to as "the Chamber"), whose modern bylaws were established in 1925 (though its history dates back to the Westerly Board of Trade organized in the colonial era). The Chamber is a leading advocate for local businesses in promoting Westerly through numerous events and

programs. Three business associations are also presently active in town – the Misquamicut Business Association (MBA), Watch Hill Business Association (WHBA) and Westerly-Pawcatuck Downtown Business Association (DBA; see the section on downtown revitalization below) – while the Greater North End Community Development, Inc. is seeking to establish a North End Business Development Association as well.

Westerly and its surrounding area have achieved significant distinctions in past years, including:

- Designation by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of only 132 Distinctive Destinations throughout the United States and the first to be designated in Rhode Island
- Ranked in 2006 by *Money Magazine*, as part of South County (officially named Washington County), as one of the Top 12 Best Places to Vacation in North America
- Ranked in June 2008 by *Forbes.com*, as part of Washington County, as the twelfth best place in America to raise a family

3.3.3 Significant Local Sectors

Westerly is primarily a town of small business establishments with only one employer among Rhode Island’s largest headquartered locally. There are a number of significant sectors in the local economy, however, and they are summarized below.

Health Care

As it is in the state, health care and social assistance is also the largest industry employer in Westerly. Demographic trends, mainly a growing elderly population, will fuel strong growth in the industry until at least 2022, according to Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (RIDLT) projections, and likely well beyond this date.

L+M Westerly Hospital is a major institution at the core of Westerly’s economy. Since its opening in 1925, the hospital has historically been a major local employer and was the largest single private employer in fiscal year (FY) 2014-2015, with 638 employees (130 of which are primary and specialty physicians). Westerly Hospital became a part of the Lawrence & Memorial Corporation in June 2013 through the L+M Medical Group. The main building is a 125-bed acute care facility and additional services are based in Westerly and Hopkinton.

The second largest health care-related employer in town, with 65 employees in FY2014-2015, is AGFA HealthCare, an autonomous business group within Agfa-Gevaert (both headquartered in Belgium) providing healthcare technology to 50 percent of hospitals globally.² AGFA HealthCare became part of the community following its acquisition of a local startup company in 2007.

²<http://www.agfahealthcare.com/global/en/main/>

The May 2016 opening of a South County Health Medical and Wellness Center in Westerly, marketed as a ‘one stop shop’ for medical needs, further indicated the strength of the local healthcare sector and is expected to staff several dozen employees. For more information on the Medical and Wellness Center and L+M Westerly Hospital, visit the chapter on Services and Facilities.

Finance

The Washington Trust Company, the largest state-chartered bank in Rhode Island and the oldest community bank in the United States (established in 1800) is headquartered in Westerly’s Downtown. It is a \$3.8 billion corporation owned by Washington Trust Bancorp, Inc. The bank employs 585 people company-wide with approximately 300 employees in Westerly. It is one of Rhode Island’s top 100 employers and has been recognized by *Providence Business News* as one of the “Best Places to Work” in the State for five consecutive years. This institution has 21 branches (3 of which are in Westerly and 20 in Rhode Island) and has 26 office locations including three offices in Connecticut and one in Massachusetts. Its extensive operations center is located in the Westerly Airport Industrial Park.

The Westerly Community Credit Union (WCCU), a full service, financial organization, has served over 17,000 members in Rhode Island and New London County since 1948. They employ over 65 employees and maintain 4 branch offices located in Westerly, Richmond, and South Kingstown, as well as a mortgage office located in Newport. A non-profit corporation, the credit union is a cooperatively-owned, state-chartered, federally-insured community financial organization whose field of membership includes all individuals who live or work in the State of Rhode Island or New London County. Recently awarded first place as the fastest-growing and most innovative company in Rhode Island by *Providence Business News*, the credit union is also very active in the community it serves. Known for its commitment to youth and area schools, WCCU sponsor and run several programs teaching financial literacy and have been an active school sports booster since 1984.

Other regional and national financial institutions have an established presence in Westerly, indicating confidence in the Town’s economic vitality.

Westerly Airport and Airport Industrial Park

Westerly Airport offers regularly scheduled flights to and from Block Island Airport via New England Airlines – the single regular commercial passenger service available. Airport tenants additionally include charter companies and aviation maintenance companies and there is substantial private aircraft traffic during the summer, primarily connected to tourism. The most recent economic impact study update for the airport, from 2006, estimated the airport generated economic activities of approximately \$8.4 million.

An industrial park adjacent to the airport is serviced by municipal water and sewer, natural gas and large-capacity electrical service and has access to Interstate 95 via Route 78. Expansion is limited due to the airport and surrounding residential neighborhoods and 13 of the 15 parcels, encompassing 90.5 percent of the area's 54.2 acres, are already developed. Preparation for the development of a fourteenth parcel, a 3.3 acre property noted in the 2010 Plan, is also underway as of spring 2016.

Textiles

Westerly has a long and significant history of textile manufacturing and finishing. Today, two of the once numerous textile facilities continue to operate. Darlington Fabrics and the George C. Moore Company, both subsidiaries of The Moore Company (headquartered in Westerly and established in 1909), are located in Westerly, adjacent to Route 1A, and produce high-quality materials including performance fabrics (Darlington) and narrow elastic (George C. Moore). Griswold Textile Print, Inc. has operated as a fully operational hand-printed fabric mill in the White Rock neighborhood since its establishment in 1937.

Printing

The C. B. Cottrell & Sons Company established in Westerly in 1855 as Cottrell & Babcock was at the turn of the twentieth-century the second largest presswork in the United States.³The workforce expertise of the company spawned two local companies which are today located in the airport industrial park and manufacture and service the printing equipment industry – Maxson Automatic Machine Company and E.R. Smith Associates. *The Westerly Sun*, a seven-day daily newspaper founded in 1857, moved its operations from downtown Westerly to Pawcatuck and continues to cover local communities in Washington County, Rhode Island and New London County, Connecticut.

Construction

United Builders Supply Co., Inc. has its corporate headquarters and its retail, wholesale and fabrication facilities on Oak Street. It is a regional supplier to the construction industry with two locations in southwestern Rhode Island and two in southeastern Connecticut. Cherenzia Excavation, Inc. operates three aggregate stone quarries in Westerly which serve the region. Numerous other contractors serve the local residential and commercial markets. The opportunities afforded by the shoreline community have produced many local master craftsmen of distinction.

Local Government

The Town of Westerly, through its various municipal departments and its School Department, is a significant employer for the community and its neighbors. The approved FY2017 budget

³http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/findaids/pdf/mss0093_0014.pdf

provides for 745.1 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions with 182.5 in non-school municipal departments and 562.6 in the School Department. Staffing is examined carefully during the annual budget process to ensure the Town maintains the capacity to deliver quality levels of service in key functional areas such as education, public works and utilities, public safety, finance and administration. School employment levels have increased slightly over the past several fiscal years arguably due to a growth in services provided to students and non-school employment levels have fallen slightly due to the consolidation of certain departmental functions between the School and municipal departments. The Town also provides part-time seasonal employment in support of recreational opportunities, maintenance of infrastructure and public safety.

Travel and Tourism

Visitors, primarily from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and other northeast locations, are attracted to Westerly each summer to enjoy its seven miles of beaches in Misquamicut, Watch Hill and Weekapaug and to experience the numerous local attractions throughout town (for more information on these attractions, see the Historic and Cultural Resources chapter). WQ Economics reported in June 2015 about one million people visited beaches in Washington County.

The Rhode Island Travel and Tourism Research Report, compiled in 2005 by the University of Rhode Island Office of Travel, Tourism and Recreation, found that Washington County collected nine percent of the \$11.9 million generated by the state lodgings tax in 2004. Tourism industry wages in Westerly in 2002 were seventh highest among the state's cities and towns, generating \$27.88 million in wages and \$101.54 million in impact. An indicator of the interdependence of tourism with the general local economy is the finding that for every one dollar of wages generated by tourism in Westerly, \$3.64 in economic activity was generated. Despite the global economic downturn in the later 2000s, comparisons of actual state grant in aid for hotel and meal taxes since FY2009 has indicated a general growth in this sector in Westerly.

Accommodations

The Town of Westerly has been proactive in allowing the redevelopment of several major coastline properties to assist in growing local tourism.

- Ocean House – The single remaining Victorian-styled hotel in the village of Watch Hill, a historically affluent summer destination. The original 1868 structure, at the request of the Royce Funds (based in New York and headed by a part-time Westerly resident) was demolished and rebuilt in replication of the original with the approval of the Town Council and oversight by the Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) and other historic preservation groups. The ability to allow

purchase of some two-bedroom luxury suites in the hotel provided by the amendments contributed to the economic viability of the project. The resort is one of a small number worldwide with the combined designations of AAA Five Diamond and Forbes Five Star hotel, restaurant and spa. Over \$1.1 million in tax revenue for the Town of Westerly was generated from the Ocean House in 2015.

- Watch Hill Inn – Established as the Narragansett Inn in 1845, the inn was approved to be converted into spacious bay and ocean view residential units and a restaurant. An adjacent structure was also added providing motel accommodations.
- Weekapaug Inn – Also through the involvement of Royce Funds, renovation and restoration of the historic inn was completed in October 2014. With approval from the Town Council, five detached townhomes and luxury suites within the hotel were added for purchase. In 2015, the Forbes Four Star hotel generated \$226,799 in tax revenues for the Town of Westerly.

Along with these, Westerly includes many more businesses catering to visitors and the seasonal economy, ranging from bed and breakfast establishments, and other inns and hotels, as shown in Table 3-1 below.

Table 3-1 Accommodations in Westerly, 2016

Establishment	Rooms Available
Aquastar Inn	16
Blue Whale Inn	9
Breezeway Inn	55
Langworthy Farm Bed & Breakfast	6
Ocean Club at Atlantic Beach	27
Ocean House	49
Ocean View Motel	10
Pleasant View Inn	100
Point 1 Motel	30
Sand Dollar Inn	33
Sandcastle Beachfront Inn	26
Sea Shell Motel	10
Shelter Harbor Inn	24
The Villa Bed & Breakfast	8
Watch Hill Court	8
Watch Hill Harbour House Inn	10
Watch Hill Inn	18
Weekapaug Inn	31
Winnapaug Inn	47
Total	517

Source: Visit Rhode Island - Official Rhode Island Tourism website

The previous plan, referencing a past edition of the *Go Westerly* annual publication by the Chamber (at that time, the Greater Westerly-Pawcatuck Area Chamber of Commerce), stated approximately 600 guest rooms existed in the Westerly area, indicating a loss of about 83 rooms. The Chamber, monitoring changes in room availability between 1996 and 2015, has recorded the closing of nineteen establishments resulting in a loss of 195 rooms and a net loss of 172 rooms. Some of these establishments were purchased to be used as housing for seasonal workers.

Although summary information has been compiled, there has been no systematic evaluation of the accommodations available in Westerly to determine whether modern markets for seasonal vacationers, year-round visitors and business travelers are being adequately served. The Town has expressed interest for a study, to be conducted through the University of Rhode Island as a student project, focused on the potential to attract a moderately-priced hotel. A hotel may be best discussed in conjunction with a much broader economic development program for the revitalization of the Route 1 corridor.

Part-time/Seasonal Residences

An important component not included in economic impact studies is the impact of second homes and part time residents. According to a 2006 study by Global Insight, Washington County has 63 percent of the statewide total of seasonal homes in Rhode Island. In Westerly, residents living in seasonal and beach property, which accounted for \$600,754,900 in total assessed value (or 13.9 percent of total assessed residential property) in 2015, contributed about \$6.4 million to property tax revenue for Westerly.⁴

In addition to helping to increase the tax base of the community, seasonal residents actively participate with full-time residents in funding amenities such as the Westerly Library, L+M Westerly Hospital and numerous charities. They also provide additional business for local retailers and restaurants, as well as for construction and skilled trades related to residential maintenance.

Agriculture

A 2012 study commissioned by RIDEM estimated that Rhode Island's agricultural sector had a total economic impact of \$268.2 million and employs 2,330 people. According to the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Census of Agriculture, the number of farms in the state grew by 2 percent between 2007 and 2012, which is in contrast to the national average rate of growth -4.3 percent. The largest growth in farms was experienced in those less than ten acres in size, while growth was also recorded in farms 180 acres or larger.

⁴ All calculations based on the total assessed values of single-family residences, two- to five-family residences, apartments, seasonal and beach property and residential vacant as recorded in the 2015 Grand List, pending certification as of June 7, 2016

While agriculture is not a significant employing industry in the local economy itself, the food system in Westerly is a critical component of the local quality of life enjoyed by residents and visitors and its relation to accommodation and food services is important to recognize and support. According to a 2015 snapshot by the Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC) and Rhode Island Agricultural Partnership (RIAP), agricultural and related economic activities were identified within all four components of the food system, including production and harvesting, processing, distribution and consumption. The following table overviews the most commonly recognized form of agriculture, farms (of which there are more than the three identified in the 2015 snapshot), within Westerly by their products and forms of product distribution.

Table 3-2 Farms by Products and Forms of Distributing

Farm	Product(s)	Distribution Form(s)
Everbreeze Farm	Eggs, meat	Farmers markets, farm stand
Hillandale Farm	Vegetables, eggs, herbs	Restaurants, schools, wholesale
Keena Farm	Vegetables, herbs, eggs, flowers, specialty products and breeding stock	Farm stand
Langworthy Farm Winery	Wine	Restaurants, wholesale
Manfredi Farms	Fruits, vegetables, herbs, honey, maple syrup, eggs, firewood, flowers, hay, specialty products and baked goods	Pick your own, wholesale
Ocean Breeze Dairy Farm	Milk, grains and feeds	Wholesale
Watch Hill Farms	Vegetables, herbs, honey, eggs, lobsters, Christmas trees, flowers and honeycomb	Pickup, Farmers markets, farm stand and restaurants

Source: FarmFresh RI (May 2016)

Along with these, RIDEM’s Division of Agriculture list of agricultural businesses in Westerly also includes Broadview Landscape and Garden Center, Pleasant Acres Nursery and the Westerly Packing Company. A community garden is located on Main Street, established following the property’s acquisition by the Westerly Land Trust through its Urban Program.

Three aquacultural farms and 47 commercial fishers are also present within the town, according to the RIFPC/RIAP snapshot (FarmFresh RI listed Watch Hill Farms and Watch Hill Oysters as two seafood producers as of May 2016), indicative of Westerly’s coastal location. Considering the 2013 estimated production for aquaculture in Rhode Island was \$24,838 per acre, it can be estimated the 5 acres under cultivation in Winnapaug Pond were thus be contributing \$126,818 annually to the local economy. Aquaculture also contributes to

employment and local purchases of equipment and supplies. In 2015, Education Exchange, Inc., with ten partners including the Chamber (then the Greater Westerly-Pawcatuck Area Chamber of Commerce) and the Jonnycake Center of Westerly, applied for a Real Jobs Rhode Island grant for an Aquaculture Training Partnership (Real Jobs RI will be discussed in greater detail further in the chapter). Noting the rapid growth in revenue in recent years, the partnership was awarded \$19,681 to develop a training program first for entry-level employees and then for intermediate positions.

Farmers markets and farm stands have grown in popularity in recent years, mirroring a national trend for seeking out local food sources. A seasonal (June to October) farmers market is organized on Main Street each week with several farms and artisanal producers, both in Westerly and neighboring communities, taking part. Two additional farmers markets, in Avondale and in Weekapaug, are also held weekly (both between July and August). Several restaurants, the local hospital and the local public school system have also sought to purchase local products for inclusion in their meals. The town has an annual agricultural program known as Westerly Springs Green focused on local agriculture, sustainable living and family activities. Local experts provide information on composting, rain gathering, organic gardening, beekeeping, organic pest maintenance, and other topics. Participants can browse a farmer's market, enter a raffle, bid on items in a silent auction or take a workshop. The event takes place in the United Theatre building and is free and open to the public. Two artisanal producers are also located in Westerly.

While land constraints and use will likely limit the ability for new producers to be established in Westerly, the town should support the continued operation of its current producers and seek opportunities to assist in expanding operations whenever possible, such as through promoting agritourism. In promoting agritourism, the Town may be interested in farm enterprises – processes, activities or uses of a farm subordinate to and conducted in conjunction with an ongoing agricultural, horticultural or silvicultural operation. Farm tours, agricultural production and skills classes, interactions with farm animals, hayrides, annual festivals and horse and pony rides are examples of such enterprises.

3.4 Current Economic Development Initiatives and Organizations

3.4.1 Approved Development Projects

In 2007, nearly \$154 million in new residential construction projects were underway in Westerly. Townhomes, single-family, and hotel room upgrades were all part of the development mix. In addition to the Watch Hill Inn and Ocean House projects referenced above, there were also nearly \$42 million in new commercial development projects approved

along US Route 1. New shopping centers, medical office buildings and restaurants, and adaptive reuse projects contributed to this development total.

In 2015, the amount of new residential construction had declined to just \$16 million, with townhomes and senior rental units being the predominant type of residential projects. New commercial development was also declining, with just under \$5.9 million in recorded value, but there appeared to be an increased interest in revitalization, which had a recorded value of over \$23.6 million. One of these projects underway is the revitalization of the United Theatre, which will be an important cornerstone of downtown Westerly and a key economic driver. With both movies and live entertainment to be scheduled year round, the United Theatre will generate frequent visits which may in turn provide downtown businesses with increased walk-in traffic. A variety of programming targeted to families, children and adults will provide many and sustained opportunities for activity and contribute to the downtown revitalization.

There is a broader interest in mixed use development. The Town of Westerly has been interested in fostering the right regulatory environment for mixed-use development since at least 1991. A concept which has only born fruit in recent years, mixed-use development done well blends residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, or industrial uses, where they may be physically and functionally integrated. The Lanphear Livery, located at 1 Bay Street, is a mixed-use, year-round structure which is being fully restored to the 1909 time period but with all of the modern necessities. The Livery, which sits prominently in historic Watch Hill, had been condemned and vacant for several years. The restoration will reinvigorate the lower part of Bay Street with two retail spaces on the first floor, and three apartments on the upper two floors. In addition to attracting seasonal visitors, the Livery will be the new home of the Watch Hill Conservancy, a gathering space for lectures and events for the greater Westerly area and the location of a summer camp for young actors. The entire project was generously funded by a private local foundation, a private equity partner and with historic preservation tax credits.

3.4.2 Westerly Landing and Westerly Depot

In May 2008, the Westerly Landing and Westerly Depot projects were included among four state-funded projects of KeepSpace, a program launched by Rhode Island Housing with support from an Advisory Committee in 2007. The Westerly Landing site is located between Main Street and the Pawcatuck River and the Depot site is adjacent to the train station. Together, they feature river access as well as transit-oriented development aspects by encompassing undeveloped and under-utilized sites in close proximity to the multi-modal Westerly Station.

The Westerly Land Trust (WLT), as part of its Urban Program (see below) and with support from the Royce Family Fund and W. H. Properties, Inc., actively acquired properties for these projects in the past. The projects, which would go through a public visioning process before reaching

final design, would have far-reaching positive ramifications for economic and workforce development, transportation, housing and environmental protection (the development of housing downtown would help the community preserve open space). Though KeepSpace Westerly was abandoned in 2013 following state budget cuts, the depot is currently being developed (as of spring 2016) as the site of the Westerly Higher Education and Job Skills Center. Already, both the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) and General Dynamics Electric Boat have announced they will have an active presence at the facility. Along with benefiting the local economy, the center will have an impact on transportation through increasing the parking supply and encouraging new sidewalks and road improvements (for more information, see the Transportation Network chapter).

3.4.3 Statewide Growth Center

Land Use 2025 identifies the urban core of Westerly as an area for potential growth and development. Concentration of growth in this area is intended to conserve state and municipal resources by making better use of the existing infrastructure, transportation choices and providing a variety of housing options. This area has a unique and historic character, significant existing infrastructure, is a short walk from a strong and active downtown, conveniently located near I-95 and the Amtrak Station. This area is prime location for in-fill and redevelopment; it will benefit from updated land use regulations to achieve this potential.

3.4.4 North End Revitalization Plan

A 2003 Neighborhood Revitalization Plan for Westerly's North End supported three-year Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding requests to enable a cohesive approach to encouraging both public and private reinvestment. Phased housing rehabilitation, the provision of four neighborhood gateways, a new neighborhood service building, adaptive reuse of the Providence Gas Company property on Canal Street and the designation of the North End as an official Rhode Island Enterprise Zone were all recommended as a part of the revitalization strategy. With the use of the Neighborhood Plan as a focus, eleven (11) structures were rehabilitated to provide 23 dwelling units, an existing building was purchased for the establishment of a Neighborhood Community Center, a pocket park was developed and vehicle parking was expanded at the Jonnycake Center of Westerly to serve its patrons and clients. Recognizing the accomplishments made through this plan, an update is actively sought as of spring 2016.

3.4.5 Downtown Revitalization

Westerly's economy is enhanced by the charming, historic downtown which is active year-round for residents and visitors. Downtown Westerly is a substantial commercial, professional and financial hub and is also the civic and cultural center of Westerly. Recognizing the importance of this area, downtown has been the focus of numerous efforts to ensure its vitality

continues into the future. In 2008, as mentioned earlier, it was identified as one of four KeepSpace communities across the State and was the only community identified outside of Providence County. KeepSpace brought together a number of state-level regulatory agencies, local organizations, planning grants and financing and has been inactive since 2013 due to budget cuts at Rhode Island Housing, the program’s administrator.

A “smart growth” initiative, KeepSpace intended to focus residential and commercial redevelopment in downtown Westerly while protecting and preserving natural spaces such as parks and the Pawcatuck River. A community garden on Main Street established by the Westerly Land Trust, the downtown façade improvement program promoted by the Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce (under its previous name), the Westerly Regional Arts Partnership (WRAP), and the Westerly Revolving Fund are all results of the funding awarded to KeepSpace Westerly which was made available prior to such cuts and grants were also awarded to the Westerly Preservation Society. Though no longer active, the vision of KeepSpace continues to have an impact on redevelopment and new development in and around downtown.

Westerly Land Trust

The Westerly Land Trust was founded in 1987 to preserve open space and natural resources in Westerly and the surrounding area. The Trust expanded this mission in 2004 to assist in revitalizing culturally significant properties. In addition to the KeepSpace initiative discussed above, the WLT has worked independently and in partnership with others to acquire several properties through its Urban Program. One of these, 10 High Street (the Industrial Trust Building), hosts the WLT’s offices of the Land Trust while its other five properties provide cultural and recreational activities for the community.

Westerly-Pawcatuck Downtown Business Association

The DBA has a stated focus to support a vibrant downtown for all to enjoy. Underlying this purpose is the belief that the downtown business district should emerge as a destination for shopping, dining, personal services and arts and entertainment. The DBA’s 22 members (as of 2016) are kept informed of events, marketing and promotional efforts and political activities affecting the downtown (DBA lobbies for legislation to sustain and improve the downtown economy). Its reach is furthered through connections with organizations such as the Chamber. The DBA also presents a unified voice for all concerns and plans for the downtown area in order to maintain the historical character and appeal of the area to residents and visitors alike.

Arts & Entertainment District

In 1998, the Rhode Island General Assembly designated a portion of Westerly’s Downtown as an Arts & Entertainment District (today one of nine districts in Rhode Island), outlining special

tax incentives for artists to live and work within its boundaries with the intent to spur the local creative economy. The sale of original works of art within the district’s galleries is also exempt from state sales tax, regardless of the location where the piece was created. While Westerly’s district is arguably the least developed in the state, the local arts, entertainment and recreation industry has experienced notable growth in the last decade and Downtown is home to a number of artistic establishments and events (for more on these, see the Historic and Cultural Resources chapter).

3.4.6 Real Jobs RI

It was noted earlier in the chapter that an Aquaculture Training Partnership received a Real Jobs Rhode Island grant in 2015 to develop a job training program. Real Jobs RI is a flexible grant program initiative of RIDLT, funded by the state and federal governments, which awards up to \$25,000 to applications put forward as collaborative efforts by businesses and agencies involved in commerce, industry and professional activities seeking to provide skills to potential employees. Along with Aquaculture Training Partnership, a Real Jobs RI grant was also awarded in 2015 to the Westerly Regional Real Jobs Partnership. The application, a collaboration of 18 local employers and partners led by Westerly Public Schools and convened by OCCC, sought funding to gather information on local and regional employer needs through surveys and focus groups with the intent to develop a workforce training plan primarily focused on non-college bound students. In November 2015, the partnership was awarded a grant of \$16,355.

3.5 Economic Data

3.5.1 Employment Rate Comparison

According to RIDLT, the labor force consists of all residents 16 years and older who are employed or are seeking employment. The unemployment rate is the proportion of members of the labor force who are jobless, available and looking for work. Westerly traditionally has had an unemployment rate about 15 to 20 percent lower than the statewide rate. Since 2010, the local rate has fallen behind the statewide rate. Westerly’s unemployment rate was 18.9 percent less than the unemployment rate for Rhode Island for both the 2014 and 2015 annual averages.

3.5.2 Westerly Industry Overview

An examination of the industries and the types of occupations in which Westerly residents are employed, provided in Table 3-3, can provide an indication of the quality of jobs they hold. This also translates into their potential buying power, though it should be noted the buying power in the local economy is significantly affected by seasonal trends in tourism (including the number of part-time workers) and residents, who significantly increase the population in the summer months.

Table 3-3 Number of Employees by Industry, 2005-2014¹

	2005	2010	2014	Percent Change, 2010-14	Percent Change, 2005-14
Accommodation and Food Services	1,353	1,417	1,647	16.2	21.7
Administrative Support and Waste Management	178	154	186	20.8	4.49
Agriculture	11	---	---	---	---
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	362	442	438	-0.9	21.0
Construction	338	211	280	32.7	-17.2
Education Services	58	70	65	-7.1	12.1
Finance and Insurance	321	326	330	1.2	2.8
Government	1,047	1,060	1,098	3.6	4.9
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,917	2,075	1,959	-5.6	2.2
Information	304	211	127	-39.8	-58.2
Management of Companies and Enterprises	246	---	---	---	---
Manufacturing	961	574	505	-12.0	-47.5
Mining	---	---	---	---	---
Other Services (except Public Administration)	438	297	307	3.4	-29.9
Professional and Technical Services	217	224	271	21.0	24.9
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	105	83	72	-13.3	-31.4
Retail Trade	2,255	2,004	1,887	-5.8	-16.3
Transportation and Warehousing	47	36	63	75.0	34.0
Utilities	---	---	---	---	---
Wholesale Trade	58	66	74	12.1	27.6

Source: RIDLT Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages 2005, 2010 and 2014

¹ All number are annual averages

3.5.3 Number of Establishments 2002-2008

The number of businesses in the Town of Westerly has remained relatively stable over the past several years, with a slight decrease likely the result of significant changes in the local and statewide economies.

Table 3-4 Number and Percent Increase of Establishments, 2005-2014¹

	2005	2010	2014	Percent Change, 2010-14	Percent Change, 2005-14
Total Private	845	852	829	-2.7	-1.9
Total Government	20	19	18		
Total Combined	865	871	847	-2.8	-2.1

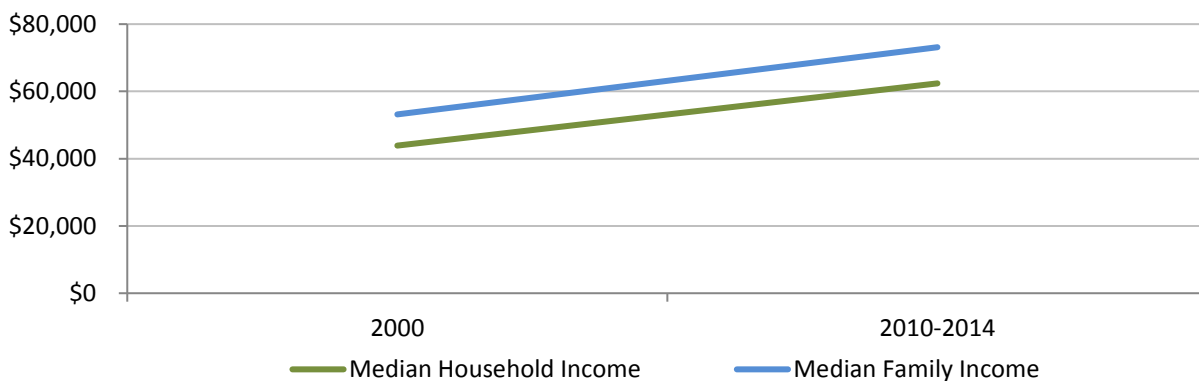
Source: RIDLT Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages 2005, 2010 and 2014

¹ All number are annual averages

3.5.4 Income

Over the period 2000 to 2014, median household income increased from approximately \$43,891 to \$62,381, an increase of 42.1 percent. Likewise, median family income increased at a similar rate (37.6 percent). The following table summarizes median incomes in Westerly from 2000 to 2014. If adjusting for inflation to 2016 dollars, median household income has remained level during this period (less than a 0.1 percent increase) while median family income has fallen slightly (-3.2 percent).

Figure 3-1 Median Incomes, 2000-2014¹



Source: 2000 Census and 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-year estimates
¹ 2000 is for 1999 in 1999 dollars; 2010-2014 is for a twelve-month period in 2014 dollars

3.5.5 Statewide Business Incentives

Like its New England neighbors and other northeastern states, Rhode Island suffers from a level of taxation that is recognized as hindering business. However, the state has recently created new programs, such as Real Jobs RI, focused on industry clusters to develop jobs and lure business to the state. Some additional programs include:

- R&D Tax Credit – a 22.5 percent tax credit offered to qualifying companies for increases in qualified research expenses associated with research and development (R&D)
- Qualified Jobs Incentive – annual, redeemable tax credits for up to 10 years for companies expanding their workforce in the state (either through relocation or new hiring) by as few as 10 employees, dependent on the industry, company size, wage level of employees and other criteria
- Innovation Vouchers – enterprises with fewer than 500 employees can receive grants (up to \$50,000) to fund R&D assistance from a university, research center or medical center in the state.

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- Small Business Assistance Program – below-market rate loans of \$25,000 or more (microloans of less than \$25,000 are also available) and technical assistance for businesses with 200 or fewer employees
- Bond Financing – offered by the Rhode Island Industrial Facilities Corporation to commercial and manufacturing enterprises
- Wavemaker Fellowship – reimbursement of eligible higher education student loan debt expenses for up to 4 years available to any individual employed in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) field in Rhode Island with such expenses
- Small Business Capital Development – tax deductions or modifications for investment, capital gain exclusions or wage credits available to qualifying business entities and certified venture capital partnerships as stipulated by General Law §44-43-2

Historic preservation tax credits for rehabilitating land mark buildings and historic homeowner tax credits for exterior restoration work on qualified residences. The Rhode Island Historic Preservation Investment Tax Credit Program has generated jobs, nearly \$2.5 billion in economic activity and more than \$400 million dollars in additional tax revenues. To help close a budget gap, the program was eliminated in 2008, except for projects already approved. In Westerly, these included nearly-completed renovations, as of 2016, to the United Theatre, 19 High Street (the Miceli's Furniture building) and the Lanphear Livery, the Weekapaug Inn, as well as rehabilitation efforts throughout downtown.

4 Natural Resources

4.1 Physical Setting

The meandering Pawcatuck River separates Westerly from Hopkinton and North Stonington, Connecticut to the north and Stonington, Connecticut to the west. Westerly's eastern border with Charlestown is a straight line running north/south for about 4.6 miles. The Town has a coastline on the Block Island Sound of the Atlantic Ocean for approximately nine miles between Sandy Point (the westernmost point in Rhode Island) and the Charlestown border. The town's size is 31.5 square miles. Its southwestern maritime border, also the New York-Rhode Island state border, extends from Little Narragansett Bay into Block Island Sound.

The topography rises from sea level along the beaches to the town's highest elevation, Mount Moriah (249 feet), in the northwestern corner of the town. On the west side of the town, the elevation of downtown Westerly rises from approximately 10 feet along the river to 150 feet near Westerly High School. At the center of the town is a large wetland complex, including the Aguntaug and Crandall Swamps, among the largest cedar swamps in Rhode Island, and Chapman Pond (33 acres of open water), which are between 30-40 feet above sea level. Woody Hill, in the east-central part of town, rises to 200 feet. The **Topography map (TOPO-1)** depicts the contour elevation lines within the town at measurements of 10 feet, 50 feet and 100 feet contour intervals (the distances between countour elevations lines).

4.2 Hydrology

4.2.1 Watersheds

It is important to consider water resources and management from a watershed perspective, because water is not confined to political boundaries. The majority of Westerly's water supply comes from the Pawcatuck Watershed. The Salt Pond Region in the southern section of Westerly contains three additional watersheds, one for each of the three major salt ponds in Westerly.

The Pawcatuck Watershed encompasses approximately 300 square miles in southeastern Connecticut and southwestern Rhode Island.¹ Within the watershed, seven major rivers and their tributaries drain to a common outlet – the Pawcatuck River and Little Narragansett Bay. These rivers, along with lakes, ponds, wetlands and streams, serve as important wildlife habitats, recreational resources and water supplies for agricultural production. Significant groundwater resources underlie the watershed and are the sole source of drinking water for people within it. Groundwater and surface waters are interconnected and the watershed is

¹ The *Pawcatuck Watershed* encompasses approximately 300 square miles in southeastern Connecticut and southwestern Rhode Island. The portion of the watershed solely within Rhode Island is referred to, in Rhode Island state policy documents, as the *Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed*.

noted for having some of the highest quality groundwater and surface water in the area.² Several organizations are active in the stewardship of the Pawcatuck Watershed. These include the Nature Conservancy, the Pawcatuck Watershed Partnership, the University of Rhode Island (URI) Watershed Watch Program and the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association.

The Salt Pond Region includes 45 square miles around the nine coastal salt ponds of southern Rhode Island lying within portions of the towns of Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown and Narragansett. Maschaug, Winnapaug and Quonochontaug ponds are all coastal lagoons – shallow, productive embayments separated from the ocean by barrier spits. They provide important ecosystem and habitat functions, are an important factor in the quality of life for local residents and are a prime recreational attraction for both residents and visitors in the region.³ The Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) is responsible for the management, protection and enhancement of resources within the Salt Pond watersheds and along coastal waters. Other organizations active in the stewardship of the Salt Pond watersheds include the non-profit Salt Ponds Coalition.

4.2.2 Surface Water

Rivers, streams, fresh water ponds, fresh water and coastal wetlands, coastal waters and salt ponds make up the surface waters of the town. The Pawcatuck River flows along the entire northern and western boundaries of the town. Other named streams include Aguntaug Brook, Mastuxet Brook, McGowan Brook and Perry Healy Brook. Chapman Pond, in the north central section of Westerly, is the town's largest freshwater pond. Other named freshwater ponds include Dr. Lewis Pond, Long Pond, Spring Pond, No Bottom Pond and Mickill Pond. Freshwater wetlands are scattered throughout the town (a result of the area's glacial past and resultant soils and topography) and along the Pawcatuck River. Crandall Swamp (also known as Chapman or Aguntaug Swamp) is one of the largest freshwater wetland systems in the state. Coastal wetlands include salt marshes and any contiguous freshwater or brackish wetlands. Coastal waters border the entire southern shoreline of the town and include the tidal portion of the Pawcatuck River. In addition to the salt ponds noted previously, there is also Little Maschaug Pond located in close proximity to Maschaug Pond.

The **Surface Water map (SW-1)**, along with the lakes and ponds included in all mapped figures and the rivers, streams and wetlands included on nearly all maps, additionally indicates the cold

² Pawcatuck Watershed Partnership, 1998, The Pawcatuck Watershed Report, p. 1

³...Ernst, Laura M., Laura K. Miguel, and Jeff Willis, April 1999, Rhode Island's Salt Pond Region: A Special Area Management Plan (Maschaug to Point Judith Ponds), Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council, pp. 1-2

water and warm water fisheries located within the town as well as the major watershed boundaries and the estuarine water quality standard boundaries (RIDEM identifies seawaters on a class system ranging from SA to SC). The five categories of water use as established by CRMC and the Special Resource Protection Waters (SRPWs) within the town are also shown.

4.2.3 Groundwater

Westerly's groundwater resources exist within three aquifers: Westerly, Ashaway and Bradford. These aquifers are located within the Pawcatuck River Aquifer Region, which was designated a sole source aquifer system by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1988. The sole source aquifer designation signifies an aquifer that supplies at least 50 percent of the drinking water to persons living over the aquifer and there can be no feasible alternate source of drinking water, such as surface water reservoirs. In the Pawcatuck River Aquifer Region, groundwater is recharged by rainfall within the watershed. Groundwater is stored within aquifers as well as discharged into surface waters. During severe drought conditions, streams and rivers can conversely recharge groundwater.

According to the Town's *Water Supply System Management Plan (WSSMP)*,⁴ the Westerly Water Department draws its water from these three major sand and gravel groundwater aquifers, all of which are located in the Lower Pawcatuck sub-basin. The Lower Pawcatuck Sub-basin is in the southwestern section of the Pawcatuck Basin and includes the towns of Charlestown, Hopkinton, and Westerly in Rhode Island and North Stonington, Stonington and Voluntown in Connecticut. The Green Fall River, Shunock River, and Wyassup Brook flow southeasterly into the Pawcatuck River, which itself flows southwesterly into Little Narragansett Bay. The Town currently utilizes both the Westerly and Bradford aquifers to supply its municipal wells.

The Bradford groundwater reservoir and the majority of the Westerly reservoir are classified as GAA groundwater sources, meaning they are suitable for public drinking water use without treatment. The remaining portion of the Westerly reservoir is classified as GB, identifying it as a source which may not be suitable for public or private drinking without treatment due to known or presumed degradation. The Groundwater Division of RIDEM has delineated the critical portions of the groundwater recharge areas to these reservoirs.

There are, at present, a total of eleven (11) gravel-packed and gravel-developed wells and seven (7) well stations that comprise the source water supply portion of the Westerly water system. Overall, the operation and production capabilities of the system to meet the needs of the water service community have been relatively efficient and capable. The ability of the

⁴ http://www.wrb.ri.gov/work_programs_wssmp/public-review/Westerly.pdf

system to supply potable water of good quality to the service population has been readily maintained, though system disinfection has had some impacts on water quality in some areas of Town.

The **Groundwater map (GW-1)** identifies several features related to groundwater including public wells, community and non-community wellhead protection areas (portions of aquifers through which groundwater moves to a public community or non-community well), groundwater reservoirs (significant subsurface water sources defined by RIDEM) and groundwater recharge areas (areas intended to be protected drinking water sources). The Office of Water Resources, an office of RIDEM, contributed the datasets used to produce this map.

4.2.4 Water Quality

Preserving and improving water quality are vital to Westerly’s natural resources. High-quality drinking water supplies are also critical for public health and well-being. Habitat areas are also essential to biological diversity which enhances water quality. As a practical matter, both drinking water supply and habitat quality depend on the maintenance of water quality at the highest possible level. Furthermore, good water quality is necessary for recreation, since contact with polluted waters is a health risk.⁵

Water quality is affected by both point and nonpoint pollution sources. Point source pollution originates from a specific place or location, such as a discharge pipe from a factory. Nonpoint source pollution originates over a widespread area of the landscape and may include malfunctioning septic systems, soil erosion, leaking underground fuel storage tanks, stormwater runoff, fertilizers, pesticides, agriculture and road salt. Unlike point source discharges, comprehensive management of nonpoint source discharges is beyond the authorities of the EPA, RIDEM and other federal and state agencies. Increasingly, these and other stakeholders believe many problems can and should be addressed locally through land use planning, education and, where appropriate, regulation.⁶

4.3. Stressors

Domestic and Industrial Waste Water

Domestic wastewater contains high levels of carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, some synthetic organic chemicals and heavy metals, all of which can affect aquatic habitat and groundwater

⁵ Rhode Island Rivers Council and State Planning Council, State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, January 1998 (amended May 2004), Rivers Policy and Classification Plan, p. 1.1

⁶ Ibid. pp. 6-11

quality. Nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus may stimulate growth of algae in coastal ponds and in the Pawcatuck River, leading eventually to declining levels of oxygen and adverse impacts on habitat. The Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA) monitors dissolved oxygen levels in the rivers quarterly to evaluate these impacts. Synthetic organic chemicals and heavy metals in waste water are toxic to humans and other organisms. Domestic wastewater also contains bacteria, viruses and medical/drug residue which may threaten human health if viable microorganisms enter drinking water. Industrial wastewater can have the same contaminants as domestic sewage; however, concentrations of synthetic organic chemicals and heavy metals may be much higher in industrial waste.

Westerly has a municipal sewage collection and treatment system that primarily serves the downtown area. The rest of the town is served by onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS), also known as septic systems. As of spring 2016, developed properties in Westerly that are not served by the sewer system rely on septic systems for wastewater disposal. Onsite wastewater treatment will continue to be the primary source of wastewater disposal for areas outside the current sewer district into the foreseeable future. Proper function and treatment of an onsite system depend on existing soil characteristics as well as on proper system maintenance. RIDEM regulates OWTS' and has established minimum standards for siting, design and installation of these systems (see the *Rules Establishing Minimum Standards Relating to Location, Design, Construction and Maintenance of Individual Sewage Disposal Systems*).

The typical lifespan of a septic system is 20 years and many existing septic systems have outlived their usefulness.⁷ Additionally, many of these systems in Westerly, including cesspools (a type of wastewater treatment that RIDEM considers to be substandard) were installed prior to current RIDEM standards. Improperly designed or failing systems can contribute pollutants in the form of nitrates – excessive nutrients and fecal coliform bacteria – to nearby surface waters or groundwater.

The Rhode Island Cesspool Act of 2007 went into effect on June 1, 2008 and requires a phasing out of all cesspools that present the highest risks to public health and/or the environment – primarily, cesspools located in close proximity to tidal water areas and public drinking waters by 2013. In Westerly, this act affects any cesspools located within 200 feet of the shore or within 200 feet of a public drinking water well. The Town's Engineering Department is currently developing a program to address this mandate.

⁷ Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Office of Water Resources, February 2007, Summary of Municipal Onsite Wastewater Programs, p. 13.

Once an onsite wastewater treatment system is installed, regular maintenance is essential to ensure its proper function. Rhode Island municipalities are responsible for making sure these systems are properly maintained.⁸ Westerly does not have a program to ensure routine inspection and maintenance of these systems is performed, although the development of such a program has been recommended in the Town’s *Wastewater Facilities Plan* and the *Town of Westerly On-Site Wastewater Management Plan* (January 2005 and revised in 2007) as well as the *Wastewater Facilities Plan* (November 1998) prepared by BETA Group, Inc.

Land Use Near Wellheads

The primary issue facing the quality of Westerly’s water supply is the lack of protective measures to ensure its integrity. Westerly’s water supply comes primarily from groundwater wells in Bradford, Crandall Swamp and White Rock. Westerly wells also provide water to 11 businesses and approximately 1,500 homes in Connecticut. Westerly’s zoning code permits commercial, manufacturing and high density residential uses over much of the aquifer; this presents a substantial risk of contamination in areas such as Misquamicut from the dense concentration of septic systems and other factors such as hazardous waste spills, leaking underground storage tanks (LUSTs) and road salt runoff.⁹

Protection of groundwater quality is facilitated through the protection of the source water supply. Source water protection areas such as wellhead protection areas and aquifer recharge areas have been identified by the state. However, protection strategies for the source water supply are accomplished through local plans, ordinances and development standards related to wellhead protection areas, aquifer recharge areas and other critical areas.

State agencies involved in the protection of groundwater and drinking water include RIDEM, the Rhode Island Department of Health (RI Health) and the Water Resources Board. RIDEM administers the *Rules and Regulations for Groundwater Quality*, which classifies the state’s groundwater and established groundwater quality standards for each class. This regulation also includes the state’s wellhead protection program. RI Health is responsible for ensuring proper operation and maintenance of the public water systems to ensure a safe drinking water supply. RI Health is also responsible for the Source Water Assessment Program. The Water Resources Board is an executive board within the state government charged with managing the proper development, conservation and utilization of the state’s water resources.

⁸ University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension, April 2003, *Westerly Source Water Assessment*, p. 69

⁹ GeolInsights Inc., May 30, 2014 *Aquifer Protection Study Phase I Westerly Aquifer* March 16, 2015 *Aquifer Protection Study Phase II Bradford Aquifer*

Groundwater reservoirs, groundwater recharge areas and wellhead protection areas are established by RIDEM. These areas are critical for the protection of drinking water quality. Groundwater reservoirs contain the highest potential yield of drinking water. Recharge areas include surface lands that drain into the groundwater reservoir. A wellhead protection area (WHPA) is the portion of an aquifer through which groundwater moves to a well. The town of Westerly operates 11 water supply wells at seven pumping stations. Town wells are located in three separate WHPAs: the Bradford and Crandall WHPAs, which are located entirely within Westerly, and the White Rock and Noyes Avenue WHPA, which includes two separate subareas (both extending into Stonington, Connecticut). RIDEM requires municipalities to develop management plans for wellhead protection areas, which are inspected in detail at least once every five years by RI Health.

Stormwater Management

During a rain event, rainwater either soaks into the ground or runs across it. As areas become more developed, a larger amount of stormwater runs off of paved surfaces, roofs, compacted soils and lawns, rather than soaking into the ground. As stormwater drains into local waterways, it carries with it sediment and pollutants including fertilizers, pesticides, road salt, oil, heavy metals, and pathogenic bacteria and viruses. Large stormwater flows within streams and creeks causes erosion and degradation of riparian habitats. Stormwater management can help reduce these effects.

Phases I and II of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), administered by the EPA, require the control of polluted discharges from large construction sites, certain industrial activities and operators of municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s). These requirements include the establishment of a stormwater management program that is intended to improve water bodies by reducing the quality of pollutants that can enter storm sewer systems during storm events. They also require the use of best management practices (BMPs) intended to reduce the negative impacts of stormwater. The RIDEM implements the NPDES requirements through the *Rhode Island Pollution Discharge Elimination System (RIPDES)*. In order to address requirements of RIPDES, as well as requirements of the NPDES Phase II permitting process, the town of Westerly has implemented its *Phase II Storm Water Management Plan*. Implementation of the plan is a five-year process that began in 2004.

The Town of Westerly's Code of Ordinances includes an Erosion and Sedimentation Control ordinance (§260-89) which requires installation and maintenance of control measures and BMPs to control erosion and sedimentation for land development and subdivision activities. In addition, the Town has enacted a Bioretention and Stormwater Management ordinance

(§A261-30.1). This ordinance requires the construction of bioretention areas (including rain or recharge gardens and grass swales) in order to reduce the volume and velocity of stormwater runoff and increase pollutant filtering and groundwater recharge.

In addition to federal and state NPDES regulations, there are other management measures designed to reduce pollution threats from stormwater runoff. The Coastal Resources Management Program (CRMP) administered by CRMC requires stormwater management plans and the use of BMPs for the reduction of pollutant loadings associated with development activities. CRMC, in partnership with RIDEM, implements the Rhode Island Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program. The Town of Westerly's *Land Development and Subdivision Regulations* require the preparation of a soil erosion and sediment control plan for all major development. Details of stormwater management measures to be installed to control erosion must be included.

Flooding

Westerly is subject to damage from flooding of both inland surface waters and from coastal storm-surges. Development in wetlands and flood storage areas reduces the land's natural ability to store floodwaters. Hurricanes, tidal flooding and nor'easters (which appear in the winter and spring more regularly than do hurricanes in summer and autumn), all cause severe coastal flooding and erosion. These hazards are thoroughly documented in the Town's *Natural Hazard Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategy*. In October 2013, an amendment to Section 980 of the Salt Pond SAMP became effective which permits the use of experimental coastal erosion control methods within the Misquamicut Headland (these methods are also permitted within the Matunuck Headland in South Kingstown) until October 2019.

Westerly participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) by adopting and enforcing floodplain management ordinances to reduce future flood damage. As of May 2013, Westerly is a participant in the Community Rating System (CRS). CRS is a voluntary program that recognizes and encourages a community's efforts to exceed the NFIP minimum requirements for floodplain management. The CRS program emphasizes three goals – the reduction of flood losses, facilitating accurate insurance rating, and promoting the awareness of flood insurance. By participating in the CRS program, communities can earn a discount for flood insurance premiums based upon the activities that reduce the risk of flooding within the community. In exchange, the NFIP makes federally-backed flood insurance available to homeowners, renters and business owners in these communities at a reduced rate.

In addition to providing flood insurance and reducing flood damages through floodplain management regulations, the NFIP identifies and maps the nation's floodplains. Within

Westerly, there are three general zones of high flood danger – zones A and AE areas are within the one percent annual chance floodplain (more commonly known as a 100 year flood) and zone V areas are also within the one percent chance floodplain but have additional hazards associated with wave action. Mandatory flood insurance purchases apply for developments within zones A and V. Quonochontaug, Winnapaug and Maschaug Ponds and the lowlands around them, Napatree Beach, Sandy Point and the coves in Little Narragansett Bay are particularly vulnerable to storm-surge flooding.

4.3.1 Quality of Surface Waters

Water quality in the Pawcatuck Watershed, which includes a significant part of western Rhode Island and eastern Connecticut, is generally described as excellent; however, in Westerly much of the river is listed as impaired. Threats in the Pawcatuck Watershed are due chiefly to agricultural and nonpoint source pollution impacts.¹⁰ In the Salt Pond Region, failing and substandard onsite wastewater systems are the single most important nonpoint source of bacteria and nutritional contamination to the region’s coastal waters.¹¹

The federal Clean Water Act (§303[d]) requires states to prepare a list of water bodies that do not meet water quality standards for ensuring that water is healthy for such uses as fish and wildlife habitat, domestic and agricultural water supplies and recreation in and on the water. All water bodies identified on the list must attain water quality standards within a reasonable period, either through a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study (known as a water cleanup plan) or other pollution control mechanisms. Within the Westerly area, the Rhode Island List of Impaired Waters (Final 2012) included the Pawcatuck River and Tributaries (broken into three segments – from the Bradford Dyeing Association [BDA] WWTF discharge point to Meeting House Bridge [Route 3], Meeting House Bridge to Pawcatuck Bridge [Route 1] and Pawcatuck Bridge to Pawcatuck Rock [tidal]), Chapman Pond and the Perry Healy Brook and Tributaries. These resources have all remained on the List of Impaired Waters, as of the 2014 draft. TMDL studies and BMPs are used to return water bodies to a healthy condition. The Town of Westerly has been awarded a NEWIPCC Grant to create a TMDL-IP and a new watershed plan in conjunction with the Wood-Pawcatuck Flood Resiliency Study. This project is scheduled to be completed in October 2016. When this plan is approved, the Town will be eligible to apply for Clean Water Act 303(d) and 313(d) funding.

Water Quality of Lakes and Freshwater Ponds

¹⁰ Pawcatuck Watershed Partnership, 1998, The Pawcatuck Watershed Report, p. 5

¹¹ Ernst, Laura M., Laura K. Miguel, and Jeff Willis, April 1999, Rhode Island’s Salt Pond Region: A Special Area Management Plan (Maschaug to Point Judith Ponds), Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council, p. 3

Since 1988, the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association has sponsored volunteer monitoring of a significant number of water bodies in the watershed, including Chapman Pond in Westerly, as part of the URI’s Watershed Watch Program. Results of testing have shown that Chapman Pond has moderate to above average levels of phosphorus, giving it a eutrophic classification.¹²

Chapman Pond was included on the List of Impaired Waters in 2012 (as well as the 2014 draft) due to Eurasian water milfoil, *myriophyllum spicatum*, lead and non-native aquatic plants. The source of nutrients and other pollutants in Chapman Pond can generally be traced to the surrounding land uses, including an adjacent road salt storage facility and the former, now inactive landfill. In June 2015, the Town received a grant to remove invasive species from Chapman Pond. Identified invaders included milfoil as well as American lotus, naiad and water chestnut and are scheduled for systematic removal. The Town will also be installing a boat washing station at the pond to prevent the spread of these species.

Water Quality of Rivers and Streams

The rivers and streams in the Pawcatuck watershed are now in generally good condition, but there are threats actively eroding the environmental quality of the watershed. Recent monitoring on the Pawcatuck River and its tributaries suggests the river is threatened by elevated lead levels which may occasionally exceed the national EPA chronic aquatic life standards. Elevated nutrients, particularly nitrate levels, have also been measured in the Pawcatuck River. Fecal coliform bacteria is another important nonpoint source contaminant, originating from some agricultural land uses, wild animals and failing septic systems. Several measurements are routinely taken in the watershed to assess the health of aquatic communities. Results of the assessment tests indicate several rivers and streams within the watershed are stressed, including portions of the Pawcatuck River.¹³

Water Quality of Coastal Waters and Salt Ponds

In the salt pond region, failing or sub-standard septic systems have been identified as the single most important nonpoint source of bacterial and nutrient contamination to coastal waters.¹⁴ The tidal portions of the Pawcatuck River and Little Narragansett Bay are also listed as impaired water bodies in Connecticut as a result of elevated bacteria levels. Currently, the direct harvesting of shellfish is prohibited at all times in Little Narragansett Bay due to pollution

¹² Pawcatuck Watershed Partnership, 1998, The Pawcatuck Watershed Report, p. 6

¹³ Ibid. p. 5

¹⁴ BETA Group, Inc., January 2005 (Revised May 2007), Town of Westerly On-Site Wastewater Management Plan, pp. 1-6

closures.¹⁵ Shellfishing is also not permitted in the tidal portions of the Pawcatuck River, from the Pawcatuck Bridge to the mouth of the river at Rhodes Point. This reach is assessed as partially supporting aquatic life.

Oxygen levels are very low because of nutrient over-enrichment. Metals and pathogens are also threats in the upper tidal reach. Much of the bottom of Little Narragansett Bay is now covered in a thick macroalgal (sometimes referred to as *black ooze* or *black mayonnaise*).¹⁶ This blanket of algae gives off a rotten-egg smell when exposed to air and creates low-oxygen zones that suffocate eelgrass, oysters and scallops. In some places, this decaying organic matter is several feet thick and the mat appears to be spreading. The University of Connecticut (UConn) and URI have both been studying this algae formation which is thought to result from fertilization of coastal waters by runoff from the Pawcatuck Watershed. This outbreak has attracted the attention of Save the Bay and Rhode Island’s congressional delegation. The Westerly wastewater treatment facility (WWTF) is considered to be a relatively minor loading source in comparison to the nonpoint source inputs (urban runoff, storm sewers, etc.) along this stretch of shoreline.¹⁷

The salt ponds are considered valuable parts of the coastal wetlands. Of the three major coastal salt ponds within the Town of Westerly, Quonochontaug Pond (733 acres) is the largest salt pond, though only its western half is in Westerly as its eastern half is located within Charlestown. It is particularly sensitive to threats of nonpoint source pollution due to prevalent soil types that result in slow permeability and high runoff rates. Water quality in the eastern section is generally good. In the western end, restricted tidal flow can result in depleted oxygen levels and, in some restricted coves, higher bacteria levels.¹⁸ Bacterial water quality surveys of the pond from 1977 to present indicate somewhat higher coliform counts adjacent to developed areas, although overall bacterial water quality remains good.¹⁹ Although there is limited data, it appears the total average nitrogen concentration is increasing with time.²⁰ The most recent report from the Salt Ponds Coalition (2014) continues to show elevated levels of dissolved inorganic nitrogen in the Westerly’s portion of the pond.²¹

¹⁵ Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, May 2007, Quality Assurance Project Plan: Little Narragansett Bay and Pawcatuck River Bacteria Sampling Plan, p. 9

¹⁶ <http://www.ecori.org/narragansett-bay/2015/7/20/little-bay-faces-big-threats>

¹⁷ Pawcatuck Watershed Partnership, 1998, The Pawcatuck Watershed Report, p. 6

¹⁸ www.saltpondscoalition.org/quonny%20pond.html, Pond Profiles: Quonochontaug Pond.

¹⁹ BETA Group, Inc., January 2005 (Revised May 2007), Town of Westerly On-Site Wastewater Management Plan, p. 6

²⁰ Callender, Ted. October 2006, Water Quality and Nutrient Status of Quonochontaug Pond – May to October 2006, p. 1

²¹ <http://www.saltpondscoalition.org/PageQuonnie.html>

The second largest of the Westerly ponds is Winnapaug Pond (446 acres), generally surrounded by the Misquamicut and Weekapaug neighborhoods. Dense development, in these two areas, has produced high runoff rates from these areas and, in some cases, stormwater drainage carries effluent from failing septic systems. Safe shell fishing limits for bacteria have been exceeded in the pond. The most recent report from the Salt Ponds Coalition (2014) indicates elevated concentrations of Chlorophyll-a and dissolved inorganic nitrogen in the southwest corner and elevated dissolved inorganic nitrogen in the East Basin.²² The third and smallest of the three main saltwater ponds is Maschaug Pond (42 acres), unique as it is completely land-locked (between Misquamicut and Watch Hill), although major storm events periodically result in an influx of salt water. The *Town of Westerly Onsite Wastewater Management Plan* reports Maschaug Pond is well protected from runoff generated in Misquamicut by an earthen dike and, subsequently, there are few threats to water quality in the pond. However, there are no monitoring data to support this assessment.

4.3.2 Quality of Groundwater

The Town of Westerly withdraws water from the Bradford and Westerly aquifers through seven large community supply wells: Bradford Wells I and II, the Crandall Well, and the three White Rock Wells. The Noyes Avenue well is not currently yet approved by RIDEM.

The quality of the Pawcatuck River Basin’s groundwater is generally good to excellent and there are isolated sources of contamination. Hazardous waste spills have been documented in the Crandall and White Rock and Noyes Avenue wellhead protection areas.²³ In a 2015 area study of the Town and surrounding area, Environmental Data Resources, Inc. (EDR) found 26 state LUST sites in the study area, several of which were located within Westerly’s aquifer recharge and wellhead protection areas.

Elevated levels of nitrates and bacteria, which can result from failing septic systems, have been detected in the system.²⁴ Research at URI estimates septic systems account for more than 50 percent of all nitrogen entering the watershed as recharge groundwater.²⁵ The White Rock and Noyes Avenue well head protection area has experienced chemical contamination events from

²² <http://www.saltpondscoalition.org/PageWinnapaug.html>

²³ University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension, April 2003, Westerly Source Water Assessment, Appendix E, pp. 1-4 James J. Geremia & Associates, Inc., March 2001 (revised December 2001), Water Supply System Management Plan Update for Westerly Department of Public Works Water Supply Division: Volume I – (Part 1 of 2), p. 5-5

²⁴ University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension, April 2003, Westerly Source Water Assessment, pp. 2-6

²⁵ Pawcatuck Watershed Partnership, 1998, The Pawcatuck Watershed Report, p. 13

fuel spills. The wells in the system have also exhibited elevated levels of sodium, resulting from winter road salting.²⁶

4.4 Management and Protection of Surface Waters

4.4.1 Watershed Level

Entities responsible for management and protection of surface waters include the RIDEM Office of Water Resources (responsible for groundwater quality, stormwater management, onsite wastewater and wetlands regulations), CRMC (responsible for preservation, protection, development and restoration of coastal areas, including coastal wetlands) and the Rhode Island Rivers Council (RIRC; responsible for general oversight, planning and coordination).

RIRC has the authority to designate watershed councils and to create a *Rivers Policy and Classification Plan* (RPCP). The Council's functions are planning, coordination and empowerment and it is not a regulatory body. RIRC has designated the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association as the watershed council for the Pawcatuck Watershed. The Salt Ponds Coalition is the designated watershed council for the Salt Ponds watersheds.

The *Rivers Policy and Classification Plan* adopted in January 1998 and amended in May 2004 is a guide for action to protect and enhance the quality and the use of Rhode Island's fresh and estuarine waters and their watersheds. It endeavors to integrate water quality planning with land use planning and with planning for activities such as recreation and habitat preservation. Its broad objectives are to protect drinking water supplies and pristine rivers, to encourage the recreational use of rivers, to foster the creation of greenways and to provide for the clean-up of rivers. Primary objectives for the Wood-Pawcatuck Sub-basin (the portion of the larger Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed that includes Westerly) include, in order of importance:

- Preservation of its quality as the state's premier freshwater recreational resource
- Maintenance of wildlife habitat quality
- Keeping groundwater quality high
- Preservation of agriculture

4.4.2 Coastal Waters and Salt Ponds

CRMC is responsible for the management, protection and enhancement of coastal areas. The regulatory authority of the CRMC is generally defined as encompassing the areas extending from three miles offshore to 250 feet inland from any coastal feature. In addition, natural coastal features such as coastal beaches, dunes, barriers, coastal wetlands, bluffs and salt

²⁶ University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension, April 2003, Westerly Source Water Assessment, pp. 2-6

ponds all have an *extended* contiguous area of 200 feet from their inland borders under the authority of CRMC.

CRMC administers the CRMP, which includes specific regulatory requirements for buffers, setbacks, subdivisions, recreational docks, barrier beach development, beach replenishment and any other activities that occur within the CRMC’s jurisdiction.

CRMC, in partnership with RIDEM, is also responsible for implementing the Rhode Island Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program. Other management programs of the CRMC are the Rules and Regulations Governing the Protection and Management of Freshwater Wetlands in the Vicinity of the Coast (wetlands are discussed later in this chapter) and the Special Area Management Plan (SAMP). The SAMP is an ecosystem-based management strategy designed to address a diversity of issues on a watershed scale. The SAMP for the Salt Pond Region, *Rhode Island’s Salt Pond Region: A Special Area Management Plan (Maschaug to Point Judith Ponds)*, was the first SAMP developed by CRMC. The Salt Pond Region SAMP focuses on managing the potential development of the salt ponds watersheds and establishes regulatory standards to protect and improve saltwater pond water quality. It also identifies pollution sources, wildlife habitat and prudent development strategies to effectuate restoration and preservation of salt pond resources. The approved five-year update to the Town of Westerly Comprehensive Plan requires changes to the existing Zoning Ordinance and subdivision regulations to comply with the CRMC Salt Pond Region SAMP (maximum density, setbacks, buffers, requirements for nitrogen-reducing technologies for onsite wastewater treatment, and CRMC participation at an early stage of municipal land use regulatory review).

4.4.3 Non-Coastal Surface Waters

The RIDEM Office of Water Resources is responsible for the protection of surface water quality inland of coastal areas. The department maintains regulations regarding groundwater quality (see next section), stormwater management (see Stormwater section), onsite wastewater treatment (see Onsite Sewage Disposal section), and wetlands (see Wetlands section).

WPWA is active in the stewardship of surface water in the Pawcatuck Watershed and developed the *Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Action Plan* in 2008. Some achievements of the WPWA include the identification and prioritization of opportunities to protect and restore riparian corridors and participation in the development of the *South County Greenspace Protection Strategy* (see Open Space and Conservation Land section of this report).

4.5 Management and Protection of Groundwater

4.5.1 Source Water Protection Strategies

Wellhead Protection Plan

Management of wellhead protection areas (WHPAs) is facilitated through the *Rhode Island Wellhead Protection Program*, which requires municipalities and large water suppliers with a groundwater source(s) of supply to inventory potential pollution threats in the wellhead protection areas and develop a *Wellhead Protection Plan*. Wellhead Protection Plans must include, at minimum:

- a pollution threat assessment
- identification of protection strategies
- coordination with neighboring states, communities and water suppliers (where appropriate) a procedure for implementing the chosen strategies.²⁷

One of the requirements was addressed through a joint effort between URI and RI Health. In 2003, URI and RI Health completed assessments of all public water supplies in the state, including the Town of Westerly Water District. Westerly’s results were published in the report *Westerly Source Water Assessment* by the URI Cooperative Extension in cooperation with RI Health and is available for review at the Water Department office. A 2001 *Water Supply System Management Plan Update* assessment addressed the second requirement by identifying known and potential sources of pollution in drinking water supplies and ranking their susceptibility to future contamination. A more current version of this plan was completed in 2013.

General protection strategies have been identified in the *Westerly Source Water Assessment* report and protection strategies specific to Westerly are presented in the *Water Supply System Management Plan Update*. Recommendations focus on protection measures that can be implemented through local plans, ordinances and development standards because municipal decision makers have primary authority over land use and the responsibility to control associated impacts.²⁸ Protection strategies specific to Westerly, presented in the *Water Supply System Management Plan Update (2001)*, include the adoption of a wastewater management district, a public education program, land acquisitions along the Pawcatuck River and strengthening of Westerly’s aquifer protection ordinance to prohibit new underground storage tanks for either hazardous materials or home heating oil.

²⁷ Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Office of Water Resources, March 2005, Rules and Regulations for Groundwater Quality, p. 32-34

²⁸ University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension, April 2003, Westerly Source Water Assessment, p. 51

The final two requirements of a Wellhead Protection Plan still need to be completed by Westerly. These include the identification of which protection strategies will be implemented for the protection of the groundwater supply and the development of an implementation procedure for the chosen strategies, as well as the coordination with neighboring states, communities and water suppliers. In addition, changes to the zoning use table are also required.

Inner Protective Radius Around Wells

The Town of Westerly addresses RI Health’s requirement of an inner protective radius around public water supply wells in chapter 251-27 of the municipal code, entitled Protection of public water supply wells. The code defines a 400 foot radius around public water supply wells located in the town, in which any development that would change the state of the area (e.g. dwellings, barns, etc.) and/or the introduction or deposit of contaminating substances (e.g. liquid or solid waste, stormwater drainage, pesticides, etc.) are prohibited. Westerly’s *Water Supply System Management Plan Update (2001)* indicates that the town owns and controls the land around each well head and that the Town has acquired land within the 400 foot radius.

Aquifer Recharge Overlay District

One source water protection tool is a groundwater zoning overlay district (aquifer recharge overlay zone). The value of such an overlay district depends on the permitted uses and performance standards required within the zone. Both Stonington, Connecticut, and Westerly have established groundwater zoning overlay districts in their zoning codes.

The Westerly Aquifer Protection Overlay District was designed to encompass the three WHPAs as well as the identified aquifer recharge areas within the town. However, the footprint of the overlay district does not fully correspond to the footprint of the current RIDEM WHPAs (see Figure 4-3 Source Water Protection). By ordinance, Westerly prohibits some high risk land uses within the overlay district, such as gas stations, dry cleaners and photo processing and requires an Aquifer Protection Permit for certain other land uses. The permit application requires more detailed information to be provided about the proposed project by the applicant. Westerly’s ordinance does not include performance measures. The Town of Stonington also has a Groundwater Protection Overlay District in its zoning code. The Stonington ordinance (2005) prohibits the siting of high-risk land uses and new underground storage tanks in groundwater protection areas. It also includes performance measures.

Acquisition of open space lands in the town’s designated aquifer protection area began in 1989, with the acquisition of a 229-acre Town Forest. Since 1991, the Town’s Utilities Division has acquired several tracts in the vicinity of the Bradford well field. In 2004, the Westerly Land Trust purchased the 500-acre open space Grills Preserve, which is comprised almost entirely of stratified drift aquifer adjacent to the Pawcatuck River. Table 4-1 below provides a general overview of the information presented in sections 4.2 through 4.5.

Table 4-1 Summary of Water Quality, Management and Protection by Resource

	Resource	Water Quality Status	Issues	Stressors	Organization(s)
Coastal Ponds	Maschaug Pond	Unknown	Unknown	Failing or substandard septic systems, Stormwater runoff, Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRMC • CRMP • RI Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program • Rules and Regulations Governing the Protection and Management of Freshwater Wetlands in the Vicinity of the Coast • Salt Ponds Region SAMP • RIDEM • RI Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program • Salt Ponds Coalition • Town of Westerly • Onsite Wastewater Management Plan
	Quonochontaug Pond	Good	Increasing bacteria, Increasing nutrients, Low dissolved oxygen		
	Winnapaug Pond	Somewhat impaired	High bacteria, Nitrate concentrations		
Pawcatuck River	Lower (tidal) ¹	Impaired	High lead levels, Heavy metal pollutants, High bacteria, Low dissolved oxygen, No shellfishing	Bradford Dye Sewage Treatment Facility, Stormwater and urban runoff, Failing septic systems, Farms and wild animals,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPA • Federal Clean Water Act §303(d) • CRMC • CRMP • RIDEM Office of Water Resources • List of Impaired Waters • RIRC • River Policy and Classification Plan • Pawcatuck River Estuary • Little Narragansett Bay Management Interstate Management Plan • WPWA • Salt Ponds Coalition • Nature Conservancy • URI Watershed Watch Program
	Upper (from Meeting House Bridge upwards) ²	Impaired	High bacteria, Elevated lead, Nitrate concentrations		

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Wetlands	All	Unknown	Small wetland areas subject to encroachment by development	Stormwater runoff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIDEM Office of Water Resources • 2006 List of Impaired Waters • RI Freshwater Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Plan • CRMC • CRMP • Rules and Regulations Governing the Protection and Management of Freshwater Wetlands in the Vicinity of the Coast • Salt Ponds Region SAMP
	Ashaway Aquifer	Good			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIDEM Office of Water Resources • Rules and Regulations for Groundwater Quality • Rules and Regulations Establishing Minimum Standards Relating to Location, Design, Construction and Maintenance of Individual Sewage Disposal Systems • RIDEM establishes footprint of groundwater reservoirs, groundwater recharge areas and WPAs • RI Wellhead Protection Program • RI Department of Health • EPA • USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service • Town of Westerly • Water Facilities Plan • Onsite Wastewater Management Plan • Water Supply System Management Plan • URI Cooperative Extension • Westerly Source Water Assessment
	Bradford Aquifer	Good	Localized contamination , Elevated levels of nitrates and bacteria, Spills	Development in recharge zones, Failing septic systems, Road salt	
	Westerly Aquifer	Good			
Groundwater					
Beaches	All	Unknown	Storm erosion, Flooding	Population pressure, Major storms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRMC • CRMP • Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Source:

¹ includes Little Narragansett Bay

² includes Chapman Pond

4.6 Agriculture, Farmland, Aquaculture, Natural Vegetation and Habitats

4.6.1 Agriculture and Farmland Soils

Agriculture in Westerly is valued for its provision of fresh food, economic contributions, contribution to the town’s rural character and its role in the maintenance and protection of open space. According to the Tax Assessor’s Office, there are four large-scale working farms within the town – Everbreeze Farm, Hillandale Farms, Manfredi Farm and Ocean Breeze Farm. These farms raise horses and egg-producing chickens, cattle, cows, goats, swine, sheep and other livestock for meat, dairy and/or fiber, vegetables, corn, potatoes, apples, herbs, flowers, hay, compost and firewood for sale. Organic farming is increasing in popularity locally, as consumers demonstrate a willingness to pay increased prices to know where and how their food is grown. Many local farmers sell wholesale and local grocers, restaurants and florists have begun to work with local farmers in farm-to-table and farm-to-shop agreements that benefit both the farms and the retailers. More information on the economic impact of the local agricultural sector can be read in the Economic Vitality chapter.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) classifies soil within the US and compiles the information in Soil Surveys. The USDA Soil Survey identifies soil types considered *prime farmland* or *farmland of statewide importance*. Identification of prime and important farmland is useful to land use planning. When prime and important farmlands are lost to industrial and urban uses, agriculture becomes relegated to marginal lands that may be more erodible, more prone to drought, less productive, or less easily cultivated. Of the 65 soil types within the town, 18 types (2,212 acres or 11 percent of the town) are considered *prime farmland*, as defined by the USDA. Additionally, 11 soil types (2,008 acres or 10 percent of the town) are considered *farmland of statewide importance*. The three large-scale working farms in Westerly are located on soils considered to be prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance. The **Farm Soils map (FS-1)** below indicates all areas in town which contain prime farmland soils and soils of statewide importance as identified through soils data provided by Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS). The locations of these soils were not limited to undeveloped areas as it possible new agricultural operations, such as farms, may be established in the future on land which may currently be used residentially. The map also shows lands actively used for agricultural activity through inclusion of RIGIS’ land cover/land use dataset based on spring 2011 orthophotography. Rhode Island’s Farmland Preservation Act allows the state to identify and acquire development rights in order to maintain farming, productive open space, and groundwater recharge areas. Two of the farms in Westerly, Everbreeze Farm and Ocean Breeze Farm, are protected from future development through the

purchase of agricultural development rights. A third area, Silver Farm, is protected by agricultural development rights, but is not in active farming use.

4.6.2 Aquaculture

Aquaculture is another important local economic activity. Aquaculture has been growing very rapidly in Rhode Island. According to RIDEM, aquaculture in the state has nearly doubled in the past few years and the south shore salt ponds have been one of the major focuses for this industry. Westerly's salt ponds are nearly ideal environments for shellfish cultivation, with Eastern Oyster being the largest cash crop. Watch Hill Oysters now has 5 acres of oysters under cultivation in Winnapaug Pond.

While aquaculture is a basic economic activity for the community (bringing dollars into the local economy) and aquaculture has favorable growth potential, the activity also has the potential to interfere with other uses of the salt ponds. Aquaculture tracts become off limits to recreational users and displace public uses of coastal pond waters. Westerly needs to evaluate the trade-offs associated with aquaculture expansion to balance the economic benefits of aquaculture against the potential recreational losses.

4.6.3 Wetlands

Wetlands perform valuable ecological functions. They remove nutrients, pollutants and sediments from surface water runoff, recharge water supplies, reduce shoreline erosion and flood risks and provide fish and wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, aesthetic benefits, sites for research and education and commercial fishery benefits.

The Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS) maintains a geographical database of wetlands in Rhode Island. These wetlands are classified according to the *US Fish and Wildlife Service's Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States*. Wetlands are classified based on their overall wetness and the characteristics of their soils and plants. The most abundant freshwater wetland type in the Town of Westerly, and also within the State, is forested wetlands dominated by the presence of woody vegetation 20 feet or taller in height. Westerly has approximately 2,905 acres of forested wetlands (approximately 15 percent of the town). Additionally within Westerly, there are approximately 608 acres of scrub-shrub wetland (3 percent of the town), 151 acres of freshwater emergent wetlands (0.75 percent of the town), and 303 acres of estuarine emergent wetlands (1.5 percent of the town). The **Ecological Communities map (EC-1)** uses a dataset contributed by Photo Science, Inc. to RIGIS which, like many other maps included in this Plan, is based on orthophotography captured in spring 2011. The ecological communities shown on this map are classes (including wetland classes) introduced by the *Rhode Island Ecological Communities Classification* published in October

2011. RIECC is available to read at <http://www.rinhs.org/wp-content/uploads/ricommclass.pdf> and contains simple descriptions of each community. Developed land classes were grouped together to better highlight non-developed ecological communities and are shown in greater detail in the **Land Cover 2011 map (LC-1)**.

Legislation to protect and regulate the use of wetlands exists at the federal, state and municipal levels of government. RIDEM regulates freshwater wetlands through the Rules and Regulations Governing the Administration and Enforcement of Fresh Water Wetlands Act. Coastal wetlands are regulated by the CRMC through the Rules and Regulations Governing the Protection and Management of Freshwater Wetlands in the Vicinity of the Coast, as well as through the CRMP and the Salt Pond Region SAMP. Freshwater wetlands include bogs, flood plains, ponds, marshes, riverbanks, rivers, streams and other areas as defined in the regulations. The CRMC addresses coastal wetlands including salt marshes and coastal freshwater or brackish wetlands contiguous to salt marshes. RIDEM and CRMC prohibit filling of, or other alterations, to wetlands. RIDEM and CRMC require permits for and evaluate all proposed projects that may alter the natural character of wetlands and their functions and/or values. Westerly does not have any additional wetland regulations or requirements besides those of RIDEM and CRMC.

In addition to government regulation, some of the best protection for wetlands has been provided through acquisition and conservation easements by private and public land protection programs.²⁹ Nearly all mapped figures, including those referenced in this chapter, show the location of wetlands. The **Conservation Land map (CON-1)** offers a visual overview of non-state conservation lands and state conservation lands in respect to wetlands. Approximately 1,356 acres, or 34 percent of the total wetlands in Westerly, fall within these conservation areas. These areas include state and town-owned land, and private and public land trust holdings. The purpose of the acquisitions include preservation of open spaces, habitat conservation, agricultural land preservation, recreation and well head protection. Given these varied purposes, the location of a wetland within a conservation area doesn't guarantee its stewardship or the protection of wetland functions. The wetlands will still be affected by land use activities within the conservation land as well as by adjacent land uses.

In an effort to monitor and assess the ecological health of freshwater wetlands, RIDEM recently initiated the *Rhode Island Freshwater Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Plan*. The goal of the wetland monitoring and assessment is to improve wetland protection and management by understanding the cumulative impacts of human activities on wetland condition. This RIDEM

²⁹ Pawcatuck Watershed Partnership, 1998, The Pawcatuck Watershed Report, p. 3

program is in the development phase and the wetland monitoring and assessment activities will be phased in over the next five years.

4.6.4 Buffer Zones

Buffer zones, or vegetated areas adjacent to rivers, streams, ponds, wetlands and coastal waters, are important landscape features that help to prevent erosion and control the transport of sediment into the adjacent wetlands and water bodies. Buffer zones are valuable for removing pollutants and excess nutrients from surface water runoff and, in some cases, from the underlying groundwater. They also provide valuable wildlife habitat. Residential and commercial development removes considerable areas of vegetation from the landscape and increases impervious areas. The cumulative effects of many individual non-vegetated areas can result in increased sedimentation to surface waters, and less removal of pollutants from surface and groundwater.³⁰ RIDEM and the CRMC have programs in place to protect riparian buffers. RIDEM wetlands include a 50-foot perimeter wetland area and 100- and 200-foot riverbank wetlands adjacent to rivers and streams depending on the width of the watercourse. For coastal areas, CRMC policy requires coastal buffer zones for certain new/improved residential development and proposed commercial and industrial development.

The Rhode Island Rivers Council (RIRC) published a report in January 2005 entitled, *Establishment of Riparian and Shoreline Buffers and the Taxation of Property Included in the Buffers: A Report to the Governor, President of the Senate and Speaker of the House*. The findings and recommendations in the report identify weaknesses in the RIDEM and CRMC buffer regulatory programs. Failure to enforce compliance with these existing regulations due to staffing and other constraints was identified as a major obstacle for buffer protection. Additionally, existing programs do not restore buffers in already built and urban areas. The report outlines a series of recommendations for the improved protection of riparian and shoreline buffers. Some of the recommendations relevant to the development of this Westerly Comprehensive Plan include:

- Private land owners, watershed councils, land trusts and municipalities are encouraged to protect critical riparian areas through the following programs:
 - Land conservation and acquisition
- Flexible urban development standards and tax incentives to encourage restoration of riparian vegetation during the redevelopment of urban parcels
 - Conservation development strategies

³⁰ Ernst, Laura M., Laura K. Miguel, and Jeff Willis, April 1999, Rhode Island's Salt Pond Region: A Special Area Management Plan (Maschaug to Point Judith Ponds), Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council, Chapter 8, p. 5

- Provide tax incentives to encourage protection of buffer areas:
 - Designation by municipalities of riparian buffer corridors as open space land in their community comprehensive plans, which would open up the opportunity to provide temporary buffer protection through the Farm, Forest, and Open Space Act
- Promote education as to the importance of buffers and the tax benefits of donating conservation easements
- Seek state bond monies through RIDEM for riparian buffer restoration

In September 2005 (revised March 2006), the RIDEM initiated a new effort to monitor and assess the ecological health of freshwater wetlands, *the Rhode Island Freshwater Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Plan*. Some of the objectives in this plan seem to be designed to address concerns outlined in RIRC’s buffer report. This RIDEM program is in the development phase and will hopefully contribute to the protection and restoration of riparian and shoreline buffers. The wetland monitoring and assessment activities will be phased in over the next five years.

4.6.5 Terrestrial Habitat

Trees and woody shrubs are an essential component of wildlife habitat, producing vegetative materials in the form of nuts, seeds, fruits, twigs, buds and foliage for consumption by herbivorous wildlife. In addition, trees and shrubs themselves provide habitat for insects and other prey animals that are consumed by many other forms of wildlife. The diversity and pattern of forests is one of the primary factors determining which types and where wildlife live in a terrestrial environment. The structure and form of the vegetation in the forest and other early successional habitats is the critical component of habitat for wildlife. Few wildlife species live exclusively in terrestrial upland. Most utilize adjacent wetlands in some way that may include a source of drinking water, a travel corridor, or an escape cover when disturbed by predators.³¹

Forested conservation areas in Westerly include the Town Forest, Riverwood, Bradford Dye/Grills Preserve, Newton Swamp Management Area and Woody Hill Management Area. Management and planning efforts for the conservation of terrestrial habitat include those discussed in the Wetlands and Open Space and Recreation sections of this Plan.

4.6.6 Coastal Features

Barriers, Beaches and Dunes

³¹ Ernst, Laura M., Laura K. Miguel, and Jeff Willis, April 1999, Rhode Island’s Salt Pond Region: A Special Area Management Plan (Maschaug to Point Judith Ponds), Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council, Chapter 5, p. 25

The southern coast of Westerly includes a string of salt ponds, wetlands, barrier beaches and dunes, rocky shores and bluffs. The barriers are narrow strips of land that occur parallel to the coastline and are separated from the mainland by a coastal salt pond or tidal wetland feature. They are comprised of unconsolidated materials, mostly sands and gravel, and contain a vegetated dune. These habitats are dynamic and change in shape and extent along with extremes in tides and catastrophic storm events. Vegetation is generally sparse and scattered along upper zones of the beach. Trapping of windblown sands by dune grass or artificial fencing contribute to the growth and development of dunes.³² The Salt Pond SAMP explains that the natural cyclical patterns of sand placement, dune/beach shape and profile is dynamic and that it is not feasible, desirable nor appropriate to attempt to stabilize or fight the constantly changing barrier beach shoreline.³³ In December of 2015, CRMC published the draft *Shoreline Change Special Area Management Plan* known colloquially as the “Beach SAMP”. The SAMP provides guidance and tools for state and local decision makers to plan for, prepare for, absorb, recover from, and successfully adapt to the impacts of coastal storms, erosion, and sea level rise. This Westerly Comprehensive Plan supports and reinforces the Beach SAMP by applying the research, tools and strategies presented in the SAMP to future coastal land use decisions in Westerly.

Shoreline Change SAMP

Figure 4-6, Coastal Features, shows the location of these important coastal resources. Westerly’s beaches include:

- Sandy Point
- Napatree Point Conservation Area and Beach
- Watch Hill Bathing Beach
- East (Maschaug) Beach
- Misquamicut State Beach
- Town Beach
- Wuskenau Beach
- Dunes Park Beach
- Quonochontaug Beach
- Fenway Beach

Westerly’s coastal areas are highly prized for their recreational opportunities, as places to establish residences, and for the habitat functions they provide. These values are often conflicting, which presents challenges for the management and protection of these resources. The preservation of this land as public or private open space has the benefits of providing public recreation opportunities and protecting the visual character of the area for residents, while also conserving critical wildlife habitat and minimizing economic losses associated with

³² Ibid. Chapter 5, p. 24

³³ Ibid. Chapter 6, p. 6

storm damage. Barrier beaches, however, have proved difficult to police and maintain, and, with several notable exceptions, there have not been sufficient funds available for appropriate walkover structures, foredune zone management, beach replenishment and education.³⁴

Sandy Point is a 35 acre barrier island, in Little Narragansett Bay, managed as a wildlife refuge by the Avalonia Land Conservancy and is accessible only by boat or kayak. Since 2015, Sandy Point is actively monitored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as part of the National Refuge System. Napatree Point and Napatree Beach are managed as the Napatree Point Conservation Area by the Watch Hill Fire District and the Watch Hill Conservancy (co-owners) in cooperation with the USFWS for protection of the federally-threatened piping plover. Maschaug Beach, owned by the Misquamicut Club, is also managed in cooperation with USFWS for piping plover protection. Significant areas around Winnapaug Pond are held in public or private conservation – Lathrop Wildlife Refuge and Winnapaug Salt Marsh on the northern shore are managed by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island and Misquamicut State Beach and Westerly’s two town beaches are public beaches located on the heavily-developed barrier which forms the southern side of Winnapaug Pond. Dunes Park and Watch Hill beaches are also public beaches. The Quonochontaug barrier within Westerly includes conservation areas managed by the Weekapaug Fire District, the Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation and the Nopes Island Conservation Association. Fenway Beach is managed by the Weekapaug Fire District.

Bluffs and Rocky Shores

In addition to beaches and dunes, Westerly’s south shore is characterized by areas of coastal bluffs and rocky shores. Two areas of coastal bluffs include Watch Hill, where more than a mile of low profile bluffs extend east toward Maschaug Pond, and at Weekapaug Point (locally referred to as ‘the overlook’ or ‘the lookout’). Small areas of rocky shoreline occur at Napatree Point, Watch Hill Point and Weekapaug Point.

4.6.1 Rare Species and Unique Habitats

The Town of Westerly covers an area with many varied habitats ranging from barriers, salt water and brackish ponds, tidal marshes, freshwater wetlands, rivers and streams, upland fields and woodlands. A number of valuable water resources in the watershed provide unique habitats for numerous rare and endangered species. About 70.0 percent of Rhode Island’s globally rare (generally found at fewer than 100 sites worldwide) and 63.0 percent of the state

³⁴ Ibid.

rare species and natural community occurrences (such as rare plants and animals) are found within the Pawcatuck Watershed.³⁵ RIDEM's Rhode Island Natural Heritage Program (RINHP) tracks the state's rare species and natural communities of conservation concern. The RINHP has developed lists of species, both plant and animal, considered to be endangered or threatened at the federal level, endangered or threatened at the state level or of special concern in the state. These data sources are used to prioritize land protection activities throughout the public and private sectors. The RINHP has identified several sites in Westerly that are natural communities of conservation concern and where rare species are known to exist.

The **Natural Heritage Areas map (NHA-1)** shows the statistically significant Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) which existed in Westerly as contributed to RIGIS by RIDEM in spring 2016. NHAs are areas where there have been a notably dense number of observations of a community or nesting site of rare or threatened species as listed by Rhode Island or the United States or of a species deemed noteworthy by Rhode Island.

Pawcatuck River

The Pawcatuck River and its tributaries support 40 species of fish including freshwater, anadromous (live in salt water and enter fresh water to spawn) and catadromous (live in fresh water and enter salt water to spawn) species. These species include striped bass, white perch, bluefish, smelt, alewives, shad and salmon, and wild and stocked populations of brook trout. The anadromous Atlantic salmon is listed as a federal endangered species. Fish passage restoration projects have restored anadromous alewife, American shad, sea-run brown trout and rainbow smelt to the river. Small returns of adult Atlantic salmon have also been achieved.³⁶ Phantom Bog, located along the north shore of the Pawcatuck River at the northeast corner of Westerly, is the site of several rare species and communities of special emphasis or concern in the region. In December 2014, the United States Congress passed the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Protection Act directing the National Park Service (NPS) to study seven rivers within the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed, including the Pawcatuck River, to determine their eligibility for designation as Wild and Scenic. Earlier in that year, NPS had preliminarily found the Pawcatuck Watershed to be likely eligible based on a reconnaissance survey. In spring 2015, NPS signed a cooperative agreement with WPWA to facilitate the three-year study of eligibility. A Wild and Scenic Study Committee to identify Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) was established by WPWA and began meeting in December 2015.

³⁵ Pawcatuck Watershed Partnership, 1998, The Pawcatuck Watershed Report, p. 4

³⁶ Dillingham, Timothy P., et al, July 1993, The Pawcatuck River Estuary and Little Narragansett Bay: An Interstate Management Plan, pp. 70-72

The Town should support WPWA’s efforts to designate the Pawcatuck River as a National Wild and Scenic River.

Crandall Swamp

Crandall Swamp is a major wetland complex dominated by Atlantic white cedar and red maple swamps, but it also contains marsh, bog and open water habitats. The boundary of Crandall Swamp includes Chapman Pond and adjacent wetlands, Phantom Bog, and adjoining portions of the Pawcatuck River. It is one of the largest freshwater wetlands in Rhode Island, about 2,000 acres in size, and contains one of the most extensive stands of Atlantic white cedar in the state, along with a great diversity of wetland vegetation. Unfortunately, Crandall Pond is also afflicted with invasive aquatic species including Spiny Naiad, American Lotus, Eurasian Milfoil, and Water Chestnut. Efforts at physical removal have proven largely ineffective at controlling these infestations and there is a need for more effective long term strategies.

Crandall Swamp is also important as a groundwater resource and flood control area for the Pawcatuck River. A variety of mammals, amphibians, waterfowl and other waterbirds frequently utilize this pond and swamp complex including several rare species. Bird species nesting here include osprey, bitterns (state endangered and state threatened) and herons (state species of concern). The osprey population is of special significance.³⁷

The Coastal Environment

Salt ponds provide important ecosystem and habitat functions. These include prime habitat for commercial and recreational fin and shellfish, resting and feeding stops for waterfowl migrating along the Atlantic flyway and nursery areas for fish that spend the remainder of their life cycle at sea or in fresh waters. Many wildlife species found elsewhere in the state are present in the salt ponds region, in addition to the many species that are dependent upon the salt ponds’ specialized habitats, such as salt marsh or brackish wetlands. Habitat fragmentation occurs within the salt pond watersheds and is impacting wildlife species.

There are over 100 species of finfish and shellfish that utilize the salt ponds at some stage of their life cycle. The most popular species, the quahogs, oysters and flounder, are all declining. The available information suggests that the habitat on which these fish and shellfish species depend is also declining.

The diversity of habitats found within the salt pond watersheds supports a variety of birds, both year round residents and migratory species. Shorebirds are one group that depends

³⁷ Ibid. pp. 70-72

significantly on the salt ponds habitats. The piping plover, which nests along the south shore barriers, is a federally threatened species. Documented nesting occurs at several sites along the south shore, including Maschaug Pond and Napatree Point. USFWS maintains lists of bird species classified as Nongame Migratory Bird Species of Management Concern in the continental United States. Species from this list occurring in the Salt Ponds Region include the Seaside Sparrow, Northern Harrier, American Bittern and Black Rail. The first three species are state listed rare species. Waterfowl (i.e. plovers, ducks and geese) are common inhabitants of the salt ponds and use the area most heavily during migration and wintering periods. The American Black Duck is considered a species of concern by USFWS. Numbers of waterfowl recorded during counts made within the past five years pale when compared to historical accounts made prior to man-made impacts, such as breachways, that have affected the food source for many of these birds.

Many mammal species can be found within the diverse habitats of the Salt Ponds Region. These include meadow voles, white-footed mice, rabbits, chipmunks, squirrels, skunks, bats, red and gray fox, raccoons, muskrat, minks, ermines, fisher, martin, river otters, white-tailed deer, coyotes and a small but increasing winter population of seals.³⁸

4.6.7 Habitat Protection

The main threat to wildlife habitat is the development of land for human uses. Natural threats such as hurricanes and invasive species can also contribute to the loss of quality wildlife habitat. The clearing of land for construction and development destroys native vegetation and its natural moderating effects, resulting in increased velocity and quantity of water runoff. Wetland filling and alteration impacts the ecological function of the remaining wetlands. Constructions of breachways and associated dredging have changed the ecology, chemistry and biology of the salt ponds by increasing the rate at which sand accumulates within them and altering their salinity and flushing characteristics.

Numerous regulations and planning documents have been developed with the goal of protecting wildlife habitat. Many of these have already been discussed in previous sections of this Natural Resources chapter. Regulations at the state level include the RIDEM and CRMC wetlands regulations mentioned in the Wetlands section of this chapter. Regulations specific to the Westerly area include the CRMC's Salt Pond Region SAMP. Within the SAMP, policies to protect fish and wildlife habitat include prohibiting the disturbance of winter flounder spawning grounds during the spawning season (between the months from December through May) and prohibiting the alteration or disturbance of piping plover habitats during nesting. Planning

³⁸ Ibid. Chapter 5, pp. 15-16

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efforts at the State and watershed level include the RIDEM’s *Rhode Island Freshwater Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Plan*, the RIRC’s *River Policy and Classification Plan*, and the *South County Greenspace Protection Strategy* (see Open Space and Conservation Land section of this Plan).

5 Infrastructure and Energy

5.1 Introduction

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan contains a written inventory of existing and forecasted infrastructural needs for the public, including potable water, stormwater management, sanitary sewer system, telecommunications and energy. Three maps are also included in this Plan to provide visual references for the infrastructural components mentioned above and expounded upon in the subsequent sections of this chapter. The **Groundwater map (GW-1)** identifies several features related to groundwater including public wells, community and non-community wellhead protection areas (portions of aquifers through which groundwater moves to a public community or non-community well), groundwater reservoirs (significant subsurface water sources defined by RIDEM) and groundwater recharge areas (areas intended to be protected drinking water sources). The Office of Water Resources, an office of RIDEM, contributed the datasets used to produce this map. The **Sewer and Water Infrastructure map (SF-1)** shows several components of the infrastructure system existing in Westerly as well as the service areas which delineate their current expanses. The datasets were contributed by RIDEM, RIDOT and the United States Geological Survey (USGS). Along with roadways and rail lines, SF-1 also shows water supply and sewer lines, public water service districts, sewer service areas, public wells and wastewater discharges. These infrastructural components are concentrated primarily within the Urban Services Boundary identified by the state in *Land Use 2025*. The **Impervious Cover map (IC-1)** shows all land in the community which was covered by impervious surface, such as pavement, as identified through orthophotography taken in spring 2011 and contributed by RIDEM and Photo Science, Inc. to RIGIS. The inability for these human-created surfaces to allow for the permeation of water results in overland flow which requires proper drainage to mitigate the potential for flooding.

5.2 Water System

Westerly's water system is a self-sustaining enterprise fund owned by the Town and operated by the Public Works Department's Utilities Division. This system serves most of the Town of Westerly as well as a portion of the village of Pawcatuck in neighboring Stonington, Connecticut. Only a small portion of the Town (approximately 6 percent of users) is dependent on private wells due to the remote location of some residences. In May 2013 (final draft submitted in November 2014), C&E Engineering Partners, Inc. prepared the *Water Supply System Management Plan* which described existing conditions and included a long range program to improve the quality and quantity of water.

Water studies are conducted on five-year cycles and results are submitted to the both Rhode Island's and Connecticut (each state's Department of Health) for evaluation. Along with the

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information provided below, a description of wellhead and aquifer protection can also be found in the Natural Resources chapter.

Water Source

Westerly's drinking water is obtained from wells which tap into the Bradford and Westerly groundwater reservoirs and pump from 12 supply wells at seven pumping stations. Generators are provided at several wells to ensure a constant supply of water is available in the event of a power failure. Pumping stations each have their own chemical feed pits where potassium hydroxide (KOH) is added to the raw water to adjust the pH (a measurement of how acidic or basic water is). Water is stored in six storage facilities before being distributed for use. Generally, the quality of the water is good; however, in three separate past incidents (in 1994, 1998 and 2000) the water became contaminated with fecal coliform, prompting the state to mandate some form of disinfection.

The Town successfully completed a pilot program for a Mixed-Oxidants (MIOX) disinfection system and transitioned to full implementation in autumn 2009. Westerly was the first town in Rhode Island authorized to conduct a year-long, full system test on water supply using the MIOX technology.

Supply

The Town has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of its groundwater reserves. The conclusion has been that its existing sites at White Rock, Bradford II, Bradford III and Crandall Swamp provide sufficient capacity. To further enhance the Town's reserves however, Bradford IV was permitted in 2007 and became operational in October 2013 with a 0.5 mgd capacity. The Town has implemented a program for hydraulic modeling which is used to ensure expected results are occurring within the water supply system. The volume of water the Town pumps into the system varies widely throughout the year due to seasonal requirements, residents and visitors. As reported by the Utilities Division, the Town pumps 3 million gallons per day (mgd) from November to March and increases this volume to between 4 and 6 mgd from April to October due to the influx of seasonal residents and visitors.

The Town has actively acquired land for aquifer protection with the acquisition funded most notably through the Rhode Island Water Resources Board Grant program. As noted previously, Westerly also provides some water service to the Town of Stonington. While this has generally been a mutually beneficial arrangement, the level of future demand from Stonington is unknown and could possibly pose significant future implications. Westerly also owns water rights on land in the Town of North Stonington in Connecticut with proven water capacity of about 1 mgd. It would be important for the Town to preserve this critically important resource.

Drought Management

The State Planning Council adopted *Rhode Island Water 2030* in 2012 which included a Drought Management Plan addressing drought mitigation to establish coordinated procedures for a statewide response to severe drought episodes. It outlines the responsibility of federal, state and local entities and defines the roles these entities are to play in response to long-term drought conditions.

The Drought Management Plan policies, goals and strategies should be viewed within the context of the four over-arching goals of the Town's *Water Supply Management Plan*, which seeks to assure:

- Protection of public health, safety and welfare
- Conservation of essential drinking water resources
- Reasonable allocation of water supply
- Support of essential and high priority water uses

One requirement of the Drought Management Plan is that water suppliers that obtain, transport, purchase, or sell more than 50 million gallons of water per year, such as Westerly, are classified as large water suppliers and must develop a Water Supply Systems Management Plan (WSSMP). Westerly's WSSMP is the previously mentioned study (*Water Supply Management Plan*) prepared by C&E Engineering.

This study functions as the master plan for the water system, addressing adequacy of water supply, the water distribution system, conservation measures, watershed protection, capital improvements and emergency preparedness. In the emergency operations management section of their WSSMP's, water suppliers are required to address drought contingencies and appropriate response. In addition, the Regulations of the Water Resources Board require that a WSSMP include an emergency component to assess system risks and response capabilities, and to describe a contingency plan for all foreseeable water supply emergencies. Suppliers are required to identify system risks, including droughts, that exceed the water supply system's design capacity. They are also required to identify their response to specific water supply emergencies.

Specific drought response activities described in Volume II of the Westerly WSSMP include procedures for the designation of a water supply alert followed by criteria and procedures for several drought phases including a:

- Drought Watch/Advisory Phase
- Conservation Phase
- Expanded Restriction Phase

Emergency Phase Distribution System

Domestic water within the Westerly Water District is pumped through an extensive network of pipes totaling approximately 191.7 miles in length. Pipe sizes range from 1.25 to 20 inches and all are maintained by the Town. Pipe materials vary by age and include recent materials such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and ductile iron to older materials such as asbestos-cement and cast iron. In 2009, a 20-inch water main was constructed over a 2.6 mile distance from the White Rock pumping station to Granite Street due to a previous inability of the Town to access the full capacity of the White Rock wells. The improvement added two mgd (a 33 percent increase to capacity) to the distribution system capacity. There are 921 public hydrants located throughout Westerly as of spring 2016, almost all of which have been replaced and upgraded over the past 30 years.

System Improvements

Some sections of the water distribution system in Westerly are well over a century old. Extensive investments have been made and continue to be made to extend the system's useful life. Improvements are funded in the Water Department's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), which is a list of all known upcoming capital improvements within a projected five-year period. Improvement projects have included the construction of a new one million gallon Winnapaug Tank, the Winnapaug Tank site lead remediation, addition of a new pump station and well in Bradford, design of a new main extension on Westerly-Bradford Road, the Tower Street Tank rehabilitation and lead soil remediation and the new White Rock Transmission Main. There was also a major pipeline evacuation study completed by C&E Engineering Partners, Inc. in May 2009, including a hydraulic analysis, to establish priorities for upgrading and establishing a long-term replacement schedule. Other completed projects have included:

- Exterior and interior painting of the Bradford tank in 2009
- A complete electrical upgrade and new standby gas generator for White Rock pump station 3 in May 2012
- Well redevelopment and inspections of wells 2B, 2D, 3, Bradford III and Crandall in 2012
- Power washing of the Winnapaug and Bradford tanks in November 2013
- Well redevelopment and inspections of wells 1A, 1B, 1D, 2A, 2C and Bradford II in 2013
- Masonry repairs to the Hinkley Hill tank's concrete structure in June 2014
- A new roof system for White Rock pump station 1 in September 2014
- Water main replacements on Bay Street, Oak Street and Watch Hill Road

In the most recent fiscal year, 2015-2016, the Utilities Division:

- Replaced 2,214 feet of water mains and 17 lead services

- Installed 800 feet of 8 inch water main to the Westerly Pee-Wee Football Complex and 16 new water services across the town
- Redeveloped wells 1A, 1B, 1D, 2A, 2C and Bradford II
- Started a Lead Soil Removal project for properties surrounding the Tower Street Tank
- Had studies done for the Bradford and White Rock aquifers
- Added 823 meters to the Radio Read System
- Repaired 77 water breaks
- Completed two rounds of Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR) Testing for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Future projects include the installing of approximately 400 feet of guardrail along White Rock Road adjacent to the open well field, along with monitoring well installation in location prescribed in recent Aquifer protection studies. All of these projects were designed to ensure Westerly has an ample supply of high-quality water into the future.

Services

There are approximately 14,500 service connections to the Westerly water system currently. Every residential, commercial, industrial and governmental service connection is metered and bills are sent out based on the volume of water used. The budget for the Water Department is prepared to incorporate all departmental operating costs and the set water rates are calculated to ensure users pay for all department costs.

5.3 Sanitary Sewer System

Westerly, also through a self-sustaining enterprise fund, owns and operates a wastewater treatment collection and treatment system which services approximately 45 percent of the Town's parcels. Of all residential parcels, about 39 percent use public sewers and about 61 percent use individual septic systems. The Town has not extended sewer service in several years while some private developers have extended sewers in conjunction with completing related development projects.

The wastewater in areas not serviced by sewers has been accommodated in many ways, including cesspools and septic systems installed during time periods where no regulations existed or where there were minimal local regulations. Later systems were installed under regulations of Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) relating to Individual Septic Disposal Systems including the Rules Establishing Minimum Standards Relating to Location, Design, Construction and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems.

Recommended improvements to the treatment plant and the existing collection system were completed in September 2008. Additionally, the Bradford Road pump station was replaced in

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2011. Westerly has one wastewater treatment plant which discharges effluent through a 24 inch diameter outfall pipe into the Pawcatuck River. The plant's discharge is regulated by RIDEM through its Rhode Island Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (RIPDES) program. Effluent standards are based on the water quality classification of the receiving water body (in this case, the Pawcatuck River) and are regulated by RIDEM's Water Quality Regulations. A *Wastewater Facilities Plan* was prepared for the Town in November 1998 and revised in December 1999 by BETA Engineering, Inc. (now BETA, Inc.). The plan addressed deficiencies within the existing sewer collection system and sewage treatment plant as well as any deficiencies or problems in areas of the community without public sewer.

Capacity

The wastewater treatment plant was built in 1920 and has had modifications and upgrades made in the late 1950s, 1979, 1986 and 1992. There was also a major upgrade in 2003 for biological nutrient removal and replacement of equipment dating from the 1970s.

The plant is currently designed to treat an average flow of 3.3 mgd and a peak hourly flow of 7.8 mgd. The plant is at 66.7 percent of capacity and averaged 2.2 mgd in fiscal year 2014. The plant currently has capacity for all currently proposed and approved subdivisions within the sewer district, normal build-out within the district and the Misquamicut section of the sewer district between Winnapaug Pond and Maplewood Avenue. The Town is also working to limit the amount of groundwater infiltration in the system. The Town has been using video cameras inserted into sewer pipes to look for broken pipe which are then lined, sealed or replaced to seal off inflow as needed.

There are nine active wastewater pumping stations in the Town. The four major sewer pump stations (one on Beach Street, one on Margin Street and two on Canal Street) have all been rebuilt since 2003 and each is capable of handling current incoming flows. The plant property has room to expand to about 4.4 mgd if the Town makes a decision to extend the sewer district boundaries.

On-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems

On-site Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS; formerly Individual Sewage Disposal Systems [ISDS]) will likely continue to play an important role in the future of wastewater treatment in Westerly due to the limitations of the Town's sewage treatment system. Unfortunately, negligence, improper operation or unsatisfactory site conditions can lead to failure of an OWTS which would be a potential threat to the health of residents because they contaminate groundwater and cause other environmental damage. One future consideration is whether the Town should consider extending the sanitary sewers to areas not currently served. This has been a contentious issue in the community and one which will require considerable informed

dialogue among all interested parties. The impacts of climate change and sea-level rise will direct future decision making.

In addition to the regulations referenced above, wastewater systems may also be subject to RIDEM regulations for groundwater quality titled Rules and Regulations for Groundwater Quality, but they are not currently regulated by the Town. These state regulations are designed to protect and restore groundwater resources for drinking water purposes and other beneficial uses and to assure protection of public health, welfare and the environment. BETA Engineering, Inc. prepared an *On-Site Wastewater Management Plan* in January 2005 (revised in May 2007) which addresses many of the questions regarding OWTS. Additional information on this issue is available from the New England Onsite Wastewater Training Program at the University of Rhode Island main campus in South Kingstown (or visit <http://web.uri.edu/owt/>).

OWTS can have a direct impact on the integrity of both groundwater and surface water sources. Improperly functioning systems can contribute pollutants to the Town's water resources. Therefore, proper septic system function and maintenance is of long term importance for Westerly. For a description on the relationship between ISDS and water quality, visit the Natural Resources chapter. Advances in relatively inexpensive treatment systems and effluent fields have made formerly undevelopable properties now potentially developable and properties of limited development capacity now capable of supporting greater development. Additionally, recent changes in state law have mandated the use of these technologies in vulnerable coastal areas.

5.4 Stormwater System

The Town of Westerly owns and maintains a stormwater drainage system with most of the system flowing into the Pawcatuck River or surrounding wetlands. There are no combined sewer overflow (CSO) connections between the sanitary sewer and stormwater drainage system. Most of the system flows by gravity with only a single pump station. There are several new developments in the Town which have created their own storm retention basins or ponds in order to comply with newer stormwater regulations. After a private developer constructs a basin, the Town assumes the responsibility for maintenance. The Town has an ongoing maintenance program for the storm system which includes cleaning catch basins and pipes and replacing aging pipes and structures.

In 2007, the Town received approval from the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) to install a municipal storm drainage collection and treatment system serving the Misquamicut area. This system is operational and successfully addressing serious flooding problems which occur during moderate and heavy rainfall.

Stormwater Pollution Prevention

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stormwater pollution regulations are applied locally through RIDEM. Communities which operate Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) as defined by population of the community were required in 2003 to obtain permits and establish storm water management programs which reduce the quantity of pollutants able to enter stormwater drainage systems during storm events. The permit, or Notice of Intent (NOI), must include a Storm Water Management Program Plan which describes the Best Management Practices for each of the following six measures:

- Public Education and Outreach
- Public Involvement/Participation
- Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
- Construction Site Runoff Control
- Post Construction Runoff Control
- Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping

Westerly has submitted its NOI to RIDEM for MS4 approval. There were major actions required for the permit – the Town had to map the storm water system and all outfall points, inspect and clean all catch basins and structural BMPs, schedule maintenance and repairs, sample all outfalls and identify and eliminate all illicit connections and discharges. Another stormwater pollution related study is the Phase II Storm Water Management Plan prepared by Fuss & O’Neill, Inc. in March 2004. The Town has received a grant from the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) to establish best management practices (BMPs) which would reduce or eliminate known contaminants and establish recommendations to correct problems where high concentrations have been detected and documented. In this process, recommendations will be made to update the 2004 Phase II Storm Water Management Plan.

5.5 Electricity and Natural Gas

Both natural gas and electrical lines in Westerly are currently maintained, owned and provided by National Grid. There is interest among some residents to bury existing utility lines as has been done in certain recent developments. While the cost of doing so has restricted the Town’s ability to conduct such projects, some residents have funded such works in specific locations. An engineering study completed by Watch Hill Conservancy has prepared for the relocation of utility lines below ground along a one mile segment of its commercial district on Bay Street. It is now seeking funding of approximately \$8.5 million needed to enable the project to move forward. Bay Street and other roadways with on-street parking, such as those in Downtown, may also be ideal locations for installing electric charging stations to encourage the use of electric and hybrid vehicles.

In April 2015, the Town Council was presented a preliminary estimated savings by the Partnership for Rhode Island Streetlight Management (PRISM) of over \$5 million after a twenty-year period for the municipal purchase and collaborative maintenance of its approximately 3,100 streetlights. PRISM, parented by the Washington County Regional Planning Council (WCRPC), estimated the savings based on filings by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and previous experience in other communities in comparison to the Town's annual payment mandated by the Rate Tariff set by PUC.

As of April 2016, following its joining PRISM, the Town received an updated estimate of between \$147,477 and \$395,600 in savings annually, which would be between \$2.9 and \$7.9 million in savings after twenty years. This is dependent on the purchase of streetlights, conversion from conventional lighting to light emitting diodes (LED) and the type of system the Town may choose to install. The Town should explore PRISM's findings and work with PRISM and WCRPC to ensure the greatest cost savings and least environmental impact would result from the potential purchase and collaborative maintenance.

While natural gas service is available in some portions of town, the main transmission line is not adequate to provide town-wide service. Lines run along many of the major roads and can be extended to meet demand. There is a major gate station along a large gas pipeline in Westerly that can supply a significant number of new services as the need arises. It was reported there are approximately 4,000 gas service connections in Westerly.

5.5 Alternative Energy Production

5.5.1 Solar and Wind Proposals

Along with the goal of conserving energy, Westerly has also undertaken efforts to seek means of alternative energy generation. In early autumn 2011, Westerly issued a public request for solar and/or wind energy proposals. Several responses were received and a proposal review committee selected rTerra of Middletown, Rhode Island. Following the Town Council's approval of a contract with rTerra in November 2011, the company conducted feasibility studies on the former landfill site, now closed, and determined the landfill cover was not adequate to support a solar energy installation. At the Town's direction, rTerra then undertook site investigations at 78 White Rock Road, next to Town's Utilities Division building. In April 2012, rTerra submitted a Master Plan/Preliminary application for a one megawatt (MW), 5.5 acre, 4,000 panel solar photovoltaic (PV) system installation on that site. The Planning Board denied Master Plan approval for the solar installation in May 2012 due to concerns regarding the appropriateness of the use on the property, which has unique characteristics and is in proximity to an important aquifer resource. Additional factors including a need for additional screening, issues regarding

wind-load requirements and dissatisfaction with the financial terms resulted in the abandonment of the project.

Westerly also pursued the alternative generation of energy through wind turbines. In 2010, the Town Council appointed an Alternate Energy Study Committee (AESC) with an initial charge to review sites feasible for installing a wind turbine, particularly the wastewater treatment plant site on Margin Street. The AESC was also asked to draft a wind turbine ordinance for commercial and residential properties in Westerly. Working with EA Engineering Science and Technology, Inc. (EA Engineering), the AESC determined that a wind turbine at the wastewater treatment plant site would not be feasible due to interference with flight paths for Westerly Airport.

At the AESC's request, EA Engineering screened 151 Town-owned properties and conducted a fatal flaw analysis for suitable turbine sites. The analysis eliminated sites within extensive forest, wetlands, properties in close proximity to high density residential areas and local flight paths and ultimately identified 12 potentially feasible Town-owned properties. The AESC then sought and received funding from the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (RIEDC; now the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation [Commerce RI]) to evaluate the sites. Based largely on funding constraints, the AESC chose to do a detailed study of the seven most promising sites:

- Site 1 – 78 White Rock Road (neighboring the Utilities Division building)
- Site 2 - 8 Springbrook Road (Transportation and Bus Garage)
- Site 3 - 49 White Rock Road (Gingerella Sports Complex)
- Site 4 - 20 White Rock Road (neighboring White Rock Pump Station I)
- Site 5 - Bradford Road (Bradford Preserve)
- Site 6 - 39 Westerly-Bradford Road (the Transfer Station, now 39 Larry Hirsch Lane)
- Site 7 - Atlantic Avenue

A more detailed feasibility study concluded Site 6, the existing transfer station, would provide the most advantageous location. The study concluded the wind resource was adequate and the location was well buffered from residential neighborhoods, close to a National Grid substation and favorable relative to the airport runways. The transfer station could also benefit from locally generated power.

5.5.2 Net Metering Project

In March 2016, the Town issued a request for proposals (RFP) seeking to procure up to 100-percent of the 4,073,285 kilowatts per hour (kWh) of electricity used by the Town annually by contracting with a private renewable energy developer to provide electricity from the

development of one or more renewable energy projects. The purpose of the RFP was to select a qualified third party renewable energy developer (“Developer”) who would successfully plan, permit, design, install, finance, operate and maintain one or more renewable energy projects at no cost to the Town to build, commission, operate and maintain (potentially excluding routine grounds maintenance).

The RFP was issued in recognition of the benefits and value of renewable energy projects as a means of stabilizing and reducing long-term electricity costs, reducing the Town’s carbon footprint and its correlating impact on the environment and community and incorporating local economic development opportunities. The State of Rhode Island has made significant improvements in the number and types of incentives and related policies which support the development of new renewable energy projects, particularly projects which benefit municipalities through public-private partnerships. Therefore, renewable energy technologies which will be considered in the future are those consistent with Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) §39-26-5:

- Solar photovoltaic (PV) or concentrated solar power (CSP)
- Wind power
- Hydropower
- Biomass (in compliance with RIGL §39-26-2[6])
- Fuel cells (using resources listed above)
- Waste-to-energy (in compliance with RIGL §39-26-2[6])
- Geothermal

The location and/or site of proposed Projects need not be within the Town, but a description of the proposed net metering (including virtual net metering through a municipal collaborative) must be provided. The net metering RFP is Westerly’s effort to move forward with locally generated renewable energy.

5.5.3 Future Alternative Energy

Westerly has made great strides in promoting large scale wind and solar power. The community also has a significant potential to meet energy needs through adoption of small scale energy generation. Westerly’s sea breezes and sunshine duration are well suited for wind and solar generation. Residents can additionally meet some or all of their energy needs through installation of small scale systems and public facilities can benefit from roof mounted wind and solar generators. The Town needs to adopt regulations allowing residential wind energy facilities and solar power systems and establishing standards for their design, installation, operation and maintenance to protect public health and safety and to preserve historic, natural and scenic resources.

Recent technological advances in the generation of electricity through the use of tidal currents to turn turbines, sometimes built into bridge and breakwater structures, show considerable promise for future energy generation. In the future, tidal turbines associated with breachways and coastal waters may offer a way for Westerly and neighboring towns to generate electricity without the adverse effects associated with combustion. Similarly, new advances in the use of wave action to generate energy indicate there may be a potential for the Town to take advantage of its coastal location to help meet future energy needs. While these technologies are mostly in the prototyping phase in the United States, they are already in use in some foreign states for power generation. Westerly should monitor these technological advances and remain open to alternative approaches to power generation as they are further developed.

5.6 Communications

There are a number of telecommunications providers in Westerly whose services include land line telephones, cellular and mobile phones and networking, including internet access. This is a dynamic market and new suppliers continue to be established at a rapid rate. Although no official survey has been conducted, cellular coverage is reported to be generally good, though some areas lack service depending on the individual provider and location. Most telecommunications infrastructure in Westerly is overhead and physical telephone lines are owned by Verizon Communications, Inc. The Town also seeks to establish a Municipal Broadband Infrastructure Upgrade and Expansion project, which would develop a fiber optic infrastructure enabling the ability to receive fiber optic connection across town (generically referred to as Fiber to the X [FTTx]).

6 Services & Facilities

6.1 Introduction

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan's Appendix I contains an inventory of existing and forecasted needs for the public such as, and not limited to, community facilities, education and schools, healthcare, public safety, recycling and waste management and social services.

The **Public Facilities Map (PF-1)** shows all structures which contribute to Westerly's ability to provide a broad range of services including emergency response, medical services, education, waste disposal, library services and social support. Datasets for these facilities are made available to Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS) by several contributors and have been modified to indicate their current statuses. Some infrastructural components are also shown in this map, including public wells and electric transmission and gas lines.

6.2 Emergency Services

6.2.1 Police

The Westerly Police Department (WPD) has 55 staff members (excluding constables and community service officers), 44 of whom are sworn officers. Its 27,763 square foot headquarters was completed in September 2007 at 60 Airport Road. The new facility houses all police operations including patrol, dispatch, investigations, detention of prisoners and administration. The facility also serves as a regional emergency operations center in the event of a disaster. In fiscal year (FY) 2015, WPD received 30,948 calls for service, a 7.4 percent increase from the previous year. The following five categories accounted for the largest percentage of calls in that year:

- Security Checks (37.7%)
- Motor Vehicle Stops (15.4%)
- Motor Vehicle Citations (8.6%)
- Criminal Arrests (4.1%)
- Disturbances (3.0%)

Updates to equipment were anticipated in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan in order to keep pace with changes in technology and no additional facility increases were anticipated. Funding has been made available in the approved FY2017 budget for the Police Department to update its existing dispatch center. The updated center will include a new console and new radios with access control not previously available. Training on how to use the dispatch equipment is also funded.

6.2.2 Fire and Ambulance

Fire Protection Services

The Town of Westerly is divided into seven fire districts – Bradford (BFD), Dunn’s Corners (DCFD), Misquamicut (MFD), Shelter Harbor (SHFD), Watch Hill (WHFD), Weekapaug (WKFD) and Westerly (WFD). Each fire district is incorporated to provide services within its boundaries and also provides services, upon request, to neighboring districts with which it has a mutual aid agreement. Fire departments in Rhode Island have taxation powers and do not rely on appropriations from municipalities. Services provided by the departments include fire prevention and extinguishment, protection and preservation of life and property endangered by fire and related emergencies and maintenance of fire district property such as beaches and facilities. BFD and SHFD have contracted with DCFD and WKFD has contracted with MFD to provide fire protection services. Following the termination of the recently approved contract between BFD and DCFD, it is anticipated BFD will merge with DCFD. All fire departments within the Town provide ongoing training programs. Training standards are consistent within all the fire districts and meet National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) standards 1500 and 1501. The following table indicates the location and major characteristics of each fire department located in Westerly.

Table 6-1 Town of Westerly Fire Departments

Department	Station(s)	Active Fleet	Members ¹	Calls (2015)
Bradford	None	None	4	None
Dunn’s Corners	1 Langworthy Rd 5664 Post Rd ²	3 Engines, 1 Tower, 1 Tanker, 1 Brush, 1 Squad and 1 Bucket	42	796
Misquamicut	65 Crandall Ave	2 Engines, 1 Unit and 1 Marine	20	120
Shelter Harbor	None	None	11	None
Watch Hill	222 Watch Hill Rd	3 Support trailers, 2 Engines, 2 Marines, 1 Ladder, 1 Truck, 1 Squad, 1 Traffic and 1 ATV		133
Weekapaug	4 Wawaloam Dr	None	17	None
Westerly	7 Union St 180 Beach St	6 Engines, 1 Ladder, 1 Fire Alarm, 2 WTs, 1 Decontamination, 1 Bucket, 1 Special Hazards and 1 car	87	669

Sources: DCFD, MFD, WHFD, WKFD and WFD

¹ Seasonal members excluded; individuals may be members of more than one fire district

² Address is in Charlestown

The fire departments have developed strong working relationships which allow them to provide support as needed in the form of Mutual Aid. DCFD, MFD, WHFD and WFD have standing mutual aid agreements with all fire departments in Rhode Island utilizing the State of Rhode Island Mutual Aid Agreement as well as with all fire departments in New London County, Connecticut utilizing the New London County Chiefs' Association.

Ambulance Services

The Westerly Ambulance Corps, established in 1917, is a private, non-profit volunteer organization which provides basic life support (BLS) and advanced life support (ALS) emergency medical services to Westerly and portions of Stonington, Connecticut, including the village of Pawcatuck. Other services include routine medical transportation, a Rescue Squad, 911 dispatching services (upgraded and automated in 2009) and first aid training courses. Ambulance services are provided by 8 full-time paid staff and 20 active volunteer members. The volunteer Rescue Squad, composed of 20 to 30 active members, specializes in vehicle extrication, dive rescue, swift-water rescue, ice rescue, rope rescue and emergency scene lighting.

Headquarters are located at 30 Chestnut Street with its fleet of four Type III ambulances (an E-450 Lifeline, an E-450 Road Rescue, an F-450 Wheeled Coach and an International Horton) and two four-wheel drive rescue vehicles (a 1500 ALS Vehicle and an E-550 Support Vehicle) located on-site. Westerly Ambulance Corps members are required to attend training programs and to keep their certifications up-to-date. The Rescue Squad attends training programs sponsored by the Rhode Island Fire Academy and private Rescue Teaching Corporations.

Mutual aid agreements for rescue services exist with Charlestown Ambulance Services and the Ashaway and Pawcatuck Fire Departments. Mutual aid agreements for ambulance services also exist with ambulance corporations in Charlestown (2 ambulances), Ashaway (2 ambulances), Stonington (2 ambulances), North Stonington (2 ambulances) and Hope Valley (3 ambulances).

6.2.3 Medical Facilities and Services

L+M Westerly Hospital

L+M Westerly Hospital (commonly called Westerly Hospital) is located at 25 Wells Street. It has been serving residents since 1925 and was acquired by the Lawrence + Memorial Medical Group in 2013. With a total physician staff of over 130, the hospital provides medical and surgical care to a service area which includes Washington County and New London County in Connecticut. The licensed capacity is 125 beds with the staff capacity of 56-60 beds. In addition to 24-hour emergency services, the hospital provides inpatient and outpatient surgical services, diagnostic laboratory services, imaging services, a variety of therapeutic services and several support groups and educational programs. L+M Healthcare reported the hospital provided over

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\$3.7 million in community benefits in 2014 and the hospital received its most recent reaccreditation from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) in 2015.

South County Health

South County Home Health (SCCH) is a part of South County Health and provides visiting nurses, rehabilitation therapists and other home healthcare professionals to residents in southern Rhode Island. Licensed by the state and accredited by JCAHO, it is certified by Medicare and Medicaid and a member of the Visiting Nurse Associations of America and the National Association for Home Care. The main facility in the region is located at 14 Woodruff Avenue in Narragansett and a satellite office is located at 55 Beach Street in Westerly, which serves the southwest quadrant of the State. In 2006, 644 patients in Westerly (11,933 visits) were served by 89 staff members. Low levels of insurance reimbursement from Medicare and other insurance companies and increasing documentation requirements to receive those reimbursements are issues that this and other medical facilities are struggling to address.

In May 2016, South County Health expanded its services in Westerly with the opening of its second Medical and Wellness Center in the state. The center (15,600 square feet) offers numerous services including an anti-coagulation clinic, behavioral health specialist, cardiology, dermatology, diabetes care, diagnostic imaging, laboratory services, nutrition services, oncology and hematology, orthopedics, physical therapy, podiatry, primary care and family medicine, an Urgent/Walk-in Care, wound care and services provided by the Center for Women's Health.

Wood River Health Services

Wood River Health Services (WRHS), a private non-profit Community Health Center, operates a satellite office at the Tower Street School Community Center (described later in this chapter) in addition to its main facility in the village of Hope Valley in Hopkinton. WRHS offers patients access to numerous services in several medical areas including family medicine, women's health, dental care, behavioral health, care management and laboratory services.

Nursing Homes and Retirement/Assisted Living Facilities

Several nursing homes and retirement facilities are established in Westerly and summarized in the table below. An assisted living facility, The Elms, is also located at 22 Elm Street and has capacity of 75.

Table 6-2 Nursing Homes in Westerly, 2016

Facility	Address	Number of Beds
Apple Rehab Clipper	161 Post Road	60
Apple Rehab Watch Hill	79 Watch Hill Road	60
Westerly Health Center	280 High Street	106
Westerly Nursing Home	79 Beach Street	66

Sources: Apple Rehab, Westerly Health Center and Westerly Nursing Home

6.3 Public Schools

Since the preparation of the 1991 Comprehensive Plan, significant improvements have been made to the Town’s public school facilities. Through a collaborative effort between the Town Council and the Westerly School Committee, two new facilities have been constructed and strategies to maintain and repair schools have been identified and implemented. In 1995, land was acquired for Springbrook Elementary School and construction was completed in 1996. The site for Westerly Middle School was acquired in 2001 and construction was completed in 2005. Many of the school facilities are old and will require significant renovation or replacement over the next 15 to 20 years.

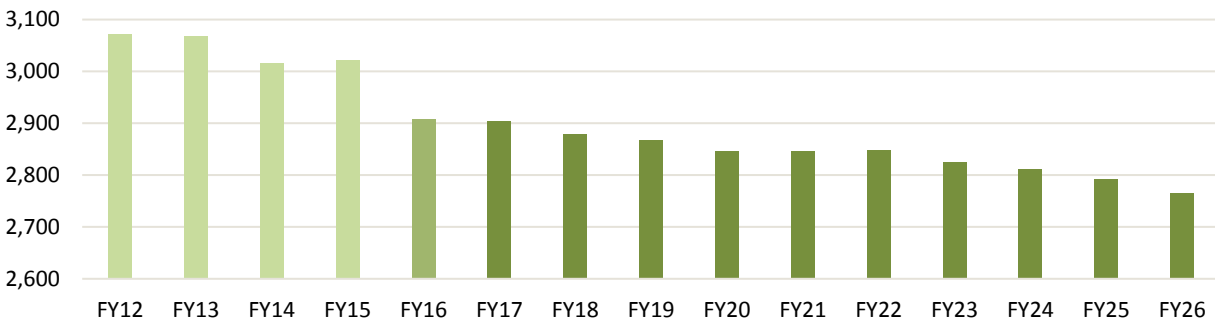
6.3.1 Enrollment

The majority of the Town’s school children (93.8 percent) attend public school. Enrollment for the 2015-2016 academic year as of October 2015 included 860 students attending Westerly High School, 869 students attending Westerly Middle School, 1,161 attending one of Westerly’s four elementary schools and 50 within a preschool program at Babcock Hall. Saint Pius X School, the Town’s only private and Roman Catholic school, provides curriculum for 178 students in Kindergarten and grades 1 through 8. As of October 2015, 53 students were sent by the District to the nearby Chariho Regional Vocational School and 86 students were educated at a charter school or were outside placed.¹

The Westerly School District has a projected total enrollment of 2,903 for the 2016-2017 fiscal year (FY), continuing a general decline in student population which has trended since 2003. Enrollment projections prepared by McKibben Demographics for the School Department, shown in Figure 6-1, indicate this negative trend is expected to continue until at least FY 2026 with a loss of 307 students from 2012 (a -10.0 percent decrease).

¹ Westerly Public Schools FY2016-2017 proposed budget

Figure 6-1 Actual and Projected Public Schools Enrollment, FY 2012-2026



Source: Westerly Public Schools (projections by McKibben Demographics)

6.3.2 Demographics and Special Services

The 2015 *...And How Are the Children?* report by Washington County Coalition for Children (WCCC) provides several statistics regarding youth population and related characteristics for all towns in Washington County. According to the report, Westerly’s population at age 18 or younger was the third largest in the county. At the same time, the community was identified as having the highest number of children and youths not living with parents (also identified in the 2016 KIDS COUNT Factbook published by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT), receiving support through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and receiving free or reduced-price school lunches. As of 2012-2013, Westerly also had the highest number of identified homeless persons aged 18 or under.

These and other economic and social demographics are indicative of hardships many students may experience while enrolled in public school both currently and in the future. Westerly Public Schools, in its commitment to student well-being, staffs four full-time school psychologists and 7.5 school social workers. A behavioral specialist has also been sought by the district, though funding was not made available as of FY2017.

6.3.2 School Facilities

At the conclusion of the 2008-2009 academic year, the Westerly School Department closed one of its five elementary schools and moved all fifth grade students to Westerly Middle School. This change was due primarily to a decade-long trend of declining enrollment. The District is now comprised of six public schools: four elementary schools, one middle school and one senior high school. The District’s administrative offices are located at Babcock Hall (23 Highland Avenue).

Table 6-3 Public School Enrollment by School, October 2015

School	Grades	Location	Enrollment	Year Built
Bradford Elementary School	P-4	15 Church Street	176	1923
Dunn’s Corners Elementary School	K-4	8½ Plateau Road	283	1967
Springbrook Elementary School	K-4	39 Springbrook Road	338	1995
State Street Elementary School	K-4	35 State Street	356	1955
Westerly Middle School	5-8	10 Sandy Hill Road	867	2004
Westerly High School	9-12	23 Ward Avenue	851	1923
		15 Highland Avenue		1920

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

As noted in narrative and the table above, many buildings have presented challenges to the school district due to their age. In 2002, a finalized *Long Range Facilities Master Plan* for Westerly Public Schools was submitted by Gilbane and RGB to the Office of the Superintendent’s Facilities Planning Committee. A resulting recommendation was to implement a multi-phase long range plan to address facility needs. As of spring 2016, two phases had been successfully completed:

- Phase 1 (completed 2005)
Westerly Middle School (renamed from Babcock Middle School and previously located at Babcock Hall) was constructed and has been in use for grades 6 through 8 since the 2005-2006 academic year. Fifth grade classes were relocated from their respective elementary schools to the middle school beginning in the 2009-2010 academic year.
- Phase 2 (completed 2012)
The School District relocated its offices to the first floor of Babcock Hall while the second and third floors became classroom space for Westerly High School (redesigned as a campus). The building previously used for the district’s offices was torn down and replaced by a bus loop and increased parking capacity for students and staff. Renovations to the Ward Building resulted in several improvements including a new science and technology wing, new art classrooms, installation of Smart Boards and new flooring, windows and ceilings.

The proposed third and fourth phases would include renovations to all elementary schools and Babcock Hall, respectively.

Declining enrollment projections has also required an examination of programs and/or the need for facility closures and a reallocation of students and staff in recent years. Following the 2008-2009 academic year, Tower Street Elementary School was converted into a community center while its student population was reallocated among the remaining four elementary schools. In August 2015, Frank Locker Educational Planning published its recommendations to

the School Committee in review of the October 2014 study by the School Design Advisory Committee. The 2015 Facilities Planning Services study concurred with the advisory committee to close State Street Elementary School. Scenarios are currently under consideration by the School Committee for the redesigning of the school system.

6.3.3 Performance Measures

Rhode Island adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS), a set of academic learning goals for students to achieve at the completion of each grade level, in July 2010. Full implementation of CCSS began with the 2013-2014 academic year and the Westerly School District's curriculum uses and seeks to continue to use aligned instruction and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) while also continuing to use other assessments, such as the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) assessment, and the Response to Intervention (RtI) model.

Between the 2012-2013 and 2015-2016 academic years, Westerly Public Schools introduced seven Advanced Placement (AP) courses to its existing program – Computer Science Principles, English Language and Composition, French, Italian, Psychology, Spanish and Studio Art. Several expansions to Westerly High School's pathways are also sought by the school district, including new courses for the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Fine Arts pathways and the introduction of a new pathway – Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH). During the 2014-15 academic year, the most recent academic year for which this information was available from InfoWorks (a data reporting collaborative between RIDE and The Providence Plan), the Westerly School District had a classroom teacher-to-student ratio of 1:13. For the same academic year, InfoWorks reported a 95 percent attendance rate and a four year graduation rate of 91 percent. Following a request for waiver from some provisions of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the state has been exempted from reporting on "highly qualified teachers" since the 2012-2013 academic year. The previous Comprehensive Plan reported the average teacher had over 10 years of teaching experience and more than 50 percent of teachers held a master's degree.

Another result of Rhode Island's request regarding NCLB was the establishment of a statewide accountability system to identify school performance in 2012. Each school in the state receives a Composite Index Score (CIS) represented as a 100 point system – a maximum of 34 points for percent proficient, 34 points for subgroup gaps, five points for distinction, 26 points for student growth percentiles and 26 points for graduation rates. Schools which receive less than 37.8 points are identified as priority schools and schools which receive 77 points or more, of which 27.2 points or more are awarded for percent proficient or for subgroup gaps, are identified as commended. Schools which receive less than 12 points in subgroup gaps, less than 10 points in percent proficient and/or less than a 95 percent participation rate for two consecutive years

are identified as focus schools. Table 5-5 shows the CIS each school in the district earned in RIDE’s 2015 classifications.

Table 6-4 Composite Index Scores, 2015

School	Percent Proficient	Subgroup Gaps	Distinction	Student Growth Percentiles	Graduation Rates	Total
Bradford Elementary	17.00	13.39	1.20	7.80	-	39.39
Dunn’s Corners Elementary	13.60	18.70	2.40	15.60	-	50.30
Springbrook Elementary	11.33	20.40	1.20	5.20	-	38.13
State Street Elementary	15.87	28.90	3.00	5.20	-	52.97
Westerly Middle	13.60	25.50	1.20	5.20	-	45.50
Westerly High	10.88	20.40	2.40	-	26.00	59.68

Source: RIDE

More detailed information is provided in school and district report cards. The 2015 district report card identified a 95 percent target for the number of school students tested for proficiency in math and reading at all grade levels in the 2013-2014 academic year. This target was exceeded by the elementary grade level and close to being met by the middle grade level. A second target for the district, the graduation rate, was considered to be met as it had made sufficient progress towards the goal of a 93.2 percent rate.

6.4 Solid Waste Disposal

Westerly owns and operates a solid waste transfer station located at 39 Larry Hirsch Lane. This facility is also available to residents of Hopkinton under an agreement between the two municipalities. The Town does not provide curbside pickup and sells trash bags (known locally as orange bags due to their distinct color) which residents fill and return to the transfer station on their own. Special charges may also be applied due to size.

There is also a recycling area for separation directly adjacent to the transfer station where residents bring recyclables at no charge. Residents can purchase blue and green recycling bins. This system has been in place for several years and in general works well since residents have an incentive to separate recyclables to save money. The Town collects the trash at the transfer station, loads and trucks it to the RI Resource and Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) facility in Johnston, Rhode Island where it is landfilled. There is an arrangement with Hopkinton to also

receive that community's waste at the transfer station. If residents choose not to haul their trash, there are a number of licensed private haulers which will collect it for a fee. If residents use a private hauler, they are not required to use the specially designated bags. It is estimated that slightly more than half of the residents hire a private hauler.

Over the past several years, the Town has increased the types of materials which can be recycled at the facility to 25 categories. Items include, among others, propane tanks, electronics, scrap metal, used motor oil, automotive batteries and tires, oil filters, wood stove ashes, rubble, clothing and mattresses. The facility will also accept truck tires and refrigerators. Various fees are associated with these items, except for cooking oil, books, anti-freeze, bikes, scraps, paint, and rigid plastics, which are collected for free. Additionally, residents can also drop off leaves and grass at no charge and brush for a per-ton fee. All compost materials are currently sent to Earth Care in neighboring Charlestown. In the future, the Town should consider implementing a municipal food-waste composting program.

Currently, the number of households which use the transfer station is not tracked and commercial and residential trash is collected in the same fashion. According to RICCC, the actual total solid waste received from Westerly yields a recycling rate of about 30 percent and an overall diversion rate (all items diverted from the landfill) of 39.8 percent. These are strong improvements in comparison to the percentages reported for the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, (respectively 14 percent and 29 percent) but are below the state goals for municipalities of 35 percent and 50 percent, respectively.

6.5 Westerly Library

The Westerly Library is located on an approximately 14.7 acre property, shared with Wilcox Park, at 44 Broad Street in the center of Downtown. The library, owned and operated by the Memorial and Library Association of Westerly, is a participating member of the Ocean State Libraries network which allows its more than 17,400 cardholders (free to residents of all Rhode Island municipalities and the Town of Stonington, Connecticut as well as nonresident property owners in Rhode Island) to access the collections of all libraries throughout the State (Westerly's collection totals over 181,600). In FY2015, 29,831 items were circulated to other libraries while 29,215 items were borrowed from others.²

In 2016, 61.9% of the library's funding came from nonpublic sources such as endowment, grants and community support, 13.5% came from the State and 24.6% came from local sources (Westerly and Stonington, Connecticut).

In addition to traditional books and periodicals, the library also offers visitors access to

² <http://westerlylibrary.org/support-westerly-library-and-wilcox-park>

audiobooks, computers, e-books, films, twenty-six online databases, Wi-Fi and a busy calendar of programs including plays, concerts, lectures and civic discussions. At present, the library is ranked among Rhode Island’s ten libraries with the highest number of items in circulation, number of library visits, number of programs offered and program attendance. The table that follows presents selected library statistics for the most recent full five year period.

Table 6-5 Selected Library Statistics, 2011-2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Items circulated	195,111	220,149	208,911	213,956	208,808
Size of collection	227,796	231,026	188,124	180,106	170,151
Full-time employees	18	18	18	15	17
Hours operated	3,063	2,929	2,929	2,906	2,906
Patron visits	228,953	243,553	240,553	243,009	242,607
Registered borrowers	16,853	16,848	17,400	17,690	17,424
Computer log-ons	30,225	44,760	40,719	34,177	29,186
Programs offered	430	381	372	461	636
Attendance of programs	27,584	29,259	28,603	28,681	31,424
Annual budget	\$1,833,859	\$1,791,733	\$1,983,134	\$1,875,291	\$1,987,233

Source: Westerly Library

The library has had three additions since it was first constructed in 1894, the most recent occurring in 1992, necessitated by expansions of services. In order to address that and other needs, the Library is conducting an \$8 million capital campaign. Roughly half of the hard construction costs will be provided by the Rhode Island Office of Library Services, which provides grants for library construction. Funds will be used for space reallocation in the library and renovations to the park. Interior renovations are expected to provide a 20 percent increase in floor space for each of the Library’s four floors without increasing the 50,000 square foot footprint. Most of the funds for this project are coming from private donations, but the project will require the combined efforts of federal, state, town, foundation, corporate and community supporters. Renovation work on the library structure was started in August 2009. In spring 2016, following the Library’s receipt of a grant provided by the Champlin Foundation, work began to update the library’s circulation desk, create a new space for teenagers and establish a modernized technology lab and makerspace.

6.6 Social Service Agencies and Programs

As indicated through data earlier in this chapter (and in other chapters as well), many of Westerly’s residents experience or will experience financial and social hardships which require some form of assistance to manage and overcome. Along with relevant services described above, there are a number of locally involved agencies and programs, shown in Table 6-6, that aim to provide needed assistance.

Table 6-6 Descriptions of Select Social Services

Agency or Program	Description
Adult Day Center of Westerly	501(c)(3) organization, located in the former Police Department headquarters, providing daytime care for adults with cognitive, emotion and/or functional impairments
Deborah K. Fallacaro Pregnancy Center of Westerly	Center located at Immaculate Conception Church providing services and education at no cost for women who believe they may be pregnant
Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County (DVRSC)	Non-profit agency dedicated to preventing and responding to domestic violence through offering safety, support, advocacy, education and services
Jonnycake Center of Westerly	501(c)(3) organization serving 3,000 individuals through education, food pantry and social services programs
Literacy Volunteers of Washington County	ProLiteracy America accredited affiliate providing English as a second language (ESL) learning and preparation for citizenship and General Education Diplomas (GEDs), among other services
Living Supplies Closet (LSC)	Ministry of Christ Church providing personal hygiene products at no cost
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Westerly/Chariho	Local affiliate of NAMI, the largest grassroots organization in the United States dedicated to educating on, advocating for and listening to individuals with mental illnesses and their families
Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center (PNC)	Multi-purpose facility offering social, educational, health and human services programs to Westerly and southeastern Connecticut communities
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	Program of the United States Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service offering grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding postpartum women and to children five years old and younger found to be at nutritional risk
Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)	Program of the United States Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service offering financial assistance to eligible, low-income individuals
St. Vincent de Paul Society	Organization of Roman Catholic lay people operating locally at Immaculate Conception Church providing temporary financial assistance and a food pantry for individuals experiencing emergency situations
South County Community Action Agency (SCCAA)	501(c)(3) organization providing numerous financial, housing, learning and social services with offices in Westerly, Charlestown, North Kingstown and South Kingstown
Tower Street School	Westerly Public Schools facility, previously an elementary

Community Center	school, offering continuing education and learning programs for cost and for free through numerous partners. Four organizations (Bradley School, Church at Westerly, Literacy Volunteers of Washington County and Wood River Health Services) are also tenants of the center.
Washington County Coalition for Children (WCCC)	Coalition of social service agencies, healthcare providers and private and public individuals providing children’s advocacy
Westerly Area Rest and Meals (WARM)	501(c)(3) organization providing an emergency shelter, soup kitchen, Attire for Hire clothing program, tax assistance and community outreach services
Westerly Senior Citizens Center	501(c)(3) organization providing social and transportation services and health programs to the senior and elderly population in Westerly and nearby communities

Sources: Adult Day Center of Westerly, Christ Church, DVRCS, Immaculate Conception Church, Jonnycake Center of Westerly, Literacy Volunteers of Washington County, NAMI Westerly/Chariho, PNC, SCCAA, SNAP, Tower Street School Community Center, WARM, WCCC, Westerly Senior Citizens Center AND WIC

Many of these agencies are involved in the Basic Needs Network of Washington County (BNN), a group of basic needs providers established in 1995. BNN conducted a Regional Needs Assessment in 2011 which focused on low-income individuals achieving economic independence. A survey of 292 low-income individuals was conducted which found respondents represented a broad range of work experiences and over one-third were from Westerly.³

6.7 Energy

6.7.1 Energy Conservation

Energy conservation and the efficient use of energy has long been a part of planning in Westerly. In 2008, the Town adopted a renewable energy policy that included a policy statement defining renewable energy as “any energy resource that is naturally regenerated over a short time scale and derived directly from the sun (such as thermal, photochemical, and photoelectric), indirectly from the sun (such as wind, hydropower, and photosynthetic energy stored in biomass) or from natural movement and mechanisms of the environment (such as geothermal, tidal and river flow energy).” The policy statement also included objectives such as obtaining at least 15 percent of the Town’s energy from renewable sources, partnering with the State of Rhode Island on renewable energy initiatives and reducing energy consumption by applying sustainable measures in the management, operation and maintenance of facilities and infrastructure.

³ Regional Needs Assessment for Washington County, Rhode Island, 2011

The 2010 Comprehensive Plan also included measures proposed to conserve energy and seek alternative forms of energy production. Objective 4 of Goal 6 was to “decrease Westerly’s dependence on petroleum-related energy sources through a municipal strategy of conservation and renewable energy generation.” Action 6.3 called on the Town to “update land use regulations to address and encourage appropriate renewable energy opportunities.” Policy 9 stated “the Town shall encourage on a continuing basis the recycling and conservation of energy, water and other environmental resources.”

6.7.2 Energy Usage

In 2011, Johnson Controls, Inc. (JCI) conducted a six-month audit of energy consumption in public municipal buildings on behalf of the Town. The goal of the audit was to find ways to reduce energy costs, provide capital upgrades, increase the energy efficiency and the reliability of the Town’s mechanical and electrical systems and to maintain or improve occupant comfort and well-being. The results of the audit and subsequent recommendations were provided in the *Town of Westerly Detailed Energy Audit Report* prepared by JCI in 2012. Table 6-7 below shows a summary of audited energy usage in each of the Town’s non-school buildings. The findings included a total of over 4.9 million kilowatt-hours of electricity and range from 2.3 to 138.1 million British thermal units per square foot per year (MBtu/sf/year) of thermal energy used across Town buildings. For informational purposes, the therm (thm) is a measure of heat energy equal to 100,000 Btus.

Table 6-7: Energy Usage in Non-School Municipal Buildings, 2011¹

Building	Electric			Oil			Gas		
	kWh	\$/kWh	MBtu/sf/yr	Gallons	\$/gal	MMBtu/sf/yr	Thm	\$/thm	MBtu/sf/yr
Town Hall	297,620	0.11	38.2	10,645	3.33	55.5	-	-	-
Landfill Building #2	19,575	0.15	8.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Animal Control	136,857	0.12	72.4	-	-	-	5,331	1.6	82.6
Armory	11,778	0.18	2.4	2,778	3.33	22.9	1,687	1.6	10.0
WWTP	2,275,524	0.15	215.8	15,568	3.33	60.0	-	-	-
Police Station	665,900	0.14	53.5	-	-	-	8,307	1.6	19.5
Beach Building #2	888	0.23	0.3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Water Dept. Building #1	791,900	0.13	180.8	5,193	3.33	48.2	348	2.2	2.3
Water Dept. Building #2	482,750	0.13	-	-	-	-	4,058	1.5	138.1
Water Dept. Building #3	18,519	0.17	152.7	-	-	-	80	4.0	19.5
DPW Highway	97,000	0.13	21.6	1,735	3.33	15.7	2,428	1.6	15.8
Bus Garage	-	-	-	1,126	3.33	21.9	-	-	-
Senior Center	128,960	0.12	30.5	-	-	-	8,562	1.5	59.3
Adult Day Center ²	21,409	0.23	5.2	-	-	-	5,112	1.5	36.5

Source: *Town of Westerly Detailed Energy Audit Report*, 2012

¹ Text in red indicates the assumed numbers when billing history was not available

² The Adult Day Center was purchased from the Town of Westerly in 2013

The major findings of the Johnson audit included the following:

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- There are many opportunities to reduce energy costs within the Town buildings. By implementing the recommendations outlined in the audit study, the Town of Westerly could reduce energy usage by 9.33% in Town buildings (3.10% electric and 21.34% thermal) based on the average utility data established as the baseline period.
- Equipment Conditions Improvement: Some of the mechanical and electrical systems are in poor condition, but are operated well, given current funding and staffing level constraints. Some of the Town buildings have programmable thermostats and the rest have pneumatic thermostats or electric dial gage thermostats. All remaining electric and pneumatic thermostats should be replaced by programmable thermostats with two set points (day and night) for occupied and unoccupied hours. The installation of a control system was proposed that would upgrade and connect all control systems in the Town Hall via the district Wide Area Network (WAN) to a front end/host computer, allowing facility personnel to access all building systems via the front end to make changes to optimize the space conditions and maximize energy savings.
- Heating System condition: The existing boilers in the buildings that are near the end of their useful life were recommended for replacement with high efficiency boilers that would provide the Town buildings with newer and more reliable equipment and contribute largely to energy savings.
- Operation and Maintenance: Several measures were recommended to reduce the demand for manual operations and labor to add to the Town Department's savings.
- Occupants Comfort Improvement: The measures recommended were expected, at a minimum, to maintain, and in most cases improve, occupant comfort.

The facilities owned and operated by the Westerly School Department are public buildings and their operating costs are passed along to taxpayers. Any energy efficiencies that can be obtained from various measures proposed for other Town buildings could equally apply to school district facilities. JCI conducted a separate energy audit of Westerly Public Schools in 2011 with results made available in its *Westerly School District Preliminary Energy Audit Report*. The results are summarized in Table 6-8 below:

Table 6-8: Energy Usage in Public School Buildings, 2011¹

Building	Electric			Oil			Gas		
	kWh	\$/kWh	MBtu/sf/yr	Gallons	\$/gal	MBtu/sf/yr	Thm	\$/thm	MBtu/sf/yr
Bradford Elementary	176,060	0.15	18.34	0.00		0.00	13,153	1.55	40.14
Dunn’s Corners Elementary	968,720	0.15	60.00	0.00		0.00	4,222	2.81	7.66
Springbrook Elementary	274,305	0.15	21.54	0.00		0.00	20,304	1.54	46.71
State Street Elementary	217,820	0.14	17.39	0.00		0.00	43,248	1.55	101.14
Westerly Middle	1,497,800	0.13	32.98	0.00		0.00	47,967	1.56	30.95
Ward Building	1,359,140	0.13	20.62	1,954.83	1.98	1.20	67,547	1.55	30.02
Babcock Hall	409,561	0.15	10.68	0.00		0.00	60,686	1.60	46.37
Tower Street School Community Center	205,240	0.14	18.04	0.00		0.00	39,299	1.53	101.23

Source: *Westerly School District Preliminary Energy Audit Report*

¹ Text in red indicates an assumed number or basis on assumed number from JCI’s experience working on similar projects

From the audit, 19 energy conservation measures (ECMs) were formed and recommended for Westerly Public Schools. The major findings of the schools audit were comparable to non-school municipal buildings. The Town recommends that the School Department use all necessary measures to ensure energy efficient operations.

6.7.3 Conservation Measures Evaluated

The Johnson Controls audit recommended eleven (11) energy saving improvements for Town buildings as follows:

Lighting – Fixture Retrofit and Fixture Controls

- Retrofit most existing T8 and T12 lamp fixtures with Super T8 lamps and replace standard power ballasts with low power electronic ballast
- Retrofit exterior lighting (Metal Halides and High Pressure Sodium) with Induction/LED lights that have higher efficiency and longer life expectancy
- Add occupancy sensors to turn off lighting in storage rooms, mechanical rooms and offices when unoccupied

Building Envelope Improvements – Weatherization

- Install caulking, weather-stripping and seal roof-wall joints to prevent air infiltration and improve insulating properties

Building Envelope Window Replacement

- Replace existing windows with energy efficient windows that cut solar heat gain, provide more insulation and reduce infiltration

Building Controls – Temperature Setback

- Adjust scheduling of the air handling equipment, fan-coil units, and unit ventilators to set back to a lower temperature during unoccupied hours

Heating System Upgrade

- Replace existing boilers that are near the end of their useful life with high efficiency condensing boilers that provide increased reliability and significant energy savings
- Replace all existing steam traps (including Float and Thermostatic, Thermostatic and bucket types) with new steam traps to decrease losses in the heating system
- Install new insulation to decrease heat loss on all existing steam, hot water and domestic hot-water piping not already insulated.

Computer Management

- Add computer management software that will automatically power down the school computers during unoccupied/low usage hours

Water Conservation

- Replace existing high flow fixtures with new low flow toilets, low flow urinals, faucet aerators, and low flow shower heads

Rooftop Unit Rehabilitation

- Repair dampers, controls, motors, air handling units, and exhaust fans that are non-functioning

Walk-in Freezer Controls

- Provide new controls to optimize compressor and evaporator operation

6.7.4 Anticipated Energy Savings

Projected energy savings for Town facilities, excluding public schools, are presented in Table 6-9 and would total 5,524 kWh/year of electricity and 1,556 MBtu/year of thermal energy. This reduction in energy consumption would also reduce carbon emissions, with the savings estimated to be the equivalent of total carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from burning 1,140 barrels of oil or heating 45 homes for one year. Emissions of CO₂ have been implicated as a causative factor in the current pattern of global climate change.

To allow a comparison between buildings, an Energy Use Index (EUI) was calculated for each building. The EUI is calculated by converting annual consumption of all fuels to Btus and then dividing that value by the area (in this case, gross square footage) of the building.

Table 6-9 Energy Savings from Implementation of Recommended ECMs

Building	Electric Energy Usage (kWh/yr)		Thermal Energy Usage (MMBtu/yr)		EUI Electric		EUI Thermal		EUI Total	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Landfill #2	19,575	14,051	0	0	8	6	0	0	8	6
Animal Control	136,857	133,550	533	367	72	71	83	57	155	128
Armory	11,778	8,865	555	389	2	2	33	23	35	25
WWTP	2,275,525	2,263,242	2,164	1,743	216	215	60	48	276	263
Town Hall	297,620	256,146	1,480	821	38	33	56	31	94	64
Police Station	665,900	639,449	831	841	54	51	20	20	73	71
Beach Building #2	888	575	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adult Day Center	21,409	15,330	511	453	5	4	37	32	42	36
Water Dept. Building #1	791,900	782,760	757	718	181	179	51	48	232	227
Water Dept. Building #2	482,750	479,976	406	350	561	558	138	119	699	677
Water Dept. Building #3	18,519	18,421	8	7	153	152	19	16	172	168
DPW Highway	97,000	89,571	484	368	22	20	32	24	53	44
Senior Center	128,960	89,844	856	703	30	21	59	49	90	70
Bus Garage	0	0	157	114	0	0	22	16	22	16

Source: Town of Westerly Detailed Energy Audit Report, 2012

6.7.5 Projected Costs

According to Johnson controls estimates, application of the eleven recommended energy conservation measures to the Town buildings would cost an estimated \$1,463,649 and would yield an annual savings of \$69,650. With anticipated utility rebates and verification costs, the payback period for the eleven recommended energy savings was estimated at 24 years.

6.7.6 Recommended Energy Conservation Measures

Subsequent to the Johnson Controls study, in January 2016, the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources and National Grid, acting on behalf of Westerly and other municipalities in the state, contracted with CHA Consulting to assist in Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank (RIIB) applications. In Westerly, this included completing Technical Energy Audit Reports for the police station and the Town Hall.

The audit report for the police station recommended three energy conservation measures: heating, venting and air conditioning (HVAC) control improvements, replacement of high-intensity discharge (HID) lighting with light-emitting diode (LED) lighting and replacement of fluorescent lighting with LED lighting. These improvements were projected to cost approximately \$185,000 and to result in an annual energy savings of 299,954 kWh of energy, equating to \$33,746 annual savings and a payback of 5.5 years.

The audit report for the Town Hall recommended five energy conservation measures: Installation of attic insulation, improvements to the domestic hot water (DHW) system, replacing the dual temperature pump motor replacements with variable frequency drive

pumps, exterior lighting replacement and general building lighting replacement. These energy conservation measures were predicted to cost approximately \$249,000 and would save 73,803 kW·h of electricity and 1,330 therms (or 133,000,000 BTUs) of natural gas for a total annual savings of \$10,187 and a payback of 24.4 years.

Westerly is now proceeding to prioritize energy conservation measures and is seeking funds from the state for low-interest financing for energy improvements. If approved for funding Westerly will refine the accuracy of the technical audit studies to an investment grade audit level, which will then be the basis for funding used by the state.

Westerly submitted a successful application to RIB and will be moving forward in the coming years to acquire and convert its streetlights to LED, implement nearly all recommendations offered by CHA Consulting for the police station and Town Hall (the single exception being lighting in Town Hall) and install solar panels on the Public Works Department facility. The Town, with assistance from an energy consultant to be determined (as of spring 2016), will also draft a Strategic Energy Plan in accordance with RIB requirements for funding. The consultant will additionally advise the Town on the goals, policies and action items of the Comprehensive Plan related to energy and assist with reviews of requests for proposals (RFPs), design-build solutions and similar items.

6.7.7 Carbon Reduction

Reducing the Town's carbon footprint was part of the 2008 renewable energy policy. At the time, it was recommended that the Town develop a carbon reduction policy to guide municipal decision-making. The Town must consider fuel efficiency in purchases of municipal vehicles and consider the carbon footprint of products procured by municipal and school operations as a matter of course when selecting vendors. Reducing energy demands, through such measures as the use of EnergyStar efficient appliances in all Town installations, also reduces carbon dioxide emissions and decreases the size of the Town's carbon footprint.

The Westerly-Pawcatuck Farmers Market, community supported agriculture (CSA), farm share, and farm-to-table programs have increased the amount of locally grown food that is sold in town. Local food production shortens food transport distances, reducing energy usage and carbon emissions. The land trusts in Westerly have preserved significant tracts of forested land that are sequestering carbon. Westerly has strongly supported the Farm, Forest and Open Space tax reduction plan, which is typically applicable to managed forests. Many local residents heat their homes, or supplement home heat, with wood. Firewood is a carbon neutral fuel. Land preservation efforts in Westerly have also reduced the maximum build out population in the Town reducing energy demand for infrastructure and reducing energy demand for commuting to jobs in neighboring communities. Maintaining land as open space also reduces

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the mileage of roadways needed to be maintained and power lines extensions, contributing to a lower long-term total energy usage in the community.

7 Transportation Network

7.1 Overview

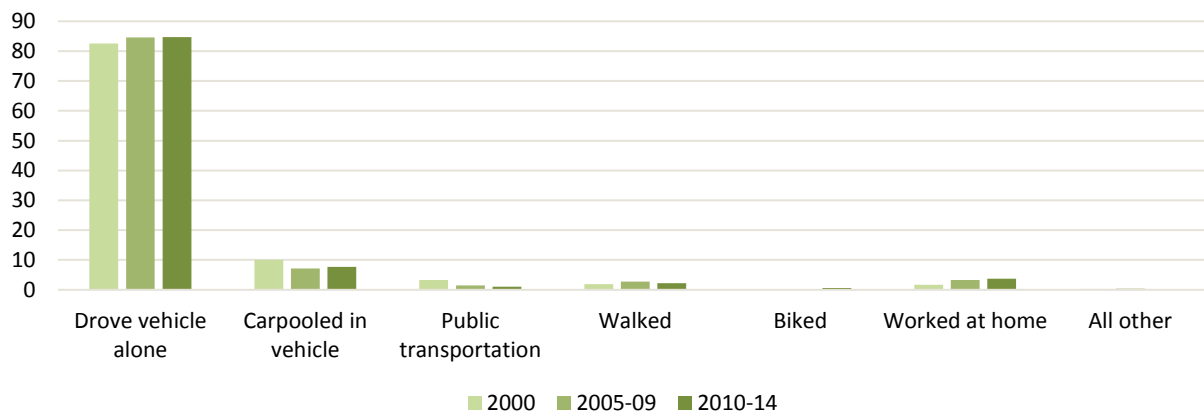
A transportation network has a major impact on the community it serves – defining community character, influencing affordability and affecting public health. More fundamentally, a transportation network determines the ability for people and goods to enter, exit and circulate within a city or town. This chapter covers the various elements contributing to Westerly’s transportation network, including roadways, sidewalks and crosswalks, bike paths and routes, air and rail services, accessible waters and public transportation. By reviewing these modes and providing for consistency with the direction for transportation policies and actions set by *Transportation 2035* and other elements of the State Guide Plan, this inventory complies with the objectives of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

The **Transportation map (TR-1)** offers a visual overview of the many components which support the town’s circulation and mobility. These include boat launches and ramps, bike paths, harbors, ports, public transit routes and stops, railroads, roadways (including evacuation routes, local roads and state roads) and transportation facilities (Westerly Airport and Westerly Station).

7.2 Roads and Motor Vehicles

Similar to most communities in the United States, the early development of the transportation network in Westerly considered several modes of travel including walking, biking and public transit. Through the twentieth-century, this original system was greatly transformed by the introduction and popularity of automobiles. As shown in Table 7-1 below, the popularity of and reliance on motor vehicles has continued into the new millennium.

Figure 7-1 Means of Transportation to Work for Workers 16 years and over, 2000-2014



Sources: 2000 Census, 2005-2009 and 2010-2014 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates

In addition to the dominance of driving to and from places of work, the prevalence of cars, trucks, vans and other vehicles is further indicated by the number of households with access to vehicles. 93.5 percent of households had access to a vehicle at the time of the 2000 Census, with 16.7 percent of households having three or more vehicles available. These percentages respectively increased to 97.8 percent and 34.2 percent in the period 2010 to 2014, according to American Community Survey five-year estimates. Likewise, the number of households with no vehicle access fell from 6.5 percent in 2000 to 2.2 percent in the period 2010 to 2014.

Vehicle operation is supported by a 219.7 mile network of public roadways maintained by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) and the municipal Public Works Department.

7.2.1 Functional Classification

In Rhode Island, the functional classification system is prepared and maintained by the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program in cooperation with RIDOT.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) classifies roadways according to the function they provide and there are three major classifications of roadways and highways:

- Locals account for the majority of all roadways and limit vehicle traffic mobility to slower travelling speeds
- Collectors provide links between local roads and arterials as well as between different areas of a community, allowing vehicles comparatively greater accessibility and mobility than local roads; collectors are sub-classified as either major or minor
- Arterials provide the highest level of vehicle mobility due to high travelling speeds and larger traffic capacity meant for long distance, uninterrupted travel; arterials are also sub-classified as either principal (including interstate, other freeways and expressways and other principal arterials) or minor

In Westerly, there are 43.4 miles of arterials (6.2 miles of non-interstate freeways and expressways, 10.5 miles of principal arterial roads and 26.7 miles of minor arterials), 18.8 miles of collectors (16.3 miles of major collectors and 2.5 miles of minor collectors) and 157.5 miles of local roads. Roadways are also further categorized locally as urban or rural, generally corresponding with the urban services boundary and the local history of development.

Route 78, also known as Westerly Bypass and Veterans Way, serves as the longest arterial in Westerly. It essentially runs east-west (though a majority of its length is north-south) to connect Connecticut to Westerly's beaches and has come to somewhat define the northern and eastern extents of Westerly's denser and more urbanized area. Nearly all of Route 1, including Broad Street, Franklin Street, Granite Street, Post Road and Union Street, is a principal arterial

which provides service through the central-southern portion of town and generally runs east-west. The scenic alternative to Route 1, Route 1A, also traverses the town from east to west. It encompasses Elm Street, Shore Road, and long segments of Beach Street and Watch Hill Road and provides a collector route for traffic to and from the beaches and coastal neighborhoods. Other arterials in Westerly include Route 91 (Oak Street and Westerly-Bradford Road) and Route 216 (Church Street and portions of Ross Hill Road). Route 3 begins on Grove Avenue as a principal arterial through its segments on High Street and Ashaway Road.

7.2.2 Traffic Volumes and Safety

Input received from the Comprehensive Plan Citizens' Advisory Committee, public meetings and focus group sessions held in conjunction with the preparation of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan update indicated there are areas of in town which have been long-standing concerns for residents regarding vehicle congestion. This issue is concentrated in the summer months when the year-round traffic volume is combined with returning seasonal residents (as noted in previous chapters, 15.3 percent of total housing units are vacant for seasonal, recreational or occasional use) and daily influxes of visitors. Significant congestion is particularly concentrated along those roadways providing access to the shoreline (including Westerly Town Beach, Wuskenau Beach, Misquamicut State Beach and other beaches) such as Airport Road, Atlantic Avenue, Route 78 and Winnapaug Road. During summer weekends and holidays, a Community Service Officer of the Westerly Police Department (WPD) is commonly stationed at the intersection of Airport Road and Winnapaug Road to direct and manage traffic. Year-round, notable instances of traffic congestion may also be generated from downtown as well as the community's seven schools (six public and one private). The proximity of Foxwoods Resort Casino (11.5 miles away via Connecticut Route 2) and Mohegan Sun (20.1 miles, also via Route 2) to the northwest of Westerly adds to local congestion. The addition of Fox Tower at Foxwoods (opened as the MGM Grand at Foxwoods and renamed in 2014) brought nearly 3,000 new jobs to the area and accompanying traffic in 2008, though the local impact of the global economic downturn has since reduced the number of jobs and the traffic impact of this expansion. New commercial developments such as Westerly Crossings, at the previously noted intersection of Airport Road and routes 1 and 78, also pose additional traffic volume concerns.

Traffic congestion issues were previously addressed statewide through a Congestion Management System (CMS) resulting from a 1997 plan. Routes 1 and 78 were both noted as part of the CMS and Route 1 was identified as experiencing congestion at the time. It was additionally forecasted to experience continued congestion as far out as 2025. Recommendations for improvements along Route 1 at that time included recommendations such as intersection improvements, signalization improvements and access management. Some of these recommendations were realized near the Charlestown-Westerly town line, with the

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installation of several traffic lights and turning lanes to enhance both traffic flow and safety. More recently, the Congestion Management Process (CMP) included as an appendix to *Transportation 2035* identified Westerly's segments of both Routes 1 and 78 as experiencing congestion in 2012 with congestion projected to continue until at least 2035.

Traffic volumes, as recorded in Table 7-1 below, are primarily sourced from the dominance of vehicle use in town. Additional causes may include accessibility management and a need for better linkages between Route 1 and the seashore and between I-95 and Westerly. The table below summarizes traffic counts shown in the 2009 RIDOT Traffic Flow Map and compares them with 2005 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volume count. In 2005 the traffic counts indicated that a section of Route 1 had an average daily volume of 21,300 vehicles. Similarly, Route 1A AADT volume between Winnapaug Road and Weekapaug Road was 4,500 in 2005 and was 3,800 in 2009.

Table 7-1 Average Daily Vehicle Traffic Counts, 2005-2009

Roadway	Segment	2005	2009 ¹
Route 1	Granite Street and Route 78	22,700	22,700
	Route 78 (to junction w/ Route 1A/Shore Road)	21,300	
	West section and Town line	13,500	
	Route 78 and Route 1A/Shore Road	9,500	
Route 78	Airport Road to Route 1	8,100	
Route 1A	Watch Hill Road	5,800	4,400
	Shore Road (Ocean View Highway to Winnapaug Road)	5,100	4,100
	Shore Road (Winnapaug Road to Weekapaug Road)	4,500	3,800
	Shore Road (Noyes Neck Road to Route 1)	2,000	
	Beach Street (East Avenue to Route 3)	7,700	7,600
	East Avenue at intersection with Beach Street	4,900	
Route 3	Route 78 and High Street	11,600	
Route 91	Post Road and Oak Street (northern portion)	6,400	
	Eastern stretch near Bradford Road	4,800	
Route 216	Between Bradford and Ashaway-Bradford Road	7,300	
Potter Hill Road		600	1,000
Canal Street	Northern portion	1,800	

Sources: 2010 Comprehensive Plan and 2009 RIDOT Traffic Flow Map

¹ Annual 24-hour ADT collected between 2004 and 2008

From fiscal years 2013 to 2015, decreases in the number of motor vehicle verbal warnings (-37.9 percent), motor vehicle citations (-2.5 percent) and vehicle collisions (-3.7 percent) in Westerly were recorded by WPD. For the first year since at least 2011 as well, no vehicle-

related fatalities occurred within the town in 2015.¹ WPD has initiated a traffic calming program managed by a Patrol Corporal who is forwarded all traffic complaints and concerns and then develops a plan to address the issue. Directed patrol, speed signs, electronic message signs and public outreach are all utilized to achieve the desired results.

These improvements have been beneficial (as noted in the statistics above) and should be maintained or modified to target other safety concerns which continue to be present in the community. Between 2013 and 2015, the number of individuals driving while intoxicated remained unchanged (ranging between 40 and 45) and increases were reported in the numbers of motor vehicle stops (28.7 percent) and erratic drivers (19.1 percent). Route 1 is a roadway which has experienced numerous collisions. It is important for the Town to also begin considering the potentially transformative impact of advances in vehicle technology, such as autonomous vehicles (AVs or, more commonly, self-driving cars), on traffic flow and safety. While this impact is difficult to project, as self-driving cars themselves are in early stages of development and state legislation needed to allow their appropriate use in Rhode Island has not been adopted by the state as of spring 2016, several automotive manufacturers plan to have produced their first self-driving models well before 2023.

7.3 Parking

While most of the parking supply throughout Westerly is adequate or ample for current and expected future needs, Watch Hill, Misquamicut and Downtown are areas where a majority of residents are concerned about the availability of parking.

Currently, it can be estimated downtown is able to accommodate about 1,300 vehicles at any given time. This capacity is possible through a combination of on-street spaces, off-street lots and one three-floor parking garage. The largest suppliers of parking are Ocean Community YMCA, the Town of Westerly and the Washington Trust Company (Washington Trust is also the owner of the parking garage). A noteworthy amount of the off-street parking supply, however, is restricted for specific purposes. Following a successful petition in 2015 by the Downtown Business Association (DBA) and other businesses operating downtown, time restrictions for on-street parking and municipal lots were changed from a two hour limit in place 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays and Saturdays to a three hour limit in place 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. every day.

Exploring opportunities for shuttle bus service, alternative parking facilities, developing traffic management, calming and parking plans and encouraging the growing trend of walking and biking, as well as use of taxi services, are some strategies which may assist in decreasing the demand for parking downtown. One taxi service, Wright's Oceanview Taxi, was located in

¹ Westerly Police Department and the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) Encyclopedia

Westerly as of mid-2016 while additional taxi services and other ride sharing and networking services also operated in town at limited activity. Particularly in recognizing private restrictions on parking, seeking shared parking arrangements between day and evening uses and identifying properties which provide opportunities for additional parking and shuttle bus stops may also have as much impact on the perception of parking availability as would an additional parking structure. Autonomous vehicles may also come to alter current parking perceptions and configurations.

In a survey conducted as part of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan’s public outreach, more than half of respondents indicated Misquamicut as another area where parking was, and as of 2016 continues to be, an issue. While both Town beaches and Misquamicut State Beach provide on-site parking (the state beach alone has about 2,500 vehicle spaces), beachgoers often seek out parking at privately owned lots along Atlantic Avenue’s commercial areas either due to cost or other lots being at full capacity. The primary cause for parking to be an issue in Watch Hill, like Downtown, is due to restrictions imposed on privately owned off-street lots. The area may thus benefit from the same strategies suggested for Downtown in the paragraph above.

7.4 Public Transportation

7.4.1 Rail Services

Public transportation is provided in Westerly through bus services operated by the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA). The first of these is a local route, the Westerly/Hope Valley Rural Ride Flex (301), which is regularly operated each Friday and was established in November 2015. The 301 Flex route originates twice at Westerly Station and includes several stops in Westerly before continuing into neighboring Hopkinton and nearby Richmond. One additional trip originating in Richmond and terminating at Westerly Station is also scheduled. Table 7-1 overviews the stops included on this route, which takes a projected total of 78 minutes between Westerly Station and the Stilson Road/Stop & Shop stop and has averaged about eight monthly riders in the first four months of 2016 (growing from 0 in January to 23 in April).

Table 7-2 Westerly/Hope Valley Rural Ride Flex Stops, 2016

	Stop	Street(s)
Westerly	Westerly Station	Railroad Avenue
	Downtown Westerly	Intersections of Broad/Main, Broad/High
	Westerly Senior Center	State Street
	Franklin Shopping Plaza	Franklin Street (Route 1)
	Wal-Mart (Dunn’s Corners)	Post Road (Route 1)
	Village/Main (Bradford)	Intersection of North Main/Village
Hopkinton	Main/Champlin (Ashaway)	Intersection of Champlin/Main

Richmond	Saugatucket Springs	Intersection of Clarke Falls/Main
	Wood River Health	Main Street
	Main/Spring (Hope Valley)	Intersection of Main/Spring
	Stilson Road/Stop & Shop	Stilson Road

Source: RIPTA

Westerly Flex (204) is a more regular route, operating Mondays through Fridays. As shown in Table 7-3, the 204 route originates at Westerly Station and terminates at Salt Pond Plaza in Narragansett, where riders may connect to the West Bay (14) and University of Rhode Island (URI) / Galilee (66) routes. Between January and April 2016, the route averaged 1,346 riders per month.

Table 7-3 Westerly Flex Stops, 2016

	Stop	Street(s)
Westerly	Westerly Station	Railroad Avenue
	Wal-Mart (Westerly)	Post Road (Route 1)
South Kingstown	Stedman Center	Tower Hill Road
Narragansett	Salt Pond Plaza	Point Judith Road

Source: RIPTA

RIPTA also operates a commuter-oriented route, the Westerly Park & Ride (95x), between Westerly and Providence, the State’s capital and largest city. All buses used are equipped with bike racks to support multi-modal travel. Three morning trips, spaced 30 minutes apart, originate at Westerly Station and make several stops along Interstate 95 before terminating at the Turk’s Head building in Providence for a 75 minute projected duration. Three return trips are then operated in the late afternoon, with the same projected time duration. RIPTA has identified an average of 16 riders bound for Providence and 18 riders bound for Westerly each weekday. Table 7-2 overviews the stops included on the 95x route.

Table 7-4 Westerly Park & Ride Stops, 2016

	Stop	Street(s)
Westerly	Westerly Station	Railroad Avenue
Hopkinton	Ashaway Park & Ride	Main Street
Richmond	Wyoming Park & Ride	Kingstown Road
West Greenwich	Exit 7 West Greenwich	New London Turnpike
	Exchange Terrace	Exchange Terrace
Providence	RI Convention Center	Sabin Street
	Empire & Westminster	Intersection of Empire/Westminster
	Weybosset & Eddy	Intersection of Eddy/Weybosset
	Turk’s Head	Weybosset Street

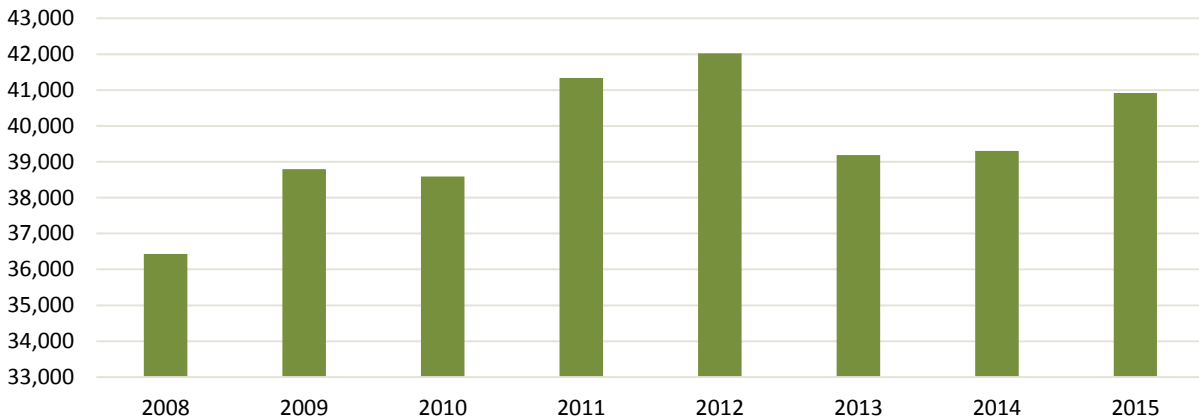
Source: RIPTA

Along with these two fixed routes, RIPTA also provides Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant paratransit through the Ride program. Reservations need to be made at least one day in advance and rides are made available through either a van or taxicab.

7.4.2 Rail Services

Westerly Station is located on Railroad Avenue between Downtown and the North End neighborhood. Built in 1912, it is today a stop on the most-heavily travelled railway line in the United States – the Northeast Corridor (NEC). Amtrak operates two services on the NEC, Northeast Regional and Acela Express, and both offer passengers direct stops in major cities including Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington. Figure 7-2 below shows the numbers of unlinked Amtrak ridership departing from and arriving at Westerly Station from 2008 to 2015.

Figure 7-2 Unlinked Ridership for Amtrak Services at Westerly Station, 2008-2015



Source: National Association of Railroad Passengers

Over the eight year period, ridership increased by a rate (12.3 percent) much higher than Kingston Station (-1.3 percent) in South Kingstown and only slightly less than Providence Station (14.3 percent). This general trend, even more impressive when considering the greater number of trains which stop at both Kingston and Providence stations daily, supports a widely-held interest in town for the extension of the Shore Line East (SLE; operated by the Connecticut Department of Transportation [ConnDOT]) and Providence line (operated south of Providence by RIDOT and north by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority [MBTA]) commuter rail services. In the same survey noted above, 63-percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed access to commuter rail was a high priority.

Two ridership projections have been conducted for Westerly Station in regard to commuter rail service. In 1995, a Brown University study conducted with consultation from RIDOT anticipated 268 daily individual boardings at Westerly Station by 2000 (excluding leisure and weekend

travel). The consultant for the 2010 Comprehensive Plan used 2000 US Census data to provide new projections which identified significant growth in potential ridership. Nearly 970 workers would commute from Westerly Station to one of five other Rhode Island communities while 640 workers from these five communities would commute to Westerly if commuter rail was available.

SLE service currently exists between New London and New Haven, Connecticut, where riders may then connect to New York via the New Haven Line of Metro-North Railroad, operated by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). Recent growth in SLE ridership and public advocacy at a public hearing encouraged the Connecticut Public Transportation Commission to recommend service expansion to Westerly as soon as feasible in its 2015 Annual Report and Recommendations and noted the expansion was not the primary focus for ConnDOT.

RIDOT has also identified Westerly Station as suitable for commuter rail service due to its walkability and surrounding high density. Several elements of the State Guide Plan, including *Land Use 2025, Transportation 2035* and the *Rhode Island State Rail Plan (2014)* cite Westerly as a community to consider for future expansion. Along with its strong pedestrian accessibility, the station currently has 36 marked vehicle spaces and unmarked space on the north side of the rail lines. Upon its completion, the adjacent Westerly Higher Education and Job Skills Center is expected to provide 123 parking spaces which may be shared with Amtrak, RIPTA and future commuter rail users to mitigate existing concerns of limited parking. This same parking supply may also support businesses such as restaurants and the United Theatre (under renovation and expected to be completed in 2017) in the immediate area during weekday evenings and on weekends. These extensions will allow Westerly to be a major commuter rail connection between New York and Boston, two of the country's largest metropolitan regions. The Town of Westerly should serve as a proponent for future commuter rail service, recognizing the transportation and economic benefits expansion may have.

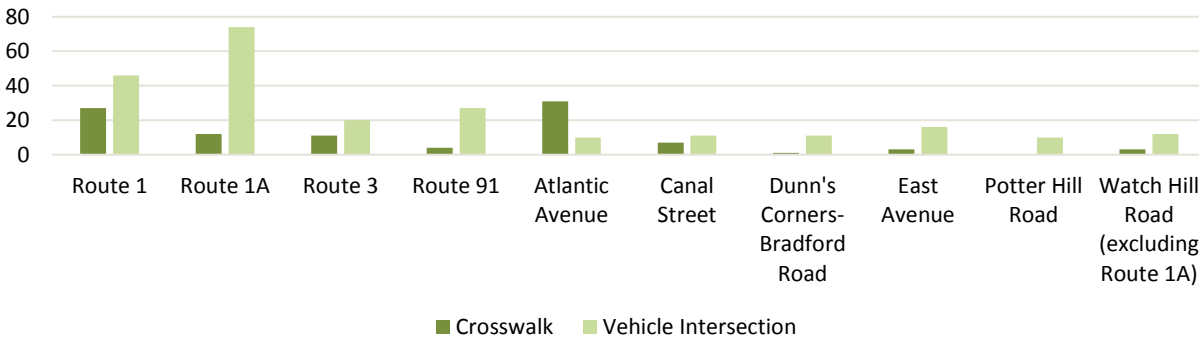
Previously, Westerly Station was an important component of the downtown revitalization project which developed out of Westerly's identification as a KeepSpace community. The concept sought increased housing and mixed-use for downtown along with upgrading Westerly Station's function as a transportation hub. While cuts to funding for KeepSpace in 2013 hindered efforts at implementing the concept, the intentions of Westerly KeepSpace continue to be considered in recent developments nearby the station.

7.5 Pedestrians and Walkability

Pedestrian infrastructure in Westerly, while located throughout the community, is less extensive than its vehicular counterpart. Figure 7-3 below is evidential of this, showing a

comparison between the number of crosswalks and vehicle intersections on major roadways throughout town.

Figure 7-3 Crosswalks and Vehicle Intersections on Select Roadways, 2016



Source: Mason & Associates, Inc.

As an indication of their pre-automobile developments, a majority of sidewalks and crosswalks are today concentrated in historic areas of town such as Downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods as well as Misquamicut and Watch Hill. These places share many of the characteristics often cited as contributing to a walkable environment, including a mix or close proximity of residential and commercial uses, greater density, shorter setbacks, hidden parking lots and aesthetic features which together allow shorter walking distances and more attractive areas to observe while walking.

As vulnerable road users, the Town has adopted several ordinances to better ensure the safety of those who walk. Arguably the most prominent of these is the required removal of all snow and ice from sidewalks within the first twenty-four hours following the end of any accumulation. In 2015, 115 code violations were recorded concerning inadequate sidewalk clearing by adjacent property owners.

Several streets, and particularly those in the town’s urban areas, will be receiving improvements to their pedestrian infrastructure or streetscaping in the near future. These include Friendship Street, Industrial Drive, Pierce Street and a segment of Spruce Street. Improvements to the latter three will be funded through the Town’s approved 2015 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application.

At the beginning of the 2015-2016 academic year, Bradford Elementary School became the first school in Westerly to initiate a Walking School Bus program. Two routes were designated for that academic year and the larger of the two was on Bowling Lane. The route operated two days each week and was utilized by 22 students (up from a starting number of 18). The second route, also operating two days each week, was on Church Street. Though many more students

and families expressed a desire to utilize this walking route, only four students ultimately participated due to a combination of factors which made the route perceived as unsafe – narrow sidewalks in poor condition, a lack of shoulder space between vehicle lanes and sidewalks, excessive speeding by drivers and an absence of sidewalks along some neighboring roadways.

7.6 Cycling and Bikability

Rhode Island's small size allows Westerly residents convenient access to the state's eight off-street recreational bike paths, including the 7.8 mile William C. O'Neill Bike Path (more commonly known as the South County Bike Path) in Narragansett and South Kingstown. Westerly currently shares a goal with South Kingstown and neighboring Charlestown for establishing a continuous bikeway which would become part of RIDOT's bike network and may serve, in part, as a segment of the East Coast Greenway, a planned bike interstate connecting Florida and Maine. Collaboration between the three towns, through their respective bike path committees, was underway as of mid-2016. Previously, cross-community collaboration occurred with a *Shoreline Bikeway Report* submitted by the Town of Charlestown to RIDOT as part of the 2003-2005 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) which proposed a signed bike route along four roadways between Charlestown and Westerly. Following this and other efforts, RIDOT established a signed on-street bike route system across southern Rhode Island which includes several roadways in the eastern portion of Westerly – Church Street, Dunn's Corners-Bradford Road, Langworthy Road, Ross Hill Road, and the segment of Westerly-Bradford Road running north-south.

The July 2007 *Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Study and Development* prepared by Westerly and Charlestown noted a recommendation not to designate the segment of the proposed Shoreline Bikeway – Post Road (Route 1) from the Charlestown-Westerly town line to the intersection of Post Road and Shore Road and from that intersection to the intersection of Shore Road and Winnapaug Road – through the installation of signage. Experienced bicyclists had indicated they would not likely make efficient use of indirect paths and driving statistics collected for the study presented safety concerns. More recently however, Westerly's Bike Path Committee has worked to establish a bike path generally aligning with Shore Road, Atlantic Avenue, Weekapaug Road and Winnapaug Road and kept physically separate from vehicle lanes by an open space or barrier. The Bike Path Committee, as of mid-2016, was seeking a decrease in the speed limit on Shore Road (from 40 miles per hour to 35 miles per hour) supported by the Town Council and Chief of Police.

In its 2015 report card, the League of American Bicyclists identified Rhode Island had accomplished five of the top ten signs of success towards a bike-friendly designation, most recently the introduction of a 'Share the Road' campaign. Bike parking has also become

available in downtown through six bike racks located across the area – two at the Washington Trust Community Skating Center, one at Westerly Library, one at Wilcox Park’s Serpa Gate (the northwest entrance), one at the Y and one in front of Ray Willis Toys and Bicycles. Locations for expanding the availability of bike parking include Westerly Station, the Post Office and other key sites.

7.7 Transportation Improvement Projects

Transportation projects which seek federal funding are required to be included in the state’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is adopted by the State Planning Council at a required minimum of every four years. The TIP for fiscal years 2013 through 2016 (FFY13-16 TIP) included seven projects for the Town of Westerly:

- Church Street sidewalk construction
- Bay Street pavement management program
- Canal Street/White Rock Road transportation alternative project
- Crandall Farm renovation transportation alternative project
- 2012 State Traffic Commission C-2 South 2013-CT-093 traffic safety program
- 2014 State Traffic Commission C-6 traffic safety program
- Atlantic Avenue reconstruction and bike path study and development

A status report submitted by RIDOT for the FFY13-16 TIP indicated that the 2012 State Traffic Commission C-2 South 2013-CT-093 traffic safety program was completed in 2014 and the Bay Street pavement management program was nearing completion as of November 2015. By this time, the Canal Street/White Rock Road project had evolved into the Bay Street program and the Crandall Farm renovation project was dropped due to insufficient funding. Amendment #7 added two additional projects to be funded in fiscal year 2016 – the Chapman Pond railroad bridge (RI 78 West bypass at RI 91 Bradford Road and Amtrak) and the Varietyville Road bridge (RI 78 West bypass at Canal Street).

The succeeding TIP, also referred to as STIP (State Transportation Improvement Program) is proposed to cover a longer timeframe, from fiscal years 2017 through 2025, to align the asset management based system the state is currently shifting to. Along with the two bridge projects noted above, there were 19 other projects in Westerly requested for inclusion in the FFY17-25 TIP. Of these, ten were designated for funding in an April 2016 status report:

- Cross Street (Main Street to Granite Street) pavement capital program (FY 2017)
- Granite Quarry Bridge (Route 78 West bypass at Route 3) capital project (FY 2017)
- Guardrail and median improvements to Route 1 (FY 2017)
- High Street Railroad Bridge capital project (FY 2017)

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- Safe Routes to School infrastructure improvements for State Street Elementary School (FY 2017)
- Potter Hill Road (High Street to Hopkinton town line) pavement capital program (FY 2019)
- Bay Street streetscape improvements transportation alternatives program (FY 2022)
- Route 78 (Route 1 to Connecticut state line) pavement capital program (FY 2022)
- Route 1 (Robin Hollow Road to Prosser Terrace) pavement capital program (FY 2023)
- Route 1 (Tower Street to Route 78) pavement capital program (FY 2024)

Projects which were not included and not likely to be included in the TIP succeeding FFY17-25 include resurfacing of Canal Street, construction of a parking garage on Union Street, elevating and constructing a bike lane on Atlantic Avenue, reconstructing Friendship Street, improving drainage on and resurfacing Main Street and resurfacing Beach Street (Route 1A). Some of these projects, such as the reconstruction of Friendship Street, are now being alternatively funded and the Town should seek additional alternative funding to implement other transportation projects.

The Engineering Division has been historically proactive in designing and implementing a program for the rehabilitation and maintenance of local roads and bridges. The Town of Westerly has several programs in place and managed by the Engineering Division to support the community's transportation network, including a Guardrail Replacement Program, Pavement Management Program, Street Improvement Program and Sidewalk Replacement Program. The Pavement Management Program was established to determine specifically where funding is to be used for performing resurfacing of roadways. During FY2006, the Engineering Division, working in conjunction with the Public Works Department, performed roadway overlay repairs throughout the town. In addition, the Engineering Division coordinated with RIDOT on several other road and bridge projects including the completion of reconstruction projects on High Street and East Avenue and design of the replacement of the Weekapaug Bridge.² A \$5 million bond referendum (\$3 million to be used for roadway reconstruction, including \$1.7 million to be used for asphalt overlay repair, and \$2 million to be used for roadway drainage) approved in autumn 2008 was used to facilitate improvements to roads across the town. A more recent bond was approved by voters in November 2014 and issued in July 2015. Along with CDB and Rode Island Local Equity Aid Program (RI-LEAP) funding received respectively towards the Downtown Culvert Replacement Project and the Cross Street Road Reconstruction Project, the following projects (totaling over \$1.7 million) were expected to be done in and/or near to FY2017:

² Town of Westerly website (accessed November 2007)

- Atlantic Avenue (Winnapaug Road to Benson Avenue) – sidewalk repairs
- Church Street – sidewalk repairs
- Happy Valley Road – drainage repairs
- High Street – sidewalk repairs
- Main Street (Broad Street to Cross Street) – milling and overlaying
- North Capalbo Drive – drainage repairs and paving
- Pondview Avenue – drainage repairs and paving
- South Fairway Avenue – drainage repairs and paving
- South Woody Hill Road (Post Road to Sandy Lane) – paving
- Springbrook Road – drainage repairs, road reprofiling and paving

7.8 Water and Waterfront Access

The Pawcatuck River (which serves as the southernmost portion of the Connecticut-Rhode Island state boundary) and its estuary are designated as a Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) under the jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC). The current management plan for the Pawcatuck River SAMP, the *Pawcatuck River Estuary and Little Narragansett Bay: An Interstate Management Plan*, was adopted in July 1992 and developed to provide a consistent, ecologically-based policy framework for decisions involving the use of the estuary's resources.³

The State of Rhode Island provides access to the Pawcatuck River at four locations in Westerly, two of which are hand carry boat launches and two are boat ramps. In 1993, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) acquired a 1.3 acre parcel in the transitional area between Main Street and Downtown Westerly to construct one of these two ramps, completed in 2001. The ramp is able to accommodate all boaters including those with physical disabilities. One additional launch at Misquamicut State Beach offers access to Block Island Sound and one additional ramp is sited at Chapman Pond.

Slightly upriver from RIDEM's ramp on Main Street, in downtown, was the proposed location for a pedestrian river walk. The intent of the river walk was to enhance the pedestrian network downtown and create a new link between Westerly on the east bank and the village of Pawcatuck on the west bank. While its design was previously near completion, the project is currently in abeyance. Despite this, the Town has made many efforts to further connect its residents and visitors with its waters including the acquisition of 27 acres of tidal marsh adjoining Winnapaug Pond on the north side of Atlantic Avenue and a parcel on Main Street next to the sewer treatment plant. A third acquisition was a seven acre parcel adjacent to land

³ *The Pawcatuck River Estuary and Little Narragansett Bay: An Interstate Management Plan*, July 1992

leased by the Town of Westerly to Westerly Marina. During the marina's operating season, the boats of town residents can be launched there under that lease agreement between the marina's owners and the Town of Westerly.

In January 2016, a completed draft of the Town of Westerly's *Harbor Management Plan* was made available for review. The plan has been in development by the Westerly Harbor Management Planning Committee for an extended period of time and its successful adoption by the Town and CRMC would help manage the growing activity within the Pawcatuck River, its estuary and Little Narragansett Bay. Recommendations of the draft plan include the permanent establishment of a Harbor Commission and a Harbormaster whose duties would include administering designated mooring areas, issuing permits for all moorings and enforcing related ordinances and state boating laws, among others. The plan additionally identified 13 private sites (excluding Westerly Marina) providing water access, most often along the estuary of the Pawcatuck River. In total, there are 224 docks, 781 slips and 336 moorings located in Westerly.

7.9 Air Service

Westerly Airport (WST), located on Airport Road, is operated by the Rhode Island Airport Corporation (RIAC) and serves corporate aviation and air passenger services as well as aircraft maintenance and repair. The 2013 Rhode Island Airport Land Use Compatibility Guidebook classified WST as a commercial service airport due to annual passenger numbers falling between 2,500 and 10,000 passengers. The guidebook additionally cited 20,528 operations at WST in 2009 – a 33.3 percent increase from the 2006 estimate (15,400) – and noted passenger boardings in certain years maybe in excess of 10,000. Most private aircraft activity occurs throughout the summer months due to the seasonal increase in residents and visitors.

Recreational flight is the most frequent activity at the airport while corporate/business activity and career training/flight instruction are also common. Additional activities normally conducted at general aviation airports, including traffic reporting, air shows, occasional medical/patient transfers and military exercises, also occasionally take place.

Rhode Island Airport System Plan was adopted by the State in September 2011 and addresses the six existing airports within the State. The Plan defined Westerly Airport's future role as being general aviation/commercial service and projected enplanements at WST to be between 11,536 (low-growth model) and 13,900 (high-growth model) in 2029. While now a decade old, the most recent economic impact for the airport was \$8.4 million in 2005 (made available in 2006). Six goals for recommended facility and service improvements – obtaining easements and clearing obstructions, updating the Master Plan, improving security fencing and lighting, constructing an operations/maintenance building, providing T-hangar storage and providing corporate hangar storage – were included in the plan along with a separate goal to maintain

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commercial service between Westerly and Block Island. A sample survey of pilots using WST indicated the three primary needs at the airport included a restaurant, ground transportation and a precision/instrument approach.

8 Open Space & Recreation

8.1 Planning Context

This chapter provides an inventory of the town's existing open space and recreation resources. These resources play a critical role in the quality of life in Westerly, serving as important natural resource protection areas, providing opportunities for leisure and exercise, and helping to preserve the character of the town. Identifying existing open spaces, facilities and programs will help the town properly plan for future needs.

8.1.1 Statewide Planning Context

This chapter is presented in the context of several plans of the State Guide Plan, including *Land Use 2025, A Greener Path: Greenspace and Greenways for Rhode Island's Future* and *Ocean State Outdoors: Rhode Island's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*.

With regard to open space and recreation, *Land Use 2025* poses a series of questions to be addressed when setting and implementing objectives and policies which specifically relate to open space and recreation (for further information regarding these guiding questions, visit planning.ri.gov/planning). While *Land Use 2025* establishes a framework for open space and recreation planning, *A Greener Path* and *Ocean State Outdoors* assess more specific statewide needs and provide specific goals and policies which municipalities may address in their comprehensive plans. *A Greener Path* is reviewed and applied to Westerly in the Open Space section of this chapter, while *Ocean State Outdoors* is reviewed and applied to Westerly in the Recreation section of this chapter.

8.1.2 Local Planning Context

Since Westerly's first Comprehensive Plan, many changes to the town's open space and recreation resources have occurred. The town's accomplishments toward achieving the Plan's recommended actions for Open Space and Recreation include:

- Acquisition and protection of several hundred acres town-wide by the Town and several non-profit organizations
- Purchase of an additional boat to patrol Westerly's shoreline and river
- Provision of picnic facilities at Cimalore Field, Gingerella Sports Complex and Craig Field
- Creations of Rotary Park, Wuskenau Beach and a community center
- Clearing of hiking trails and provision of signage at the Town Forest
- Upgrades to school and town playground facilities
- Establishment of the Recreation Department
- Expansion of the Westerly Senior Citizens Center
- Approval of a \$3 million open space bond in 2006

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Continued open space preservation efforts and recreation facility improvements are encouraged and assisted by the Recreation Department, the Recreation Board, the Westerly Municipal Land Trust and the Conservation Commission. The following two sections describe management resources, provide an inventory of existing conditions and describe how town resources fit into the regional context.

8.2 Open Space

Open space in Westerly is a part of the community character and is essential to the protection of natural sources and recreational facilities for residents and visitors. The Town has not had a consistent funding source for the purchase of open space and its recreational needs. It does have a municipal land trust (the Westerly Municipal Land Trust) and a Conservation Commission, both of which provide the Town Council with recommendations for conservation. The Westerly Municipal Land Trust has relied solely on the passage of municipal bonds for its funding. The following subsections provide an inventory of existing open space, regional conservation plans/strategies and available preservation tools which will assist in the management of these resources.

8.2.1 Existing Open Space

In Westerly there is a demonstrated need for balance between the protection of and provision for natural resources and development pressures. Responding to the Town's open space preservation needs are a variety of public and private organizations preserving open space in Westerly. The combination of preservation efforts in Westerly has protected over 4,600 acres of conservation land, translating into about 23.1 percent of the Town. Approximately 78.3 percent of the town's conservation land has some extent of public access. The **Conservation Lands map (CON-1)** includes all existing public and private conservation areas permanently protected, including local 'conservation intents' in which property owners have made efforts to protect their land from future development. Like Table 8-1 below, it illustrates the breakdown of the state protected lands (green lines facing diagonal left) and land protected by the Town and non-governmental organizations (green lines facing diagonal right). In addition to the 4,650.9 total acres provided through data from the Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS), the Town has also indicated a further 493.0 acres as open space. These properties are also indicated within CON-1 as local conservation lands but are not labeled.

Table 8-1 Conserved Lands in Westerly by Primary Owner

Name	Acreage	Percent of Total	Acreage of Public and Limited Public Access
State of Rhode Island ¹	953.46	20.50	953.46
Town of Westerly	854.36	18.37	854.36
Shelter Harbor Fire District	93.53	2.01	0.00

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Watch Hill Fire District	64.26	1.38	0.00
Weekapaug Fire District	50.21	1.08	0.00
Westerly Fire District	1.69	0.04	0.00
Audubon Society of Rhode Island	95.61	2.06	95.61
Avalonia Land Conservancy	37.15	0.80	37.15
H. C. Moore Foundation	31.32	0.67	31.32
Memorial and Library Association of Westerly	14.66	0.31	14.66
Nature Conservancy	118.58	2.55	118.58
Nopes Island Conservation Association	4.16	0.09	0.00
Watch Hill Conservancy	4.57	0.10	0.00
Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation	109.77	2.36	69.41
Westerly Land Trust	1,467.85	31.56	1,467.85
Private (subtotal)	749.73	16.12	0.00
Total	4,650.90	100.00	3,642.40

Source: RIGIS

¹ Acreage excludes state conservation lands overlapping with local conservation lands

Of the fee simple owned properties in the table above, many have one or two easement owners. Many easements list more than one participant, reflecting funding and contingent succession of financial or operating responsibility. These documents are a matter of record.

Location of Open Space in Westerly

Open space is scattered throughout the Town Westerly, with its largest concentrations in the eastern and northern portions of town (including the Town Forest, the Woody Hill Management Area and the Grills Preserve). All these areas are accessible to the public.

In the southern and southeastern portion of the Town, a substantial amount of open space is preserved by four golf courses – the Shelter Harbor Golf Club (closed membership and clubhouse located in Charlestown), the Misquamicut Club (closed membership), the Weekapaug Golf Club (semi-closed membership), and the Winnapaug Country Club (open membership).

Coastal open space, accessible to the public, includes the Misquamicut State Beach, two town beaches, the Weekapaug Fishing Area, Napatree Point Conservation Area, and several beaches owned by fire districts. The Audubon Society of Rhode Island and the Westerly Land Trust maintain large areas of open space along Route 1A on the northern shore of Winnapaug Pond, known, respectively, as the Lathrop Wildlife Refuge and the Winnapaug Pond Preserve. Just

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north of Route 1A is the Westerly Land Trust's Dr. John Champlin Glacier Park. These areas provide a large span of open space along Winnapaug Pond.

Open spaces in the central portion of the Town include swamp lands such as Crandall Swamp (also known as Aguntaug Swamp) and the Newton Swamp Management Area. Open spaces in the northern section of town include the purchase of approximately 50 acres on Route 91. This purchase was made possible through the approved 2006 Open Space Bond referendum.

Types of Protected Land

Open space preservation in Westerly has a variety of purposes, including agricultural land protection, water supply protection, habitat protection and recreation. The pie chart below illustrates the breakdown of different types of conservation land in Westerly. Most of Westerly's conservation land has been preserved for habitat protection with recreation as the second largest purpose for preservation.

Land Acquisition

Integral to ensuring continued open space protection in Westerly are land acquisitions. Acquisition types include fee simple, agricultural development rights, conservation easements and recreation easements. Property acquisitions have been proven to be an economic benefit to local communities (recreation, tourism, reduction of costs associated with storm damage) and they also help preserve existing scenic resources.

The Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) is working with the South Shore Management Area Work Group (which includes representatives from Westerly), organized by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's (RIDEM) Land Conservation and Acquisition Program, to identify priority acquisitions along the south shore.

8.2.2 Regional Conservation Plans and Strategies

As Westerly considers its future open space preservation needs, it is important to consider how these needs fit into the regional framework. The Town should strive to achieve regional goals for open space, while understanding that there may be limiting factors such as road widths, traffic constraints, topography, existing environmentally sensitive areas and availability of funds. The local framework for Westerly includes *A Greener Path: Greenspace and Greenways for Rhode Island's Future*. Five years after *A Greener Path* was adopted however, a 1999 joint study by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) and Washington County Regional Planning Council (WCRPC) concluded that some components of *A Greener Path* were not environmentally or economically feasible and therefore could not be pursued. Following these findings, WCRPC worked with several partners to form a greenspace protection strategy. The strategy is included in the findings of the *South County Greenspace Project*, submitted in

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spring 2003 (accessible at wcrpc.org/greenspace-project), and discussed in the following section.

As of spring 2016, the Town did not have coastline or riverfront greenways and a riverwalk along a portion of the Pawcatuck River, while partially designed by the Town, has not received public funding. An existing on-street bike route follows a portion of routes 1 and 1A (both of which are state roads) in Westerly's northwest and has yet to be connected into a larger network. Efforts of several organizations and groups operating in town have successfully preserved portions of the Greenspace Resource Areas proposed for Westerly in *A Greener Path*.

In order for the Town to achieve what is proposed in the state's Greenspace and Greenways System, it needs to:

- Continue efforts on the riverwalk through public and private partnerships
- Initiate a greenways project along the Town's coastal border
- Preserve greenspace along the coast and in the central portion of the Town

South County Greenspace Protection Strategy

The *South County Greenspace Protection Strategy* is an effort to prioritize open space resources into a single system which is intended to focus the many individual open space organizations into a coordinated effort. University of Rhode Island (URI) has targeted critical lands and compiled all existing protected land into a regional map and inventory, recognizing future acquisitions must provide the greatest economical value for the conservation dollar.

In addition to providing regional information, the *South County Greenspace Project* has provided each town in Washington County with a series of maps and reports to assist in making changes to comprehensive plans and zoning and subdivision regulations for meaningful preservation of open space as development continues. The information includes a set of maps illustrating a comprehensive and up-to-date inventory of its natural, cultural and recreational resources (with local protection priorities mapped and linked into a regional greenspace strategy), 26 maps (10 local resource and 16 regional) with underlying GIS data, and an audit and written report prepared for each community by Randall Arendt, a prominent conservation and landscape planner and advocate.

Priorities identified in the composite maps include: five primary destination points in Westerly (Bradford Landing, White Rock, Westerly Center, Watch Hill and Weekapaug); heritage areas along the Town's coastal edge and along the Pawcatuck River; a large natural resource zone in the central portion of town; and heritage areas within natural resource zones near White Rock, Bradford Landing, Weekapaug, Watch Hill and Chapman Pond. Other priorities identified on the

Westerly maps include heritage corridors, natural resource corridors, bike trails, hiking trails and water trails.

Westerly recently funded the initiation of a GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping system. In GIS, spatial data can be combined or separated and subjected to a variety of analyses. For example, all of the recreation facilities in town could be mapped, along with all of the school facilities, to show areas in which the Town and schools could coordinate in delivering recreation facilities.

8.2.3 Preservation Tools

Several tools are available to the Town to help it preserve and maintain open space as development occurs including the Farm, Forest and Open Space Act, funding sources and State/regional guides to development practices.

Table 8-2 Preservation Tools for Open Space

Tool	Description
Farm, Forest and Open Space Act tax incentive program	Helps preserve properties for farming, forested land or open space. As property owners face increasing economic pressures to convert to more profitable land uses, this program enables land owners to have their land assessment based on its current use, not its value for development. This is a tool that has been utilized in Westerly. In November 2007, there were 73 properties enrolled in the program. As of June 2016, this number had decreased slightly to 70 parcels. ¹
Funding Sources for land acquisition/protection	Funding sources for land acquisitions are a critical tool for preservation. Funding sources include direct or matching funds from various programs of DEM, RI Foundation, Champlin Foundation, Duck Foundation, Forrest C. and Francis H. Lattner Foundation, Lattner Family Foundation, town open space bonds and others.
Rhode Island Conservation Development Manual ²	Provides a 10 step process for planning and design of creative development projects. The manual is in response to increasing development pressures and resulting suburban sprawl. Similar to the goals of cluster development, the manual utilizes conservation development as a technique to preserve open space in a community.
South County Watersheds Technical Planning Assistance Project ¹	An effort by several groups, including RIDEM, Rhode Island Rural Lands Coalition and South County Planners, to prepare a comprehensive review of the best possible solutions nation-wide and show how they can be applied locally. The result of the project was several documents to help plan for growth, including South County Design Manual, model zoning ordinances, strategies to promote farming and forestry, a Transfer of Development Rights study and Development Site Assessment Guide.

¹ Town Assessor’s Office

² it is important to note RIDEM provides several guides for more environmentally sensitive development

8.3 Recreation

While the Town does not yet have a master plan to help guide long-range recreation initiatives, the Recreation Department (established in 2001 as a result of a recommendation in the 1991 Comprehensive Plan), manages and administers improvements for the recreation facilities – including Westerly Town Beach and Wuskenau Beach Facility – and programs with the involvement of the Recreation Maintenance Division of the Public Works Department and the Board of Recreation. The seven member Board meets once monthly and advises both the Planning Board and the Town Council on the planning, organization and promotion of recreational resources in Westerly. The Recreation Director reports to the Board on Town recreation matters and efforts.

Many of the town's existing recreational facilities and programs, including both non-water and water based, are included on the **Recreation map (REC-1)**. Like the Conservation Lands map, REC-1 also shows conservation lands and also includes boat launches and ramps, bike routes, hiking trails, recreation sites, and scenic landscapes and roadways. The recreation sites included are those on the most up-to-date State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) Inventory of Facilities as contributed by RIDEM.

8.3.1 Recreation Facilities and Programs

Non-Water Based Recreation Facilities

Recreation facilities for non-water based uses include municipal, public school, quasi-public, private and regional facilities. The following sections provide descriptions of these recreation facilities.

Town Facilities

There are several non-water-based outdoor Town recreational facilities which serve Westerly's active recreation needs including the Bowling Lane Playground, Cimalore Field, Craig Field, Gingerella Sports Complex, Rotary Park and a basketball court and tennis court on Narragansett Avenue (see Tower Street School Community Center in Table 8-4). Additionally, the Town maintains the state-owned Airport Field and all public schools have outdoor recreational facilities available to the public during non-school hours. Generally the Town's recreation facilities are in fair condition, though there is a need for some utility poles, providing onsite lighting, to be replaced.

In addition to these facilities, it should also be noted the Town owns a 230.4 acre property along the Pawcatuck River known as the Town Forest. Although this property is categorized as habitat protection land, like many open spaces, it serves multiple uses. The Town Forest is available for public use as a passive recreation facility and contains approximately three miles

of trails for nature walks and environmental education. The table below describes these town facilities.

Table 8-3 Town of Westerly Recreation Facilities

Facility	Location	Description
Bradford Preserve	Bradford Road	1 general field
Bowling Lane Playground	Bowling Lane	1 playground
Cimalore Field	Wilson Street	1 baseball field 2 basketball courts 1 playground 4 softball fields
Craig Field	Mountain Avenue	1 baseball field 1 basketball court 1 playground
Gingerella Sports Complex	White Rock Road	1 basketball court 1 playground 1 skate park 8 soccer fields 1 tennis court
Rotary Park	Airport Road	2 playgrounds 6 tennis courts 2 volleyball courts
Westerly Town Beach	365 Atlantic Avenue	Sand beach
Wuskenau Beach	311 Atlantic Avenue	Sand beach
Department Office	93 Tower Street	See 93 Tower Street (Table 6-4)

Source: Recreation Department, Town of Westerly

Public School Department Facilities

The Westerly School Department works in conjunction with the Recreation Department to provide recreation opportunities for the entire Westerly community. The Town and the School Department utilize each other’s facilities as needed to optimize the recreation resources available. All school facilities are available to the public while not in use by the schools. The following table details some information regarding the available recreation resources at the Westerly public schools.

Table 8-4 Westerly Public School Department Recreation Facilities

Facility	Location	Description
Bradford Elementary School	15 Church Street	1 basketball court, 1 gymnasium, 1 playground, 1 softball field and 2 tennis courts
Dunn’s Corners Elementary	8.5 Plateau Road	1 basketball court, 1 general field, 1

School		gymnasium, 1 paved playing area and 1 playground
Tower Street School Community Center	93 Tower Street	1 general field, 1 gymnasium and 1 playground (1 basketball court and 1 tennis court adjacent)
Springbrook Elementary School	39 Springbrook Road	1 basketball court, 1 general field, 1 gymnasium and 1 playground
State Street Elementary School	35 State Street	1 general field, 1 gymnasium and 1 playground
Westerly High School	23 Ward Avenue 15 Highland Avenue	2 general field, 2 gymnasiums, 1 multi-sport fields and 1 track
Westerly Middle School	10 Sandy Hill Road	1 baseball field, 1 gymnasium and 1 multi-sport field

Source: School Department, Town of Westerly

Excluding the Transportation and Bus Garage, the seven public school facilities in Westerly are located on approximately 114.9 acres and include a variety of recreation facilities. Parent-teacher organizations (PTOs) and school principals facilitate the construction of new or updated playground facilities at the schools. At Bradford Elementary School, the PTO and principal worked to reclaim the elementary school’s two tennis courts that had become overgrown. Both courts were cleared and made usable for the 2008-2009 academic year and additional improvements continued in 2009. As the table above shows, each public school facility has at least one outdoor field and indoor gymnasium. While priority is given to school team sports, non-school youth and adult leagues also use school gyms. Demand for the gyms is primarily focused on the high school and middle school facilities.

Quasi-Public Facilities

Quasi-public facilities within Westerly include privately owned facilities available for public use. The most significant of these, Wilcox Park, is open from dawn to 9:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) and serves as a central feature in the heart of Downtown (for more information on Wilcox Park, see the Historic and Cultural Resources chapter). Other facilities listed as quasi-public have user fees and are open to the public.

Table 8-5 Quasi-Public Recreation Facilities in Westerly

Facility	Location	Description
Camp Quequatuck (Boy Scouts of America)	Boy Scout Drive	4.5 acres containing 3 camp sites and 1 general field
Grills Preserve	198 Bowling Lane	482 acres containing cross country path and walking trails

Ocean Community YMCA (The Y)	95 High Street	1 fitness center, 2 gymnasiums, 1 playground, 2 swimming pools and 1 tennis court
Washington Trust Skating Center	61 Main Street	Skating rink in winter and sand court in summer
Westerly Girl Scout Center		2 floor building with 4 meeting rooms and a kitchen
Westerly Senior Citizens Center	39 State Street	12,500 square foot center containing activity room, cafeteria game room and lounge
Wilcox Park	44 Broad Street	Arboretum containing benches, a fountain, 5 monuments, a pond and walking paths

Source: 2010 Comprehensive Plan

Private Facilities

There are a variety of private facilities providing recreational opportunities in Westerly. Several of these private facilities serve as home to Westerly’s sports groups such as the Paul E. Trombino Sports Complex, home to the Westerly National Little League, and the facility at 60 Hopkinton Road, home to Pee Wee Football and Cheerleading. Listed below are Westerly’s private recreation facilities.

Table 8-6 Privately Owned Recreation Facilities in Westerly

Facility	Location	Description
Misquamicut Club	60 Ocean View Highway	1 golf course and 7 tennis courts
Pond View Racquet Club	252 Shore Road	5 tennis courts
Saint Pius X School	32 Elm Street	1 general field and 1 playground
Shelter Harbor Golf Club	1 Golf Club Drive ¹	1 golf course
Shelter Harbor Inn	10 Wagner Road	Outdoor Paddle Club
Trombino Sports Complex	Moorehouse Road	3 baseball fields and 2 softball fields
Weekapaug Golf Club	265 Shore Road	1 golf course
Weekapaug Tennis Club	24 Chapman Road	8 tennis courts
Westerly Pee Wee Football	60 Old Hopkinton Road	1 football field
Winnapaug Country Club	184 Shore Road	1 golf course

Source: 2010 Comprehensive Plan

¹ address in Charlestown, Rhode Island

Regional Facilities

An important consideration when addressing the recreation facilities in Westerly is identifying the surrounding recreation facilities which serve the region. The regional facilities surrounding Westerly include Barn Island Wildlife Management Area (Stonington, Connecticut), Burlingame State Park, Ninigret Park, Quonochontaug Breachway, a river/cultural corridor and a state bike route. Below are brief descriptions of these facilities.

Barn Island Wildlife Management Area

A 1,013 acre wildlife conservation area located in Stonington (directly across from Watch Hill Harbor on Little Narragansett Bay) managed by the State of Connecticut. The wildlife conservation area has the largest public boat launch on the Pawcatuck River/Little Narragansett Bay waterway.

Burlingame State Park

A state park located in Charlestown featuring 3,100 acres of rocky woodlands and 755 campsites surrounding Watchaug Pond.

Ninigret Park

A 227 acre public park in Charlestown, on Route 1A, with four tennis courts, a 9/10 mile bicycle course, basketball courts, a Kid's Place Playground, Frisbee disc golf course, recreational fields, a beach, a spring fed pond and the Ninigret Park Frosty Drew Nature Center and Observatory.

Quonochontaug Breachway

A popular public boat launch and fishing area located in Charlestown.

River/Heritage Corridor

The state's Greenways map identifies a River/Heritage Corridor along the Pawcatuck River north from Westerly's downtown and continuing into Charlestown and Hopkinton.

Southern RI Green Trail

An on-street, state-designated bike route along Route 91 beginning in Bradford and continuing into Hopkinton, Richmond and Charlestown.

Water-Based Recreation Facilities

Westerly's water-based recreation facilities are key features in the town's recreation system. Bounded by water on three sides, the town has riverfront and coastal lands which serve as recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Waterfront facilities in Westerly include beaches, marinas and boat launches and are identified in Table 8-7.

Table 8-7 Water-Based Recreation Facilities in Westerly

Facility	Location	Water Feature(s)
Dunes Park Beach	Atlantic Avenue	Block Island Sound
East Beach	Bluff Avenue	Block Island Sound
Maschaug Beach	Ocean View Highway	Block Island Sound
Misquamicut State Beach	257 Atlantic Avenue	Block Island Sound
Napatree Beach and Napatree Point	Fort Road	Block Island Sound and Little Narragansett Bay
Quonochontaug Beach	Sand Trail	Block Island Sound
Sandy Point	Sandy Point	Little Narragansett Bay
Watch Hill Beach	151 Bay Street	Block Island Sound
Watch Hill Yacht Club	21 Bay Street	Watch Hill Cove
Weekapaug Yacht Club	23 Spray Rock Road	Quonochontaug Pond
Westerly Yacht Club	1 Watch Hill Road	Thompson Cove
Westerly Town Beach (Old Town Beach)	365 Atlantic Avenue	Block Island Sound
Wuskenau Beach (New Town Beach)	311 Atlantic Avenue	Block Island Sound

Source: 2010 Comprehensive Plan

In addition to the water-based recreation facilities listed in the table above, there are also restaurants and clubs on Atlantic Avenue which provide direct access to the beach. Accessibility may be limited to customers.

Access Points for Boating and Fishing

Other important water-based facilities are access points for boating and fishing. The following table lists the available water access points in Westerly.

Table 8-8 Water Access Points for Boating and Fishing in Westerly

Facility	Location	Water Feature
Bradford Landing Fishing Area	Bradford Road	Pawcatuck River
Chapman Pond	Larry Hirsch Lane	Chapman Pond
Frank Hall Boat Yard	3 India Point Road	Pawcatuck River
Gray’s Boat Yard	91 Watch Hill Road	Pawcatuck River
Main Street Boat Ramp	Main Street	Pawcatuck River
Lotteryville Marina	25 Avondale Road	Pawcatuck River
Viking Marina	19 Margin Street	Pawcatuck River
Watch Hill Boat Yard	13 Pasadena Avenue	Colonel Willie Cove
Watch Hill Floating Docks	Bay Street	Watch Hill Cove
Weekapaug Breachway	Atlantic Avenue	Weekapaug Breachway
Westerly Marina	23 Margin Street	Pawcatuck River

Source: 2010 Comprehensive Plan

Riverfront Development

The Westerly Riverwalk Program was designed and permitted for High Street in downtown. The cost of obtaining easements made it economically unfeasible however, and it currently appears the project can only be completed with private funds, assistance from charities/foundations, changes in zoning (where appropriate) or other incentives provided by state or federal agencies.

Recreation Department

Most programs sponsored by the Recreation Department are seasonal events or classes. The Town also provides summer playground camps at several of the Town-owned playgrounds. Several programs, especially those requiring indoor recreation facilities, are sponsored in conjunction with private organizations to provide a wide variety of recreation options for residents. Most team sports are provided by private organizations and supported by the Town, with teams, such as the Westerly Soccer Association and the Connie Mack Baseball League, using town facilities. Further Town recreation programming information can be found on the Recreation Department's website, www.westerlyrec.com.

Participation numbers for Town programs have continued to increase since the Recreation Department was established in 2001 with thousands of residents now participating. One of the programs with the largest participation numbers is the Town's Tunes on the Dunes program, offered in July and August and held at the Westerly Town Beach on Atlantic Avenue. The Blues on the Beach and Monday Night Jamz concerts have grown to between 2,000 and 3,000 attendees.

Other Program Providers

The Westerly School Department provides two key programs in Westerly – Westerly Community Education and Enrichment and After School Enrichment. Westerly Community Education and Enrichment provides a variety of adult classes such as educational, hobby, yoga and workforce training classes funded through tuition fees.

After School Enrichment, also tuition-based (except for students in the Free and Reduced-Priced Meals program who pay reduced tuition only for full-day programs), is offered mainly to elementary school students and runs twice a week, for five weeks, three to four times a year. The programs provide classes for students to learn special activities or skills ranging from martial arts to basket weaving and beach combing. During school recesses in February and April, the programs also provide extended full-day sessions. In addition to classes for elementary school students, there are also programs offered for older students including a program for high school students with the local radio station and a girl's lacrosse program for middle school students.

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While it is not a public entity, Ocean Community YMCA provides additional recreation opportunities in Westerly (as well as in Wyoming in Richmond and Mystic in Stonington, Connecticut) for both members and non-members. Programs include aquatics, arts and enrichment, childcare, health and wellness classes, yoga programs, sports classes and teen programs. The Y also offers a center for teens to socialize after school and on weekends and an after school program for Westerly’s elementary school students which uses Westerly public school facilities.

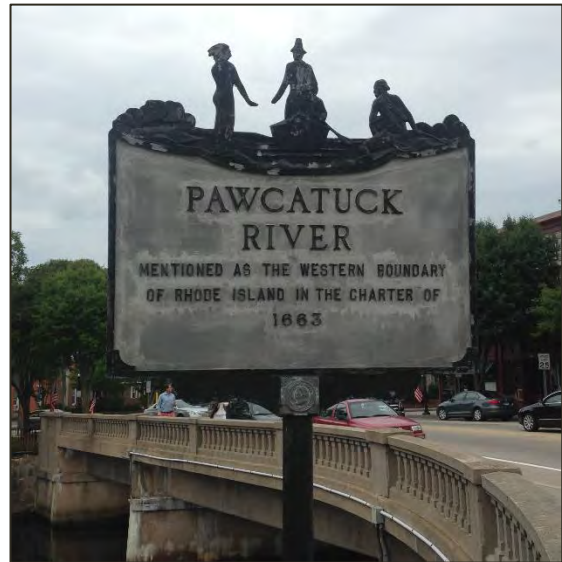
The Westerly Library provides a multitude of community programs such as book discussions, art gallery receptions and various special events. Information on the library’s services is located in the Services and Facilities chapter and its local significance is discussed in the Historic and Cultural Resources chapter.

9 Historic & Cultural Resources

9.1 Historic Places

The area of modern-day Westerly was first settled by the Narragansett Tribe several centuries prior to the beginning of a documented history by European explorers in the 1630s. During this time, and until the 1660s, the area was called Misquamicut (though this is anglicized from its original Narragansett form) for its red fish, referring to the salmon which appear on the Town's seal.

English settlement of Misquamicut began in 1661 and the Town was incorporated by Rhode Island in 1669. Its original land was first partitioned in 1738 to establish and incorporate the Town of Charlestown (which included the area of present-day Richmond) and once more in 1757 to establish the Town of Hopkinton. Through successive generations and waves of immigration, strong development took place in both Westerly's built environment and local economy. The impact of this urbanization continues today through the community's services and facilities as well as the diversity of its architecture, transportation choices and neighborhoods.



A marker installed by the Colonial Dames of Rhode Island identifies the historic significance of the Pawcatuck River.

9.1.1 Neighborhoods and Historic Districts

Many of Westerly's historic places are located within Westerly's core neighborhoods and along its periphery. The core, bounded by the Pawcatuck River on the west and several roadways (Railroad Avenue and Oak, Tower, Granite, Franklin and Wells streets), includes the Downtown and North End as well as many residential neighborhoods east and south of Wilcox Park. The establishment of other mills beyond these bounds, at the historic villages of Bradford, Potter Hill and White Rock, brought new development as well. The increasing popularity which accompanied the Town's expansion also led to the establishment of several coastal villages, including Misquamicut, Shelter Harbor, Watch Hill and Weekapaug. Frequented and often settled by affluent visitors from across the country, these places are enjoyed today for their beaches, restaurants, shops and scenery.

Of these neighborhoods, six – Bradford (1996), Downtown (1995 and extended in 2007), Main Street (1978), North End (2006), Watch Hill (1985) and Wilcox Park (1973) – are listed as historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). One additional area, the Perry

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Homestead (which includes the NHRP listed Lewis-Card-Perry House) on Margin Street, has been nominated with its designation pending. The registration forms for these seven districts are available on the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) website at <http://www.preservation.ri.gov/register/>.

A 2006 report by the Westerly Preservation Society included a further nine places, some portions of which overlapped with other districts or existing districts on the NHRP. Six of these – Avondale, an extension to the existing Main Street Historic District, Misquamicut, Potter Hill, Shelter Harbor and Weekapaug – were recommended for further study and three – the Elm Street, Margin Street and White Rock historic districts – received a determination of eligibility. In the decade since the report's publishing, the only further related activity has been the nomination of the Perry Homestead, which is a portion of the determined eligible Margin Street historic district.

9.1.2 Historic Sites

In the study of each historic district, numerous structures and sites are distinguished as notable contributors to the historic character of its respective district. Each historic district registration form will identify such places.

Structures and sites may also be listed independently of a historic district as well. Currently there are nine individual sites in Westerly listed on the National Register – the Dr. Joshua Babcock House (locally known as the Babcock-Smith House; 1972) Flying Horse Carousel (1980), Former Immaculate Conception Church (currently the George Kent Performance Hall; 1984), Lewis-Card Perry House (2005), Nursery Site RI-273 (1984), Ram Point (2015), U.S. Post Office (located Downtown; 1971), Westerly Armory (1996) and Weekapaug Inn (2007). Two of these places, the Flying Horse Carousel and Nursery Site RI-273, are of particular note. The Flying Horse Carousel, located at the end of Bay Street in Watch Hill, is arguably the oldest carousel in the United States, dating back to about 1876, and operates each summer. The carousel was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1987. Nursery Site RI-273 is the only site in the Town in a restricted access location, likely due to the sensitivity of the area which contains evidence of prehistoric settlement. In 1992, RIHPHC had also identified a further twelve properties and structures which it identified as candidates for NRHP listing – the Barnes House, Foster-Thompson House, Lewis Farm, Lucy Carpenter House, Maxon-Cottrell House, Meeting House Bridge, Ninigret Farm, Pawcatuck River Railroad Bridge, the Sullivan Granite Co. quarries, Weekapaug Bridge, White Rock Bridge and 201 Main Street.

In addition to these, Westerly also includes two sites in the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and two in the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER). These collections document achievements within the United States' built environment and are held by the

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Library of Congress (also accessible online at loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/). Westerly Station and the Babcock-Smith House are both documented in the HABS and the HAER includes White Rock Bridge and the Northeast Corridor (NEC), a segment of which passes through the town. The documentation of Westerly's segment of the NEC includes Westerly Station and the railroad itself as well as the High Street and West Street bridges, though the latter was taken down in early 2011 due to concerns about its structural integrity.

The Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission currently lists 95 cemeteries in its database for Westerly (<http://www.rihistoriccemeteries.org/newsearchcemetery.aspx>), the majority of which were recorded by Frederic Denison in the late 1860s. Many of these grounds have not been recorded since and it is likely others have not yet been identified.

Protection for historical and archaeological burial sites is ensured through Chapter 137 'Historic Site Preservation' of the Town's Code of Ordinances. Under ordinance, any plan to alter a burial site may only be permitted by the Town Council following a public hearing and if any burial site is discovered in the process of a property being developed, the site must be reported to the Building Inspector and activity must cease until further notice is given.

The **Cultural Resources map (CR-1)** identifies all historic districts and sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including those added after 1995 (the most recent year for which the RIGIS dataset includes information on). In addition to these, it also illustrates the districts determined eligible for listing on the NRHP included in the Westerly Preservation Society's 2006 report and candidate sites identified by RIHPHC in 1992.

9.2 Regulatory and Administrative Programs

RIHPHC provides municipalities within the State a variety of information on historic resources. In 1978, the Commission developed *Historic and Architectural Resources of Westerly, Rhode Island: A Preliminary Report* as a tool to identify and record properties of historic and architectural significance in the town. In addition to this Town-specific survey, the RIHPHC has prepared several state-wide surveys including a historic landscapes survey, an outdoor sculpture survey, a historic bridges survey, an engineering and industrial sites survey and an archeological survey. Locations in Westerly have been identified in each of these surveys.

Largely because action has been unsupported by community consensus, the Town has not enacted historic district zoning nor established a Historic District Commission (pursuant to RI General Law Title 45, Chapter 24.1). Other means to protect the listed districts and the structures within them have been enacted by the Town Council however. The Zoning Ordinance standards governing development plan review, to which all development except one and two family structures is subject, requires:

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“If the building is in a Historic District, the recommendations of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission shall be incorporated in the Administrative or Planning Board review. (See §260-45[F](1) The definition of Historic District used in the ordinance includes a historic site or sites registered or...deemed eligible to be included on the state register of historic places (see §260-9[B]).”

For the Shore Commercial – Watch Hill zoning district on Bay Street, the Town Council in 2006 took another approach to preserving the character of the area. It enacted an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance proposed by the Watch Hill Conservancy, which established architectural design standards for construction there. These standards are applicable to the development plan review of all applications in that zone.

In 2009, the Watch Hill Conservancy published a primer on the residential architectural history of Watch Hill, *Watch Hill Style*. With the visual appeal of its 200 full-color images of Watch Hill cottages, it is intended to influence those planning new construction in Watch Hill to emulate the architectural traditions of the community.¹ Supporting both the standards enacted for Bay Street and the examples contained in *Watch Hill Style*, the Conservancy also provides initial free design services to those planning new construction in the Watch Hill Historic District.

Additionally, with respect to the large area of the Town within the jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), either due to its proximity to the coast or by virtue of being located within the Special Area Management Plans (SAMPs) for Winnapaug Pond or Quonochontaug Pond, additional protection also exists in the permitting process. CRMC’s regulations, Section 220, Areas of Historic and Archaeological Significance, C. Policies state:

“The Council shall require modification of, or shall prohibit proposed actions, subject to its jurisdiction where it finds a reasonable probability of adverse impacts on properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Adverse impacts are those which can reasonably be expected to diminish or destroy those qualities of the property which make it eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The Council shall solicit the recommendations of the Historical Preservation Commission regarding impacts on such properties.”

“Prior to permitting actions subject to its jurisdiction on or adjacent to properties eligible for inclusion (but not actually listed in the National Register of Historic Places), and/or areas designated as historically or archaeologically sensitive by the Historical Preservation Commission as the result of their predictive model, the Council shall solicit the recommendations of the Commission regarding possible adverse impacts on these properties. The Council may, based on the Commission’s recommendations and other evidence before it, including other priority uses of

¹ *Watch Hill Style*, Watch Hill Conservancy, 2009.

this Program, require modification of or may prohibit the proposed action where such adverse impacts are likely.”

As an incentive for property owners to maintain the historic character of designated historic structures and to encourage the owners to obtain historic designation for structures not already so designated, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) exempts historic structures from floodplain management requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as long as they maintain their historic structure designation.

9.2.1 Funding Assistance

As of 2016, RIHPHC administers four programs to assist historic properties owners in meeting their maintenance costs. These include the State Historic Tax Credit program, federal tax credits, the Historic Preservation Loan Program and a Preservation Easement program. The 2010 Comprehensive Plan noted the success of the State’s tax credit program prior to its elimination of funding in 2008 and recommended the Town should advocate for its restoration. The program was reopened in 2013 and presently offers credits of 25-percent and 20-percent of costs for approved rehabilitation of spaces for trade and businesses and for residential apartments and condominiums, respectively. and now provides funding for of maintaining their historic properties, and the rehabilitation of historic structures (both those within listed historic districts and those individually listed) has been supported by state (30 percent) and federal (20 percent) tax credit programs. In 2011 however, the Homeowner Tax Credit program for the maintenance and repair of historic houses was suspended.

Since the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, RIHPHC has also been involved in two grant programs – Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief Grants for Historic Properties and State Preservation Grants. The first of these was a direct response to the destructive impact of Hurricane Sandy (also called Superstorm Sandy) in 2012. Grants were awarded to Lanphear Livery Stable (\$52,368) and Watch Hill Lighthouse (\$447,500), both in Watch Hill, as well as a multi-town (Charlestown, Narragansett and Westerly) survey of archaeological sites (\$477,847). All three projects received approval from the National Park Service (NPS). The 2015 State Preservation Grant program included two awards for Westerly properties in 2016, the Babcock-Smith House (\$11,734) and the Westerly Armory (\$24,750).

9.2.2 Voluntary Preservation Programs

As noted in the previous subsection, RIHPHC operates a Preservation Easement program. The voluntary legal agreement ensures the owner will maintain a property’s architectural and historical character without alterations unless approved by the Commission. A donated endowment is required and treated under federal law as a charitable contribution, potentially

allowing tax benefits for estate, federal income and gift taxes. The town could promote volunteer preservation by facilitating local education and awareness of this option.

9.2.3 Historic Preservation Accomplishments and Opportunities

Several preservation projects focusing on structures throughout the town have been successfully completed or are underway, strengthening Westerly's historic character in recent years.

In 2005, the Victorian-era Ocean House resort hotel located in the Watch Hill Historic District in an area under CRMC jurisdiction was demolished as part of a plan approved by RIHPHC in conjunction with a panel of historic architectural consultants it convened. The Ocean House then reopened in 2010 following a major replication project which included rebuilding the hotel on the original structure's footprint with the inclusion of over 5,000 salvaged artifacts and furnishings including the reception desk, main lobby fireplace, the iconic Ocean House sign and mahogany balustrades.²

In 2006, the newly National Register listed North End sought funding through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to rehabilitate low- and moderate-income (LMI) housing within the neighborhood.

Adaptive restoration preserved the Dr. John Champlin House at 9 Granite Street, now used as an office building with a zoning variance granted to make such use possible, and the Old Town Hall, which may be reopened in the future as a museum. A museum is currently maintained by the Watch Hill Lighthouse Keepers in a renovated former service building on the property. Revitalization efforts for the Granite Theatre and George Kent Performance Hall, both former churches, now allow both buildings to provide enhanced theatrical and musical performance space.

It is expected that preservation efforts will continue into the future as well. The Westerly Land Trust is currently embarking on an ambitious urban initiative to create a gateway to the town along Main Street and the riverfront which includes renovating the United Theatre (opened in 1926) and a portion of the adjacent property to include space for a cinema, live performances, offices, rehearsal rooms, event spaces and a public television station. Efforts to preserve the former Lanphear Livery in Watch Hill are also underway (more information on this project can be found in the Economic Vitality chapter).

² <http://www.oceanhouseri.com/about/history> and http://www.centerbrook.com/project/ocean_house

9.2.4 Recognitions

Westerly's historic resources were a major factor in its 2002 designation by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as a Distinctive Destination. The program selected twelve towns and cities each year between 2000 and 2011, based on a combination of factors including a dynamic downtown, cultural diversity, attractive architecture, cultural landscapes and a strong commitment to historic preservation, sustainability and revitalization related to historic and cultural preservation.³ Out of the 132 destinations ultimately chosen, Westerly was the first to be selected in Rhode Island and the third to be selected in New England.

In 2004, Westerly also received designation as a Preserve America Community, a national initiative in cooperation with several federal agencies and departments. Such recognition, along with allowing use of the Preserve America logo on its signs and promotional materials, offers the Town eligibility for Preserve America grants when funded by the United States Congress.

9.3 Cultural Resources

Westerly's growth and development over the centuries, with support from a myriad of public and private citizens and organizations, makes it a community of great cultural wealth for the benefit of its residents and enumerable visitors throughout the year.

This abundance is anchored primarily around Downtown, a product of the urbanization which took place at the turn of the twentieth century. Along with the high concentration of its historic, architecturally diverse structures and its mix of uses, Downtown is also the location of the Westerly Arts and Entertainment District. One of only nine districts in the State as of 2016, the designation given by the Rhode Island General Assembly offers eligibility for certain tax incentives (for more information, visit the State Council on the Arts' website at <http://www.arts.ri.gov/projects/districts.php>) to artists living and working in the district who produce original and creative works in a broad range of forms including writings, paintings, sculptures, films and many others. The sales of original art pieces at galleries in the district are also exempt from the state sales tax.

At the municipal level, the Town has designated the Granite Street Overlay District (See §60-58, Code of Ordinances), comprised of properties with street frontage between Grove Avenue and Tower Street to allow artistic and photo studios (as well as professional offices) to be located in the residential district by special use permit.

In 2011, the Westerly Regional Arts Partnership was formed with the mission to provide arts advocacy and promote Westerly as a destination for the arts. WRAP states its membership is

³ <http://www.preservationnation.org/travel-and-sites/distinctive-destinations/dozen-distinctive-destinations.html>

open to all workers in the creative economy, referring to the economic system culminating between the arts, business, culture and technology.

9.2.1 Institutions and Places

Westerly is home to several religious places of worship offering services to various Christian denominations (including several Baptist denominations, Episcopal, United Methodist, Mormon, non-denominational Protestant, Presbyterian, Quaker and Roman Catholic as well as non-denominations) and to the Jewish community. These groups are often major sources for advocacy and volunteerism working with many of the organizations mentioned in the Services and Facilities chapter.

Perhaps the most notable institutions in town are Westerly Library and Wilcox Park. Owned and operated by the Memorial and Library Association of Westerly since 1892, the library has stood as a memorial to the Union forces of the American Civil War since 1894. In 2015, Westerly Library received a Literary Landmark honor from the United for Libraries division of the American Library Association, dedicated to author Margaret Wise Brown (author of “Goodnight Moon” and “The Runaway Bunny”) and the extensive collection of her works and writings located at the library.⁴ Adult cardholders also have access to free or reduced admission for several area museums. Additional information on the services provided by the Westerly Library can be found in the Services and Facilities chapter.

Wilcox Park is adjacent to the library and currently encompasses an area close to 14 acres. Designs for the original portion began in 1898 by Boston-based landscape architect Warren H. Manning, who worked with preeminent landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted on several projects (including Biltmore in Asheville, North Carolina and the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois) before starting his own firm in 1896.⁵ An expansion of the park to its current size brought additional contributions from landscape architects Frank Hamilton and, later, Arthur Asahel Shurcliff, a contributing planner to the Boston Commons and the primary designer of the restored Colonial Williamsburg.⁶ In 1999, the American Society of Landscape Architects awarded the park a Centennial Medallion. More recently, a Preserve America grant was also awarded.

9.2.2 Performing Arts

Wilcox Park is often cited as a treasure for the community also due in part to its role as the host for several well-attended events throughout the summer. The most popular of these is arguably the Summer Pops concert, held annually in June by the Chorus of Westerly since 1981 (and

⁴ http://www.ala.org/united/products_services/literarylandmarks/landmarksbyyear

⁵ <https://tclf.org/pioneer/warren-h-manning>

⁶ <https://tclf.org/pioneer/arthur-asahel-shurcliff>

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once previously in 1960). The Chorus of Westerly, located at the George Kent Performance Hall (the former Immaculate Conception Church registered on the NHRP), was established in 1959 and offers patrons several events throughout its seasons while providing musical education programming throughout the year.

A theatrical series, the Shakespeare Festival (more commonly known as Shakespeare in the Park) is also put on annually between late July and early August by the Colonial Theatre, which also performs abridged Shakespearean plays for local schools in Westerly as well across the State and in southeastern Connecticut. Two more theaters, both Downtown and in close proximity to the park, offer residents and visitors additional opportunities to enjoy a variety of genres. Granite Theatre has hosted several shows produced by Renaissance City Theatre, Inc. since the theater's purchase by the Granite Theatre Corporation in 2000 (ownership was transferred to Renaissance City Theatre in 2013) while the United Theatre held its first event since 1986 in 2014 (as mentioned above, the theater is currently undergoing renovations). Several restaurants on Canal Street, High Street and Railroad Avenue and on Atlantic Avenue also bring in local musicians to entertain patrons (perhaps most notably the Knickerbocker).

The Westerly Armory is currently used by the Westerly Band for rehearsals. The band was established in 1852 and is the oldest continuously active civic band in the United States. It performs in several parades and at various venues throughout the year, including at Wilcox Park.

Beyond Downtown, the Town's Recreation Department organizes an annual Tunes on the Dunes program at the Westerly Town Beach. The program is comprised of two series, Blues on the Beach and Monday Night Jamz, which are both held weekly throughout July and August. The Sunset Concert series is also held in the summer season, from June to August, and takes place on the Village Green in Watch Hill.

9.2.3 Visual Arts

The *Virtu* Outdoor Arts Festival is held each year, also in Wilcox Park, at the end of May to showcase and promote local painters and crafters from around the region, as well as performing artists. Year-round, there works are often featured in month-long exhibitions at the Hoxie Gallery, on the second-floor of Westerly Library, and the Artists' Cooperative Gallery of Westerly (ACGOW), located next to the United Theatre on Canal Street. ACGOW also organizes its largest showing, the Annual Regional Art Exhibit, in May.

9.2.4 Celebrations and Events

The Town of Westerly observes Neighbor Day as an annual holiday to celebrate the importance of neighborly virtues including equality, respect and love of one another. It was established in

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1993, with state observance made law in 1999, as a response to a hate crime which took place in the community.

Parades held on Memorial Day, Columbus Day and Veteran’s Day gather large crowds, while many also line the banks of the Pawcatuck River for the Duck Race in late April, benefiting many local schools and non-profit organizations, and River Glow in August. The Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce is a major coordinator for these and other events. More recently, beginning in 2010, the Chamber also organizes a restaurant week in autumn. Other events are also held by many of the fire districts which operate in town.

10 Natural Hazards & Resiliency

10.1 State Guidance

Westerly's Comprehensive Plan, along with all other municipalities' comprehensive plans, must include an identification of areas that could be vulnerable to the effects of sea-level rise, flooding, storm damage, drought, or other natural hazards. Goals, policies, and implementation techniques must also identify what would help to avoid or minimize the effects that natural hazards pose to lives, infrastructure, and property.

10.2 Natural Hazards in Westerly

The purpose of this section is to provide a comprehensive overview of how various natural hazards such as flooding, high wind and changes in the climate can impact Westerly. In this chapter, natural hazards will be ranked in order of priority based on the frequency of occurrence and area affected. The information provided also attempts to put the likelihood of an event occurring into perspective; recognizing that, although some events may occur more often, their impacts are less severe than events that may occur infrequently.

Identifying the risks and vulnerabilities of Westerly to natural hazards is the primary factor in determining how to allocate finite resources and to determine what actions are feasible and appropriate to address those vulnerabilities. The hazard analysis involves identifying all of the hazards that potentially threaten Westerly and then analyzing them individually to determine the degree of threat that is posed by each natural hazard. Addressing risks and vulnerabilities through hazard mitigation measures will reduce societal, economic and environmental exposure to natural hazards impacts (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014).

The results of this analysis were used to develop a prioritized menu of recommended actions, policies, and goals that the Town can implement to help eliminate or minimize the negative effects of natural hazards.

10.3 Significant Events

There have been several significant storm events that have impacted Westerly and the region since the preceding Comprehensive Plan update. Most notable are major flooding events (March 2010), Hurricane Irene (August 2011), blizzards (January 2011 and February 2013) and Hurricane Sandy (October 2012; often referred to as Superstorm Sandy). Though it did not have a significant impact on Westerly, the Virginia Earthquake (August 2011) was also felt in the region.

10.4 Summary of Hazards

The Town of Westerly Hazard Mitigation Committee reviewed many hazards in this strategy. Hazards discussed in the Comprehensive and Hazard Mitigation plans were included for a

variety of reasons including historical records of past events, repetitive losses, potential losses as identified by predictive modeling (SLOSH, FIRM) and expert knowledge.

Keeping in line with Rhode Island State Hazard Mitigation Plan’s (SHMP) risk assessment, the natural hazards have been grouped into categories and listed in order of frequency and impact (columns are listed in descending order from most frequent to least frequent) with Table 10-1 below.

Table 10-1 Summary of Natural Hazards in Westerly

Wind-related	Winter-related	Flood-related	Geological-related	Others
Storm surge	Snow	Riverine flooding	Earthquakes	Wildfires
Tropical cyclones	Ice	Flash flooding		Droughts
Tornadoes	Extreme Cold	Coastal flooding		Extreme heat
High winds		Climate change and sea level rise		
		Coastal erosion		
		Dam breaches		

The **Natural Hazards and Mitigation map (NH-1)** depicts several components of the Town’s infrastructure, including dams, electric transmission lines, public facilities and other facilities related to emergency management and sewer pumping stations. It also shows these components in relation to those areas of the community which are at greatest risk of impact from a natural hazard, primarily a major storm or flooding event. These areas include the coastline of Block Island Sound, the banks of the Pawcatuck River and the wetlands within the center of town. Most of the information presented was made available by RIGIS datasets contributed by several departments of the state, the University of Rhode Island (URI), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the United States Army Corps. of Engineers.

10.4.1 Storm Surge

The south shore of Rhode Island is susceptible to hurricanes and other wind-related damage (Town of Westerly, 2012). Because Westerly was originally formed along the Pawcatuck River and the ocean front, much of the developed areas are susceptible to wind-related damage. Areas that have historically suffered damage from such storms include Misquamicut State Beach and Westerly Town Beach which are located on the south shore of Westerly. Atlantic Avenue, a heavily developed commercial and residential road that runs parallel to Misquamicut Beach, is also vulnerable to wind damage. Additionally, Watch Hill, located in the southwestern portion of the town, is situated on an exposed peninsula bounded by the open ocean and Little Narragansett Bay. A particularly susceptible area of Watch Hill is the Napatree Point Conservation area, which is a sandy spit that extends westward from the Watch Hill business

district. Other areas prone to wind damage include the communities of Weekapaug and Shelter Harbor, which are seasonally occupied.

Hurricane- and gale-force winds can also cover roadways with debris, making them impassable to conventional vehicles. This presents a dangerous situation for anyone requiring immediate medical attention (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014). This was the case on Atlantic Avenue after Hurricane Sandy hit Westerly. In addition to several homes and businesses along the road suffering massive damage or complete collapse, the road itself, which is located on a spit between Block Island Sound and the salt ponds, was covered in sand that measured up to six feet in depth in some areas (Goonan, October 30, 2012).

10.4.2 Tropical Cyclones

Tropical cyclones, a general term for tropical storms and hurricanes, are low pressure systems that usually form over the tropics. The Rhode Island shoreline faces south, so storms passing to the west raise the highest storm surges for Rhode Island. In addition, Narragansett Bay funnels the surge northward where decreasing surface area amplifies the surge height (Boothroyd 2008). The 1938 Hurricane made landfall west of Rhode Island as a Category 3 hurricane with a forward speed in excess of 50 miles per hour. Because the center of the storm made landfall in Connecticut, the Rhode Island shoreline experienced the highest storm surge levels (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014).

As a coastal community, the majority of Westerly is susceptible to the effects of hurricanes and tropical storms. The coastal barrier beaches that separate the Maschaug, Little Maschaug, Winnapaug and Quonochontaug Ponds from Block Island Sound have all been designated “V” zones, as are lands located immediately north of the northern shorelines of these salt ponds. “V” and “VE” zones are areas along coasts subject to inundation by the 1-percent-annual-chance flood event with additional hazards associated with storm-induced waves and velocity wave action (FEMA 2014). Other “V” zone locations include Napatree Point, Watch Hill Point, both sides of Atlantic Avenue in Misquamicut Beach, and portions of Weekapaug to the south of Wawaloam Drive and Ninigret Avenue. FEMA-designated “A” zones are much more expansive, and include low-lying portions of Watch Hill, portions of Misquamicut Beach located some distance inland from the ocean, and a large number of properties located between the north side of the salt ponds and Shore Road (Route 1A).

The most recent hurricane to strike Westerly and much of the East Coast was Hurricane Sandy in October 2012. By the time Sandy reached Rhode Island it had been reduced to Tropical Storm status, however Rhode Island still experienced a great deal of damage from the storm. Rhode Island sought and received a federal emergency declaration from President Barack Obama prior to the storm to ensure access to funds to assist in the recovery effort. This

hurricane left over 122,000 people in Rhode Island without power. In total, Rhode Island received \$39.4 million in support from federal disaster relief programs, a majority of which came from NFIP (\$31.1 million) (Rhode Emergency Management Agency, 2014). In Westerly, Hurricane Sandy destroyed many of the sand dunes along Misquamicut Beach and heavily damaged or destroyed many residences and businesses along Atlantic Avenue (Hanarhan 2012). It also flooded the historic Watch Hill village.

10.4.3 Tornadoes

A tornado is a violently rotating column of air in contact with and extending between a cloud and the surface of the earth. Winds in most tornadoes are 100 MPH or less, but in the most violent, and least frequent tornadoes, wind speeds can exceed 250 MPH. Tornadoes, typically track along the ground for a few miles or less and are less than 100 yards wide, though some can remain in contact with the earth for well over fifty miles and exceed one mile in width (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014).

Tornado Alley, which extends from Texas to the Dakotas, receives the most tornado activity, and while Rhode Island falls well outside of that region, tornadoes may occur in Rhode Island at any time. This situation may be more dangerous than states in Tornado Alley because Rhode Island residents do not expect severe tornadoes and are ill-prepared to respond to a tornado strike. Tornadoes are considered to be low frequency, high-impact events. Eight reported tornadoes touched down in Rhode Island between 1950 and 1994, resulting in 23 injuries and nearly \$2 million in damage (Town of Westerly, 2012).

10.4.4 High Winds and Thunderstorms

Thunderstorms are formed when the right atmospheric conditions combine to provide moisture, lift, and warm unstable air that can rise rapidly. Thunderstorms occur any time of the day and in all months of the year, but are most common during summer afternoons and evenings and in conjunction with frontal boundaries. The National Weather Service (NWS) classifies a thunderstorm as severe if it produces hail at least one inch in diameter, winds of 58 MPH or greater, or a tornado. About 10 percent of the estimated 100,000 annual thunderstorms that occur nationwide are considered severe (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2010).

In general, buildings are more likely to be struck by lightning if they are located on high ground or if they have tall protrusions such as steeples or poles which the stepped leader can jump to. Electrical and communications utilities are also vulnerable to direct lightning strikes. Damage to these lines has the potential to cause power and communications outages for businesses, residences, and critical facilities.

Human vulnerability is largely determined by the availability and reception of early warnings for the approach of severe storms, and by the availability of nearby shelter. Swimming, boating, and fishing are particularly dangerous during periods of frequent lightning strikes, which can also cause power outages, topple trees, and spark fires.

10.4.5 Winter-related Hazards

A heavy snow is generally defined as having more than eight inches of accumulation in less than 24 hours. Heavy snow can bring the community to a standstill by inhibiting transportation, knocking down trees and utility lines, and by causing structural collapse in buildings not designed to withstand the weight of the snow. Repair and snow removal costs can be significant and surpass annual municipal salt and snow removal budgets, often before the end of the season.

The term “ice storm” is used to describe occasions when damaging accumulations of ice are expected during freezing rain situations. Ice storms result from the accumulation of freezing rain, which is rain that becomes super-cooled and freezes upon impact with cold surfaces. Freezing rain most commonly occurs in a narrow band within a winter storm that is also producing heavy amounts of snow and sleet in other locations.

Excessive cold may accompany winter storms, be left in their wake, or can occur without storm activity. Extreme cold can lead to hypothermia and frostbite, which are both serious medical conditions. In Rhode Island, extreme cold usually involves temperatures below zero degrees Fahrenheit (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014a).

The wind chill index attempts to quantify the cooling effect of wind with the actual outside air temperature to determine a wind chill temperature that represents how cold people and animals feel, based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin.

Westerly lies outside the heavy snow regions of the northeast. Located along the southern New England coast, Westerly has a maritime climate that is cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter than many inland locations. As a result, Westerly experiences less snowfall, on average, than cities to the northwest. During an average year, coastal regions of Rhode Island receive nearly 36 inches of snow. However, severe winter storms are spatially expansive and during nor'easters. Westerly is susceptible to heavy amounts of snowfall, which can restrict travel and damage power lines and trees, effectively paralyzing the region.

10.4.6 Flood-related Hazards

A flood can be slow or fast rising but generally develops over a period of days. Flood is defined by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as:

- A general and temporary condition of partial or complete inundation of two or more acres of normally dry land area or of two or more properties from: overflow of inland or tidal waters; unusual and rapid accumulation or runoff of surface waters from any source; or a mudflow; or
- The collapse or subsidence of land along the shore of a lake or similar body of water as a result of erosion or undermining caused by waves or currents of water exceeding anticipated cyclical levels that result in a flood as defined above.

By their very nature, floodplains are the low, flat, periodically flooded lands adjacent to rivers, lakes, and oceans, and are subject to geomorphic (land-shaping) and hydrologic (water flow) processes. It is only during and after major flood events that the connections between a river and its floodplain become more apparent. These areas form a complex physical and biological system that not only supports a variety of natural resources but also provides natural flood and erosion control. In addition, the floodplain represents a natural filtering system, with water percolating back into the ground and replenishing groundwater.

Within the established flood risk areas in Westerly, certain regions are more susceptible to damaging floods than others. In order to identify such regions, the Westerly flood risk areas can be prioritized based on the flood zones designations.

Zone VE designates areas along coasts subject to inundation by a 1-percent-annual-chance flood event in addition to storm-induced velocity wave action. Zone V designates areas along coastline subject to inundation by the 1-percent-annual-chance flood events with the additional hazards associated with storm-induced waves; however, unlike Zone VE no base flood elevations are described. Both Zones V and VE require mandatory flood insurance. Zones A, AE, AH, & AO are also subject to inundation by the 1-percent-annual-chance flood event and also require mandatory flood insurance. However, regions in these zones are susceptible to shallow flooding from ponding and/or sloping terrain. The Zone X designation is given to those areas subject to flooding by severe, concentrated rainfall coupled with poor drainage systems (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014).

While riverine flooding in Westerly is a typical by-product of coastal storms and hurricanes, it can also occur during late winter due to melting snow, ice and persistent spring rain. The effects of such flooding include retaining wall and building foundation damage, road damage, and ice or water-borne debris buildup against bridge structures.

The primary freshwater body in Westerly that is susceptible to flooding is the Pawcatuck River, whose watershed covers an area of 486 square kilometers, or 188 square miles (Dillingham,

1993). It extends north into Rhode Island and west into Connecticut, encompassing all or part of twelve different municipalities.

Flood hazard areas in Westerly include the coastal barrier beaches that separate the Maschaug, Little Maschaug, Winnapaug and Quonochontaug Ponds from Block Island Sound, which are designated V zones, as are lands located immediately north of the northern shorelines of these salt ponds. Other "V" zone locations include Napatree Point, Watch Hill Point, both sides of Atlantic Avenue in Misquamicut Beach, and portions of Weekapaug to the south of Wawaloam Drive and Ninigret Avenue. FEMA-designated "A" zones are much more expansive, and include low-lying portions of Watch Hill, portions of Misquamicut Beach located some distance inland from the ocean, and a large number of properties located between the north side of the salt ponds and Shore Road (Route 1A).

Flood conditions are exacerbated by constriction of river waters that can occur when large amounts of ice, debris, fallen trees, or tree limbs pile up behind low-lying bridge decks or narrow bridge spans. There are nine bridges located on Westerly's section of the Pawcatuck River, several of which date to a period before structures were designed to pass floodwaters from a 100-year storm event. The collapse of one of these structures could cause a downstream catastrophe, as a flood surge laden with trees or buildings piles up against the next dam or set of bridge abutments.

In 1978, 1982 and again in 2010 heavy rains caused the Pawcatuck River to overflow its banks. In 2010 these events caused road blockages along Route 91 between Westerly and Bradford, and along Canal Street, which included the complete failure of the National Grid substation that disabled power to the entire area, and Industrial Drive in the North End. Several businesses were flooded out and one building suffered a partial collapse. The Pawcatuck River reached a new record level, exceeding the previous record which was set by storm surge from the 1938 Hurricane. The Pawcatuck River was so severely impacted that it did not recede below flood stage until April 12. In Westerly, a mile of train track was inundated, resulting in a suspension of Amtrak services. In addition, Chapman Pond was flooded so badly that it effectively shut down Route 91 and Pound Road, causing a prolonged blocked access to an entire neighborhood (National Weather Service). Many inland areas of Westerly subject to riverine flooding are designated "A" zones, including low-lying areas along the Pawcatuck River (including portions of Downtown Westerly, the North End neighborhood, White Rock and Bradford), Mastuxet Brook, and Chapman Pond.

The Great New England Hurricane of 1938 and Hurricane Carol in 1954 were severely damaging hurricanes that caused extensive coastal flooding in southern New England (Vallee and Dion, 1998). Hurricane Carol produced a powerful storm surge of 14.4 feet in Narragansett Bay,

which surpassed the surge created by the Hurricane of 1938 (Vallee and Dion, 1998). Flooding hastens coastal erosion, and areas such as Misquamicut Beach suffered erosion and sand dune damage after Hurricane Sandy (Goonan, Oct. 20, 2012).

10.4.7 Coastal Erosion

Coastal zones are dynamic areas that are constantly undergoing change in response to a multitude of factors, including Sea Level Rise (SLR), wave and current patterns, hurricanes, coastal flooding and human influences. High winds and associated marine flooding from storm events such as hurricanes, nor'easters, flooding, and sea level rise, increase the risk exposure along developed coastal lands. Storm impacts and long-term erosion threatens developed areas with potential loss of life and billions of dollars in property damage. In addition to the natural processes that cause erosion, human alterations are also affecting erosion rates (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014).

The beaches, barrier spits and coastal bluffs of Rhode Island are vital economic, environmental, and cultural resources. A healthy, wide sandy beach provides protection against the effects of storm surge, coastal flooding, and high surf impacts. The beach and barrier environment provide habitat for marine and terrestrial organisms with beach dependent life stages and are home to species of indigenous and endemic Rhode Island plants. Beaches, barrier spits, and coastal bluffs are also the basis for the tourism industry, exceeding by a factor of three all other industries combined when providing direct income to the state.

The headlands and barriers of the south shore from Watch Hill in Westerly to Point Judith in Narragansett are generally eroding at a higher rate than other shorelines along the Rhode Island coast due to their exposure to ocean forces and geologic setting and composition (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014). Continuous erosion of this nature will decrease the coastal buffer making waterfront property more susceptible to storm surge.

Of the six shoreline types found in Rhode Island, beaches and barrier spits are the most susceptible to erosion. About seven of Westerly's nine miles of coastline are comprised of these unconsolidated sediments (exceptions are rocky headlands located at Watch Hill Point and Weekapaug Point).

Coastal erosion threatens both waterfront property and fragile shoreline habitats, and can affect Westerly's shoreline even during moderate coastal storms. In addition, the predicted increase in global sea-level rise will exacerbate coastal erosion as lower intensity storms cause greater amounts of damage and flooding than their historic counterparts (RIDEM *a*). Westerly is composed of headland beaches and barrier beaches, which experience erosion at different rates (Faulkner, Mar. 1 2014). Barrier beaches tend to be more dynamic, losing sand at times

and then regaining it through natural processes, while headland beaches tend to only erode, resulting in lost beach area (Faulkner, Mar. 1).

The average coastal erosion rate is 1.6 feet per year in Rhode Island (Sullivan, Aug 30, 2012). Rhode Island's shoreline is naturally eroding and migrating over time (Save the Bay, 2013). Based on measurements of the Newport tide gauge, sea level has risen approximately ten inches since 1930 and a full foot of sea level rise is expected by 2030 (Freedman, Jan. 13, 2013). Most of this erosion occurs during short term storm events such as hurricanes and nor'easters, although factors such as sea level rise and coastal armoring also contribute to erosion (Save the Bay, 2013). The vulnerability of many of Rhode Island's beaches and shoreline areas to coastal erosion and flooding tends to increase dramatically as manmade structures are allowed to be built along the shoreline thus impeding the natural, dynamic system of the beach. Coastal armoring and the construction of jetties and groins may save the beach for one private property owner, but it severely impacts sediment deposits from occurring down shore of the structure, thus accelerating erosion activity and negatively impacting property owners in these locations (Save the Bay, 2013).

Westerly has experienced both gradual shoreline erosion and more dramatic erosion from storms. During the period of October 28-31, 2012, Hurricane Sandy caused significant erosion along Misquamicut beach, in addition to several other areas of Rhode Island shoreline (USACE, Nov. 5 2013). In 2013, with assistance from USACE the town began a project to repair the damage on the beach caused by the hurricane through a sand replacement project (USACE, Nov. 5 2013).

Napatree Point is another area especially vulnerable to the effects of coastal erosion. The 1938 hurricane in addition to gradual erosion has caused the beach area of Napatree to recede 200 feet and cause the separation of Sandy Point from the mainland (Seaside Topics, 1938).

Over shorter periods of time, waves and storm events are the primary cause of changes in shoreline conditions. Sea level rise (SLR) is one of the long term causes of shoreline erosion (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014). SLR contributes to erosion by influencing and worsening on-going coastal processes, making coastal areas ever more vulnerable to extreme events. As SLR increases, storm surges and waves will extend further inland, flooding homes, businesses and roadways. In some areas of the Northeast, storm surges associated with future hurricanes could be two to four feet higher than present conditions. The potentially large effect of SLR on erosion rates must therefore be considered (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014).

10.4.8 Dam Breaches

Dam failures can result from natural events, human-induced events, or a combination of the two. Failures due to natural events such as prolonged periods of rainfall and flooding can result in overtopping, which is the most common cause of dam failure. Overtopping occurs when a dam's spillway capacity is exceeded and portions of the dam that are not designed to convey flow begin to pass water, erode away, and ultimately fail. Other causes of dam failure include design flaws, foundation failure, internal soil erosion, inadequate maintenance, or mis-operation. Complete failure occurs if internal erosion or overtopping results in a complete structural breach, releasing a high-velocity wall of debris-laden water that rushes downstream, damaging or destroying everything in its path. An additional hazard concern is the cascading effect of one dam failure causing multiple dam failures downstream due to the sudden release of flow (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014).

Dams are classified by size and hazard ratings. The size classification, which provides a relative description of small, medium, or large, is based on the storage capacity and height of the impounded water (RIDEM, 2012). The hazard classification relates to the probable consequences of failure or mis-operation of the dam; however, it does not relate to the current condition or the likelihood of failure of the dam. The hazard classifications are defined in the Rhode Island Dam Safety Regulations as follows:

- High Hazard – means a dam where failure or mis-operation will result in a probable loss of human life.
- Significant Hazard – means a dam where failure or mis-operation results in no probable loss of human life but can cause major economic loss, disruption of lifeline facilities, or impact other concerns detrimental to the public's health, safety, or welfare.
- Low Hazard – means a dam where failure or mis-operation results in no probable loss of human life and low economic losses (RIDEM, 2012).

According to the 2009 Annual Report to the Governor on the Activities of the Dam Safety Program all of the dams within Westerly and those that are shared between Westerly and neighboring Connecticut are designated as low hazard dams, meaning that if the dam were to fail it would result in no probable loss of human life and low economic losses. The dams within Westerly include: Olaf Farm Pond dam (Dam No. 493) on Cedar Swamp Brook, Boiling Spring dam (Dam No. 752) on Mastuxet Brook, Woody Hill Reservoir Dam (Dam No. 454) on Perry Healy Brook and the Misquamicut County Club Pond dam (Dam No. 547; (RIDEM, 2009). The two dams shared with Connecticut along the Pawcatuck River White Rock dam (Dam No. 255) and the Stillmanville Dam (Dam No. 256) are also designated as low hazard (RIDEM, 2009). The Bradford Dam (Dam No. 253) was inspected in 2010 by RIDEM following the flooding events of late March and early April and was also designated as a low hazard (RIDEM, 2010).

The spring rains of 2010 breached Blue Pond Dam in Hopkinton. This dam failure caused a surge of water that incapacitated the National Grid substation on Canal Street and flooded the Canal Street manufacturing district and the North End Neighborhood. Other dams that were closely monitored during the March 2010 flooding included the Alton Dam on the Wood River in neighboring Hopkinton. The Alton Dam was submerged by swiftly moving waters and the bridge spanning the river on Route 91 was left with a deep crevice (Benson, 2010). Additionally, the dam over the Pawcatuck River in the Bradford section of Westerly overtopped its embankment and flooded Route 216 and the Bradford Dyeing Association plant. Other flooded and damaged dams included dams on the Pawcatuck on Route 3 and Potter Hill Road (Benson, 2010) and the Hewitt Farm Dam (Souza, 2014). During the flooding, the Alton-Wood River Junction and the Bradford sections of Westerly and Hopkinton downstream of the dams were ordered to evacuate. However, while the flooding did put significant pressure of the dams they did not fail (Benson, 2010).

10.4.9 Wildfires

Wildfires are fueled by natural cover, including native and non-native species of trees, brush and grasses, and crops along with weather conditions and topography. While available fuel, topography, and weather provide the conditions that allow wildfires to spread, most wildfires are caused by people through criminal or accidental misuse of fire (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014).

Westerly is a well-developed coastal town with large areas of open space that are mostly composed of beaches. Fires can occur in these open spaces given the right conditions. Wildfires that occur in undeveloped, natural areas may be less accessible to fire protection services, thus further increasing the risk of wildfire.

The likelihood of fire varies based on a number of weather-related factors. Drought leads to increasing dryness, which affects how deep in the vegetation the fire will burn. Wind speed influences direction and speed of the spread of wildfire. Both temperature and humidity affect the likelihood of wildfire; warmer and dryer weather can result in increased fire danger. Locations in Westerly most vulnerable to wildfire include the Woody Hill Management Area and the Town Forest that are inaccessible to motor vehicles. Other critical areas are the coastal grasslands in vicinity of Avondale, Watch Hill and the salt ponds. While these grassland areas are relatively small in size, the real danger associated with wildfire is the potential for its spread to nearby structures. While coastal grasslands are generally accessible to fire apparatus, they may be located some distance from hydrants, necessitating the transport of water to burning vegetation.

10.4.10 Droughts and Extreme Heat

Drought is characterized as a continuous period of time in which rainfall is significantly below the norm for a particular area. The American Meteorology Society defines drought as a period of abnormally dry weather sufficiently long enough to cause a serious hydrological imbalance. Drought differs from other natural hazards in that they typically occur suddenly whereas a drought evolves over months or even years and, while causing very little structural damage, can have profound economic, environmental, and social impacts (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014).

Westerly's drinking water groundwater resources are drawn from three major sand and gravel aquifers all located within the Pawcatuck Basin designated in 1988 as a sole-source aquifer (Town of Westerly, 2013 *b*). The Town of Westerly's Department of Public Works has the primary responsibility for managing the town's water supply distribution system, and for ensuring that it can provide sufficient water to meet public health and safety needs of its customers. The Rhode Island Water Resources Board (RIWRB) issues notices regarding drought conditions in the state, and the Drought Management Element of the State Guide Plan controls state policy relative to long-term drought response.

Westerly is on a Sole Source Aquifer (RI Health, 2003). The White Rock Wellhead Protection Area draws water from the Westerly Sole Source Aquifer and accounts for approximately 70% of the town's average daily supply (RI Health, 2003). The Pawcatuck River flows through the wellhead protection area providing recharge to groundwater during dry months. Land use activity in the White Rock wellhead protection area is a mix of medium to high-density residential development (380 acres) and agriculture (100 acres); institutional and recreational land uses account for an additional 106 acres (RI Health, 2003).

The Town has the lead role in preparing for and managing all stages of drought at the community level. Drought preparedness measures are included in Westerly's Water Supply Management Plan, which stress policies that promote water conservation wherever possible, including a provision for local ordinances to ensure that established regulations and procedures can respond (Town of Westerly, 2010). Westerly's water distribution deficiencies have caused water use restrictions in the past partly due to insufficient drought planning and water-supply protection (Town of Westerly, 2010).

10.4.11 Geological-related Hazards

An earthquake is caused by a sudden displacement within the earth. Strong and destructive earthquakes usually result from the rupturing or breaking of great masses of rocks far beneath the surface of the earth. The ultimate cause of these deep ruptures has not been established. All earthquakes produce both vertical and horizontal ground shaking. This ground movement

begins at the focus or hypocenter, deep in the earth, and spreads in all directions. The felt motion is the result of several kinds of seismic vibrations. The primary, or P, waves are compressional. The secondary, or S, waves have a shear motion. These body waves radiate outward from the fault to the ground surfaces where they cause ground shaking (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014).

Rhode Island is located in a region of the North American plate and falls within seismic zone 2A with 8-16% ground acceleration, which translates to a “moderate” seismic hazard (Petersen et al. 2008; US Seismic Zone Map). This means that people may experience moderate intensity shaking that can lead to slight damage during an earthquake event (FEMA Earthquake Hazard maps). There are no significant geologic fault lines in Rhode Island or New England, and the USGS Earthquake Hazards Program identifies all of Rhode Island as occurring in a low seismic risk area (<2%g peak acceleration). Earthquakes that occur in the northeast, which is considered an intraplate area, do not meet the assumptions of the plate tectonic theory since there is no obvious relationship between earthquake occurrence and fault lines in intraplate areas (Kafka, 2014).

European settlers in Rhode Island noted the effects of a number of earthquakes beginning in the mid-seventeenth century. Between 1776 and 2007, 38 earthquakes were recorded in Rhode Island, far fewer than any other New England state. Most of these earthquakes measured low on the intensity scale, and are believed to have originated elsewhere, some as far away as Quebec. In 1883, an earthquake believed to have been centered on Rhode Island was felt from Bristol to Block Island. On December 20 and 24 in 1940 there were strong earthquakes centered around Lake Ossipee in New Hampshire that caused some damage in the epicentral area and caused Intensity V effects on the MMI scale in Newport, Rhode Island (von Hake, 1976). The largest earthquake recorded in Rhode Island occurred on June 10, 1951 and was centered in Kingston with a 4.6 Richter Scale rating (Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, 2014). The most recent earthquake to affect a portion of Connecticut and Rhode Island was a 3.3 magnitude quake that occurred on January 12, 2015 with an epicenter in Wauregan, Connecticut (USGS, 1/12/15). Effects of the quake were mostly felt along the Rhode Island and Connecticut border shared between Plainfield and Foster, although weak intensity effects were also reported in Westerly (USGS, 1/12/15; Algier, 1/12/15).

10.4.12 Climate Change

Changes in the climate are considered hazards within themselves as well as exacerbating other naturally occurring events. Based on the NOAA Technical Report NESDIS 142-1, Regional Climate Trends and Scenarios for the U.S. National Climate Assessment: Climate of the Northeast, two climate model simulations have been developed that project the effects of high and low greenhouse gas emission scenarios. Analyses of the simulated future climate are

provided for the periods of 2021-2050, 2041-2070, and 2070-2099, with changes calculated with respect to a historical climate reference period (1971-1999, 1971-2000, or 1980-2000) (NOAA 142-1, 2013). The resulting climate change conditions are to be viewed as scenarios, not forecasts, and there no explicit or implicit assumptions about the probability of either scenario (NOAA 142-1, 2013).

Key findings of the simulated climate models are as follows:

- Models indicate an increase in temperature for all three future periods, with little spatial variation. Changes along coastal areas, such as Jamestown, are slightly smaller than inland areas.
- Simulated temperature changes are similar in value for the high and low emissions scenarios for the near future, whereas late in the 21st century the high emissions scenario indicates nearly twice the amount of warming.
- The range of model-simulated temperature changes is substantial, indicating substantial uncertainty in the magnitude of warming associated with each scenario. However, in each scenario, the modeling is unequivocal and large compared to historic variations.
- Increases in the number of days with a maximum temperature above 95°F are simulated to occur throughout the northeast, with the largest increases occurring in the southern and western areas.
- Simulated decreases in the average annual number of days with a minimum temperature below 10°F are largest (21 days or more) in northern areas. Decreases in the number of days with a minimum temperature below 32°F are 20-23 days across most of the region.
- The freeze-free season is simulated to lengthen by at least 19 days across the region by the mid-twenty-first century. Simulated increases in most areas are 3-4 weeks.
- The far northern regions show the largest simulated increases in average annual precipitation, while southern and coastal areas show less of an increase. Models are mostly in agreement that precipitation will increase over the entire region under these scenarios. Simulated seasonal changes are mostly upward in winter, spring, and fall, and downward in summer.
- All areas see simulated increases in the number of days with precipitation totals exceeding 1 inch, with the greatest increases (up to 30%) occurring in parts of New York. The simulated increases are statistically significant in most northern areas.
- Most models do not indicate a statistically significant change in temperature (with respect to 2001-2010) for the near future; however, as the time period increases a greater number of models simulate statistically significant temperature changes,

with all being significant at the 95% confidence level by 2055 (for the high emission scenario).

These modeled scenarios of hotter weather and increased precipitation, along with current climate trends such as increased sea level rise will affect Westerly in the long term. Increased precipitation can lead to inland flooding and potentially cause issues, such as dam breach of the drinking water reservoir. Conversely, hotter weather can lead to drought-like conditions and strain Westerly's drinking water supply. The rise in sea level will intensify coastal erosion and damage vulnerable areas.

2016
DRAFT

Comprehensive Plan: Appendix II
Town of Westerly, Rhode Island



*A plan for vitality and
sustainability*

Appendix II Public Input into the Comprehensive Plan

1 Introduction

The preparation of this Comprehensive Plan included an active public participation and outreach program. The main purpose of the program was to provide opportunities for local residents to help shape the plan and ensure that it reflects their vision. Public participation also helped to build support for the plan among stakeholders and to foster an understanding of the Plan among local residents.

In its Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act, the state of Rhode Island encourages public input into the Comprehensive Plan. The only formal requirement for public input is that the Planning Board and the Town Council hold public hearings prior to the adoption of the Plan. In that respect, the Act leaves the design of public input programs to the discretion of communities. It provides a series of suggested public input techniques, but its concrete requirements are:

In order to encourage citizen participation in the comprehensive planning process, planning boards, commissions, or committees are directed to adopt comprehensive plans only after soliciting and considering public input. Public hearings by the planning board, commission, or committee and the municipal legislative body are required to be held prior to the adoption of the comprehensive plan. Adoption of the comprehensive plan by a municipal legislative body is in the same manner provided for the adoption of ordinances in the manner provided for in the legislative or home rule charter of the municipality except that the plan need not be published in its entirety in a newspaper of general circulation.¹

For the Town of Westerly Comprehensive Plan, the public input program was designed to ensure residents and stakeholders were provided with multiple opportunities to participate in the planning process. The following elements were incorporated:

- Discussion Sessions – Discussion sessions were held with the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee (the Committee) at project kickoff and with the town's department heads shortly thereafter. These sessions were designed to give the groups the opportunity to identify what they perceived as strengths and weaknesses of the town and to express their visions of the future. In the case of the department heads,

¹ <http://www.planning.state.ri.us/comp/handbook16.pdf>

discussion focused on usefulness of the forthcoming plan and how it could best meet their needs.

- Interactive Public Workshops – Interactive public workshops were designed to allow the public to give individual input as well as to collaborate with other residents and participants. Three rounds of public workshops were held:
 - Round One – The first round of workshops focused on the identification of local issues. It featured individual and group input, gave participants the opportunity to give their personal opinions about issues in the town as well as a collaborative group exercise in which participants located the issue areas on maps of the town. The purpose of the session was to educate and inform the public about the Plan and the process as well as to gather opinions and feedback. The mapping contributed by the groups was used directly in the creation of the Neighborhoods Map (N-1), Neighborhood Planning Areas (N-2), and the Future Land Use Map (FLU-1).
 - Round Two – During the second round of workshops, the public was invited to develop goals, policies and actions for the major planning areas. Workshop participants were asked to identify goals they felt would be appropriate for the community and then help work out policies and actions to help Westerly achieve those goals. This discussion provided the basis for more detailed policy discussion and action choices.
 - Round Three – During this round, participants were asked to review and comment on a complete draft of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that the information in the plan is accurate and that the plan adequately addresses the concerns and priorities of the community.
- Media – All public meetings, workshops and hearings were advertised in the Westerly Sun, a local newspaper of general circulation. Meetings were also posted on public bulletin boards in the Town Hall. The Planning Department staff also assisted by specifically inviting parties to whom the discussion topics would be of interest. The consultant’s project manager also participated in an on-air radio interview broadcast on radio station WBLQ 1230 AM to publicize the plan and discuss some of the goals for public consideration.
- Web Access – On [date] a complete draft of the 2016-2036 Comprehensive Plan was posted to the Town of Westerly Website.

The public input for this Plan also includes written correspondence and emails along with the records of discussion sessions and workshops. A number of interviews were held throughout the planning process with elected and appointed officials, citizens, state and local leaders and other interested parties to help inform the process.

2 Discussion Sessions

The purpose of these sessions was to gather information, reflections and insights about Westerly and learn local perspectives on the unique challenges and opportunities facing the town. The information was used along with the other sources of public input to assist in the identification of issues within the town. The opinions and views expressed during these and other public input sessions helped to lay the basis of the goals and objectives for the Plan and the vision of the future for the town of Westerly. These sessions also helped alert the consulting team to issues of special concern about which they might otherwise not have been aware. The discussions sessions were loosely formatted to provide for thoughtful conversations between the stakeholders, town staff, and the consultant. The object was to create an atmosphere where participants felt comfortable enough to discuss their areas of expertise and air their views and opinions with confidence.

Citizens Advisory Committee

As part of the initial phase of the Comprehensive Plan preparation, a kickoff meeting was held with the Citizens Advisory Committee at the Committee's first meeting with the consultant. When asked to describe the character of the town of Westerly, committee members noted its small size, historic New England quality, its seaside location and its diversity in population, cultural activities and offerings, as well as its beautiful setting. Committee members described the town as family-oriented and its residents as caring and charitable.

When asked to articulate their visions of the future for the town, committee members wanted to see more employment opportunities to encourage young people to stay in Westerly or to move back and live there. Committee member's visions also included adequate and affordable housing, housing and services for senior citizens, natural resource protection and downtown restoration and revitalization. The Committee recognized the need for some growth, but would like to see character of the town preserved and important natural features protected. Improving the tax base and increasing resilience to natural disaster and the impacts of climate change and sea level rise were also mentioned. Finally, improved communications and broadband internet access were also mentioned as important future needs.

Committee members described the distinction between tourist and resort communities, noting that Westerly should become more of a resort destination and less dependent upon a seasonal economy ("beds for heads"). Other opportunities committee members cited included economic

development potentials such as home based businesses, light industrial, knowledge-based industry, health care and industrial development. Natural resources preservation, access and natural resources-based industry were also mentioned as potentials. Several committee members also saw potential in Westerly's location, highway, rail and air access.

Committee members discussed issues that should be considered in drafting the new Comprehensive Plan. A perceived lack of enforcement of zoning and excessive variance granting, growing financial pressures limiting access to funding for investment in infrastructure, and needs for education and economic development were noted. Other committee members noted a need for affordable housing, better beach access, and improved parking, possibly including seasonal off-site parking and beach shuttles.

Department Heads

Meetings were held with the town department heads early in the process to identify self-perceived department strengths and weaknesses and learn each department's specific needs for the new Comprehensive Plan. Participants used terms like traditional, small town and historic to describe the character of Westerly. When asked to describe their visions of the future, most anticipated responsible development and planning, open space preservation, protection and enhancement of the character of Westerly, improved water, sewer and other infrastructure and sustainable economic revitalization to bring new jobs into the community.

When asked what the new Plan should do, participants named usefulness, user-friendliness and accessibility as specific qualities they would like in a new Plan. They expressed a desire to have the Plan fairly represent everyone in the community and be a tool to help guide land development, infrastructure improvements, and sustainable economic growth. The plan should help the town be more resilient to natural disaster, address the future impacts of global climate change, and prepare for the future impacts of sea level rise. Most of all, the Plan has to be implementable so that it will be useful.

3 Public Workshops

Interactive public workshops were held at the beginning of the Comprehensive Plan process. Each workshop featured background information about the Plan and Plan process as well as an interactive portion. The interactive portion of the program encouraged both individual input as well as group consensus-building. The purpose of the meetings was to educate the public about the Plan and the importance of the Plan and to identify issues that should be addressed through the planning process. By using both individual and group input techniques, the workshop sought to encourage collaboration and cooperation in problem identification and solutions.

Participants overwhelmingly agreed that the town should preserve unique natural features and scenic areas to protect open space and encourage public access. Most agreed that Westerly needs more affordable housing although there was little support for state imposed affordable housing mandates. There was also some hostility to the affordable housing comprehensive permit process which is perceived as usurping local control and damaging neighborhoods without successfully increasing the supply of affordable housing.

Traffic volume and safety are on-going issues in the town of Westerly. There was general agreement on the need for an increase in available transportation modes such as better bus service, a possible beach shuttle, bike lanes, and parking and sidewalk improvements in Westerly. Availability of transport at the airport and the train station were also concerns.

Additional public workshops were held by the Advisory Committee upon the publication of the draft Plan. In July and August of 2016 the Advisory Committee facilitated [number] of workshops and received additional public input. A final report from the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee, representing a diversity of interests in the community, was forwarded to the Planning Board in [month].

The Planning Board held a public workshop at which both Advisory Committee members and the public were invited.

4 The Public Hearing Process

The Planning Board conducted a public hearing

The result of the Planning Board's deliberations on the Plan included the [date of meeting] endorsement of the final draft (dated [date]) to the Town Council for their consideration and adoption as ordinance of the Town of Westerly.

The Town Council [began/conducted] a public hearing on [date] during which they received the Planning Board's recommendation and entertained public testimony. All public comments and council discussion having been concluded, the Town Council voted on [date] to incorporate the Plan into the Code of Ordinances as Chapter 10. With the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan document by the Westerly Town Council, the 2010 Comprehensive Plan was repealed and replaced with this updated twenty-year vision for the Town of Westerly. Through its adoption the Plan becomes not only an official statement of Westerly's future direction and guiding document, but it is legally binding on all future land-use decisions made by the municipality.