

Part 1.

Section 2.8 – The Future

As stated in the preceding chapter, this Plan envisions Westerly as a safe, resilient, and compassionate community that has preserved and enhanced its quality of life, its distinctive heritage, and its extraordinary cultural and natural resources for all generations. The Plan also requires dedication to a strong, stable, equitable economy and a responsible and publicly engaged government. Looking forward to 2040 evokes an image of what the future holds.

A Vision for Westerly

- Westerly 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, blight, sign pollution, and the development of housing and commercial space will have been thoughtfully managed to meet the needs of residents of all generations and will have promoted a prosperous economy with as little impact on the natural environment as possible.
- Downtown Westerly will be a welcoming and attractive gateway for visitors arriving by public transportation or otherwise, a premier cultural center for all, continue its legacy as an Historic District and Arts Center, and will be well-connected to all neighborhoods through its public spaces, programs, events, and services of community-wide interest.
- Westerly will have secured its water supply for the twenty-first century and carried out its extensive programs of infrastructure maintenance and revitalization, including water, sewer, and stormwater management systems, while maintaining and upgrading of town facilities in a timely fashion.
- The shoreline, Pawcatuck River, salt ponds, and greenspace will remain Westerly's trademarks, with public rights-of-way carefully managed and maintained both to ensure accessibility and to sustain their uses while preserving their health and natural beauty for future generations to enjoy.
- Westerly will have achieved a condition of economic and physical resilience to natural and man-made events.
- The Route One commercial corridor will be vibrant, distinctive, inviting, safe, and reflective of the Town's character. Route One will provide an economically diverse and sustainable mix of commercial and professional uses and a broad range of affordable housing options.

Section 2.9 – Long-term Priorities

Protecting Open Space, Scenic Viewscapes, and Important Land Features

Since the adoption of Westerly's Comprehensive Plan in 1992, substantial areas of open space have been acquired for preservation and recreation. Public/private and non-profit entities have been active and successful in the purchase/dedication of lands for open space and, in some cases, the purchase of development rights.

Most recently, 433 acres in Bradford, known as the Lucey properties, was acquired for passive recreation, open space, and aquifer protection. This parcel is contiguous with the state-owned Woody Hill Management Area (722 acres) and the non-profit Westerly Land Trust's Wahaneeta Preserve (84 acres), thus creating Westerly's first green belt – extending more than 12,000 contiguous acres. The Town of Westerly also purchased 41 acres on Springbrook Road within a wellhead protection area. This purchase was also associated with restrictions placed on the adjacent White Rock Quarry concerning mining practices so mining operations would not adversely affect the Town's wellheads (located near this land). This land purchase was funded through the Westerly Water Department, requiring a minor increase in town water fees.

Federal, state, and local government contributions to future acquisitions are likely to be reduced or eliminated in the current economic and political climate. Therefore, the Town, private and non-profit organizations will continue to use traditional methods of property acquisition as well as other strategies to achieve its objectives without taxpayer dollars.

Proactive approaches at the earliest stages of the regulatory process, rather than reactive responses at later time, have been valuable in achieving the Town's desired objectives.

All Town entities involved in land-use regulations and permitting will remain cognizant of newer regulatory alternatives, consider their implementation and be flexible in their use so the development authorized also protects important greenspace and greenway systems.

Long-term Priority Continued from the 2010 Comprehensive 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.

Additional Long-term Priority for 2020-2040

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

While great achievements have been made in the acquisition of open spaces and natural resource areas of significant importance, it is equally imperative that these lands are conserved for years to come. Projections have become increasingly certain that Westerly, like nearly all other coastal communities world-wide, must be prepared for sea level rise (SLR) and more frequent and intense storm events.

Westerly's salt marshes are its most productive ecological natural communities, yet as sea level rise accelerates, the salt marshes are lost. Open space must be available for salt marshes to migrate inland as sea level rises, and not just for the twenty-year term of this Plan. Maintaining undeveloped lands in their natural state will be one of the most effective actions for the Town to undertake and support over the next two decades.

Healthy Places through Greenspace Connections and a Multi-Modal Transportation Network

As noted above, while more needs to be accomplished, great strides have been achieved in the protection of open space, important land features, and public right-of-way access to both the shore and the Pawcatuck River. However, there has been little progress in access to these areas by means other than 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 automobiles. Alternative multimodal transportation in the Town could include walking, biking, public transit (trains and buses), water taxis, and private boats.

The public outreach which occurred in relation to the 2010 Comprehensive Plan indicated widespread support for the creation of biking 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 largely successful. While the 2010 Comprehensive Plan called for the establishment of such facilities generally, it prioritized the creation of a discrete specific scenic coastal loop. A component of this proposal is the Misquamicut multi-use path, which would connect the sidewalks on the east and west side of the state beach along the road, with opportunities for small areas to observe Winnapaug Pond and learn more about it through interpretive signage. The project is in active discussion between the Town and State agencies as of January 2020.

The Town will support quality redevelopment with consideration given to road capacity and the availability of pedestrian and bicycle amenities. In the development of this Plan, the value placed on integrating walking and biking remains-is strong, as long as public safety concerns can be met. ~~Other~~ Concepts proposed are:

- Require 'multi-modal transportation analyses' for development projects to include pedestrian, bicycle, public transportation, water access, shared motor vehicle, and private motor vehicle access.
- Pass a Complete Streets resolution, a Smart Growth policy, that directs the ~~Town's Department of Development Services~~ Planning and Engineering Departments to routinely ~~design an entire~~ include in the right of way ~~to enable~~ safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation.
- For improved travel and targeted commercial redevelopment, include language requiring new approaches to access management, qualifying parking demands, and standards for parking lot design that elevate the importance of pedestrian and bicycle circulation and stormwater treatment.

Long-term Priority Continued from the 2010 Comprehensive Plan

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

Additional Long-term Priority for 2020-2040

The Town of Westerly will empower and improve opportunities for the public to voice their values, ideas, and concerns regarding transportation choice and the impact on health.

While Westerly continues to integrate bike lanes and sidewalks into its street system, a second focus will be on programs that provide transportation assistance to healthy food outlets, active recreation opportunities, and other social and health service agencies. Residents strongly associate themselves

with the neighborhoods in which they reside. ~~Equitable access to goods and services means either transportation assistance or neighborhood business development.~~ Personal health and lifestyle habits influence where people choose to live. Neighborhood Plans will open areas within Westerly to small-scale, context-sensitive mixed-use development and recreation opportunities that support a healthy lifestyle. A plan for the Route One Corridor ensures all residents, regardless of their location, have the opportunity to access essential goods and services by accommodating pedestrian and bicycle traffic and providing opportunities for local business investment.

Achieving Excellence in Community Design

The Zoning Ordinance, adopted in 1998 to implement the 1992 Comprehensive Plan, initiated development plan review (DPR) by the Planning Board for all uses other than one- and two-family homes. It also introduced general development standards. Since then, refinements and additional provisions have been added.

In October 2006, development standards for the Shore Commercial-Watch Hill (SC-WH) zoning district elevated DPR to include context sensitive standards. The entire area of that district is within the Watch Hill Historic District listed in the NRHP. The Zoning Ordinance provides standards that are intended to reflect the character-generating elements of the historic district for the Planning Board to apply in its DPR of proposed development in Watch Hill. There are five other Westerly neighborhoods listed in the NRHP. Excellence in design requires a study of each of these areas and the development and adoption of standards for each, as was achieved in the SC-WH district.

DPR has been a very useful development tool for the Town. The Planning Board, joined by the ARB in 2010, has made effective use of DPR to initiate improved design within the public realm. Serving in an advisory capacity to the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Review, the ARB provides comments and improvements in site design, function, and aesthetics on all commercial, industrial, institutional, and multifamily residential developments during DPR.

Currently applied on a site-by-site basis, the scope and the standards to be applied in DPR need to be revisited. As with earlier initiatives, the limits of public support and acceptance may pose a challenge. However, the character of Westerly is already substantially defined by existing structures and uses, many of which are facing challenges that require redevelopment, renovations, and revitalization. There is an opportunity for achieving more than excellence in community design.

Additional Long-term Priority for 2020-2040

The Town of Westerly will achieve excellence in community design through the application of context sensitive development standards and best practices.

Westerly's development plan review process (DPR) and policy emphasis on neighborhood planning are the foundation of the Route One Corridor Plan vision for Aesthetics. The Town will address residential density and commercial redevelopment based on the unique qualities and characteristics of each planning "neighborhood" and support context-sensitive design and neighborhood-based zoning changes in a corridor/sub-corridor overlay. A determination of Comprehensive Plan consistency in any land-use decision making by the Town Council, Boards and Commissions will continue to include findings of consistency with neighborhood character.

DPR is a method to preserve the Town's natural environment, enhance its built environment, improve its visual character, and sustain a high quality of life through review of plans for new development and redevelopment of existing uses. DPR ~~is~~ can be context sensitive and utilizes best practices. High standards of design, landscaping (including landscaped parking lots), improved community appearance, preservation and protection of environmental quality, buffering and screening of conflicting land uses

from other land uses and from public streets, and traffic and pedestrian safety are goals to be achieved through development plan review. [The Town of Westerly is in a good position to incorporate design standards for landscape, signs, building design and location into the existing DPR with Architectural Review Board insight.](#)

Vital Neighborhoods

The successful revitalization of the historic Westerly downtown and the enhanced development of the Downtown Revitalization Area, which encompasses and surrounds it, will require a spirit of cooperation, creativity, and flexibility. Transforming the appearance of the commercial corridor to a distinctive, inviting, safe, commercial, professional, and residential area reflective of the Town's character will require its own study and solution.

In this Plan, the Town maintains its commitment to the revitalization of Downtown. The existing character of the Town's other constituent neighborhoods require the evaluation of each neighborhood's specific needs before redevelopment and revitalization can occur.

Long-term Priority Continued from the 2010 Comprehensive Plan

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

Additional Long-term Priority Continued for 2020-2040

The Town of Westerly must preserve the unique character and importance of each constituent neighborhood and evaluate opportunities for redevelopment and revitalization in each.

Westerly contains six (6) neighborhoods listed in the NRHP. This Plan identifies nineteen (19) Neighborhood Planning Areas in total. Excellence in design requires a study of each of these areas and the development and adoption of standards for redevelopment and revitalization for each. The character of Westerly is already substantially defined by existing structures and uses, many of which are facing challenges that require redevelopment, renovations, and revitalization.

Recent experience should be a strong signal that Westerly officials appreciate both the values and challenges presented in neighborhood revitalization. Westerly officials 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 North End Neighborhood Revitalization Plan was designed on key planning concepts that included recommendations for 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.

This Plan recommends small area plans for each of the Town's neighborhoods. Small area plans cover a specific geography (neighborhood, corridor, or district) that often has a cohesive set of characteristics. The preservation of the unique character of each Neighborhood Planning Area and recognition of its distinct values requires thoughtful evaluation and community engagement to inform the Town's choices and efforts for redevelopment and revitalization.

Maintaining and Developing Exceptional Public Infrastructure

Achieving the future vision of Westerly requires that the Town maintain and further develop 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, gas, and alternative energy) with respect to capacity and supply, as the Town addresses its own infrastructure issues, including maintenance, repair, and replacement. This effort also requires ongoing coordination with adjoining communities. The repair and extension of public sidewalks is also essential to connecting the areas of greenspace and greenways of the Town.

The 2010 Comprehensive Plan's priority of maintaining and developing high quality infrastructure and coordination of private utilities is still relevant to this Plan. However, based on the Town's experience with natural hazards, storm surges, and future conditions anticipated to result from climate change, this priority has taken on even more significance.

Long-term Priority Revised for 2020-2040

The Town of Westerly must maintain and develop first-class supporting infrastructure that will be resilient when the community is faced with weather hazards, the effects of climate

There is an important connection between the capital improvement program (CIP) and the effective implementation of this Plan. The Town's approach to the budgeting for capital improvements, maintenance expenditures, and operating costs must be consistent with land-use policies and development needs of the community, as well as fiscally and operationally responsible.

The Westerly Planning Board has a legal responsibility to review the Town's capital improvement requests annually and meet with the Town Manager and Finance Director to review Department plans for the budgeting of both capital improvements and maintenance expenditures as outlined in each year's CIP. The Planning Board's interaction with the Finance Department and involvement in the CIP process is required for:

- Orderly and efficient provision of facilities and services through long-range capital facilities planning,
- Incorporating new technological advancements into facilities and services,
- Addressing deficiencies, if any, to accommodate desired future growth, and
- Training personnel in the skills and knowledge needed to maintain adopted level of service standards.

Risk assessment and mitigation must become a regular part of this discussion. Prioritization of action items needed to build community resilience and development of a variety of finance options to address those needs are critical steps in protecting the Town's residents and economic vitality. The Town of Westerly's participation in the State's Municipal Resilience Program, Resilient Rody, has kicked off this initiative. This Plan requires the Town to establish a new protocol for the development of the CIP, which will allow the Town to maintain and develop first-class supporting infrastructure that is resilient.

Potable Water

The availability of a high quality and abundant municipal water supply for industrial and domestic use and fire suppression is essential. Achieving this goal requires protection of the 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 must be reconciled. [The use of appropriate stormwater and wastewater management strategies during redevelopment of Route One](#)

will assist in protection of water quality within the Aquifer & Wellhead Protection Overlay District.

Wastewater

In addition to the public health aspects of the municipal sewer system, the availability of 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 Downtown Westerly 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, affordable and LMI qualified housing 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 two-fold: berming the existing wastewater facility to protect it from catastrophic weather events and eventual climate change and 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. Construction of the additional components of the sewer treatment plant needed to improve its design capacity and identification of potential areas of system expansion need to be part of a periodically updated facilities plan. This plan 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 of maintenance and future expansion of the municipal sewer system.

Stormwater

The Town of Westerly contains an aged stormwater drainage network that requires routine maintenance, repairs, and improvements. The network consists of structures, channels, underground pipes, historical stone culverts, and detention/retention basins that collect, treat, and carry stormwater runoff to various points of discharge. Due to a lack of historical mapping for the stormwater drainage network, the Town has had difficulty with maintaining the existing network and identifying areas of deficient drainage infrastructure and sources of bacterial contamination. Identifying portions of the stormwater network that are failing, insufficient, or in need of improvement will enable the Town to create a priority list and identify available funding opportunities.

An inventory and analysis of existing stormwater infrastructure and its condition will allow coordination with RIDOT involved redevelopment for either the disconnection of impervious surface or the pretreatment of stormwater prior to conveyance. Mapping of the town-wide stormwater drainage system will also create a documented inventory of drainage assets, help to provide a systemic program for routine maintenance activities, and identify areas where further investigation, repairs, or improvements are needed.

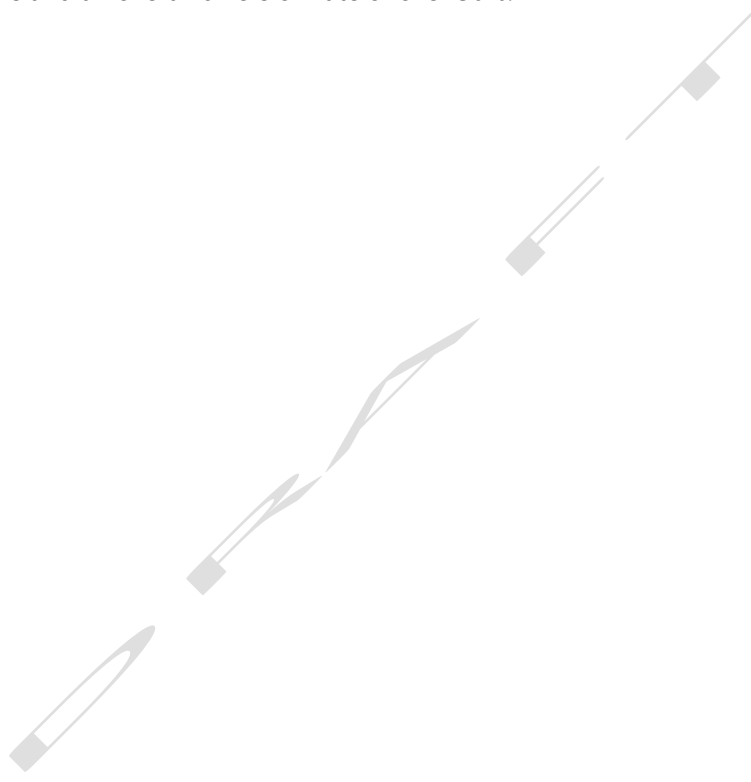
The Town also looks to improve the quality of stormwater drainage system and through the incorporation of green infrastructure best management practices for the purpose of reducing bacterial loadings from stormwater discharges to surface water to comply with State regulatory criteria. The Town will revise stormwater management and site development regulations to require green infrastructure and reduce the amount of impervious surface at existing uses and as part of redevelopment, particularly in the commercial corridors Downtown and along Route One. ~~Identifying portions of the stormwater network that are failing, insufficient, or in need of improvement will enable the Town to create a priority list and identify available funding opportunities.~~

Solid Waste Disposal

Capacity at the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) facility in Johnston is limited and

the State encourages cities and towns to reduce waste generation and recycle more to meet its 35% recycling rate and 50% overall diversion rate goals. 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. Hopkinton residents also utilize the Westerly transfer station. According to the [RIRRC 2019 Municipal Summary](#), the actual total solid waste received from Westerly (and Hopkinton) yielded a recycling rate of 32.1% and an overall diversion rate (all items diverted from the landfill) of 33.3% in 2019. Other services under consideration are the recycling of food scraps, composting, and new outreach programs. Westerly continues to push towards improved recycling numbers and an overall diversion rate of over 50%.

END



Section 3.1 – Existing Land Use

Subsection 3.1.2 – Commercial

Westerly has 514 acres of commercially developed land cover, or 3.2% of total land area in the Town. ~~Large-scale~~Commercial development is located along the Route One corridor predominantly in two areas:

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

The 2022 Route One Corridor Study (Section 4.4 herein) takes a geographic approach to addressing the varied pattern of commercial and residential development existing along the entire corridor, an approach consistent with the vision and values of this Comprehensive Plan and the neighborhood planning methodology. The Study delineates a specific Route One Corridor Overlay area segmented into sub-corridors. This geographic approach will provide customized land-use regulation for each sub-corridor based first on area characteristics (neighborhood aesthetics), second on infrastructure (its availability and sustainability) and thereafter consideration of the appropriate mix of uses.

There is also a defined historic downtown bounded by the Pawcatuck River and ~~encompassing~~encompasses portions of Main-Union Street, Broad Street, High Street, Canal Street, and Railroad Avenue. This area is an architecturally and aesthetically significant downtown commercial hub. Main Street, once a center for industry along the Pawcatuck River, is a natural extension of downtown commerce and to date an untapped opportunity for economic growth. Vacant and under-utilized parcels in this corridor require a plan for sustainable future buildout.

~~Two o~~Other substantial mixed-use commercial areas exist along the shore; one is on Bay Street in the historic Watch Hill neighborhood, and the other is on ~~portions of~~ Atlantic Avenue in the coastal Misquamicut ~~neighborhood~~beach area. Smaller neighborhood scale commercial areas are scattered throughout the Town.

~~Vacant and under-utilized parcels within the existing Commercial Highway and General Commercial zoning districts require a plan for sustainable future buildout.~~

Section 3.3 – Existing Zoning

Subsection 3.3.2 – Commercial Zoning Districts

There are nine (9) commercial zoning districts that collectively occupy 3.62% of the land area within the Town of Westerly. These districts vary by types of uses permitted, lot sizes, and setback requirements and are also scattered through different areas of Town.

NB (Neighborhood Business)

The Neighborhood Business zoning district, which consists of approximately 45 acres (or less than half of one percent of the total land area within the Town), is intended for areas characterized by small retail and personal service operations adjacent to and serving one or more residential neighborhoods that are surrounded by residential areas. Properties in this district are small and the districts themselves are scattered around the Town, with most of them in the urban core.

HC (Highway Commercial)

The HC zoning district, which consists of approximately 300 acres (or 1.5% of the total land area within the Town), is intended for areas that are primarily motor vehicle-oriented due to their location along major roadways. An objective of the 2022 Route One Corridor Study 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 Highway Commercial is located the most predominant district along Route 1 (Franklin Street, Granite Street, and Post Road). The Town will reconsider the use of underutilized area within the HC zoning district through implementation of a Corridor Overlay District in areas along Route 1 that are served by sidewalks.

GC (General Commercial)

The GC zoning district, which consists of approximately 75 acres (or less than half of one percent of the total land area within the Town), is intended for areas of historic commercial activity outside of the Downtown and Highway Commercial districts. Development in this district is less vehicle-oriented than the Highway Commercial District and is not compatible with residential development. Minimum lot sizes are smaller than the Highway Commercial District and the Downtown Center 2 District. These areas are located throughout the Town.

END

Section 3.6 – Future Land Use

Subsection 3.6.1 – The Future Land-Use Categories

The figure [Future Land Use \(FLU-M1\)](#), a visual **guide** to future planning. It is NOT identical to the Zoning District Map. It is a map of what the community wants to have happen, not a prediction of what will happen. The FLU-M1 brings together most, if not all, of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan, such as natural resources, economic development, housing, and resiliency. The community assesses the various scenarios and reviews the vision, goals, policies, and actions when creating the FLU-M1. The Map has been modified from the previous “FLUM” included within the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. There are both existing conditions and proposed development that have led to recommended classification changes. The specifics of the proposed changes are discussed throughout this Chapter.

Existing Zoning, illustrated by figure [Zoning \(LUZ-M2\)](#) further defines each of the land-use categories by including several corresponding districts. This material is organized in Table 4.

Table 4. Existing Zoning Districts within Future Land-Use Categories -Unaffected

Some changes to existing zoning districts will be made to further align the description of the district with its purpose.

- Lands in several zoning districts are protected in perpetuity by conservation easements. The zoning of these parcels is intended to align with the land-use values being conserved (i.e. low intensity agriculture, passive recreation, natural habitat protection). The FLUM includes the new Category of Conserved Land, intending to capture land protected from development through conservation restrictions, and/or land that can be used for small scale recreation, agriculture, or left untouched to provide protection of water quality, natural resources, and wildlife habitat, consistent with the restrictions in place with the existing zoning district designation for these parcels. However, a zone change is not required to remain consistent with the FLUM.
- An Airport Overlay District has been 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. This Overlay is now included on the Official Zoning Map and is illustrated on Figure [Zoning Overlays \(LUZ-M3\)](#). The FLUM is not impacted by this addition.
- Those properties originally zoned and approved as Planned Unit Development (PUD) have been incorporated into the category of high-density residential appropriate to the existing residential density on the FLUM. Zone changes for these parcels will follow.
- ORAT-zoned properties will be addressed individually to assess the appropriate zoning for each lot, given the current inconsistency in use within this zone. The assigned zoning district will remain consistent with the FLUM.

Changes to land-use policy and regulations include:

- Eco-friendly development methods such as conservation development and cluster development have not been readily used due to the insignificant number of properties that

qualify. These subdivision options are proposed for deletion from the zoning ordinance and replacement by context-sensitive design standards and performance standards designed for resiliency.

- Regulations required by the Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) near the Salt Ponds and for water quality protection will be included in the Westerly Zoning Ordinance.
- The Town shall modernize the Zoning Ordinance, development regulations, and related policies to better recognize existing conditions of the built environment and will incentivize greater public investments in community character in new development and redevelopment projects. [The Route One Corridor Overlay District \(Rte1 Overlay\) is one example.](#)
- The PUD development tool will be replaced by other mixed-use development options.
- The Town will migrate to an electronic filing and broader administrative review process for development applications and permitting. Conversion to online permitting has already occurred for building and inspections, with zoning soon to be added, followed by planning.

Consistency with *Land Use 2025* is achieved when the Comprehensive Plan's FLUM aligns with the residential densities suggested by the State. Areas inside the Urban Services Boundary are expected to have higher residential density due to the presence of existing services, facilities, and infrastructure. In areas outside of the water and sewer service areas, a community balances development and conservation, considers natural hazards and special resource concerns (such as groundwater and natural resource protection), and contains a lower level of residential density. The Town of Westerly's FLUM is expected to be consistent with the minimum and/or maximum residential densities outlined in *Land Use 2025*. This comparison is illustrated in Table 5 below. Specific changes to the DC-1, NB, [and P-15, and the CR zoning districts to allow mixed-use commercial](#) are anticipated in this Plan. [Mixed-use multi-family development will be considered in the implementation of the Route One Corridor Overlay District.](#) Possible changes in residential density will be a part of the Plan's implementation and noted in Table 5 as "to be determined."

Table 5. Overview of Residential Density by Zoning District and Future Land Use Category
Unaffected

Subsection 3.6.7 – Commercial and Industrial Development

This Plan prohibits the expansion of commercial and industrial zoning districts, with the exception of the airport industrial zone, and encourages redevelopment of existing under-utilized commercial and industrial space, particularly in the Route 1 corridor. The buildout analysis estimates a total of 471,981 square feet of commercial space over 39.72 acres and 3,132,026 square feet of industrial space over 312.43 acres can be added in the Town.

Reuse and revitalization of existing commercial and industrial space as an alternative to new development is ~~one of a~~ **the** themes of this Plan. For example, the Plan 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. This 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 reductions in required parking area.

[Development and commercial activity along the Route 1 corridor are different in form, scale, and function than other areas of Westerly. Businesses along the corridor serve the regions of southwest Rhode Island and southeast Connecticut. The 2022 Route One Corridor Plan recommends replacing outdated modes of development, encourages the use of land efficiently, and supports the kind of](#)

experience that Westerly residents desire. Underutilized parcels, poorly utilized parking areas, vacant storefronts, lack of neighborhood character, and no integration of uses constrain economic growth. Through changes to zoning, the Town will provide opportunities for mixed commercial and professional services in redevelopment of Route 1.

~~The Plan envisions that Westerly's Downtown~~ will continue to be a focal point for commercial, artistic, and civic activities. Walking to and through downtown will be facilitated by providing good pedestrian connections through ~~densely built~~ 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. Efforts shall be made to revitalize the Pawcatuck River corridor to connect neighborhoods through public riverfront access and encourage investment in the community. This Plan also calls for obtaining financial support from multiple sources for the continued revitalization of Downtown Westerly (particularly the DC-I zoning district) and its surrounding areas (primarily the DC-II zoning district) and modification of land-use regulations to complement this effort. This Plan calls for the Town to promote the use of artist tax benefits and encourages cultural and performing arts as bases for economic development. This Plan recognizes the need to coordinate with the Towns of Stonington, Hopkinton, and Charlestown on issues of mutual interest, which include Pawcatuck River water quality and shared economic development initiatives such as investment in the Pawcatuck River greenway project.

Westerly has been a tourist destination for years and this Plan has several actions that will help sustain tourism-related industries. It calls for a program to proactively work with owners of existing lodging facilities to encourage rehabilitation and the 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. This 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 the hiring of residents and protecting the interests of affected neighborhoods. This Plan requires 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.

Subsection 3.6.10 – Economic Development

Westerly is home to more than 1,500 businesses that operate within nearly all industries and sectors of the regional and national economy. The local business community has a well-documented history of activism and ensuring the vitality of small businesses. While welcoming regional chains and national franchises, Westerly – through the Town's EDC, the Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce, business associations, and individual companies – has always valued small businesses as the primary engine for employment and economic growth.

This Plan remains committed to ensuring the vitality of commercial assets throughout the community. Following its adoption, the Town will undertake numerous regulatory improvements to modernize the permitting of redevelopment and revitalization efforts. Simultaneously, municipal staff, working with the same partners noted above, will begin working to enhance ~~its~~ its ~~Westerly's~~ Westerly's sense of place and quality of life – investments that will attract new clients, new potential employees, and new connections. This Plan anticipates regulatory reform, incentives, and other tools to create the appropriate conditions for ~~equitable, stable~~ robust economic activity.

~~While respecting its natural environment and recognizing that Westerly must be a regional leader in~~

~~resiliency due to its unique geographic location, the Town will also continue to promote its beaches, open spaces, and historic places to residents and visitors alike.~~

Subsection 3.6.11 – Transportation, Infrastructure, and Services

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

- An important set of recommendations in this Plan relate to improving the area around the train station and increasing its use. This Plan specifies evaluating parking, safe access, and redevelopment planning at and near the railroad station. This Plan also calls for increased use of Westerly Station, which could improve rail connections for visitors and residents.
- Regarding infrastructure, this Plan asks the Town to pursue all available state and federal funding opportunities to improve the Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) capacity consistent within its existing design and secure this system's longevity through resiliency planning. Within current capacity, this 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.
- ~~This Plan also supports continuation of the~~suggests consideration of a "complete streets" program to meet other infrastructure needs, such as roadway maintenance sharing, sidewalk replacement, and low impact stormwater control to be phased in through future pavement resurfacing and road reconstruction projects.
- The Town Route One Corridor Study suggests an inventory and analysis of existing conditions of stormwater in the Corridor and coordination with RIDOT to either disconnect RIDOT infrastructure or pretreat stormwater prior to conveyance.
- Westerly residents have funded the construction of a new middle school and renovated the high school. The school facilities plan provides a program for elementary school improvements – an ongoing discussion. The importance of a strong school system to the Town is recognized in this Plan.
- Throughout its transportation system and within its infrastructure and services, there is an increasing importance for the Town to promote the use and consumption of renewable, rather than finite, energy sources. This Plan seeks to continue improvements by the Town while also calling for a review of ordinances to reflect advances in energy use available to residents and businesses and alleviate potentially burdensome regulations.
- Although the Town of Westerly fulfilled its statutory obligation to control hazards to aviation in the vicinity of the Westerly State Airport (WST), the struggle to define a long-term plan for WST persists. This Plan seeks a dialogue with the FAA, Rhode Island Airport Corporation (RIAC), and elected State officials on the role of WST in Westerly and requires adequate and appropriate public involvement as part of future planning for WST.

END

Chapter 4. IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Section 4.3 – 2020 Implementation Table

Section 4.4 - Route One Corridor Study

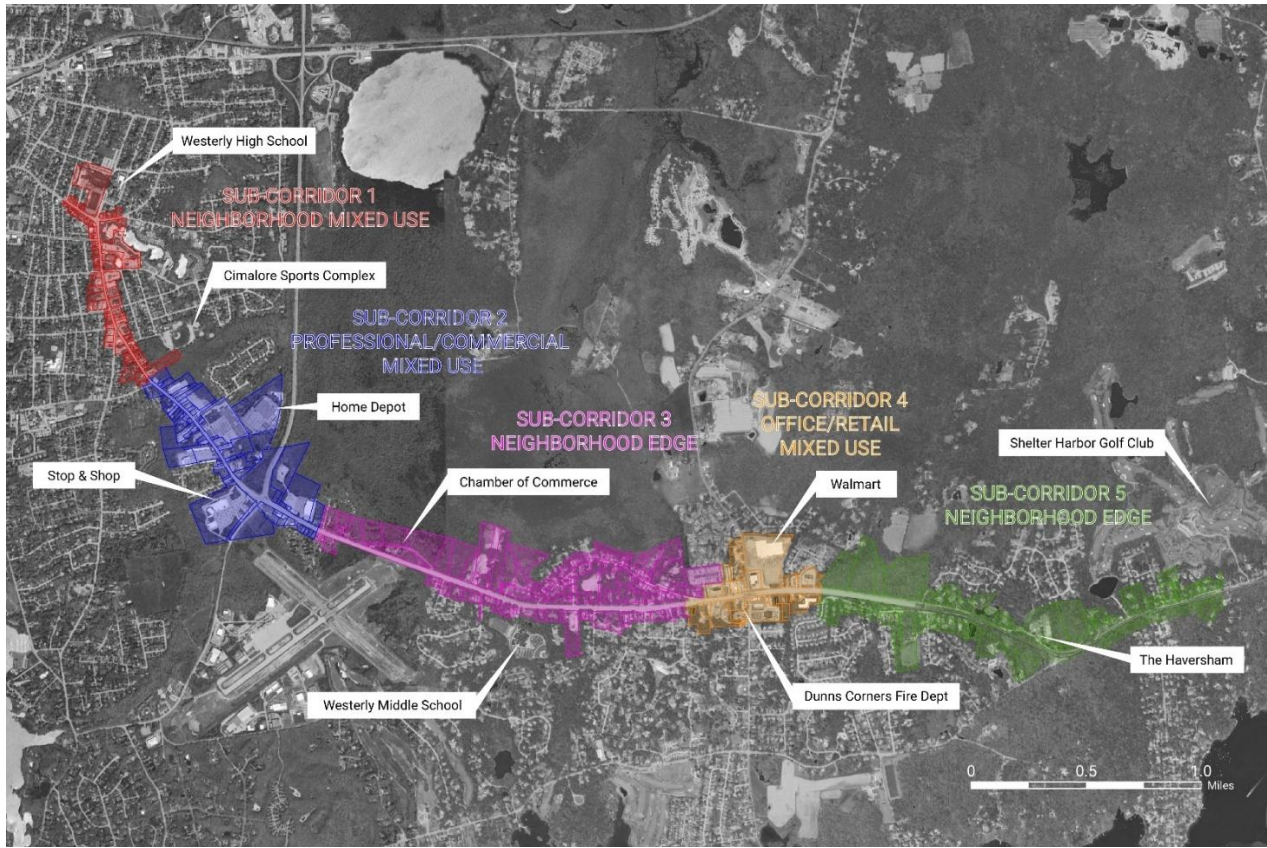
In alignment with the vision for Westerly, the Comprehensive Plan prioritizes several economic development initiatives including the transformation of commercial corridors into “distinctive, inviting, safe, commercial, professional, and residential areas reflective of the Town’s character”. This commitment has led to the Route One Corridor Study and supplemental advisory board efforts for further articulating the Town’s vision for Route One. These efforts are now culminating in the adoption of the Route One Overlay District zoning.

The Town of Westerly (the Town) contracted Weston & Sampson for a study of the Route One commercial corridor in 2021. The study identified strategies to encourage the type of development the Town and community would like to see along Route One, consistent with the goals of this Comprehensive Plan. The Route One Corridor Plan compiles new analysis by Weston & Sampson and RKG Associates conducted as part of the project with historical work that has been done previously by various parties. The result is a cohesive, implementable strategy for Route One that can guide Town departments, the Planning Board, the Economic Development Commission, private property owners and investors, and state agencies in redevelopment. The overall project consisted of existing conditions assessment, public and stakeholder engagement, and a final report providing a full analysis of site conditions and implementable strategies.

The Corridor Study was completed in August of 2022 and reviewed with the Town Council in the spring of 2023. It was then referred to the Planning Board. In FY 2023-2024, the Planning Board reviewed and recommended certain amendments to the Comprehensive Plan intended to incorporate existing conditions assessment and the concepts of the Route One Study. These were presented to the Town Council on February 20, 2024. Though progress slowed in 2024, in 2025, staff and board members advanced the findings of the Route One Corridor Study, choosing to focus on issues of building design, landscape, streetscape, mapping, zoning provisions and sub-corridor planning for the Route One Corridor.

The Planning Board sought input from the Architectural Review Board (ARB) and the Economic Development Commission (EDC) in further collaboration on the Comprehensive Plan amendments. The Planning Board met with the ARB and the EDC through a series of work sessions to review recommendations on policy and design guidance. The collaboration helped reach consensus on descriptive and regulatory recommendations for the Route One Corridor. These outcomes informed the draft amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and provided the foundation for implementing changes through zoning ordinance provisions, design review criteria, and potential zoning district and use adjustments. The Planning Board completed this collaboration with a joint meeting in October of 2025 prior to making the final recommendations to the Town Council later that month.

The Town Council adopted amendments to the Comprehensive Plan codifying many of the goals & policies of the Route One Corridor Study on [month, day] 2026. These amendments include text amendments and adding action items for implementation with the adoption of Table 4-5. The boundaries of the Route One Corridor Overlay District and the five (5) sub-corridors will be established through a zone change. Zoning amendments required to implement the actions prescribed in Table 4-5 will be reviewed and adopted by the Town Council.



Section 4.5 - Route One Corridor Implementation

A schedule for preparation, discussion and adoption of zoning changes are explained in Table 4-5. Selectively taken from Table 4-2 of the Corridor Study titled "Implementation Table", the Goals and Action items were reviewed by the Town Staff, Planning Board and EDC and Town Council prior to adoption. Recommendations were made for the incorporation of specific actions in the Route One Study to be undertaken to achieve the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. The implementation program in this Table is based on the establishment of goals for specific purposes (e.g., Roadway and Traffic Flow) and a schedule of municipal actions required to achieve the Town's vision for Route One. Table 4-5 assigns each ACTION item with a similar implementation horizon, responsible party, and supportive partners that are used in Section 4.3 Implementation Table.

Implementation will begin with the adoption of a new Zoning Overlay District title "**Route One Corridor Overlay**" (Rte1 Overlay) and five (5) sub-corridor divisions based on present and future use.

1.—Sub-Corridor 1 – Neighborhood Mixed Use

Sub-Corridor 2 – Professional/Commercial Mixed Use

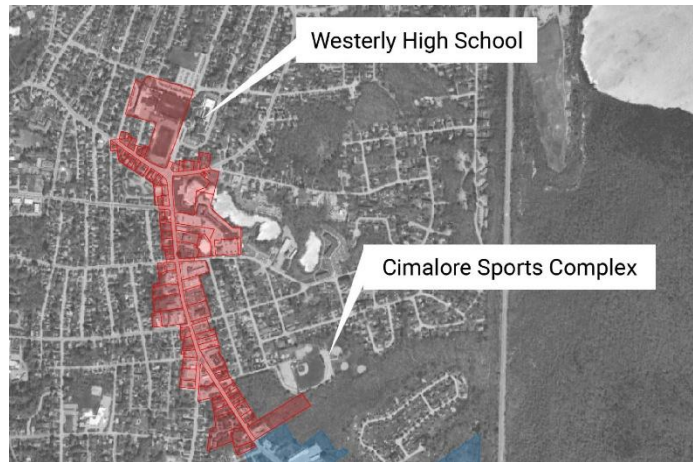
Sub-Corridor 3 – Neighborhood Edge

Sub-Corridor 4 – Office/Retail Mixed Use

Sub-Corridor 5 – Neighborhood Edge

Sub-corridor 1. Neighborhood Mixed Use

- From Vose Street at Granite Street to the Wells Street intersection with Franklin Street. (86 parcels). Primarily composed of compact commercial development with residential development interspersed, sub-corridor 1 is a densely developed mixed-use environment. This sub-corridor serves as the connection to and from Historic Downtown Westerly, allowing visitors and residents to the north and south access,—by vehicle, bicycle and on foot,—to local goods and services. , †The roadway is relatively narrow withand has sidewalks on both sides of the right-of-way, and several traffic lights and crosswalks.



Sub-corridor 1 is a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood because of its compact commercial and professional services, high density residential neighborhoods, and the efficient use of land. Use of these parcels will continue to remain consistent with that permitted in the underlying zone, provided new development and redevelopment meet the design guidelines for the Overlay and those specific to sub-corridor 1. Commercial development shall remain compact with limited surface parking, which could limit commercial tenant options.



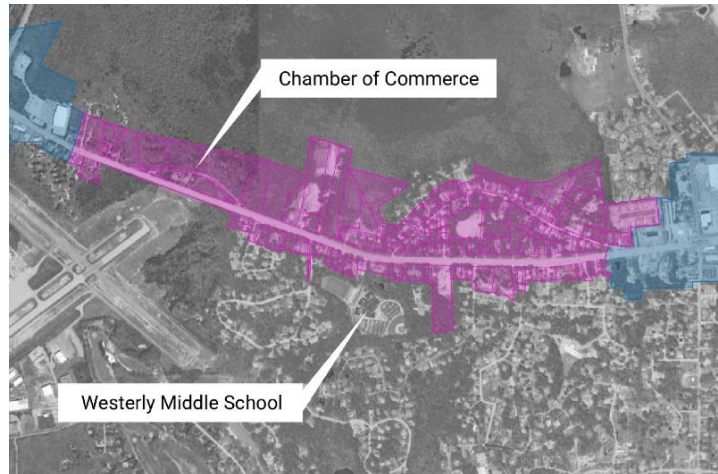
Sub-corridor 2. Commercial /Professional Mixed-Use

- From Wells Street to 1000 feet West of Chamber Way. (62 parcels). Travel in this portion of the corridor is predominantly automobile dependent. The western end near Wells Street is more compactly developed than the parcels closer to the signaled intersection at Route 78 bypass. The roadway abruptly widens as traffic approaches Route 78 and travel speeds increase slightly. Beyond this main intersection, travel speeds increase quickly.

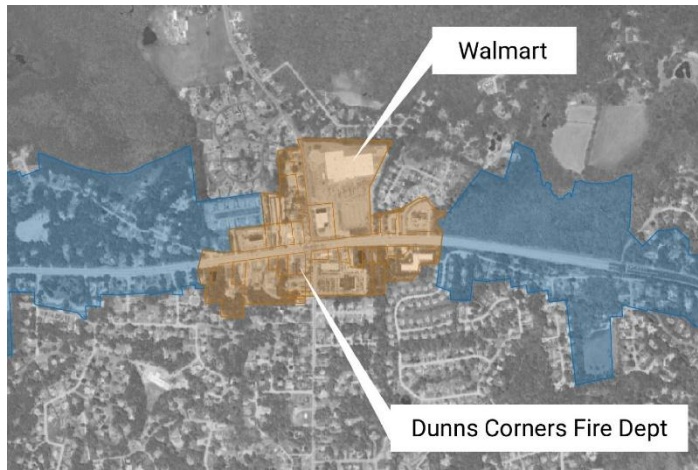
Primarily zoned Highway Commercial (HC) Sub-corridor 2 contains a mix of styles and sizes of commercial development which provide needed commercial, and professional, goods and services to the region. There are several strip plazas as well as separate retail and office establishments. Large general merchandise retailers with oversized parking areas and insufficient landscaping and architectural design create a less than welcoming atmosphere. Use of these parcels will continue to remain consistent with uses permitted in

the underlying zone. New development shall encourage a mix of uses on a single parcel or adjoining parcels, that may include residential with commercial and professional services.

Sub-corridor 3. Neighborhood Edge - From 1000 feet West of Chamber Way to Spinnaker Landing and includes Old Post Road. (141 parcels) Sub-corridor 3 consists of primarily residential development (both year-round and seasonal) of a medium density with five (5) motel/seasonal housing sites and an assisted living facility. This sub-corridor will remain zoned residential. With public water available, further residential development (e.g. infill, ADU, cottage and two-family dwellings) can be anticipated with OWTS provided. An open area meant solely for landscape and driveway access is consistent along the entire stretch of this sub-corridor providing a natural buffer between homes and the traffic.



Sub-Corridor 4. Office/Retail Mixed Use - From Spinnaker Landing to approximately 500 feet east of South Woody Hill Road. (33 parcels) Consisting of primarily large-scale office and commercial uses with other small businesses, parcels in this sub-corridor are all zoned Highway Commercial (HC) with only two exceptions, zoned General Commercial (GC). Travel in this portion of the



corridor is automobile dependent. Use of these parcels will continue to remain consistent with uses permitted in the underlying zone. New development shall encourage a mix of uses on a single parcel or adjoining parcels, that include differing yet complementary non-residential uses, and which provide for a variety of activity, goods and services throughout sub-corridor 4.

Sub-corridor 5: Neighborhood Edge. From approximately 500 hundred feet east of South Woody Hill Road to the town line with Charlestown. (86 parcels) Sub-corridor 5

consists of primarily residential development (both year-round and seasonal) of a medium density, yet few residences actually front on the Corridor. The majority are within small side streets or neighborhoods that gain access from the Corridor. The Haversham Inn is the only notable business on this stretch of the roadway, and it is zoned SC-G. The zoning designation of this area will remain residential. Freshwater and forested wetlands in close proximity to Post Road naturally limit further development. Improvements to the right-of-way would preserve the existing natural buffer along the wide shoulders.



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