

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PUBLIC FORUM



TUESDAY, JULY 29, 2008
WESTERLY MIDDLE SCHOOL
10 Sandy Hill Road • 6:30 PM

To Review a Proposed Draft of
VISION • GOALS & OBJECTIVES • POLICIES



INTRODUCTION

The Vision, Goals and Objectives of the Comprehensive Plan provide a framework to guide conservation, development and change in the Town of Westerly. They set a standard for the Town and its residents to meet and provide a benchmark for evaluating the progress of Plan implementation.

To assure a sustainable future, Westerly Town government will engage itself and its residents in responsibly managing growth to protect and enhance the quality of life for current and future residents. It will achieve this ambition through the application of the Goals and Objectives that follow. These goals are supportive of and consistent with the goals of the Land Use 2025: Rhode Island's State Land Use Policies and Plan.

VISION

The vision statement crafted for the Westerly Comprehensive Plan embraces several challenges. It is brief and to the point, though attaining its objective may be more complicated and involved than Westerly residents and taxpayers would wish.

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

The Comprehensive Plan is a vision of the future for the Town of Westerly. It includes policies and projects to implement the Future Land Use Plan and the vision. It is a guide to land use decision-making in Westerly. An equally important function of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide a framework for guiding decision-making within the context of the vision of the future crafted by the Comprehensive Plan.

Statewide Planning in Rhode Island requires communities to revisit and update their plans every five years. These revisions should reflect changes in the economic, demographic, social and other aspects of the community and should incorporate changing goals, objectives and policies. The five-year review is the time to accommodate changes in philosophy or direction.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The Goals and Objectives provide a framework to guide development and change in Westerly. They set a standard for the Town and its residents to meet and provide a benchmark for evaluating the growth of the town.

Goals should be broad, declarative, general, overarching, umbrella statements. On the other hand, Objectives are more specific and are designed to implement the Goals. They should be strategic; directly related to their respective Goals; serve as the basis for the Policies; and able to guide evaluation of the Plan

Goals and Objectives are based on the entirety of what is learned through the Comprehensive Plan process and everything that is contained in the Plan. This includes the Plan inventory with guidance from the public.



GOAL 1

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

- Objective 1. Protect and conserve the natural beauty of Westerly's setting and natural environment.
- Objective 2. Ensure natural resources considerations are paramount in any development proposal.
- Objective 3. Foster awareness of and protect and develop appropriate access to the community's natural resources for enjoyment and recreation.
- Objective 4. Promote land use decisions that encourage the protection and sustainable use of the Town's natural resources.
- Objective 5. Conserve Westerly's existing and investigate future potential ground water sources.
- Objective 6. Support a comprehensive groundwater protection strategy.

GOAL 2

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

- Objective 1. Explore strategies that support access to shore, river, and local businesses.
- Objective 2. Provide safe alternatives that reduce dependency on motor vehicles and promote a healthy lifestyle.
- Objective 3. Ensure that traffic safety and efficient flow are necessary considerations in approval of any development plan.
- Objective 4. Continue a program of roadway drainage and sidewalk replacement and maintenance.

GOAL 3

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

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

GOAL 4

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

- Objective 1. Seek diversity and sustainability in the economy.
- Objective 2. Focus economic development efforts on helping locally-owned businesses prosper.
- Objective 3. Encourage entrepreneurial activities, especially those with potential for bringing well-paying, knowledge-based jobs to the community.
- Objective 4. Attract and retain high quality workforce and employment opportunities.
- Objective 5. Provide quality public school education and expand opportunities for all residents seeking higher education and technical skills for job advancement and greater earning potential.



GOAL 5

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

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

GOAL 6

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

- Objective 1. Promote approaches to growth management to better conserve infrastructure, land and natural resources.
- Objective 2. Provide wastewater treatment to prevent unsanitary conditions; and carefully prioritize expansion of the service area of the existing plant.
- Objective 3. Continue a program of reduction of groundwater infiltration into the sewer system.
- Objective 4. Consider the investment in infrastructure to foster economic development including water, waste water treatment and well-site development.

GOAL 7

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

- Objective 1. Promote aesthetic qualities of residential and commercial development consistent with the Town's history and culture.
- Objective 2. Ensure that Westerly's historic districts develop in accordance with superior design that reflects the historic character of each.
- Objective 3. Incorporate design principles where appropriate to improve housing choices, transportation, & commuting availability.
- Objective 4. Encourage sustainability.
- Objective 5. Discourage further commercial sprawl.
- Objective 6. Work with land owners and other stakeholders to identify and preserve, as appropriate, cultural, archeological, and historic resources



GOAL 8

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

- Objective 1. Promote a culture where land-use regulations and decisions applying such regulations are evaluated in reference to the potential impact upon these four key elements and upon Westerly's quality of life and economy.
- Objective 2. In municipal decision-making, consider the implications of decisions' impacts on available infrastructure, protection of natural resources, the preservation of historical features and availability and safety of transportation alternatives as they relate to each of four key elements.
- Objective 3. Establish a strategy to extend the length of stay of vacationers and tourists, increasing their positive economic contribution to the community and reducing their negative impact on infrastructure and municipal services.
- Objective 4. Encourage development that supports a broad spectrum of seasonal residences throughout the community, providing a range of housing alternatives and value and helping to secure Westerly's significant seasonal-resident tax base.
- Objective 5. While making the opportunity to enjoy Westerly's attributes available to tourists, also ensure that doing so does not exclude or unduly hamper local residents and taxpayers from using and enjoying the community's natural and cultural resources.

GOAL 9

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

- Objective 1. Recognize that Westerly's Hospital, the Library, and its volunteer ambulance and fire departments are critical to Westerly's future.
- Objective 2. Support future school facility decisions that are based on intensive student population forecasts and consideration of the capacity of current facilities and their condition.
- Objective 3. Continue to support the activities of non-profit organizations which contribute to Westerly's quality of life.

GOAL 10

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

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



POLICIES

The policies for the Comprehensive Plan are based upon the goals and objectives and are applied to all of the elements of the Plan. The policies reflect the goals and objectives that are themselves based upon the public's input into the planning process. The policies set the framework for the implementation of the vision represented in the goals and objectives.

The policies are:

1. The Town's conservation, development and annual and long-term financial choices shall be guided by the basic principle of balancing economic prosperity for all its citizens and preserving its irreplaceable natural and cultural resources.
2. Commercial growth and economic progress are important to Westerly's future and should be encouraged in harmony with the Town's residential, historic and environmental character.
3. The Town's ordinances must clearly identify the specific responsibilities of the Town Planner, the Planning Board and the Town Council for developing, implementing and updating the Comprehensive Plan.
4. The Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee shall continue to meet at least semi-annually to assess status of recommended Actions, advise on priorities, and identify emerging issues and trends that may impact the Plan. The Committee shall report, with the Town Planner, to the Planning Board on at least an annual basis.
5. It is recognized that the quality of mapping in the Comprehensive Plan is inadequate due to the lack of a Town Geographic Information System (GIS). The GIS mapping capability currently being contracted by the Town should be incorporated into the Plan as soon as possible; and the Town must continue to allocate adequate resources annually to maintain and improve this capability which is essential to the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.
6. There shall be clearly defined responsibilities within Town government for an Economic Development Officer with special focus on relevant Objectives and Actions in the Comprehensive Plan.
7. On an annual basis, the Town Council should convene a meeting of officials of the seven Fire Districts to discuss fire district issues and activities with implications for the Comprehensive Plan.
8. Recognize that implementation of the Comprehensive Plan requires that the Town maintain a sound financial condition and that decisions regarding conservation, development, facility construction and maintenance, and infrastructure shall always be evaluated for future financial impact.
9. The Town shall encourage on a continuing basis the recycling and conservation of energy, water and other environmental resources.