

TOWN OF WASHINGTON

2014 PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT



Washington Planning Commission

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INTRODUCTION

This 2014 Plan of Conservation and Development is a tool for guiding the future growth of our community. It is an advisory document for both the Planning and Zoning Commissions, as well as for other Town boards, commissions, and residents, and provides a framework for consistent decision making in Washington over the next decade.

Connecticut's General Statutes require that the Washington Planning Commission prepare and adopt a Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). This Plan sets forth the Commission's recommendations for population and housing diversity, the village centers, economic development, sustainability, preserving our natural resources, the future needs and care of our community facilities, and the improvement of our current zoning districts.

Washington adopted its first Plan in 1963. That document was the foundation for revisions that were subsequently adopted in 1974, 1993, and 2003. These plans guided conservation and development and influenced the current land use regulations in Washington—they were particularly instrumental in helping to preserve the Town's rural character.

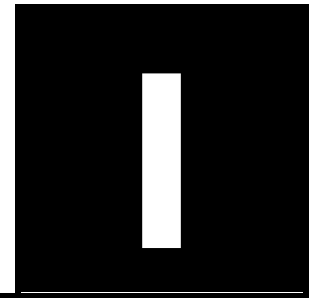
This 2014 POCD continues to build upon the strengths of previous editions while addressing new issues that have become relevant to the Town. The goals and recommendations of this Plan reflect a consensus built upon the past and present work of the Planning Commission with input from other Town boards and commissions, the business community, and Washington residents. The Planning Commission therefore endorses the continued application of the guiding principles and programs recommended in the 2003 Plan, except when the goals and recommendations of this POCD are inconsistent with those in the 2003 Plan.

In order to ascertain the Town's views and concerns, the Planning Commission held an initial public meeting and met on several occasions with representatives of the Land Use Commissions, members of the Washington Business Association, and leaders of the Town's five schools. The Commission also offered public interaction with its consultant during advertised office hours. Based on this input, the Planning Commission focused the 2014 Plan on four issues that were clearly the most critical to Washington's future: Housing, Economic Development, the Village Centers, and Sustainability.

While these issues are comprehensively addressed in this POCD, continued effort is required; the clear message of this process is that there are no simple solutions to Washington's challenges. The Planning Commission views this Plan as an ongoing document and will pursue additional studies upon its adoption in order to make more detailed recommendations.

This POCD continues to endorse the distribution of Washington's population based on the physical character and capacity of its land while encouraging a diverse population and economic growth that is in harmony with the environment of our Town. However, implementation will only occur with the diligent efforts of Washington's people. The Planning Commission urges all officials and commissions to carefully consider the recommendations of this Plan, recognize the merits, and implement regulations that reflect and achieve its goals. The ultimate responsibility for implementation rests with our boards, commissions, agencies, and citizens.

DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION, IMPLEMENTATION & BRIEF HISTORY OF WASHINGTON



DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

This 2014 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) is divided into two separate but linked documents. The first document is the actual Plan of Conservation and Development; it contains the topical chapters that include a comparison to the 2003 Plan, a primary analysis, and the goals, objectives, and strategies for each topic. The second document consists of six appendices that contain statistical information and analyses of demographic, housing, and economic data, as well as baseline information on Washington's five village centers, natural resources, and community facilities. It also includes a section on the consistency of the POCD with other state and regional planning documents and governing state statutes. The appendices provide the background information utilized to formulate and support the analyses, goals, objectives, and strategies in the primary POCD document while freeing the individual POCD topical chapters of cumbersome statistical tables and data. This organization provides for a more concise POCD document that can be cross-referenced when necessary.

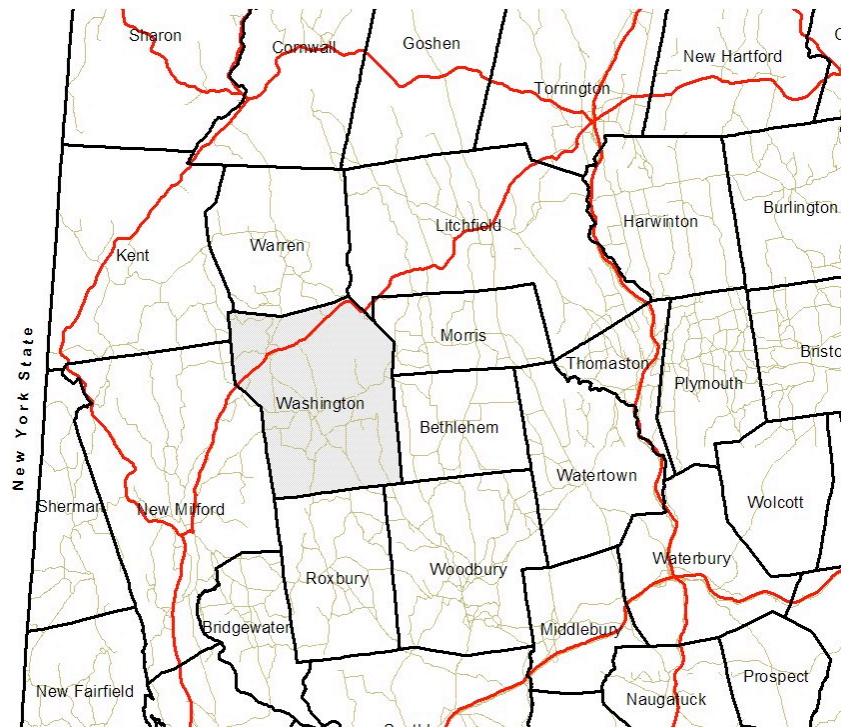
PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Individual Action Agendas are provided at the end of each chapter for the implementation of the various recommendations contained in this Plan of Conservation and Development. The Action Agendas identify the major goals and strategies, the responsible primary and secondary agencies, and the time frame for implementation.

The primary responsibility for implementing a particular strategy falls to the agency that is the logical party to spearhead the effort. Many proposals will involve multiple agencies in a secondary role. The nature of the activity required of those responsible for a given strategy will vary depending on the type of recommendation, budget commitments, and capital expenses, as well as the level of advocacy, promotion, or administrative action.

Priorities are classified as ongoing, immediate, short-term (1-3 years), mid-term (4-6 years), and long-term (7-10 years). Many of the short-term items may be activities and policies that are already in place and simply need to be continued. Mid-term and long-term priorities are activities that are considered important but placed "down the road" because limited resources (in terms of both time and money) may affect implementation of the Plan. Capital projects may also require intermediate planning and design activities before implementation can occur.

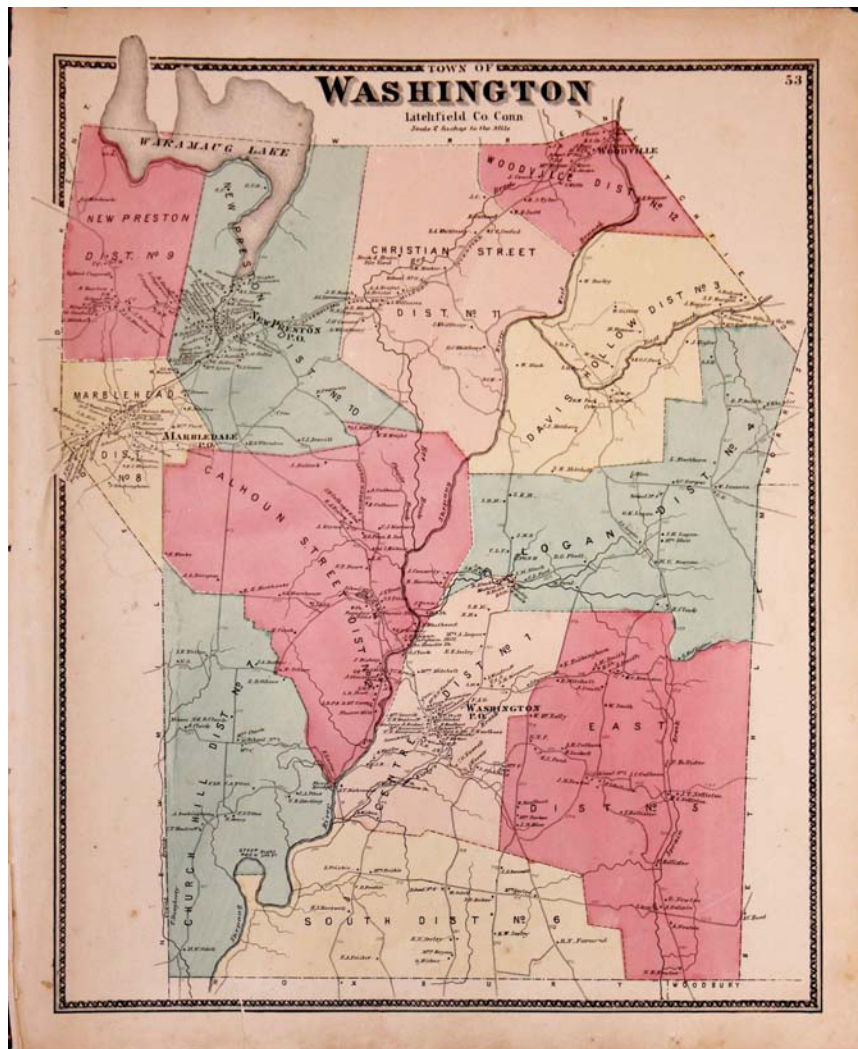
The Action Agendas are presented in the form of a “To Do” list. This allows the Planning Commission to easily review and report on implementation progress as a component of its annual report. All applicable boards and commissions shall include a summary of the status of the relevant Action Agendas of the adopted Plan of Conservation and Development in their annual reports for the Town. The reports should highlight the status of each Action Item and recommend steps to assure implementation of the Plan of Conservation and Development. The Land Use Administrator will take these individual reports and consolidate them into a unified annual progress report.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF WASHINGTON

Like most areas of Connecticut in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Washington had a subsistence-based agricultural economy. Waterpower from local streams eventually drove a number of mills (grist mills, saw mills, fulling mills) that supported the growing community, and the population grew to 1,675 people by the first US Census in 1790. Numerous manufacturing sites were located in Factory Hollow, later to be known as the Depot. New Preston became a center for mills and small factories producing a variety of goods, and Marbledale became home to stone saw mills for the marble deposits found in this area.

The arrival of the railroad in 1872 caused a major shift in Washington’s economy and history. The importation of goods by rail car caused a decline in local manufacturing activity and the Town reverted to its agricultural roots.



1867 Beers Atlas Map of Washington – Courtesy of Gunn Memorial Museum

Washington became a major producer of dairy products. A great boon to local farmers was the Borden Creamery that stood on the present site of Bryan Memorial Town Hall. Butter and cheese were produced and shipped by train to New York City. Washington Depot became the primary community focal point.

The arrival of rail service also resulted in another local change. Washington was now more accessible from a larger area, and trains brought an increasing number of city dwellers seeking rural vacation retreats. Inns and boarding houses were established along Lake Waramaug and horse and carriage service was provided to and from the New Preston train station. The entire town became a rural retreat for many New York City residents.

The advent of the automobile and the establishment of a state highway system created new opportunities throughout Connecticut. Even as rail passenger service declined in importance, Washington remained accessible and continued to grow due to the lure of its rural character and pleasant setting. This growth accelerated after World War II with the expansion of residential development into once rural areas.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HOUSING

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Cottage at the Gunnery

The proper understanding of demographic and housing trends, characteristics, and forecasts is crucial to the Plan of Conservation and Development process. This information provides the background for anticipated and planned future changes and development within a community. This chapter and Appendix A provide key demographic characteristics and trends for Washington and the surrounding region. The US Census Bureau's 2010 Census data have been incorporated into this Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) along with appropriate state data. It should be noted that although changes in certain demographic and housing indicators may appear quite large on a percentage basis, the changes in terms of raw numbers are typically quite small. All statistics, tables, graphs, charts, and subsequent analyses of this information are included in Appendix A.

Changes since the 2003 POCD

Significant changes have occurred in the statistical characteristics of Washington's demography and housing stock, thus affecting the Town's identified goals and objectives. Washington's population has slightly declined since the 2000 Census and the population has substantially aged, with a dramatic decrease in the number of younger people living in the community. Only 104 new housing units were added to the housing stock during this time, and the price of housing continued to substantially climb. While no specific goals or objectives were identified in the 2003 POCD in terms of demography, the Plan did list a number of recommendations for housing in the community such as encouraging conservation subdivision designs, evaluating

revisions to residential zoning regulations, and promoting housing for a diverse community. This POCD builds upon these general goals by proposing significant and specific housing goals and strategies designed to meet the current realities of Washington's housing situation while still supporting the goals of the 2003 POCD. Additional housing data is provided in Appendix A to present an updated view of Washington's demographic and housing characteristics.

Status of 2003 POCD Goals and Recommended Actions

The 2003 POCD identified a number of goals and action steps applicable to the issues of demographics and housing. The following table summarizes these goals and action steps and the progress made to date in addressing each item.

2003 POCD Goals and Recommended Actions Applicable to Demographics & Housing	
2003 Goal	Status
Review Subdivision Regulations. Provide guidelines and incentives to encourage conservation design subdivisions.	Incomplete
Review open space priorities and criteria in Subdivision Regulations for consistency with recommended open space planning strategies.	Incomplete
Continue soil based zoning; monitor and further refine if necessary.	Ongoing
Review Zoning Regulations regarding development flexibility and determine need for revisions to further encourage conservation development designs.	Incomplete
Consider revisions to strengthen Zoning Regulations regarding road frontage, floor area, building height, setbacks, and district boundaries.	Ongoing
Reconstitute Housing Study Committee to evaluate strategies to accomplish goals of 2002 Housing Study Committee Report.	Complete
Consider a Housing Land Fund to support housing diversity goals.	Complete
Consider adopting an affordable housing set-aside provision in Subdivision Regulations with a fee in lieu of affordable housing provision.	Not Implemented
Consider regulation revisions to encourage housing options such as mixed residential uses in village areas.	Not Implemented
Evaluate and develop special permit process for condominiums, congregate housing, assisted living, and skilled nursing facilities.	Not Implemented
Support public and private efforts to develop elderly and affordable housing.	Ongoing

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS (see Appendix A for detailed information)

- a. The population of Washington has slowly and steadily declined from its peak 1990 level; this decline is projected to continue.
- b. A significant increase in the median age, caused by increasing numbers of residents over age 55 and declining numbers of school age residents between 1990 and 2010, indicates that Washington's population is rapidly aging; this is also projected to continue.
- c. The total number of housing units in Washington has increased by over 14% since 1990, while the Town's population has decreased by over 8%. A significant majority (78%) of housing units are owner occupied. Over 60% of the housing units in Washington were built before 1970. Almost 22% of all housing units in the community are seasonal homes.
- d. The housing market remains strong in Washington, with median sales prices consistently higher than in neighboring towns (except for Roxbury). Gross rents are more consistent with surrounding communities than sales prices. However, Washington has the third highest median rent of the nine communities in the immediate vicinity.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Addressing the issue of affordable housing within the overall market structure of a small rural community in New England brings a host of challenges and opportunities. The absence of dense development patterns, public transportation, and large employment centers hinders the development of traditional affordable housing. However, the compact forms of the village centers in Washington provide opportunities for small-scale affordable housing development. Washington has a long history of proactively discussing and addressing affordable housing issues—a positive approach that should be continued in the future.

Based on current demographics (see Appendix A), the median age in Washington has increased over seven years in the past decade, reaching a current age of over 50 and a projected median age of 55 by 2021. As the median age continues to rise, Washington must create appropriate housing options for an aging population while increasing opportunities for younger families.



Riverwoods Senior Housing – Washington Community Housing Trust

- 1. ISSUE:** Washington's population is projected to further decline, which will impact the local housing market, the Town's demographic profile, and its character in the coming years. The shrinking average household size will impact the character of Washington and change the nature of its housing market, particularly with regard to the desired types of housing.

GOAL: Washington should strive to reverse its population decline and create a stable population level so that the Town can plan for future community and public service needs, as well as attract younger households to Washington to maintain a demographic balance. This can be accomplished by providing a targeted mix of services, housing, and economic opportunities that will attract a broad range of households.

STRATEGIES:

- Encourage the diversification of Washington's housing stock to make more units available to a wider range of household types. Review and modify the Town's Zoning Regulations as necessary to permit this diversification.
- Develop Washington's employment base to attract new workers and potential residents. Hire an Economic Development Director to actively promote the expansion of the Town's tax base.
- Promote Washington's unique quality of life, numerous attributes, and rural character as attractions for new residents. Regularly update the redesigned Town website for use as a marketing and promotional tool, as well as a municipal information resource.
- Continue to support the social and cultural assets that make Washington an attractive place for younger age groups, either through financial assistance or Town services.

- 2. ISSUE:** A decreasing school-age population has impacted public school enrollment and may affect planning for other types of services and facilities.

GOAL: Washington must monitor the dynamics of the school enrollment trends in order to plan for future educational needs. Based on the analysis of school system data, the Town must assess the implications of various potential school system reconfigurations.

STRATEGIES:

- Immediately collaborate with the Region 12 school district to effectively respond to current demographic trends and create strategies for addressing the future needs of the district's students. Based on an assessment of the district's changing characteristics, implement a strategy that best addresses the current and projected status of the district as it relates to the Town of Washington.
- Educate the public on the ramifications of inaction as it pertains to the Town of Washington, particularly with regard to implementing Goal One (reversing the population decline). The community must understand that continuing under the present regional configuration is not a viable long-term option.

- 3. ISSUE:** The composition of Washington's households is shifting towards married couples without children and elderly residents living alone, along with a correspondingly lower percentage of households with children. The continued aging of Washington's population will dramatically affect a variety of public service and community needs.

GOAL: Washington should plan for a future where an increasing percentage of residents are seniors while still seeking to attract younger residents and households. This will entail analyzing the current and projected needs of the Town's senior population and providing the correct mix of services, housing, and economic opportunities in order to attract a broad range of households.

STRATEGIES:

- Plan for the community services and needs of a growing senior population.
- Assess the current state of Washington's senior facilities and programs and compare with the recent survey findings of senior center facility and program users.
- Promote the development of condominiums in the village centers and accessory apartments as more affordable types of senior housing. Review and modify the Town's Zoning Regulations to enable this initiative.
- Promote and encourage LEED and Smart Growth development appropriate for a rural setting to foster an environment conducive to aging in place. Modify the Town's Zoning and Subdivision Regulations as necessary (see Chapter 5 – Sustainability).

- 4. ISSUE:** High housing prices in Washington are preventing many young families, singles, and other diverse household types from living in the Town.

GOAL: Washington should encourage and enable the development of a wider range of housing types that create opportunities for a more diverse population. In order to accomplish this, the Town's Zoning Regulations must be modified to permit additional housing options in Washington.

STRATEGIES:

- Reach consensus on the true boundaries of the village centers. Modify Washington's Zoning Regulations to permit denser residential uses such as condominiums, age-restricted and/or congregate housing, and assisted living facilities by Special Permit in the village centers. Codify appropriate design and development controls to maintain village character and aesthetics. Encourage residential developments within village centers to set aside a certain percentage of units as affordably and/or moderately priced. Consider allowing alternative wastewater treatment methods (such as community septic systems) in lieu of standard septic systems or traditional public sewer infrastructure.

- Restore annual funding to the Housing Commission to help it pursue affordable housing opportunities. Support the newly created down payment assistance fund for first-time low- and moderate-income homebuyers, particularly targeted to buyers who currently work or reside in Town. Institute a payment in lieu of affordable housing program, with collected funds used to finance affordable housing initiatives.
- Pursue a variety of outside funding sources, including USDA Rural Development funds, Community Development Block Grants, Home Investment Partnership funds, and other sources to proactively develop affordable housing and/or leverage additional public, non-profit, and private sector funds to assist in the financing of affordable housing.
- Collaborate with local non-profit entities such as the Washington Community Housing Trust to create a limited-equity housing program. Encourage property owners to deed restrict their accessory apartments as officially affordable for inclusion on the Town's affordable housing appeals list.

ACTION AGENDA

DEMOGRAPHICS & HOUSING

(The Goals and Strategies listed below are summarized; please refer to previous pages for specifics.)

GOAL ONE: Reverse Washington's population decline and create a stable population.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Encourage diversification of Town housing stock to make more units available to a wider range of household types.	Housing Commission (PC/ZC/BOS/BOF)	Ongoing Effort
Develop Town's employment base to attract new workers and residents.	Economic Development Dir. (PC/ZC)	1-3 Year Implementation
Promote Town's quality of life, positive attributes, and rural character as attractions for new residents.	Board of Selectmen (PC/EDD)	Ongoing Effort
Support the social and cultural assets that make Washington an attractive place for younger age groups.	Parks & Rec Commission (BOS/BOF)	Ongoing Effort

EDD – Economic Development Director

GOAL TWO: Monitor school enrollment trends and plan for future educational needs.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Work with Region 12 to respond to new demographic trends and create strategies for addressing future needs.	Board of Selectmen (BOF)	Immediate Implementation
Educate public on ramifications of inaction, particularly with regard to implementing Goal One.	Board of Selectmen (BOF/PC)	Immediate Implementation

GOAL THREE: Plan for an increasing population of senior residents.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Plan for the community services and needs of a growing senior population.	Board of Selectmen (BOF/ELD)	1-3 Year Implementation
Assess current state of Town's senior facilities and programs and compare with survey findings.	Board of Selectmen (BOF/ELD)	1-3 Year Implementation
Promote development of condominiums in the village centers and accessory apartments for senior housing.	Housing Commission (ZC/PC)	4-6 Year Implementation
Encourage LEED and Smart Growth development appropriate for a rural setting.	Planning Commission (ZC/HC)	4-6 Year Implementation

ELD – Municipal Agent for the Elderly

GOAL FOUR: Develop a wider range of housing types for a diverse population.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Determine village center boundaries; modify Zoning Regulations to increase residential density by Special Permit for senior and moderately priced housing.	Zoning Commission (PC/HD)	4-6 Year Implementation
Restore local funding to Housing Commission; support newly created down payment assistance fund; craft payment in lieu of affordable housing program.	Housing Commission (BOS/BOF)	1-3 Year Implementation
Pursue outside funding sources for affordable housing and leverage additional public and private funds.	Housing Commission (BOS)	4-6 Year Implementation
Collaborate with WCHT on limited-equity housing and encourage deed restrictions on accessory apartments.	Housing Commission (ZC)	4-6 Year Implementation

HD – Health Department

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3



Retail building in Washington Depot

This chapter describes the existing conditions and characteristics of Washington's economic activity, outlines Washington's future economic development potential, and discusses the issues, recommendations, and suggested strategies to achieve economic goals. The Town's volunteer boards and commissions will be critical in developing the economic growth strategies that will benefit Washington. It should be stressed that while Washington pursues the enhancement of its economic base it should be cautious in undertaking activities that could negatively impact the low-density character of the Town's residential neighborhoods.

Changes since the 2003 POCD

The 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development did not incorporate a specific chapter on economic development. However, the 2003 POCD provided information on a number of economic statistics and fiscal indicators to illustrate the economic and fiscal health of the Town. These statistics have been included in Appendix B as part of this 2014 POCD to provide comparable data for the current time period. One of the primary objectives of this plan was to craft a comprehensive chapter on economic development with appropriate strategies and action steps to assist the Town in achieving its economic goals. This chapter and Appendix B are intended to provide these tools as part of the POCD process.

FUTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

Washington has a small but relatively balanced economy consisting of a mix of retail, service, and other commercial establishments typical of a small community. The most limiting factors for economic growth in Washington are the scarcity of commercially and industrially zoned parcels and the extended travel times to larger economic markets. In addition, the Town's land is overwhelmingly zoned as residential or preserved as open space.

Commercial zoning is limited to the village areas of Washington Depot, Marbledale, New Preston, and Woodville; the Town currently has no industrial zones. Another issue impeding economic development (other than tourism and agriculture) is Washington's topography. With its steep and rolling hills, there are few flat areas in the Town of a sufficient size to support commercial or industrial development. The absence of a public water supply and sanitary sewers also impedes certain types of commercial and industrial development. Despite these limitations, however, there are still economic development opportunities for the Town.

Market Potential and Projected Occupational Growth

Economic growth forecasts were prepared by Connecticut's Department of Labor for 2008-2018 and updated in November 2010. Employment forecasts in Connecticut over this ten-year period project a 4.6% increase in the number of total jobs. The occupations with the highest predicted rates of growth are Healthcare Support, Personal Care and Services, Education and Training, and Technical Services. The occupations with the lowest rates of growth are Production, Transportation and Material Moving, Office and Administrative Support, Protective Services, Sales, and Construction and Extraction. The predicted growth areas are consistent with Washington's primary clusters (see Appendix B).

Economic Development Approach

A three-pronged approach to economic development is proposed for the Town of Washington consisting of Physical, Structural, and Socio-Political elements. Each element has a number of subtopics that address individual issues of concern that should be emphasized as part of the Town's overall economic development strategy.



Professional building between Marbledale and New Preston

ELEMENT I: PHYSICAL

Village-Based Economic Development

Rather than aggressively expand zoning or development potential into currently residential or undeveloped areas, the Town should focus economic development around the villages of Washington Depot, Marbledale, New Preston, and Woodville. Each village is unique and offers visitors a different experience—a key characteristic that can be reinforced through effective marketing. The continued development of these areas should be implemented through the utilization of LEED neighborhood development principles such as mixed-use structures, pedestrian-friendly streets, and ‘green’ buildings; Low Impact Development techniques such as pervious surfaces and innovative storm water management; and elements of Traditional Neighborhood Development such as compact built forms and activity centers. These concepts are further detailed in Chapter 5—Sustainability.

Zoning

Washington’s Zoning Regulations should be reviewed to determine whether they promote or hinder creative and dynamic economic development. The regulations should be revised as necessary to assure a clear and concise pathway for appropriate development projects while still protecting the Town’s unique village centers, residential districts, and overall character.

For example, numerous parcels in the village areas are presently divided by commercial and residential zone boundaries. Under present regulations, a lot that lies within two zones is governed by the more restrictive zone. This issue prevents denser yet appropriate levels of development in the village centers. Expanding the existing business district boundaries on a case-by-case basis to include these lots in their entirety—or permitting them to be used for commercial purposes by Special Permit—would be a relatively straightforward step to promote greater economic vitality in the village centers. Additional information on this topic can be found in Chapter 4—Village Centers.

Infrastructure

The Town must ensure that telecommunications infrastructure exists at an appropriate level for current and projected business operations. Cellular phone service is limited in Washington, particularly in the Washington Depot village center, and fiber-optic internet service is barely present. This 21st century infrastructure is critical for small business growth, particularly in rural communities. State-of-the-art telecommunications can reduce business costs in less densely populated areas by providing an alternative to land-based commerce, significantly increasing the potential markets for goods and services. In addition, new residents and tourists are increasingly demanding high-speed internet and cellular phone service.

The supply of off-street and on-street parking in the village centers of Washington Depot, Marbledale, and New Preston should be assessed in terms of availability and how parking issues are impacting local businesses. Parking is a critical infrastructure component for these three village centers that must be properly addressed in a sustainable manner.

ELEMENT 2: STRUCTURAL

Business Retention and Expansion

A critical component for village-based economic development is an effective business retention and expansion strategy. Emphasis should be placed on assisting existing businesses and creating a friendly environment for local entrepreneurs. The Town government must have closer contact with the Washington Business Association; it can also aid existing businesses by hiring an Economic Development Director. This person could connect local businesses and entrepreneurs with support programs, feasibility analyses for potential business ideas, and business entity formation assistance. Established businesses could offer mentoring services and advice on improving business plans. The Economic Development Director would act as a liaison for local businesses to access market research assistance through partner organizations, avenues for networking, and financing for expansion.

Clusters and Specialty Uses

As shown by the data and analyses in Appendix B, Washington has competitive advantages in several economic sectors such as education, accommodation and food services, and professional, scientific, and technical services. The Town should focus on these sectors as a base for a strong local economy and to promote job creation.

In addition, Washington has a significant economic advantage in arts, entertainment, and recreation activities. Even though this sector experienced a slight decline in growth during the recent economic downturn, it still accounts for almost 8% of the Town's jobs—more than double the percentage of any nearby community. Washington's various galleries, recreational facilities, and performing arts organizations contribute to its unique and attractive community vitality. These activities are important to the Town's economic life and should be supported in appropriate locations.

Agricultural Assets

The nature of farming and its role in Washington's economy has significantly changed over time. According to local land use data, there are 67 parcels in the Town (comprising 2,456 acres) currently dedicated to agriculture and approximately 2,811 acres classified as farmland for tax purposes and protected under Public Act 490. Data from the USDA's 2007 Agricultural Census indicate 31 farming operations in Washington. Although Washington has two major orchards and several small farming interests, 22 of these operations had commodity sales of \$50,000 or less. While Washington does not have statistically significant farm sector employment, it could seek connections between small niche farms and its strong accommodation and food service sectors. Expanding and enhancing agricultural operations could not only add to the Town's character but could also provide an additional avenue for economic development and sustainability. Thus, while farming operations currently play a very small role in Washington's economy, the amount of land in agricultural use indicates that agriculture is an important element of Washington's character and heritage and has potential for future economic growth.

Creative Economy

The creative economy encompasses a wide range of activities from the visual and performing arts to craftsmen and artisans to cultural heritage and tourism. It is a great focal point because it can be developed and nurtured on a small scale yet has a significant impact on a local economy. The creative economy also dovetails with promoting greater entrepreneurship because it shifts focus from commercial concerns towards individuals and ideas. This concept is already supported in Washington, as evidenced through the job clusters of existing residents discussed in Appendix B. This essential economic component should be further developed through networking and collective idea generation.

Washington must increase support of its cultural institutions and community events in order to foster independent artists and craftspeople. In addition, the streamlining of home occupation zoning regulations and the permitting of non-traditional spaces and incubators (such as shared studio spaces where renters can share expensive equipment) can further encourage artisans to work and live in Washington. Finally, the Town's website should be used to promote cultural and community events and the new Economic Development Director should cooperate and coordinate with cultural institutions to promote events and functions.

Private Educational Institutions

Washington is home to four private education institutions—a unique feature for a community of 3,500 people—that provide several hundred jobs for area residents (see Appendix B). The Gunnery, Rumsey Hall, the Glenholme School, and Washington Montessori have a combined enrollment of over 950 students from around the world. In February 2013, members of the Planning Commission met with school leaders to learn their views on the relationship between Washington and these educational institutions. It became clear from this discussion that the private schools are a relatively untapped resource for the Town.

Numerous issues were raised by school leaders. More reasonably priced housing is needed to encourage young families and educational workers to move into the Town. Washington also needs to be more economically diverse in order to ensure long-term sustainability. It was noted that if the schools collaborated on issues of common concern they could be more successful in achieving common goals and objectives. Each school has encountered zoning issues from time to time regarding the expansion of their facilities, though they have found the Town to be accommodating in most cases. Although their enrollments are stable (and even expanding in some cases), they are concerned over Washington's declining population of young people, as their student rolls are increasingly being filled by children who do not reside in Washington.

Washington must leverage the presence of these private education institutions as a component of its future economic development platform. Linking these schools with their nearby villages would help create additional market support for local shops and businesses. Providing housing opportunities for educational workers would help stabilize the Town's population decline. Working with these schools on sustainable development practices would help assure the preservation of Washington's rural character as these institutions continue to grow.

ELEMENT 3: SOCIO-POLITICAL

Entrepreneurship

The promotion of entrepreneurship should be a key component of Washington's economic development program. The Town has a wealth of financial and intellectual capital with the potential to create a strong entrepreneurial environment within its borders. The addition of an Economic Development Director could assist in nurturing business growth by linking potential entrepreneurs with mentors and providing access to economic data and market analysis. The Director would ideally work in concert with the Washington Business Association to recruit new small business start-ups and coordinate efforts with the Washington Art Association to promote local artists and artisans.

While traditional economic development focuses on business attraction, Washington's efforts should target direct services to entrepreneurs in order to incubate businesses from within Washington that best fit the community's character. Washington could initiate a local business accelerator program where start-ups are mentored by members of the business community to take their initial concept and build it into a viable enterprise.

Any local program for entrepreneurial development must maintain clear goals and realistic expectations. Washington will always have a small economy, so any economic development and entrepreneurial development program must focus on small gains and successes. However, successes should be highlighted and celebrated in order to build a positive outlook on the economic environment of the Town.

Regionalism

Washington cannot view its economy as a stand-alone system in a vacuum, but rather as part of a larger regional economic system; Washington is too small to produce significant economic development that is locally dependent. Expanding the view to all of Litchfield County or to the greater New Milford area can provide a more complete economic analysis. For example, Health Care is the largest employment sector in Litchfield County, though its role in Washington's economy is negligible. However, neighboring New Milford accounts for 17% of the total Health Care sector employment in the County and could provide important sector linkages for expanding the Health Care industry. Washington must consider its place within the region, along with its competitive advantages, and collaborate with surrounding communities to develop economic networks.

Housing Affordability

As previously noted in Chapter 2—Demographics and Housing, a key requirement of economic development policy is the existence or creation of housing that is affordable to current and future workers in a community. In addition, there must be some nexus between wages and the price of housing. Washington's economic future is directly linked to its ability to provide a housing stock that meets a broader range of household needs and economic means. The Town must take steps to diversify its housing stock so that it can support a diverse local economy.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- 1. ISSUE:** As a small rural community with limited areas of commercial development, Washington is challenged in how it can increase its tax base.

GOAL: Washington must create additional economic development and stimulate the economic value of existing businesses, particularly in the village centers, while maintaining the rural character and heritage of the Town.

STRATEGIES:

- Modify Zoning Regulations in the business districts to allow commercial development of multiple-zoned parcels, encourage compact mixed-use development, and promote new housing options where practical and feasible to increase economic activity in the affected villages. Require low-impact development techniques to ensure environmentally sensitive additions to the economic base.
- Provide tax deferments for new or expanding businesses, promote the development of new clean-industry firms, increase support of cultural and academic establishments, and ensure the highest level of technology infrastructure to increase business efficiency.
- Encourage development in the business districts along the Route 202 corridor that is thoughtful in design and blends with the surrounding rural character to avoid sprawl along this important transportation route.
- Incorporate “farm friendly” and “right to farm” components in the Zoning Regulations and consider other issues such as housing for seasonal workers, adaptive reuse of farm structures, and sales of farm products on agricultural properties.

- 2. ISSUE:** In order to compete in a difficult and increasingly global economic climate, Washington must nurture its economic base and assist existing and potential businesses.

GOAL: Washington must provide an array of services and activities that make the Town economically sustainable at the local level while enabling it to compete at the regional level.

STRATEGIES:

- Craft a job description for and hire a new Economic Development Director to serve as the Town’s primary point of contact for Washington’s businesses.
- Compile an inventory of economic resources, including a detailed business inventory and an economic analysis of current business needs and concerns, and conduct a public opinion and business community survey on economic development.

- Focus on clusters of uses where the Town has a regional competitive advantage. Nurture Washington's creative economy through advertising and marketing assistance; continue the open dialogue with the Town's private educational facilities to leverage these cultural assets in sustaining the Town's economic health.
- Pursue grants and other sources of funding through the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development's Office of Small Business Affairs and the Small Town Economic Assistance Program. Establish a designated economic development budget line item for local economic development funding.

3. ISSUE: Washington's small economy and limited development patterns are not conducive to a traditional business recruitment and relocation policy. The Town must seek local ideas and strategies through an entrepreneurial dynamic and cooperate on a regional level.

GOAL: Washington must maximize its inherent socio-economic and locational advantages to create a fertile environment for new business development and growth.

STRATEGIES:

- Create an environment conducive to entrepreneurship and rooted in the Town's financial and intellectual capital through coordinated outreach to identified individuals, groups, and firms. Direct services to entrepreneurs who can incubate businesses from within Washington that best fit the community's character.
- Regularly update the Town's website as a vehicle for attracting economic development by creating links to existing community businesses and cultural organizations, promoting Washington's numerous cultural, historic, and natural assets in seasonal events, and developing a marketing plan that focuses on its niches and unique features.
- Co-sponsor an expansive "Buy Local" campaign through the Washington Business Association and actively engage with other towns in the region to coordinate marketing and advertising efforts, with a particular emphasis on opportunities in Washington.
- Identify potential sites for new businesses and actively recruit businesses for these sites.

ACTION AGENDA

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

(The Goals and Strategies listed below are summarized; please refer to previous pages for specifics.)

GOAL ONE: Stimulate economic development while maintaining rural character.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Modify regulations to increase commercial and mixed uses on multi-zoned lots in business districts.	Zoning Commission (PC)	Ongoing Effort
Provide tax deferments, promote clean industry, support cultural and academic establishments, and improve technology infrastructure.	Board of Selectmen (BOF/EDD)	Ongoing Effort
Encourage appropriate development along 202 corridor while guarding against sprawl.	Zoning Commission (PC/EDD/CC)	4-6 Year Implementation
Incorporate “farm friendly” policies and practices to promote sustainable agriculture.	Zoning Commission (CC/PC)	4-6 Year Implementation

GOAL TWO: Provide services to promote local and regional economic stability.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Craft job description and hire new Economic Development Director to coordinate business activities.	BOS/Planning Comm. (BOF)	Immediate Implementation
Compile an inventory of economic resources and analyses; conduct survey on economic development.	Economic Development Dir. (PC/TXA)	1-3 Year Implementation
Focus on economic clusters of activity, nurture creative economy, and continue dialogue with private schools.	Economic Development Dir. (BOS/PC)	Ongoing Effort
Pursue economic development funding through state grants; designate town funds for economic development as an annual line item.	Board of Selectmen (EDD/BOF)	1-3 Year Implementation

TXA – Tax Assessor

GOAL THREE: Maximize socio-economic and locational advantages.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Create entrepreneur environment by incubating businesses within Washington that fit the community.	Economic Development Dir. (BOS)	1-3 Year Implementation
Regularly update town website to attract development, promote culture, and market uniqueness of Washington.	Economic Development Dir. (BOS/BOF)	1-3 Year Implementation
Co-sponsor year-round “Buy Local” campaign and coordinate with regional marketing efforts.	Economic Development Dir. (BOS/BOF)	1-3 Year Implementation
Identify potential sites for new businesses and recruit businesses for these sites.	Economic Development Dir.	1-3 Year Implementation



Store in New Preston Village

VILLAGE CENTERS

4



New Preston Village

The Town of Washington has five village centers that are unique in both characteristics and issues. Because the Plan of Conservation and Development must have a holistic overall strategy to succeed, four essential concerns have been identified for these villages:

1. Improve and strengthen the economic vitality of the Town.
2. Develop regulations that reinforce the intrinsic character and potential of each village.
3. Identify infrastructure improvements for immediate and long-term implementation.
4. Identify opportunities for expanding housing options and mixed uses in the villages.

These concerns should all be addressed with an emphasis on public/private collaboration.

Changes since the 2003 POCD

The 2003 POCD provided brief overviews and enhancement strategies for each of the Town's village centers. This 2014 POCD expands on this initial base of information by providing an overview of each of the five village centers through a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. Detailed goals and specific strategies for each village are then outlined for their enhancement and improvement.

Status of 2003 POCD Goals and Recommended Actions

The 2003 POCD identified a number of goals and action steps that were applicable to the village centers. The following table summarizes these goals and action steps and the progress made to date in addressing each item.

2003 POCD Goals and Recommended Actions Applicable to Village Centers	
2003 Goal	Status
Consider establishing a design review process and standards.	Not Implemented
Washington Depot	
Conduct a special study of Washington Depot.	Complete
Consider separating current business district into two distinct districts.	Not Implemented
Consider revising the Zoning Regulations to reflect newly defined districts and village business character.	Incomplete
Marbledale	
Consider modifying zoning district boundaries to establish Village Business District and Gateway Business District.	Not Implemented
Consider establishing a transitional special use district between current district and Wheaton/Mygatt Roads.	Not Implemented
Consider revised zoning requirements to reflect business village character.	Not Implemented
New Preston	
Consider modifying zoning district boundaries.	Not Implemented
Consider need for special study.	Not Implemented
Consider revised zoning requirements to reflect village business character.	Ongoing
Washington Green	
Consider modifying zoning district boundaries.	Not Implemented
Consider revised zoning regulations to reflect special uses in district.	Incomplete
Woodville	
Monitor commercial activity.	Ongoing
Consider changes to B-4 district as appropriate.	Not Implemented

VILLAGE CENTER “SWOT” ANALYSES

Because the village centers have unique conditions and require unique solutions, these SWOT analyses identify the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats for each village. While only a general overview, these analyses clarify the existing conditions and guide the subsequent recommendations for the five village centers. It should be noted that there are some issues that exist in all of the village centers such as economic competition from neighboring communities, floodplain and wetlands challenges, and automobile-oriented design and pedestrian access problems (see Appendix C). Although these issues may be highlighted for a specific village, the proposed solutions may also have merit in other village centers. Detailed descriptions of the form and function of each village can be found in Appendix C.

Washington Depot

STRENGTHS

- A potential core of retail stores and personal and professional services that can produce a vibrant village center, although current vacancy levels are elevated.
- A compact development form that is ideal for walkability.

WEAKNESSES

- Primarily located within the 100-year floodplain and historically inundated during severe flooding events, thus complicating further development.
- Difficult to access from neighboring communities and market areas.
- Problematic parking during peak business hours.
- Challenged pedestrian traffic due to State roads intersecting in the village center.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Several sites within the village have potential for economic improvement, including the former gas station and the old Town Garage site.
- The community has a highly skilled, active, and concerned population; this is applicable to the Town as a whole.

THREATS

- Competition for retail sales from other regional locations.
- Current macroeconomic trends such as competition from online retailers and big-box retail developments outside of town.

Marbledale

STRENGTHS

- Excellent location with easy access to New Milford customer market.
- On-site and/or off-street parking for most uses.
- A good mix of business types.

WEAKNESSES

- The physical design is oriented towards automobiles rather than pedestrians.
- Dispersed development along Route 202 prevents the establishment of a critical density of uses that truly define a village center.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Additional economic development, if properly implemented, would enhance the overall character of the Marbledale village corridor.
- Marbledale has the greatest future development potential of all the village centers.

THREATS

- Development pressures from “strip” commercial uses are encroaching Washington’s western border.
- Any future expansion or widening of Route 202 could encourage more automobile oriented development types.

New Preston**STRENGTHS**

- A core of retail stores and personal services.
- Compact development form that permits economically sustainable development.
- The village’s physical design and development patterns are conducive to walkability.

WEAKNESSES

- Limited parking resources.
- Little space for future development without significantly changing village character.
- Limited septic capabilities.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Parcels surrounding the village center offer potential for denser residential development.
- Historic character provides an existing form not found in other developed areas that can serve as leverage for maximizing development potential.

THREATS

- Development pressure from strip commercial uses, particularly along the segment of Route 202 that forms the southern border of the village center.

Woodville**STRENGTHS**

- Woodville has the most potentially developable land of any of the village centers.
- Route 202 serves as a good access route to tap into neighboring markets.

WEAKNESSES

- A minimal number of current uses and a minimally sized business district.
- The village lacks walkability and is oriented towards automobiles.
- Some areas around the center of Woodville have floodplain soils.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Untapped potential as the northern portion of the Route 202 corridor; if correctly designed with the appropriate amenities, it could be a significant village center.

THREATS

- Development pressure from strip commercial uses.
- Current design of Route 202 could negatively impact development forms.

Washington Green**STRENGTHS**

- A cultural, historic, and scenic hallmark of the Town; although it has little commercial activity, it is as important to the identity of Washington as any business center.
- Historic, well established, and appropriately designed structures that contribute to its distinctive and unique character.
- Compact development form promotes walkability.

WEAKNESSES

- Lacks the diversity of commercial uses found in the other village centers. However, the lack of commercial uses in this historic district may also be seen as one of its strengths.
- While the Green lends itself to walkability, the pedestrian circulation system is not fully developed and integrated to capitalize on this village design attribute.
- On-street parking can be difficult given the narrow design of side streets and the minimal shoulder area along Green Hill Road. This becomes especially problematic during large social and cultural events.
- Most, if not all, of the beautiful historical characteristics of the Washington Green village center are now nonconforming under the Town's Zoning Regulations.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The future development of The Gunnery, the Gunn Memorial Library and Museum, and the Washington Club Hall could increase visitors to the Green for a variety of events.

THREATS

- The existing institutions must manage their growth and development in a manner that is appropriate for the character of the village. Too much development could overwhelm the village center, which has a limited capacity to absorb new uses in terms of infrastructure and physical design.

GENERAL VILLAGE CENTER GOALS

- Hire an Economic Development Director tasked with guiding and formulating policies and strategies to further the economic stability and potential of Washington Depot, New Preston, Marbledale, and Woodville. There should be close collaboration with the strategies put forth in the Economic Development section of this POCD.
- Address the immediate needs of each village center as quickly and effectively as possible. Public and private collaboration between the Town government, business owners, and property owners can accomplish improvements in pedestrian access, parking, traffic calming, and lighting in the short term while work continues on large-scale town-wide issues to energize the future economic health and vitality of the village centers.
- Review Washington's Zoning Regulations to determine whether current regulations should be strengthened or removed to enhance the viability of each village center.
- Conduct septic capacity/feasibility studies for Washington Depot and Marbledale to determine the septic capabilities of these areas for future development activities.
- Study the feasibility of expanding the B-1 (New Preston), B-2 (Washington Depot), and B-3 (Marbledale) district boundaries through appropriate commercial development of multi-zoned lots. Base recommendations for modifying these zones on field reconnaissance and analyses of existing land uses, soil types, and zone boundaries.
- Modify the Town's Zoning Regulations to incorporate regulations in the village centers that discourage strip development such as requiring buildings to be closer to the street and locating parking areas to the rear of properties.

VILLAGE-SPECIFIC GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Washington Depot

I. GOAL: Washington must mitigate the constraints inherent with residing in a FEMA floodplain while maximizing Washington Depot's strengths and opportunities.

STRATEGIES:

- Develop the former Town Garage site for passive recreational, commercial, mixed-use, and/or residential purposes by revisiting previous plans and concepts such as the Mill Race Road proposal and the Depot Study. Review new design opportunities for limited residential and commercial uses within a floodplain.
- Draft and implement specific design guidelines for the B-2 zone that encourage mixed uses as of right and permit a higher density of housing. Establish different unit types and development sizes that supersede the existing soil-based zoning in this area. Emphasize mixed-use development at a scale that is appropriate, feasible and manageable. Incorporate architectural and design considerations into the approval process.

- Utilize the Depot's riverscape as a recreational enhancement of the village image; view the Shepaug River as a scenic asset and not a threat. Increase access to more portions of the river for passive and active recreational use.
- Review Zoning and Inland Wetlands regulations, as well any pertinent State and Federal laws and regulations, to assess the possibility of revising watercourse setbacks and floodplain requirements; determine the potential impacts on development for Washington Depot, Marbledale, and New Preston.

2. GOAL: Washington should improve pedestrian traffic in the Washington Depot village center and coordinate efforts with the State DOT to specifically implement traffic calming at the intersection of Routes 47 & 109.

STRATEGIES:

- Appoint an *ad hoc* group consisting of a member of the Zoning Commission, Planning Commission, Board of Selectmen and three members of the Washington Business Association to encourage pedestrian traffic and parking alternatives in the Depot. Install new sidewalks and additional pedestrian infrastructure along Green Hill Road (Route 47) and around the corner along Bee Brook Road and Titus Road, linking up with existing sidewalks and crosswalks found along Green Hill Road.
- Install pedestrian-friendly and appropriately designed streetscape and landscape elements to create a unified design theme and context for the village center, particularly with the upcoming Bryan Plaza improvements. Assure that any implemented street lighting adheres to Dark Skies International standards.

Marbledale

I. GOAL: Washington should encourage village-style development in Marbledale and discourage strip commercial development, as it is the “gateway” to development pressure moving up the Route 202 corridor.

STRATEGIES:

- Draft and implement specific design guidelines for the B-3 zone that permit a higher density of housing. Establish different unit types and residential development sizes that supersede the existing soil-based zoning in this area. Emphasize mixed-use development at a scale that is appropriate, feasible and manageable, and expand the district boundaries if necessary. Incorporate architectural and design considerations into the approval process.
- Prioritize the economic development of Marbledale because of its proximity to the commercial growth along Route 202. Shape an overall strategy for reinforcing Washington's economic health, but not at the expense of specific villages; they should work in concert with and not compete against each other.

- Leverage the proximity of Marbledale to New Preston by way of Route 202. Coordinate the development and marketing efforts in Marbledale and New Preston, but not at the expense of each other. From a planning and development perspective, the Town should effectively view Marbledale and New Preston as a unified entity, though this should be construed as enhancing each rather than combining them.
- Create a unifying built form and streetscape design. Marbledale is presently a 1.5 mile stretch of commercially zoned land without any type of unifying design character or vernacular. The Town should craft a specific design palette for the development or redevelopment of properties that will tie the different segments of the corridor together. Streetscape elements such as sidewalks, landscaping, and signage should be implemented—particularly within the historic central portion of Marbledale—to knit together the different land uses and structures along Route 202.

New Preston

I. GOAL: Washington should strive to reinforce and maintain New Preston’s unique qualities while addressing the impediments to its appropriate development.

STRATEGIES:

- Appoint an *ad hoc* group consisting of a member of the Zoning Commission, Planning Commission, Board of Selectmen and three members of the Washington Business Association to improve pedestrian traffic and parking alternatives in New Preston. Work with the State DOT to implement traffic calming along Route 202.
- Draft and implement specific design guidelines for the B-I zone that encourage mixed uses and permit a higher density of housing. Establish different unit types and residential development sizes that supersede the existing soil-based zoning in this area. Emphasize mixed-use development at a scale that is appropriate, feasible and manageable. Incorporate architectural and design considerations into the approval process.
- Increase and improve pedestrian amenities and streetscape elements, including the installation of additional sidewalks along East Shore Road and Main Street and signage and landscaping where appropriate. Assure that any implemented street lighting adheres to Dark Skies International standards.
- Leverage the recreational value of Lake Waramaug as a unique asset to generate additional activity for New Preston’s businesses. Reinforce the intrinsic nature of this village and guard against the commercial pressure of strip development along Route 202.

Woodville

I. GOAL: Washington should redefine the Woodville village center by considering an overall economic development strategy and its future importance.

STRATEGIES:

- Create an economic development plan that considers the potential value of this village and how it could contribute to the long-range growth of the Town. Review possible municipal improvements in conjunction with input from local community members.
- Create a clear identity for the village and a unifying streetscape along Route 202. The center of Woodville lacks clear definition in its physical boundaries and design. The few non-residential uses along Route 202 provide the visitor with some sense of place, but without design elements that clearly identify it as the center of a distinct village it is difficult to “define” Woodville as a unique destination.

Washington Green

I. GOAL: Washington should enhance and strengthen the Washington Green village center through an improved definition of the village center.

STRATEGIES:

- Maintain the existing character and *status quo* of the Green’s historic development. Modify Zoning Regulations so that the style of development that now exists on the Washington Green would be replicated in new development. Consider expansion of the historic district if appropriate.
- Coordinate with The Gunnery, the churches, the Gunn Memorial Library and Museum, and the Washington Club on any future development plans. Consider these educational, cultural, and social institutions as integral to the overall health of the Town.

ACTION AGENDA

VILLAGE CENTERS

(The Goals and Strategies listed below are summarized; please refer to previous pages for specifics.)

GENERAL VILLAGE CENTER GOALS

GOALS	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Hire a new Economic Development Director to coordinate village center economic development.	Board of Selectmen (BOF/PC)	Immediate Implementation
Address immediate needs of each village center as quickly and effectively as possible.	Board of Selectmen (PC/ZC/BOF)	Immediate Implementation
Review Zoning Regulations to enhance the viability of each village center.	Zoning Commission (PC)	1-3 Year Implementation
Conduct septic capacity/feasibility studies for Washington Depot and Marbledale.	Board of Selectmen (BOF/PC)	1-3 Year Implementation
Study the possible expansion of the B-1, B-2, and B-3 district boundaries via multi-zoned lots.	Zoning Commission (PC)	1-3 Year Implementation
Modify regulations to require buildings in the villages to be closer to the road and locate parking behind structures.	Zoning Commission (PC)	1-3 Year Implementation

WASHINGTON DEPOT

GOAL ONE: Mitigate the constraints of the floodplain while maximizing opportunities.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Develop former Town Garage site for passive recreational, commercial, and/or residential purposes.	Economic Development Dir. (BOS/PC/ZC/BOF)	4-6 Year Implementation
Encourage mixed uses as of right and permit a higher density of housing. Establish unit types and development sizes that supersede existing soil-based zoning.	Zoning Commission (PC/HC)	1-3 Year Implementation
Utilize the riverscape for recreational enhancement; increase access to river for recreational use.	Parks & Rec Commission (ZC/PC/IWC)	1-3 Year Implementation
Review regulations to possibly revise watercourse setback and floodplain requirements; determine potential impact.	Zoning Commission (PC/IWC)	4-6 Year Implementation

GOAL TWO: Improve pedestrian traffic and calm automobile traffic.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Appoint an <i>ad hoc</i> group to address pedestrian and parking alternatives.	Board of Selectmen (PC/ZC)	Immediate Implementation
Install pedestrian friendly streetscape and landscape elements to encourage walkability.	Board of Selectmen (BOF/ZC/PC)	1-3 Year Implementation

MARBLEDALE**GOAL:** Discourage strip-style development in Marbledale.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Encourage mixed uses as of right and permit a higher density of housing. Establish unit types and development sizes that supersede existing soil-based zoning.	Zoning Commission (PC/HC)	1-3 Year Implementation
Prioritize economic development of Marbledale because of Route 202 development encroachment.	Economic Development Dir. (BOS/PC/ZC)	1-3 Year Implementation
Leverage the proximity of New Preston and coordinate development and marketing efforts.	Economic Development Dir. (BOS/PC)	Ongoing Effort
Create a unifying built form and streetscape design to tie different segments of the corridor together.	Planning Commission (ZC/EDD)	4-6 Year Implementation

NEW PRESTON**GOAL:** Maintain New Preston's unique qualities while addressing development impediments.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Appoint an <i>ad hoc</i> group to address pedestrian and parking alternatives.	Board of Selectmen (PC/ZC/EDD)	Immediate Implementation
Encourage mixed uses as of right and permit a higher density of housing. Establish unit types and development sizes that supersede existing soil-based zoning.	Zoning Commission (PC/HC)	1-3 Year Implementation
Install pedestrian friendly streetscape and landscape elements to encourage walkability.	Board of Selectmen (BOF/ZC/PC)	1-3 Year Implementation
Leverage the recreational value of Lake Waramaug to generate additional business activity.	Economic Development Dir. (PC)	Ongoing Effort

WOODVILLE

GOAL: Redefine the Woodville village center with an overall development strategy.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Create an economic development plan and review possible municipal improvements.	Economic Development Dir. (PC)	4-6 Year Implementation
Create a clear identity and unifying streetscape to define the Woodville village center.	Planning Commission (EDD)	4-6 Year Implementation

WASHINGTON GREEN

GOAL: Enhance the Green through a more defined village center.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Maintain existing character and <i>status quo</i> of the Green; expand historic district if necessary.	Historic District Commission (ZC)	Ongoing Effort
Coordinate future development efforts with existing cultural, social, and educational institutions.	Zoning Commission (BOS/HDC)	Ongoing Effort



First Congregational Church on the Green

SUSTAINABILITY

5



Apples at Averill Farm

This chapter discusses strategies for ensuring the sustainability of Washington so that present generations meet their needs without compromising those of future generations. A sustainable community practices sound stewardship of its natural, social, economic, and cultural resources. People move to Washington because of its rural character, scenic vistas, small village centers, and overall quality of life—for these residents, sustainability is not simply a “green” issue. The quality of life that must be sustained occurs in both social and economic realms as well as the natural environment. They are all connected.

Previous plans addressed many of these issues. The people of Washington clearly have a desire to protect the rural character that characterizes the Town’s quality of life. The *2000 Natural Resource Inventory Report and Recommendations* and the 2005 Washington Depot Village Study have viable recommendations that can be applied throughout the community.

Existing efforts and future strategies for a sustainable Washington have been organized around an educated and engaged community, land stewardship, water management, transportation, municipal properties, and clean and renewable energy.

Additional analysis of Washington’s sustainability goals and strategies should start immediately after the adoption of this Plan of Conservation and Development. Land use regulations should be updated to align with a comprehensive sustainability framework to achieve the greatest benefit for our human/natural systems at the lowest cost. The Town may also wish to consider the potential impacts of climate change on existing and future development.

AN EDUCATED AND ENGAGED COMMUNITY

A community that is educated about its impact on the environment and natural resources is vital for determining and implementing strategies for local sustainability. Recognizing and protecting community resources is a collective effort. All of Washington, including the five villages, the lake community, the weekend population, and the private school personnel, must be fully engaged and committed to exert the political will and financial commitment necessary for implementing sustainable initiatives.

Status and Current Initiatives

Several businesses, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations located in Washington are already working to implement sustainable practices in their own operations. While no agency or organization presently maintains a comprehensive inventory of current practices, the Washington Environmental Council (WEC), a private non-profit organization, works with a number of diverse groups in the region on a wide variety of environmental protection and sustainability issues. WEC's efforts at community education and engagement are substantial and provide a great resource for the community. The activities of the Steep Rock Association, the Lake Waramaug Task Force, the Lake Waramaug Association, and the Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust also help to collectively endorse a comprehensive framework using the example programs cited in this plan.

Sustainable Development

Cities and towns across the nation are becoming more aware of the impacts of development decisions on their surrounding physical and social environment. A variety of approaches have been proposed to manage these impacts in an intelligent and sustainable manner. There are three development scenarios that could be potentially advantageous to Washington in terms of encouraging high-quality and economically sustainable development while still protecting the rural nature of the Town.

LEED for Neighborhood Development

Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design for neighborhood development (LEED) is a national rating system that measures how communities meet established standards for environmentally responsible and sustainable development. The primary goals of the LEED rating system are encouraging the intelligent location and design of neighborhoods to reduce the reliance on automobiles, situating new jobs and services within walking distance of housing or public transportation, and promoting the development of green buildings and infrastructure where feasible. While it cannot replace local planning efforts, LEED is an effective tool for evaluating comprehensive plans, subdivision and zoning regulations, and applicable Town ordinances. LEED is designed to flexibly assess individual neighborhoods and provide information related to improving the sustainability of both new and existing development areas.

LEED has several potential applications for the Town of Washington. Newly proposed development projects could be assessed using LEED standards and ratings to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, thus allowing the Town to identify and suggest sustainability improvements. In addition, the Town's village centers could be audited with LEED principles, metrics, and guidelines to determine improvements for overall sustainability. This would enable Washington to identify specific capital improvements and policy changes for enhancing the sustainability of the villages. Finally, the Town could utilize LEED principles and standards to audit the zoning and subdivision regulations and identify areas that could be modified to encourage or require more sustainable development in Washington.

Sustainable Community Development Code

Initially prepared by the Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute, the Sustainable Community Development Code provides a framework for community development that is sustainable, multi-disciplinary, and contextually sensitive. It addresses the following subject areas of environmental health and natural resources: natural hazards, land use and community character, mobility and transportation, community, healthy neighborhoods, housing, food security, energy, and livability. These subject areas are further divided into specific topics such as floodplain management, historic preservation, low-impact development, green infrastructure, and affordable housing. Each topical issue includes a description of the potential consequences of inaction, goals in addressing each issue, potential sustainability measures, and specific tools that can be implemented to affect positive change and make progress in achieving established goals.

The Sustainable Community Development Code could be used to measure the overall level of sustainable development encouraged or required by the Town of Washington's zoning and subdivision regulations. The Code provides a series of gold, silver, and bronze achievement levels that provide specific action items in a Town's development regulations relative to each level. Washington's current regulations could be compared to the proposed sustainable development requirements and assessed as to their level of compliance. The Town could then revise its zoning and subdivision regulations to meet specific levels of the Sustainable Community Development Code.

EPA Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities program provides local governments with technical assistance in creating sustainable development tools and policies. Similar to other EPA programs, the Building Blocks program consists of a workshop involving direct consultation with local stakeholders and a summary memorandum that clearly lays out the steps for implementing the sustainable development concepts and tools devised during the workshop. The EPA annually selects a group of communities based upon responses to a request for letters of interest. The EPA has developed a toolbox of sustainable development techniques and applications based upon its work in selected communities. Once a specific tool has been successfully utilized over time, the EPA makes the tool publicly available online. As more EPA sustainable development tools become available, the Town of Washington could evaluate each one for its possible utilization.

One of the programs currently available online is “Smart Growth Guidelines for Sustainable Development,” the result of work completed in conjunction with the Capitol Region Council of Governments—the regional planning organization for the greater Hartford area. This document provides a number of sustainable practices that the Town of Washington could use to ensure that new development is implemented in a sustainable manner.

LAND STEWARDSHIP

Land use not only defines a community’s character but also affects other components of sustainability from water and air quality to energy usage. Washington’s picturesque rural landscape depends on the natural landscape, farms, and villages that have evolved over many generations. Proper stewardship and maintenance of both the built environment and the natural resources of Washington improves community sustainability.

Status and Current Initiatives

Washington’s land use commissions actively promote good land stewardship in Town through their regulatory authority. Additional Town newsletters and a revamped Town website could further promote these stewardship activities and initiatives with a financial commitment and proactive leadership.

The Town’s soil-based zoning directs growth and development in a sustainable manner because density is controlled by the soil’s ability to accommodate septic systems. These regulations could be further modified to align with the sustainability framework of this POCD by focusing on more diverse and dense development potential in its village centers.

The *Natural Resource Inventory Report and Recommendations*, prepared by the Washington Ad Hoc Conservation Committee in 2000, is a valuable resource for the land use commissions. Many concepts in this document will remain relevant in the future.

Open space and farmland protection efforts in Washington have resulted in over 27% of the Town’s acreage being permanently protected (see Appendix D). The Town established an open space acquisition fund in 2003 and purchased 31 acres in the New Preston village center in 2009. The Conservation Commission, the local land trusts, and the Northwest Conservation District helped prioritize significant natural resources worthy of conservation and leverage resources to achieve their protection.

WATER RESOURCES

The effective management of potable water resources, stormwater runoff, and surface water quality preserves the overall ecological health of a community and ensures the sustained availability of these resources for future generations. The stewardship of Washington’s water resources will be a critical priority during the coming years. While the majority of Town residents have their own wells, the Judea Water Company serves several areas and was recently acquired by Aquarion, a water company that provides water services to 47 Connecticut municipalities and is the largest investor-owned water utility in New England.

Status and Current Initiatives

Washington's land use commissions have implemented strong regulations to protect water resources. The current Zoning Regulations require setbacks from watercourses, springs, and lakes for buildings, paved surfaces, excavation, quarries, refuse disposal, and septic systems. Soil erosion and sedimentation control plans are required for most applications to the Inland Wetlands and/or Zoning Commission. Special permits require provisions for conserving natural features and drainage basins. Existing site design standards in the current regulations include requirements for well-designed drainage systems and runoff control measures.

In addition to these municipal activities, the Town of Washington also benefits from the work of several local and regional groups concerned with water quality, including the Lake Waramaug Task Force, the Lake Waramaug Association, and the Housatonic Valley Association.

The Town of Washington has no major public water supply wells that require regulation under the State's Aquifer Protection Program. However, the Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative has identified areas of glacial meltwater deposits capable of yielding a sufficient quantity of water for groundwater wells and local basins important to maintaining high-quality surface water resources. Groundwater protection is of vital importance to Washington given its reliance on small individual wells.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Town has contracted with the Bristol Resources Recovery Facility for municipal solid waste disposal, and the Town provides recycling services with free bi-weekly curbside residential pickup of recyclables. Additional recyclable materials, household waste, and bulky waste items may be brought to the Town's Transfer Station on Clark Road. Washington currently recycles over 525 tons of material annually and has recently instituted single-stream recycling to increase convenience and recycling rates.

TRANSPORTATION

Free-flowing circulation systems for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians are important to the vitality of any community. The ability to bike and walk safely promotes recreation and improves public health by offering an alternative to vehicle travel, particularly in the village centers. Scenic roads are also a critical component of Washington's rural character.

Status and Current Initiatives

The Town currently maintains approximately 90 miles of road, including 24 miles of unimproved roadway. The Town has designated numerous local scenic roads, in addition to the state-designated scenic roads along Routes 45, 202, and Lake Waramaug. The state-designated scenic roads are also recommended cycling routes on the CT Bicycle Map.

The Shepaug Greenway, a 3.3-mile footpath that runs from the Steep Rock Reservation north to the Hidden Valley Preserve, offers a means for pedestrian access from the Green to the Depot and runs alongside the Washington Primary School property.

MUNICIPAL PROPERTIES

The operation and maintenance of municipal facilities is an important venue for incorporating sustainability practices into Town government. Municipal buildings and facilities can be used as appropriate models of sustainable practices for the rest of the community.

Status and Current Initiatives

The Town has utilized energy efficiency programs in its municipal structures such as replacing lighting. In addition, the heating system in Town Hall was recently renovated from an oil-fired steam system to a propane hot water system. The Conservation Commission is examining the decommissioning of unnecessary streetlights to save money and minimize light pollution.

CLEAN AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

Clean and renewable energy improves air quality and reduces water consumption; it is essential for the ability of future generations to provide for their needs. Renewable energies help lessen our dependence on fossil fuels and can provide energy for future generations without the costs to the environment exacted by non-renewable energy.

Status and Current Initiatives

The most prominent renewable and “green” energy initiative undertaken by Washington is the Town’s participation in the Connecticut Clean Energy Communities Program. This program, implemented through the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund (CCEF), enables cities and towns to purchase renewable energy and earn credits for clean energy system infrastructure. Credits can be earned through enrolling households and businesses in the CTCleanEnergyOptions program, encouraging households and businesses to install their own clean energy systems, and purchasing certified Renewable Energy Certificates. Once a municipality earns a certain number of credits, the CCEF provides the community with a free solar or wind clean energy system. CCEF covers all costs associated with purchasing and installing the new energy system and assists the municipality in selecting a suitable location.

The Town of Washington, along with the Town of Roxbury, also participated in the Solarize Connecticut initiative—a public/private collaboration for encouraging the affordable installation of solar-powered electrical systems. Residents were offered the opportunity to receive free assessments and proposals for solar panel installations. The cost of installation was linked to the level of participation; the more participants, the lower the cost. The Town received solar “credits” that can be used to subsidize the future installation of municipal solar energy infrastructure. A number of residents took advantage of the program, resulting in a doubling of the solar power output for the Town.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. GOAL: Washington should pursue sustainable policies and practices that encourage an educated and engaged community.

STRATEGIES:

- Provide a clearinghouse of information for improving energy efficiency, reducing waste, and promoting sustainable practices for local businesses and educational institutions. Highlight sustainability achievements to the community through the Town's web site, official communications, and other media. Coordinate efforts with the Gunn Memorial Library to create a local sustainability resource center. Support the Washington Environmental Council's educational and community initiatives such as Earth Day activities, water testing discounts, and energy conservation programs.
- Educate Washington's land use commissions on conservation designs and techniques that may be appropriate for Washington such as open space conservation subdivisions and other low-impact development techniques consistent with a sustainability framework. Continue to implement the recommendations of the Natural Resource Inventory Report. Implement ridgeline protection and design regulations such as low-impact development requirements for new structures.
- Incorporate the sustainability goals identified in this chapter into the core of the Town's Land Use Regulations and infrastructure practices. Modify regulations to minimize site disturbances and incorporate low-impact development techniques such as permeable surfaces for driveways and parking areas, along with other green practices.

2. GOAL: Washington should continue its leadership in land stewardship practices.

STRATEGIES:

- Continue efforts at farmland protection and coordinate with neighboring communities to develop an agricultural plan for the region as outlined in the Northwest Connecticut Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.
- Reinststate the budget line for the monitoring and maintenance of existing open space and Town-owned properties.
- Prioritize stewardship and maintenance activities for all open space and conservation easements and craft an implementation plan that identifies partnering organizations and agencies. Seek assistance from environmental organizations in the region to expand baseline reviews to include all Town-owned open space and conservation easements.

3. GOAL: Washington should increase and improve its monitoring of potable and recreational water resources and waste treatment systems.

STRATEGIES:

- Identify and investigate incidents of failing septic systems and underground storage tank leaks. Coordinate efforts with regional water resource agencies to enhance land and water resource protection.
- Educate homeowners and contractors on the importance of runoff infiltration through the use of permeable surfaces, rainwater basins, infiltration systems and vegetated buffers while incorporating green practices into renovations. Reduce water usage through landscaping with native and/or drought-resistant plants and by capturing rainwater for irrigation purposes.
- Continue free curbside residential recycling pickup. Promote backyard composting and consider creating a regional organic recycling facility to separate food and organic materials from the Town's waste stream and turn it into compost for consumer reuse.
- Locate and evaluate all water resources to determine any at-risk areas requiring present or future monitoring or protection. Map these areas, test water in areas of concern, identify threats, and recommend remedial action if necessary. Educate the public on the importance of protecting and preserving water resources.

4. GOAL: Washington should develop a sustainable transportation policy for maintenance of its roads, pathways, and municipal vehicles.

STRATEGIES:

- Continue to properly maintain the municipal fleet and consider emissions and life cycle costs when replacing vehicles. Implement an idling time policy for public works vehicles.
- Develop linkages between Town-owned and privately owned open space properties similar to the Shepaug Greenway. Coordinate the maintenance of pathways for hikers.
- Implement context-sensitive design measures for roadway improvements. Work with the Department of Transportation to widen the road shoulders along State roads, where feasible, to create a safer environment for bicyclists.

5. GOAL: The Town of Washington should enact sustainable construction, renovation, operational, and maintenance policies and procedures for all municipal properties, structures, and facilities as an example for the greater community.

STRATEGIES:

- Require the installation energy-efficient heating, cooling, and lighting systems, as well as low-flow fixtures, graywater recycling systems, rainwater collection systems, and low-water landscape designs in all municipal renovation and construction projects. Require LEED standards for all municipal construction and renovation projects, even those not necessary under state mandates. Replace incandescent streetlights with LED lights.
- Incorporate green cleaning and maintenance practices at all current and future municipal facilities. Create a green cleaning policy and train staff in green cleaning techniques, and require the use of low-volatility organic products for light maintenance tasks. Use Integrated Pest Management techniques on Town-owned fields and parks.

6. GOAL: Washington should strive to increase its use of clean and renewable energy sources in municipal, business, and residential applications.

STRATEGIES:

- Complete an energy audit of municipal facilities to determine where improvements can be made to increase energy efficiency. Retrofit municipal facilities with energy-efficient equipment and features where appropriate and feasible. Ensure that new equipment meets appropriate energy efficiency standards.
- Educate residents on local property tax exemptions for renewable energy systems. Encourage eligible businesses and residences to apply for low- and zero-emission renewable energy credit programs that allow customers who install qualifying renewable energy systems to sell back renewable energy credits.



Solar Panels in Washington Depot

ACTION AGENDA

SUSTAINABILITY

(The Goals and Strategies listed below are summarized; please refer to previous pages for specifics.)

GOAL ONE: Pursue sustainable policies to educate and engage the community.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Provide a clearinghouse of information for sustainable practices throughout the community.	Conservation Commission (PC)	1-3 Year Implementation
Educate land use commissions on conservation designs and techniques appropriate for Washington.	Conservation Commission (PC)	1-3 Year Implementation
Incorporate sustainability goals into Land Use Regulations. Modify regulations to minimize site disturbances and incorporate low-impact development techniques.	Zoning Commission (PC/CC)	Ongoing Effort

GOAL TWO: Continue land stewardship and open space preservation.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Continue farmland protection and coordinate with neighboring communities on a regional agricultural plan.	Conservation Commission (PC/BOS)	4-6 Year Implementation
Reinstate budget line for the monitoring and maintenance of existing open space.	Board of Finance (BOS/CC)	1-3 Year Implementation
Prioritize stewardship of open space and conservation easements and expand baseline reviews.	Conservation Commission	1-3 Year Implementation

GOAL THREE: Increase monitoring of water resources and waste treatment systems.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Identify and investigate septic system failures and underground storage tank leaks.	Health Department (BD)	Ongoing Effort
Stress importance of permeable surfaces, rainwater basins, infiltration systems and vegetative buffers.	Inland Wetlands Commission (CC/PC/ZC)	Ongoing Effort
Continue curbside recycling; consider a regional organic recycling facility.	Board of Selectmen (CC)	Ongoing Effort
Locate and evaluate at-risk water resources; map, test, and identify areas of concern; educate public.	Conservation Commission (IWC)	Ongoing Effort

GOAL FOUR: Develop a sustainable municipal transportation policy.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Continue to properly maintain municipal vehicles and institute and idling time policy.	Highway Director (BOS/BOF)	Ongoing Effort
Develop linkages between town-owned and private open space and maintain pathways.	Conservation Commission (P&R)	4-6 Year Implementation
Implement context-sensitive roadway designs and create safer bicycling pathways.	Board of Selectmen (BOF/PC/HD)	4-6 Year Implementation

P&R - Parks & Recreation Commission; HD - Highway Department

GOAL FIVE: Enact sustainable operational policies for all municipal properties.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Require energy-efficient systems and designs for all construction and renovation; install LED street lighting.	Board of Selectmen (ZC/BPC)	4-6 Year Implementation
Incorporate green cleaning and maintenance practices at all municipal properties.	Board of Selectmen (BPC)	4-6 Year Implementation

BPC - Building and Property Committee

GOAL SIX: Increase the use of clean and renewable energy sources.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Complete an energy audit of municipal facilities; retrofit with efficient equipment and features where feasible.	Board of Selectmen (BPC)	Immediate Implementation
Educate citizens on property tax exemptions and renewable energy credit programs.	Board of Selectmen (TXA/PC)	Ongoing Effort

TXA – Tax Assessor

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE

6



Shepaug River

Washington is defined and distinguished by its rural character, and preservation of this attribute has been the dominant planning theme of the Town since its first Plan of Conservation and Development in 1963. This continuing objective remains strongly supported by Washington residents, as shown through the significant efforts undertaken by the Town over the past twenty years to identify and protect its natural resources.

These efforts have been very successful and continue to be an example for other communities. Many of the strategies identified in this Plan will further community efforts to retain the qualities that today's residents value and future residents will cherish.

Changes since the 2003 POCD

The 2003 POCD contained a thorough and comprehensive chapter on the preservation of Washington's rural character that included a wealth of information on the natural resources and environmental assets of the Town, along with a wide range of recommendations for protecting its natural environment and resources. As part of this 2014 POCD, the goals and strategies from 2003 that are still relevant have been retained; in some cases, they have been augmented with new information. An updated set of maps and descriptions of Washington's natural resource components are either contained in Appendix D or available in the Town's Land Use Office to provide current natural resource information. The continuity in goals and strategies between the 2003 POCD and this 2014 Plan seeks to maintain the Town's environmental and open space policies in the coming decade.

Status of 2003 POCD Goals and Recommended Actions

The 2003 POCD identified a number of goals and action steps that were applicable to the issues of natural resources, open space, recreation, and historic resources. The following table summarizes these goals and action steps and the progress made to date in addressing each item.

2003 POCD Goals and Recommended Actions Applicable to Natural Resources, Open Space & Recreation	
2003 Goal	Status
Protect wetlands and watercourses	Ongoing
Protect water quality	Ongoing
Maintain soil based zoning	Ongoing
Include natural systems in open space planning	Ongoing
Establish permanent Open Space Committee	Complete
Adopt Conservation Commission's Open Space Plan	Complete
Develop evaluation tools for Town acquisitions	Complete
Establish open space funding mechanisms	Incomplete
Prepare, implement, and update open space action plan	Complete/Ongoing
Consider scenic resource protection regulations	Incomplete
Investigate reduced assessments on historic barns	Not Implemented
Encourage implementation of Scenic Road Ordinance	Ongoing
Consider state routes as state scenic roads	Incomplete
Include scenic resources in open space priorities	Complete
Continue to support local agriculture	Ongoing
Include farmland as open space priority through easements and State Development Rights purchases	Complete
Continue application of PA 490 assessment for agricultural land, including leased land	Ongoing
Encourage creation of Washington Historical Society	Not Implemented
Maintain local historic districts	Ongoing
Consider new districts	Not Implemented
Encourage sensitive stewardship	Ongoing
Adopt a demolition delay ordinance	Not Implemented
Encourage responsible archeological investigations	Incomplete
Include historic/cultural resources in open space priorities	Complete
Research appropriate standards for light and noise pollution and implement if warranted	Partially Complete

GOALS & STRATEGIES

- 1. ISSUE:** The *2000 Natural Resource Inventory Report and Recommendations* detailed the resources that should be preserved and conserved, and several relevant strategies were identified: conserve natural systems, protect open space, preserve scenic and historic assets, support agricultural land and farming, and assure architectural integrity.

GOAL: Washington should continue to maintain and protect its natural resource areas.

STRATEGIES:

- Continue utilizing soil-based zoning regulations to manage the intensity of residential development and requiring open space set asides for subdivision approval. Develop zoning and subdivision regulations that encourage conservation design subdivisions by offering incentives such as density bonuses or flexible lot sizes.
- Continue to pursue the Town's plan of achieving 30% permanently preserved open space. Coordinate the Conservation Commission's efforts with other Town agencies to ensure a seamless approach.
- Acquire new open space funding resources through grants and donations. Appropriately utilize the PA-490 tax abatement program for forested land and agricultural parcels.

GOAL: Washington must make protecting water quality a primary goal for the Town.

STRATEGIES:

- Provide Health Department funding to conduct regular water quality testing for key surface water bodies and Town wells to provide advance warning of potential contamination threats to surface water and aquifers.
- Conduct educational programs and distribute information on the dangers of sediment runoff, septic system neglect, hazardous materials, lawn and garden chemicals, the clear cutting of trees, the clearing of understories, and the importance of wetlands. Reduce "non-point" pollution from sources such as storm drainage discharges, lawn fertilizer, and agricultural runoff through strengthened zoning and street design regulations pertaining to impervious surfaces.
- Carefully monitor increasing development around Lake Waramaug and its impact on water quality. If necessary, adopt additional zoning and wastewater controls such as stricter lot coverage requirements.

- 2. ISSUE:** Scenic assets and scenic roads are important components of Washington's rural character and heritage, and greenways help to integrate and connect the numerous open spaces throughout the community.

GOAL: Washington should protect its scenic assets, encourage the designation of more scenic roads, and consider additional greenways throughout the Town.

STRATEGIES:

- Include scenic resources such as ridgelines in development reviews; restrict development on steep slopes exceeding 15%; review appropriate methods and revise regulations if necessary. Consider provisions that require preserving or relocating scenic resources such as stone walls, barns, and rustic fences. Discourage activities with negative visual impacts such as indiscriminate tree clearing. Enforce and improve existing outdoor lighting and fencing regulations.
- Continue to consider requesting state designation of sections of State highways as scenic roads to ensure that any alterations maintain their scenic character. Encourage further use of Washington's Scenic Road Ordinance to protect local roads.
- Expand the greenway trail network for pedestrian access and connect open space areas where appropriate. Replace roadway sections with off-road routes as opportunities become available. Pursue grant programs for greenway trail development.

- 3. ISSUE:** Washington has traditionally been a rural farming community, but local agriculture is threatened by farm economics and other factors. Our farms, the most visible components of the rural landscape, could be gone within the next 20 years.

GOAL: Washington should continue to encourage the preservation of farmlands and historically significant farm buildings.

STRATEGIES:

- Continue support for reduced local tax assessments on agricultural lands, whether owned or rented, through PA-490. Continue the use of agricultural conservation easements to protect farmland in perpetuity.
- Continue to use soil-based residential density regulations to conserve agricultural land by allowing smaller home sites in selected areas and preserving the bulk of the land for agricultural use, as permitted by the Zoning Regulations.

- 4. ISSUE:** Washington's numerous historic, architectural, and archeological assets are a key component of the community's rural character. The preservation of these buildings, sites, and artifacts can provide Washington with a sense of identity and stability, preserve community character, and enhance the Town's historical heritage.

GOAL: Washington should coordinate the preservation of historic, archaeological, and architectural resources through new and existing agencies.

STRATEGIES:

- Establish a Washington Historical Society under the auspices of the Gunn Historical Museum, and coordinate efforts with the State Historical Commission. Provide educational programs and technical assistance related to historic preservation to assist owners of historic resources.

- Maintain the three existing historic districts. Consider improving existing design review processes and their accompanying standards to ensure that new and existing architectural styles are compatible within historic districts.
- Adopt a demolition delay ordinance to help preserve historic dwellings, barns, stone walls, rustic fences, and archaeological sites. Modify zoning and subdivision regulations to require investigations of areas with archeological potential in order to collect and catalog additional information on settlement history.

ACTION AGENDA

NATURAL RESOURCES & OPEN SPACE

(The Goals and Strategies listed below are summarized; please refer to previous pages for specifics.)

GOAL ONE: Continue to maintain and protect natural resource areas.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Continue soil-based zoning policies and encourage conservation design subdivisions.	Zoning Commission (CC/PC)	Ongoing Effort
Continue to pursue 30% open space goal and coordinate efforts with Town agencies.	Conservation Commission (BOS/PC)	4-6 Year Implementation
Acquire outside open space funding resources. Continue use of PA-490.	Conservation Commission (BOS/BOF)	1-3 Year Implementation

GOAL TWO: Protect water quality for the Town.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Conduct regular water quality testing for key surface water bodies and wells.	Health Department (BOF/CC)	Immediate Implementation
Highlight the dangers of runoff, septic failure, clear cutting and the importance of wetlands. Reduce non-point pollution through zoning and design regulations.	Conservation Commission (HD//ZC/IWC)	1-3 Year Implementation
Monitor increasing development at Lake Waramaug; consider stricter coverage requirements.	Zoning Commission (IWC)	Ongoing Effort

GOAL THREE: Protect scenic assets, encourage scenic roads, and promote greenways.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Include scenic resources in development reviews; restrict development on steep slopes exceeding 15%; enforce and improve outdoor lighting and fencing regulations.	Zoning Commission (CC/PC)	4-6 Year Implementation
Continue to seek State scenic highway designations; encourage use of local Scenic Road Ordinance.	Conservation Commission (PC)	Ongoing Effort
Expand existing greenway network; replace roadway sections as possible.	Conservation Commission (PC)	Ongoing Effort

GOAL FOUR: Encourage the preservation of farmlands and farm buildings.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Continue support of PA-490; encourage agricultural easements and preserving farmland in perpetuity.	Conservation Commission (BOF/PC)	Ongoing Effort
Use soil-based zoning to conserve agricultural land by allowing small lots while preserving bulk of land.	Zoning Commission (PC)	4-6 Year Implementation

GOAL FIVE: Preserve historic, archaeological, and architectural resources.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Establish a Historical Society; coordinate efforts with State Historic Commission; provide education and assistance.	Board of Selectmen (HDC/PC)	4-6 Year Implementation
Maintain existing historic districts; consider improving existing design review processes.	Historic District Commission (ZC/PC)	Ongoing Effort
Adopt demolition delay ordinance; require investigations of areas with archaeological potential.	Board of Selectmen (PC/CC)	4-6 Year Implementation

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

7



Washington Fire House & Ambulance Association

A Plan of Conservation and Development must review the distribution, availability, condition, and capacity of a Town's community facilities and municipal infrastructure in order to meet the current and projected needs of residents and businesses. For this plan, community facilities are defined as public buildings (including schools, police and fire stations), public housing, community/senior centers, and general government facilities that serve the general or specific needs of the public and are the responsibility of the Town to maintain. In addition, facilities such as the Gunn Memorial Library, while operated by an independent board of trustees, must also be considered. Municipal infrastructure includes storm sewers and flood control structures, transportation infrastructure, public water supplies, dams, and solid waste disposal. Parks and recreation facilities are addressed in Appendix E. The following, along with Appendix E, presents an overview of the current inventory of community facilities and municipal infrastructure and identifies proposed improvements necessary to resolve existing problems and/or accommodate forecasted changes in development patterns.

Changes since the 2003 POCD

The 2003 POCD identified a number of vital community services and facilities and cited ongoing improvements to facilities, services, fire and emergency medical services, educational facilities, town roads, utilities, and telecommunications. This 2014 POCD has expanded these baseline areas by providing more detailed information on the operations of a variety of community facilities and services provided in the Town (see Appendix E). It has also added new goals and strategies to address present-day issues and potential impacts to the level of service or use of facilities in the Town over the next decade.

Status of 2003 POCD Goals and Recommended Actions

The 2003 POCD identified a number of goals and action steps that were applicable to the issues of community facilities and services. The following table summarizes these goals and action steps and the progress made to date in addressing each item.

2003 POCD Goals and Recommended Actions Applicable to Community Facilities	
2003 Goal	Status
Address public works storage requirements	Ongoing
Evaluate needs and available space for uses of Bryan Memorial Town Hall and other properties	Ongoing
Plan for long term recreational facility needs	Ongoing
Monitor elementary school capacity and anticipate future needs and uses of school facilities	Ongoing
Evaluate abandonment or discontinuance and restricted use options for unused roads	Ongoing
Plan road maintenance to preserve scenic character of Town roads	Ongoing
Evaluate and revise pavement management systems	Incomplete
Monitor potential need for alternative sewage treatment capacity in village areas and anticipate need to plan for future septic treatment requirements	Not Implemented
Continue long standing cooperation with private educational interests, but balance their needs with the interests of the Town and its residents	Ongoing
Consider developing townwide facility siting plan	Complete
Identify appropriate municipal representation before state tower siting proceedings; monitor and reevaluate zoning regulations for guidance	Ongoing
Expand dissemination of information on important Town issues through the Town website, newsletter, and public workshops	Ongoing
Support and publicize volunteer awards	Ongoing
Continue to support and nurture community spirit and civic pride	Ongoing

Specific Facility Needs and Potential Future Development

In terms of specific community facility needs, the Town of Washington has already addressed the present location of the Town Garage and the repairs to Bryan Memorial Town Hall following the fire and explosion, respectively, in 2012. The Town's facilities are generally adequate for the needs of the community at this time, and many minor additions to the Town's facilities and equipment are already accounted for in the Nonrecurring Capital Expenditures Fund. It should be noted that the ongoing restoration of the Town Hall will enable the use of an additional meeting room that will ameliorate scheduling conflicts.

Two potential capital improvement issues may surface in the next decade. First, improvements to the Town's Community/Senior Center will be needed due to the rapid aging of Washington's population that is projected to continue over the coming years. Upgrading this facility is crucial given the important role it plays in the community and the wide variety of popular programs and services that it offers. To this end, an independent group conducted a survey on the desires and future needs of the Community/Senior center and its programs. The primary findings of this survey, presented in April 2013, showed that there is demand for programs that cannot be accommodated at the existing facility and that Washington's growing senior population necessitates the consideration of an alternative facility. Second, whether or not a school district reconfiguration can be determined and agreed upon by the three towns in Region 12, it is possible that the Washington Primary School will no longer be used as an educational facility. If so, the Town will need to determine the appropriate use of this capital asset (see Appendix E).

A new build-out analysis of the Town was not performed as part of this Plan of Conservation and Development, although a build-out analysis was completed as part of the 2003 POCD. The 2003 analysis indicated that a maximum Town build out would result in a population ranging from 9,200 to 10,800 residents. If the Town were to grow to such a size, accommodating this increased population would almost certainly require significant changes to existing community facilities and services. However, Washington's population is projected to stagnate—or actually decline—in the foreseeable future. Housing development has been very limited over the past several years due to adverse economic and market conditions following the housing market peak in 2007. A rapid increase in Washington's population seems highly unlikely over the next decade, and any sizable increase in demand for new or expanded community facilities or services during this time period is also unlikely. Some programmatic changes in community services may be necessary as the demographics of Washington's population evolve, particularly in terms of services for an aging population.

ISSUES, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

- 1. ISSUE:** Although Washington is a small rural community with limited general government service needs, it must continue to provide critical core services.

GOAL: Washington must maintain its small but dynamic Town Hall staff, ensure adequate police, fire, and emergency medical services, and provide for both the current and projected needs of government facilities.

STRATEGIES:

- Maintain current level of government services; expand economic development capabilities by hiring a new Economic Development Director.
- Continue to maintain the high level of fire, police and emergency medical service currently available in Town through proactive hiring and recruitment. Support upgrades for personal protection equipment and vehicular assets for first responders. Improve cellular communications throughout the Town to provide increased safety.
- Assess the physical plants of all Town facilities and proactively address necessary repairs or expansions needed to stay current with the Town's needs. Reach consensus on the future use of the former Town Garage site.

- 2. ISSUE:** Demographic changes in Washington such as the rapid aging of the community, stagnant population growth, and the declining public school enrollment will have significant implications for Town facilities.

GOAL: Washington must tailor its government and community services and facilities to match the changing demographics of the Town.

STRATEGIES:

- Evaluate community services and facilities to ensure that they are meeting the changing needs of the Town's population. Offer programs and services that are attractive to younger adults, families with children, and senior citizens to foster demographic balance.
- Work with the Region 12 School District and its member towns to arrive at a logical and fiscally prudent solution to the reconfiguration of school facilities in the face of declining enrollments. It must be stressed that maintaining the current configuration is not a viable long-term option and thus not in Washington's best interest.
- Pursue all possible educational opportunities, programs, scenarios, and services that could prepare Washington's school children for the 21st century, including those that may not require or involve the present region as configured.

ACTION AGENDA

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

(The Goals and Strategies listed below are summarized; please refer to previous pages for specifics.)

GOAL ONE: Maintain staff, ensure emergency services, and provide adequate facilities.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Maintain current level of services; hire new Economic Development Director.	Board of Selectmen (BOF)	Immediate Implementation
Continue to maintain emergency services; support equipment upgrades; improve cellular communications.	Board of Selectmen (BOF/WVFD)	Ongoing Effort
Assess physical plants of Town facilities. Reach consensus on future use of old Town Garage site.	Board of Selectmen (BPC/PC)	1-3 Year Implementation

GOAL TWO: Tailor services and facilities to meet changing Town demographics.

STRATEGIES	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY)	TIME FRAME
Evaluate community services and facilities; offer programs for younger people, families, and seniors.	ELD/P&R (BOS/BOF)	4-6 Year Implementation
Work with Region 12 to reach logical and fiscally prudent reconfiguration solution.	Board of Selectmen (BOF)	Immediate Implementation
Pursue all possible educational scenarios, including those that may not require present region.	Board of Selectmen (BOF)	1-3 Year Implementation

ELD – Municipal Agent for the Elderly
P&R – Parks & Recreation Commission

EXISTING ZONING AND LAND USE

8

EXISTING LAND USE IN WASHINGTON

The Town of Washington is primarily comprised of single-family residential properties and undeveloped land. Of the Town's total parceled area of 24,136 acres (not including streets and roads), approximately 12,505 acres are dedicated to single-family residential use and 4,820 acres are designated as undeveloped land. There are only 17 properties with 94 acres of land designated as either multi-family residential or condominium development. Agricultural land comprises 2,456 acres, or just over 10% of the Town's parceled land. The small amount of commercial and industrial land is generally confined to the village centers, with a total commercial land area of 147 acres and only 5 acres of industrial land. Various public and private institutional uses totaling 846 acres are scattered throughout the Town. Washington also has 2,833 acres designated as parks and open space, and State-owned land accounts for 354 acres.

EXISTING ZONING IN WASHINGTON

Washington has adopted and effectively implemented soil-based zoning to manage and guide development in the community. This type of zoning determines the density at which new development may occur based on the amount and characteristics of soil types found on a given site. Soil-based zoning helps to assure that impacts from new development do not exceed the capacity of the land to absorb them. In 2000, Washington received an award from the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association for enhancements to its zoning regulations that encouraged residential development patterns more responsive to environmental land use considerations.

It should be noted that the figures provided in this section for acreage within each zone designation include only those properties that lie completely within the boundaries of a single zone. The Town of Washington has 148 properties that are split by two different zones, comprising approximately 1,200 acres. Washington has designated three zoning districts for residential development. The Farming and Residential (R-1) district comprises 21,420 acres or 88.7% of the total parceled land area. The Lake Waramaug Residential (R-3) district contains approximately 1,220 acres. The Washington Green (R-2) district is a special residential district comprising only 3.1 acres.

Four separate business zones are located in the Marbledale, New Preston, Washington Depot, and Woodville village centers. These districts combine to occupy 296 acres, or 1.2% of the total parceled land area of Washington.

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL IN WASHINGTON

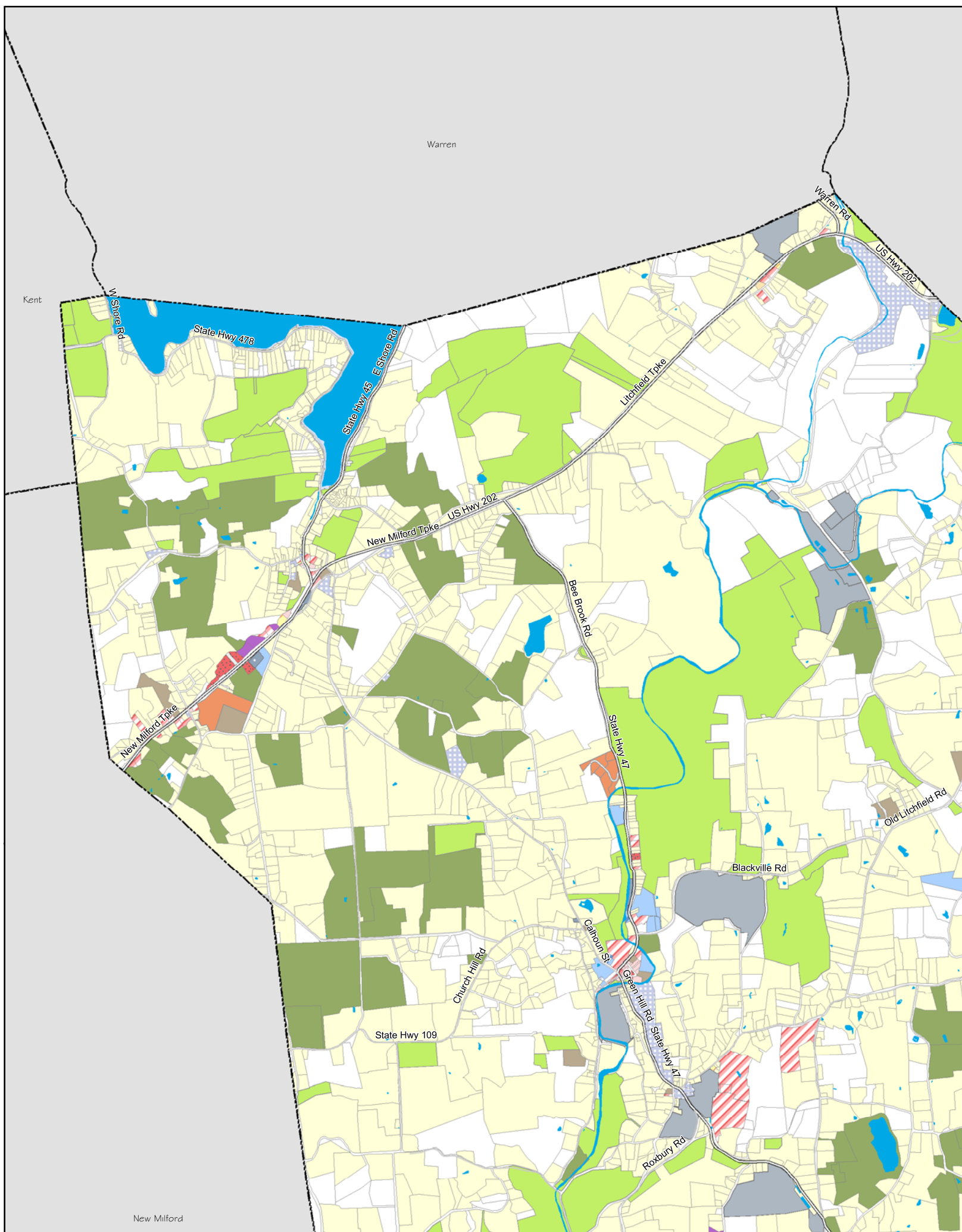
The Washington *ad hoc* Conservation Committee, as part of the *2000 Natural Resource Inventory Report and Recommendations*, calculated the potential total residential build out of the Town based on the soil-based zoning regulations then in effect. The Report indicated that there are approximately 24,727 acres of land in Washington. Based on this figure, 8,103 acres were deducted because they consisted of protected open space, wetlands, watercourses, and slopes in excess of 25 percent. The Report estimated that the various soil types of the remaining land could eventually support a total of approximately 4,400 building lots; 2,069 lots existed when the analysis was done.

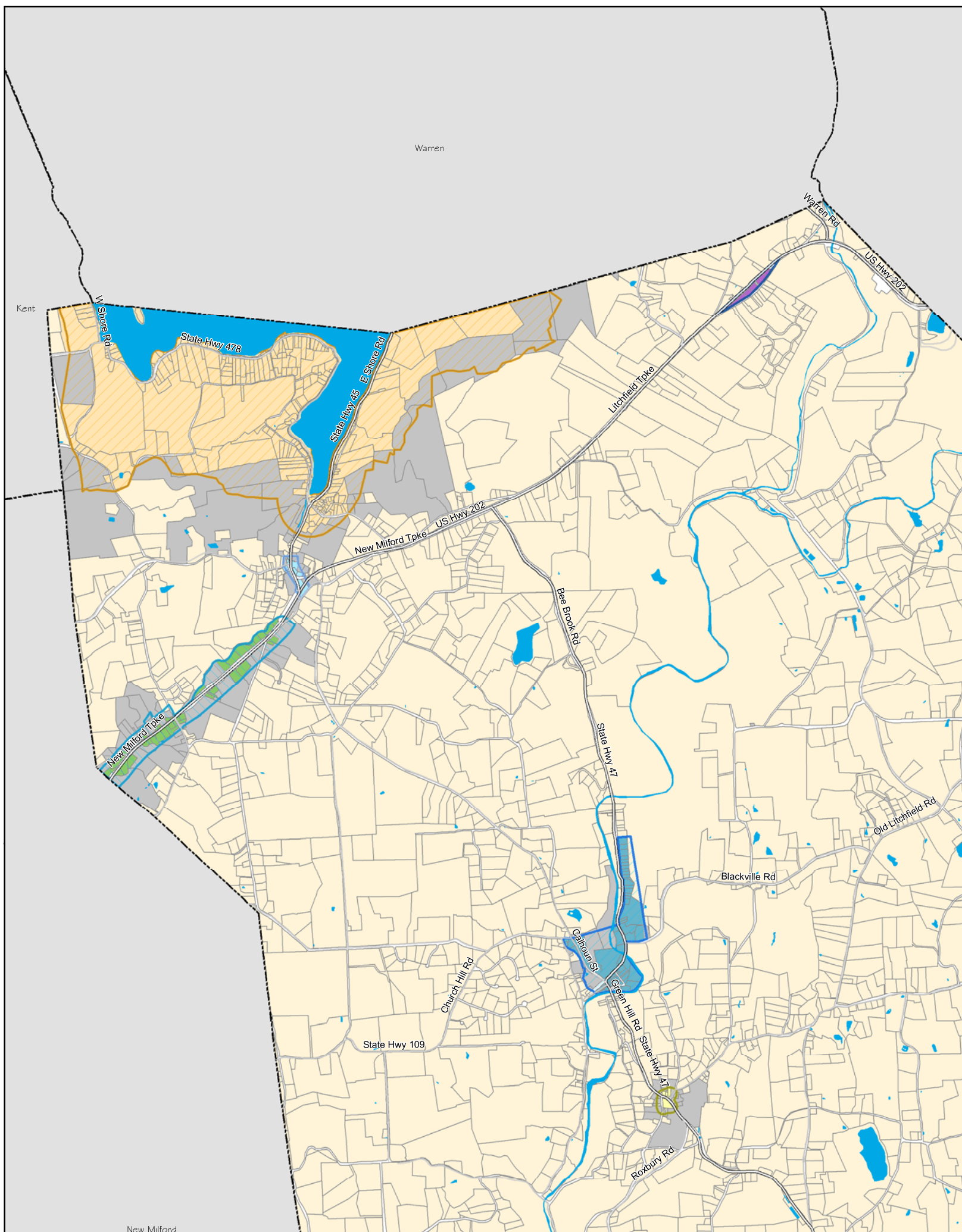
The 2010 Census indicates that over 21.5% of the housing units in Washington are held for seasonal or occasional use. If this percentage were to remain constant, then the ultimate year-round population of the community could approach 7,840 residents under current zoning and subdivision regulations. However, if all housing units were fully occupied at the current per-unit average size of 2.27 persons, then the ultimate year-round population of Washington could potentially grow to almost 10,000 residents.

Another factor that will influence the ultimate population of Washington is the current trend of large-lot development that reflects the value that current and new residents place on homes sited on large acreage lots. This trend, if continued, would reduce the estimated ultimate population but exacerbate the limited housing diversity.



Lake Waramaug from the Pinnacle





CONCEPTUAL FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

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The Conceptual Future Land Use Plan contains a variety of land use categories that address location, density, and current conditions. The map is a graphic representation of the structural, zoning, and land use issues, recommendations, and strategies presented in this POCD. While this is neither the Town's Plan nor is it a recommended zoning map, it provides an overview of some of the critical issues that may be illustrated by categories on such a map. It is expected that this map will evolve and develop as the community proceeds through the implementation process. It should be noted that there are individual properties that may have a land use different from the category on the map; this is unavoidable in a built-out community with small parcels. The intent of the Conceptual Future Land Use Plan is to present desirable land use patterns that can guide future change. Existing land uses are not affected by the map.

Residential: Single Family

These areas encompass properties that have single-family homes as permitted under the R-1, R-2, and R-3 zones. Properties in the R-1 zone may also include accessory agricultural uses that have been designated as one of the PA-490 land categories for taxation purposes, but the use of the land is still defined by its primary role of providing single-family housing for Town residents.

Residential: Condominium

These properties include higher density, attached housing developments existing under a common ownership agreement. There are two such properties currently in Town: Quarry Ridge in Marbledale and Bee Brook just north of Washington Depot.

Residential: Apartment/Multi-family

These properties provide four or more residential units for occupancy on one parcel. A small number of these properties are scattered throughout the Town, primarily in or near the Washington Depot, Marbledale, Washington Green, and New Preston village centers.

Educational

The Educational land use classification indicates properties owned and/or operated as private or public school facilities. These include the Rumsey Hall School, the Gunnery, the Glenholme School, the Washington Montessori School, and the Region 12 School District, which includes the Washington Primary School site and the Shepaug Valley School campus.

Parks and Open Space

This land use designation is assigned to properties that are currently held as open space, whether in private or public ownership. Existing open space includes active and passive recreation and open space areas, parks, playgrounds, ball fields, and land trust properties.

Industrial

The Industrial land use designation is intended for parts of Washington where a variety of manufacturing, fabrication, distribution, and warehousing uses are appropriate. This designation generally reflects the current manufacturing usage of land in Washington.

Agricultural

This land use designation denotes tracts that are used primarily for agricultural purposes.

Private Institution

This category includes cemeteries, churches, and other private institutional properties.

Public Service/Infrastructure

This land use category includes Town-owned facilities such as fire stations and other municipal facilities, as well as public infrastructure such as the transfer station and the Town Garage.

State Property

This land use designation refers to property owned by the State of Connecticut.

Undeveloped Land

Land classified as undeveloped land is generally zoned as R-I Farming and Residential and is available for future residential development or open space preservation.

THE VILLAGES

The designated village areas are intended for a mix of uses, including but not limited to residential, retail, office, and institutional uses that collectively support a traditional village built-form environment, promote consistency with LEED development principles, and create an atmosphere conducive to economic sustainability. In terms of guidance for possible future modifications to the Town of Washington's Zoning Map, the village areas are intended to be the areas where the Planning and Zoning Commissions will determine the exact boundaries of the commercial/mixed-use zoning districts that underlie each village center. Somewhat higher densities of population and housing, consistent with zoning, soil conditions, and existing or proposed septic capacity, should be permitted in these areas.

Washington Depot

The Washington Depot village area is envisioned as a center for mixed-use development. Retail and office space, single-family residential, mixed-use properties, and government and institutional uses combine to create a compact village core for this area. The development of multi-family housing consistent with soil conditions and septic capacity is also encouraged in this area in a manner appropriate for this village center.

Marbledale

Like Washington Depot, the Marbledale village area is envisioned as an area for compact, mixed-use development in a traditional village format. The goal for this area is to utilize the excellent access provided by Route 202 without permitting the area to develop in an auto-centric development pattern. Retail and office space, single-family residential, multi-family residential, mixed-use properties, institutional uses, and potentially light industrial uses are all compatible uses for this area.

New Preston

While smaller than the other villages, the New Preston village area is still intended to be home to a mix of commercial and residential uses that mutually support one another. Future development in this area is expected to be limited, but the goal is to maintain a small but vibrant center of activity with a particular focus on a pedestrian-oriented development pattern. Like Washington Depot, development of multi-family housing consistent with soil conditions and septic capacity is also encouraged in this area as appropriate.

Washington Green

The Washington Green village area is intended as a mix of low-density residential and institutional land uses, with a very limited amount of existing commercial development or uses. This particular village area is not envisioned as an area for extensive future development, but rather to retain its existing character as the historic center of the Town; it should remain consistent with the development types and patterns permitted under the R-2 Washington Green zoning district and the surrounding historic district.

Woodville

The Woodville village area encompasses an area of northeastern Washington intended for a mix of single-family residential, light commercial, and institutional uses. The development of two- to four-family housing, consistent with soil conditions and septic capacity, is also encouraged in this area as appropriate.

