

9 | LAND USE

Overview

As Barrington approaches build-out, with few parcels that can support new growth, the Town is facing critical issues integrally related to land use planning. These include:

- Providing housing options for an aging population and adding to the affordable housing stock.
- Mitigating impacts of rising sea levels in areas near Barrington's extensive shoreline and low-lying inland areas.
- Growing the non-residential tax base.
- Preserving community character as pressure mounts to redevelop lots in established neighborhoods and build in areas without adequate infrastructure.
- Providing adequate municipal, school and recreational facilities.
- Protecting environmentally sensitive areas.
- Retaining farming as a viable use in town.

As the list above suggests, the use of land is inherently tied to the other elements of the Comprehensive Community Plan, and the goals described for each of these elements is naturally a reflection of the goals and priorities of the community.

Existing Conditions

Current Land Use

Existing land use in Barrington is depicted in **Map LU-1** and **Table 1** (next page) both of which are based on 2011 land use data as mapped by RIGIS. Residential is the dominant land use in Barrington, comprising more than half of the total land area within the town limits. Commercial acreage (2.2 percent), mostly concentrated in the County Road commercial district, represents a much smaller share of the Town's overall land use pattern.

Industrial sites are non-existent. Since the mid-1990s, all of the remaining land that had been



used historically for industrial purposes has been converted to other uses. This is due to the redevelopment of two industrial sites on Bay Spring Avenue into senior housing developments in the mid- to late-1990s: the former RI Lace Works site (now Bay Spring Village Assisted Living) and the former Pilling Chain Mill (now Barrington Cove Apartments). Both sites were rezoned to Elderly Housing.

Institutional uses (2.8 percent of total land area) include public schools and municipal facilities, and religious institutions. The largest institutional landholders include St. Andrews School and the Town. The buildings at the former Zion Bible Institute campus at Middle Highway and Primrose Hill Road remain vacant; however, the owner in 2014 presented conceptual plans to redevelop the site as a senior residential community.

Although it is perceived to be nearly completely developed, the town has a large amount of land utilized as open space, including active recreation and conservation areas. For example, the Town has more than 200 acres of developed recreation land, including the golf course at the RI Country Club. The category also includes Town-owned parks and athletic/play fields associated with educational institutions.

A significant amount of acreage consists of permanently protected conservation parcels—including environmentally sensitive areas and critical wildlife habitat. Barrington has 645 acres of open space on parcels protected from future development; approximately 510 acres of open space are unprotected.¹ (this total includes forested wetlands, but not approximately 217 acres of coastal and other types of wetland listed separately in Table 1).

Table 1: Barrington Land Use

Land Use	Acres	% of Total
Commercial/Mixed Use	119.31	2.2%
Institutional	148.28	2.8%
Residential - Total	2,843.71	52.9%
Low Density Residential (>2 acre lots)	21.98	0.4%
Medium Low Density Residential (1 to 2 acre lots)	20.93	0.4%
Medium Density Residential (1 to 1/4 acre lots)	1,610.73	30.0%
Medium High Density Residential (1/4 to 1/8 acre lots)	1,122.96	20.9%
High Density Residential (<1/8 acre lots)	67.12	1.2%
Transportation	31.27	0.6%
Waste Disposal	13.36	0.2%
Developed Recreation	217.11	4.0%
Cemeteries	19.16	0.4%
Conservation/Open Space	644.61	12.0%
Undeveloped (unprotected)	509.04	9.5%
Agriculture	199.34	3.7%
Wetland*	440.90	8.2%
Water	190.05	3.5%
Total Acreage	5,376.15	100.0%

*Wetland: The 2011 RIGIS land use data identified wetland areas as “visibly grassy or vegetated areas often near or adjacent to open water bodies or streams and or visibly scoured areas that may be associated with tidal flow or flooding.” Forested wetlands are treated as forest types in the data, are categorized on Map LU-1 and in this table as either *Conservation/Open Space* or *Undeveloped (unprotected)*.

Source: RIGIS - 2011 Land Use Data

Wetland areas identified in the State's land use coverage total 440 acres—which, as noted above, excludes forested wetlands and other types that are not near water bodies or streams or in areas susceptible to tidal flow or flooding. (For a complete inventory of wetland types, all of which total 955 acres, see Table 1 in the Natural and Cultural Resources element.)

The final category, water bodies, constitutes all the open water within the Town's land area, including those within the low-lying marshland around Hundred Acre Cove. The largest interior water body in Barrington is Brickyard Pond which is about 106 acres, more than half of the total acreage for all water bodies. Brickyard Pond is followed in size by Echo Lake (25 acres), and Prince's Pond (9 acres).

Residential Density

Shown on the land use map is residential use depicted for 2011 at various density levels. These categories are:

- *High Density Residential* (less than 1/8-acre lots) High density areas are primarily in western Barrington with some areas located near Barrington Beach. Overall, just 1.2 percent of land area in Barrington falls in this category.
- *Medium High Density Residential* (1/8-acre to 1/4-acre lots). Almost 21 percent of the town falls within this residential density range. Examples: Roberta Plat and the Maple Avenue area.
- *Medium Density Residential* (1 to 4 houses per acre). This density is consistent with the lot area requirements of the three single-family housing zones—Residence 10 zone (10,000-square-foot minimum lot size), Residence 25 (25,000-square-foot minimum) and the Residence-40 zone (40,000-square-foot minimum). About 30 percent of land in

town is categorized “medium density” residential. Much of the residential land in Hampden Meadows, Nayatt Point and Rumstick Point is in this category.

- *Medium Low Density Residential* (1 house per 1 to 2 acres) and *Low Density Residential* (>2 acre lots). Areas include residential land between Adams Point Road and the Warren River (zoned R25). Just 0.8 percent of all land falls within these categories.

These numbers suggest the vast majority of existing residential areas in Barrington are within the medium-density to medium-high density range.

Zoning Districts

Map LU-2 depicts the town's zoning districts. The zoning ordinance has four residential zones: R-40-Conservation Development, R-40, R-25, and R-10, with single-family cluster developments allowed within the R-40 and R-25 Districts. (Currently there are no R-40 cluster developments.) Barrington also has a Business (B), Neighborhood Business (NB), Waterfront Business (WB), Elderly Housing (EH), Limited Manufacturing (LM), Government & Institutional (O&I), Open Space-Active (OS-A), Open Space-Passive (OS-P), Conservation (C) and Wildlife Refuge (WR) Districts.

The bulk of the land in Barrington is zoned for single-family residential (approximately 3,366 acres) with the Residence 25 District encompassing the most land area among the three residential districts (see **Table 2**, next page). Following residential, the largest zoning categories in terms of land area are those where residential and commercial uses are prohibited: Open Space-Active, Open Space-Passive, Conservation and Wildlife Refuge Districts.

For the remaining designations there are only approximately 136 acres of land zoned for business, 27.6 acres zoned for waterfront busi-

¹ These totals include forested wetlands (categorized as forest in the State's land use data). For more information see the wetland note in Table 1 on the previous page.

ness and just 4.8 acres zoned for manufacturing. The Recreation and Education zoning district, which encompasses a range of uses including public and private schools and golf courses, covers another large area of town, approximately 428 acres, with the RI Country Club the largest contiguous RE-zoned area.

Barrington’s predominant land use, single-family residential lots, is reflective of the zoning that has evolved over time. Zoning requires at least 10,000, 25,000 or 40,000 square feet per

house lot. With the exception of the two Elderly Housing districts, multifamily housing currently is not permitted in any zone except in the form of mixed-use development in the Business and Neighborhood Business zones.

Nonconforming Lots

Historically, Barrington allowed for a wide range of lot sizes, a much different development pattern than currently permitted. For example, the 1926 Zoning Map, the first for Bar-

Table 2: Zoning Districts—2014

Zoning District, with Definition	Acreage
Business. (B) Areas forming the basic pattern of retail and service business serving the community, including mixed-use commercial structures.	57.9
Neighborhood Business (NB). Areas where business uses are permitted and are in character and scale with proximate residential uses. Intended for less intensive commercial and retail activities.	78.3
Waterfront Business (WB). Areas for business enterprises requiring or appropriate for waterfront or shoreline locations.	27.6
Limited Manufacturing (LM). Areas suitable for future development of manufacturing uses.	4.8
Government & Institutional (GI). Sites that contain governmental buildings of the Town, State and Federal government or their agencies.	29.3
Elderly Housing. Areas for multi-unit housing for persons 62 years or older, or for persons with disabilities.	8.8
Residence 10 (R-10). Areas suitable for development at approximately four dwelling units per acre.	963.2
Residence 25 (R-25). Areas suitable for residential density of approximately two dwelling units per acre.	1,869.0
Residence 25C and R-40C. R-40 and R-25 Districts that have been rezoned for clustered housing.	28.3
Residence 40 (R-40). Areas suitable for residential use at one dwelling unit per acre.	430.8
Residence 40-Conservation Development (R-40CD). R-40 areas rezoned to permit construction of projects based on the principles of conservation development.	75.0
Recreation & Education (RE). Areas used for public and private educational institutions and active public and private recreational activities.	428.2
Open Space-Active (OS-A). Areas maintained for active public use, including all permitted types of active outdoor recreation.	193.5
Open Space-Passive (OS-P). Publicly owned open space maintained for non-intensive recreational uses and activities, or privately owned open space not suited for further development.	366.3
Conservation (C). Freshwater and coastal wetland areas, and other environmentally sensitive land or natural areas which are in public ownership, or owned by a private organization for the purpose of maintaining it in its natural condition and/or protecting a plant or animal habitat area.	637.0
Wildlife Refuge (WR). Land preserved and managed for purpose of protecting important animal species habitat areas; it includes both Town-owned land and land held by private organizations.	209.6
Total	5,407.6

Source: Town GIS data, Zoning Ordinance

rington, included zones requiring as little as 2,000 square feet per lot, and allowing for multi-family (2,000 square feet of lot area per family) and “double-cottages.”

The presence of a wide variety of lot sizes across Barrington today reflects the zones established on previously adopted zoning maps. For example, many, if not most, of the lots in Bay Spring are smaller than 10,000 square feet; however, the existing R-10 zone in place in Bay Spring requires that amount of land per lot. As a result, many of the houses are on non-conforming lots due to a lack of minimum land area, and the fact that setbacks are more stringent today than in the past means that even small additions to a house can require applying for dimensional variances from the Zoning Board of Review.

Town-wide, undersized lots are scattered throughout the Residence 10 and Residence 25 zones. As **Maps LU-3** through **LU-5** show, undersized lots tend to be concentrated not only in the Bay Spring area, but also the Maple Avenue area (R10 zone) and Ferry Lane (R25). There are relatively few undersized lots in the R40 zone.

Development Trends

Housing

Building permit data (discussed in greater detail in the Housing & Neighborhoods element) reflect periods of strength and weakness in the real estate market. For example, the town hit peaks of more than 80 units per year in 1987 and 1988 before tapering off to about 20 units per year in the mid-1990s on the heels of a recession. Until the 2000s, there was almost no multifamily development in Barrington in the 1980s and 1990s. One exception was the 60-unit Barrington Cove Apartments on Bay Spring Avenue built in 1996. In addition, Atria Bay Spring Assisted Living, built in 1999, added 126 assisted living units.

In the mid-2000s, developers began taking advantage of the Town’s Zoning Ordinance amendments adopted in 2000 allowing for

mixed-use development, with apartments above first-floor commercial space. The largest multifamily development in recent years, Sweetbriar on Washington Road, added 46 two-family and townhouse-style units—approved through the comprehensive permit process. Another 10 duplex-style units, built in 2008 on a lot adjacent to Sweetbriar in the Neighborhood Business zone, also were approved under the Comprehensive Permit process.

While there has been some multifamily construction in Barrington, since 1980 the preponderance of new housing has been in the form of single-family detached houses. A total of 1,122 housing units were built from 1980 to 2013, of which 988 (88 percent) were single-family houses. The largest single-family development in recent years is the Atlantic Crossing subdivision on Northwest Passage off Upland Way, consisting of 18 single family lots approved in 2001. Two 10-lot subdivisions have received Planning Board approvals—next to Lavin’s Marina (under construction) and the Bluemead Farm subdivision on Chachapacasset Road (final plan approval pending.)

The Town could add 200 to 300 additional units in the next few years, with two projects before the Planning Board. One is the 40-unit Palmer Pointe affordable housing multifamily development on Sowams Road, which was granted master plan approval in 2013. In 2014, the Board began reviewing a conceptual master plan for a senior residential development at the former Zion Bible Institute campus—which would add more than 200 independent living units, in multi-family buildings and in senior “cottages,” as well as assisted living and memory care units.

Non-Residential

The Economic Development section discusses commercial development in greater detail. The largest commercial developments in recent years have involved redevelopment and up-

grades of existing properties. New standalone commercial buildings are rare. Since 2010, there has been just two such structures—a bank built on a former car dealership parking lot and a building for AAA with space for a second commercial tenant. Both of these buildings are on County Road.

Off County Road, mixed-use development is more common. For example, a developer built two mixed-use buildings in 2013 on Wood Avenue—a street parallel to County Road that is slated for streetscape improvements in 2015. Other mixed-use projects were built in the mid-2000s, including two buildings with 12 commercial spaces and 12 apartments on Bay Spring Avenue, and a building on Maple Avenue with three commercial and three residential units.

Recent expansions of institutional uses have included the Bayside YMCA (now 36,000 square feet), and school buildings at St. Andrew’s and Barrington Christian Academy. The School Department’s plans for a new Middle

School call for the school to remain at its current location on Middle Highway. It was determined that a suitable alternative site is not available in town.

Demographic Trends

Included within this section are a summary of the 2010 Census for Barrington, and a review of projections done by the State Department of Administration to the year 2040. The Housing Element includes a detailed discussion of these data as well.

2010 Census

The 2010 census revealed Barrington had lost population, which decreased by 509 people compared to 2000. The town experienced the drop in numbers despite an increase of 187 housing units. Factors in the population loss include a drop of 76 in household-occupied houses, which on average have more people per household (2.80) compared to rental units (2.13). In addition, the number of vacant hous-

Table 3: 2010 Census Summary—Barrington, Bristol County, Rhode Island

	Barrington		Bristol County		R.I.
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent
Total population	16,310		49,875		
Male	7,804	47.8%	23,951	48.0%	48.3%
Female	8,506	52.2%	25,924	52.0%	51.7%
Median age (years)	44.1	(X)	42.9	(X)	(X)
Under 5 years	735	5.9%	2,179	4.4%	4.4%
20 years and over	11,422	70.0%	37,590	75.4%	75.1%
65 years and over	2,393	14.7%	8,343	16.7%	14.4%
Race					
White	15,449	94.7%	47,752	95.7%	81.4%
Black or African American	80	0.5%	398	0.8%	5.7%
American Indian and Alaska Native	21	0.1%	80	0.2%	0.6%
Asian	451	2.8%	716	1.4%	2.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	3	0.0%	0.1%
Some other race	64	0.4%	185	0.4%	6.0%
Two or more races	245	1.5%	741	1.5%	3.3%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	333	2.0%	989	2.0%	12.4%

Source: US Census Bureau

ing units increased by 204 units, for a total of 392, as measured by the 2010 census. The number of renter-occupied units—which would include the 47-unit Sweetbriar development — increased by 59.

Table 3 (previous page) contains a breakdown of the 2010 census by ethnic group for Barrington, Bristol County and the State. In 2010, the Barrington's 16,310 residents were as follows: 94.7 percent white, 0.5 percent black, 2.8 percent Asian and about 1.9 percent other. These are approximately the same percentages as all of Bristol County, but vary from those for the state, which has a lower percent of white (81.4 percent) and higher percentages of the other ethnic groups. In addition, there are 333 people of Hispanic origin in Barrington, or 2.0 percent of the total population—almost double the number from 2000. Hispanics make up about 12.4 percent of the state population.

The Town's population is nearly a third of Bristol County's but only 1.6 percent of the state's population. In terms of its age distribution, the aging of the Baby Boomers is pushing up the Town's median age, from 40.2 years in 2000 to 44.1 years just 10 years later. The percentage of people 65 years and older in 2000 (14.7 percent) was approximately the same share as in the 2010 census. However, as more Baby Boomers reach retirement age, the number of residents in this age bracket is bound to increase.

Population Projections

Population projections completed by the Office of Statewide Planning of the State Department

of Administration project that the town's population will decrease from 16,310 in 2010 to 15,569 in 2040, or approximately 740 people (4.5 percent). The projections suggest that Warren will experience a sharper decline in population (a decrease of 14 percent) than Barrington over the next 25 years, with Bristol gaining population, increasing a projected 3.6 percent.

The projections, however, have limited value for determining Barrington's future needs – housing, recreation, community services and facilities, etc. – given the State's model does not account for future growth in residential units. Of particular concern is the impact on population projections resulting from the housing production strategies aimed at achieving the 10 percent affordable housing goal. In response, for the purposes of this Plan the Town has elected to use its own projection (see Table 6 on Page 141) to factor in the impact of new housing as called for in the affordable housing strategies in the Housing & Neighborhoods Element, as well as ongoing housing construction activity unrelated to these housing strategies. (The impact of these strategies on future increases in population and housing units is discussed in the Issues & Opportunities section.)

Tax Base

Barrington is consistently ranked among communities with the highest residential share of total assessed value. **Table 4** shows the percentage breakdown by category for the tax base of Barrington and the state as a whole, in 2005 and

Table 4: Share of Tax Revenues by Assessment Category, 2005-2009

Municipality	Barrington			State Average		
	2005	2009	% Point Change 2005-2009	2005	2009	% Point Change 2005-2009
Residential	91.0%	90.4%	-0.6%	80.0%	75.3%	-4.7%
Commercial/Industrial	3.9%	4.4%	0.5%	12.4%	17.4%	5.0%
Motor Vehicles	4.5%	4.1%	-0.4%	5.7%	4.0%	-1.7%
Other	0.7%	1.1%	0.4%	1.8%	3.3%	1.5%

Source: RI Office of Municipal Affairs

2009. The figures show assessed residential values remaining at approximately 90 percent of the share of the total tax base. The share of the commercial tax base (industrial values are almost nil) increased from 3.9 percent to 4.4 percent, as several commercial and mixed-use projects were built during that period.

Issues and Opportunities

Meeting Land Use Objectives at “Build Out”

Future, long-term growth will continue to be a function of the State's economy and the health of the housing market. For Barrington, the most significant long-term factor will be the amount of land available for new development. As discussed elsewhere in the Housing and Neighborhoods element and other sections of the Comprehensive Plan, Barrington is inching closer to “build out,” the condition where all buildable parcels are developed to the extent possible under existing zoning. The State’s population projections for Barrington show a declining population in future years based on birth and mortality rates, in-migration and other factors. These projections do not factor in impacts of changes to future land use as recommended in the Comprehensive Plan, to achieve goals such as adding

senior housing and complying with the State’s affordable housing law.

Factoring in estimated use of vacant buildable land to achieve housing strategies over the next 20 years (see Table B-4 in Appendix I), the Town is likely to reach full build-out around 2040 (see **Table 5**). The Town’s population projections, with the addition of the new housing anticipated in future years, comes to 17,814 in 2035, and about 18,050 at build-out a few years later (see **Table 6** on the next page).

Overall, this would represent a 10.6 percent population increase compared to 2014—which would affect issues such as schools (where enrollment is projected to fall by 19 percent by 2024), and community services and facilities. With Barrington approaching build-out, the Town will need to make the most efficient use of existing assets (municipal buildings, parks, school sites), to meet future needs, as well as take steps to avoid pushing development into areas that are unsuitable due to environmental values or potential natural hazards impacts.

Other issues related to build-out include the following:

- *More tear-downs.* Recent housing construction trends indicate more residential lots are being redeveloped for many of the new units built in town—pointing to a dimin-

Table 5: Projected Build-out Year by Zoning District

Estimated Acres Used - Vacant Buildable Land	R10	R25	R40	R40CD	SRV	B	NB	LM
Buildable Acres	21.4	127.4	44.0	47.4	7.4	4.6	9.8	1.2
%Used: LMI Strategies¹	85%	86%	76%	0%	100%	20%	75%	100%
Acres used—through 2035	18.2	109.6	33.5	0.0	7.3	0.9	7.4	1.2
Remaining Vacant Land—2035	3.2	17.8	10.5	47.4	0.1	See footnote 2	2.5	0.0
Years to Build-out—After 2035³	3.7	3.4	6.6	NA	0.0	0.0	7.0	0.0
Build-out Year	2039	2038	2042	NA	2035	2035	2042	2035

¹ Per Table B-4: Estimated Acres Required for Strategies, by Zoning District—Appendix I

² Remaining 80 percent of vacant Business-zoned property assumed to be developed as commercial

³ Based on remaining vacant land and assumed rate of development

Table 6: Housing Development and Build-out Projections—Units, Population

Year	Single-Family Units ¹	Multifamily Units ¹	Special Approvals ²	Residential Demolitions ¹	Net change
Annual Average —2005-2014	15	2	n/a	6	11
Projected Development Activity					
2015	14	0	4	6	12
2016	13	0	154	6	161
2017	12	1	3	6	10
2018	11	2	109	5	117
2019	11	2	5	5	13
2020	11	2	26	5	34
2021	12	2	7	5	17
2022	13	3	20	5	31
2023	13	4	10	5	22
2024	13	4	34	5	45
2025	12	4	10	5	21
2026	12	4	36	5	47
2027	12	4	10	5	21
2028	12	4	35	5	46
2029	12	4	12	5	23
2030	12	4	25	5	36
2031	12	4	11	5	22
2032	12	5	24	5	36
2033	12	5	28	5	40
2034	12	6	27	5	40
2035	12	6		5	13
Total: 2015-35	255	70	590	112	804
Total Est. Units - 2014					6,224
Total Projected Units—2035					7,028
Additional Units to Reach Build-out³	66	24			90
Total Units at Build-out					7,118
Assumed HH Size⁴	2.8	2.13	2.13	2.8	
Population Change	715	149	1,257	(312)	1,809
Adjusted Pop. Change⁵	693	144	1,217	(302)	1,751
Projected Pop.: 2015					16,063
Projected Pop.: 2035					17,814
Pop. Change - 2035 to Build-out	185	51	-		236
Projected Population: Build-out					18,050

¹ New single-family and demolitions based on 10-year rolling averages, starting with permit activity from 2005-2014

² Major comprehensive permit projects, projected units at Zion Bible Institute campus and other LMI units anticipated per *Table C-1: LMI Units by Strategy and Year* in Appendix I

³ Based on Buildout Analysis —see Table 7 in Housing & Neighborhoods element

⁴ Single-family HH size assumes owner-occupied HH size of 2.8 per unit (2010 census); 2-family and units in special approvals assume 2.13 HH size based on average size of rental units at 2.13 per 2010 census (note that these units will be a mix of owner and renter-occupied units; however, these include age-restricted units and multifamily units, which will result in smaller household sizes than typical owner-occupied units that existed in Barrington as of the 2010 census)

⁵ RI Statewide Planning's projected -3.18% decrease in Barrington's population in 2035 per Technical Paper 162: Rhode Island Population Projections 2010-2040 (April 2013)

Source: Barrington Building Official Permit Records, Planning Department; Statewide Planning; 2010 Census

ishing supply of available vacant land. For example, 251 housing units (188 single-family units and 63 multi-family units) were built from 2000 to 2009. During that period, the town saw an overall net increase of just 187 housing units, according to census data. A review of demolition permit data suggest a substantial number of these units were built on lots where the original house was torn down — approximately 80 residential demolition permits were issued from 2000 to 2009.

- *Preserving community character.* The increasing pressure to tear down existing houses to redevelop existing lots is altering the character of established neighborhoods one lot at a time. Larger scale developments—such as the 40-unit Palmer Pointe on Sowams Road and the potential future redevelopment of the Zion Bible Institute campus—are on land abutting existing houses, requiring careful consideration of design issues such as buffers, building design, drainage, parking lots and lighting.
- *Providing parks and recreation facilities.* Provision of additional park facilities, including athletic fields, requires land. The Open Space and Recreation Element identifies a need for four new athletic fields, which will require either utilizing land currently owned by the Town or purchasing additional sites. The Plan also stresses a need to develop parks that benefit people of all ages and physical abilities, including walking and biking trails and tot lots/playgrounds.
- *Addressing community facilities and services needs.* The Plan (see Community Services & Facilities Element) discusses concerns regarding a need for improved facilities, including possibly a new Senior Center, and expanding or upgrading of schools.
- *Conservation of sensitive lands.* The Town and other organizations, including the Barrington Land Conservation Trust and Audubon Society, have purchased an extensive

amount of open space parcels throughout town, mostly wetlands and other environmentally sensitive lands. Development on sites once considered marginal could fragment open spaces for Town parks and greenways and habitat corridors.

- *Preservation of prime agricultural land.* The Town also has taken steps to preserve its ties to agriculture, including lease agreements for farming operations to utilize Town-owned parcels. Fields used for growing crops and raising horse are maintained in the Four-Town Farm area off George Street; however, there are pressures to develop the area despite the lack of water and sewer and adequate roads.
- *Promotion of economic development.* Land available for commercial development is also scarce, with just a handful of vacant parcels in the Neighborhood Business and Business zones. As a result, future development is likely to occur incrementally, as smaller sites are filled in with new construction. Opportunities to expand commercial zoning are limited, and the Town in the past has adopted a position to maintain the size of commercial zones and emphasize the town's existing residential character (see the Economic Development Element).

Land Use Issues – Adjacent Communities

Barrington is connected by land with three communities: East Providence to the north/northwest, Swansea to the north/northeast and Seekonk (at the very northern tip of Barrington in the George Street area). Barrington and Warren are separated by the Palmer and Warren Rivers.

The Town has evaluated the future land use policies of the three communities, and determined the following:

- *East Providence.* East Providence's 2010 Comprehensive Plan describes land uses generally consistent with the Town land use

pattern, with low density residential uses for areas abutting medium-high and medium density areas in Barrington. East Providence designated as “open space” land abutting conservation properties the Wampanoag Trail and the section of Haines Park within Barrington on Bullocks Cove.

There is a conflict where East Providence’s land use map depicts a “high density” residential district that borders the Town-owned Divine-Vargas conservation area in Barrington. This is not considered an issue, as the high density residential designation reflects existing land use (Stratford Arms Apartments), and the presence of wetlands at the city limits will prevent additional development from expanding south toward Barrington. The “Conservation” designation for the Divine-Vargas conservation area reflects the Town’s intent to protect the 38-acre site, consisting mostly of forested wetlands – from development

- *Swansea, Massachusetts.* Barrington and Swansea share a border for approximately 1.9 miles, extending from rural George Street through wetlands abutting Hundred Acre Cove, across a pocket of residential development on New Meadow Road, through the Johannis Farm area to the coastal marshes of the Palmer River. Swansea has designated the entire area as “Rural Residential,” where the minimum area for a residential lot is 60,000 square feet.

Rural Residential is Swansea’s most restrictive zoning district. Swansea has seen additional development in the form of large-lot subdivisions along Warren Avenue which has altered the rural character of areas near George Street. Additional housing in Swansea west of Warren Avenue could continue to erode the character of the area, but the 60,000-square-foot lot area minimums will help limit the impact. This Plan calls for an evaluation of Barrington’s zon-

ing in the George Street area – including larger minimum lot sizes – to protect the area from overdevelopment and limit conflicts between farming and residential use. Other areas that adjoin Swansea are either fully developed (medium-density residential on New Meadow Road and Barneyville Road) or protected open space (conservation land at Johannis Farm to the Palmer River). As Swansea already has in place its most restrictive zone for the entire area bordering Barrington, the Town has identified no significant concerns about land use conflicts.

- *Seekonk, Massachusetts.* Seekonk borders Barrington at the most northerly tip – land owned and farmed by Four-Town Farm off George Street. Seekonk has designated the area for 40,000-square-foot residential lots. A larger minimum lot requirement (such as the R-4 zone, with 62,500 square feet lot minimums) would be more consistent with Barrington’s land use objectives for George Street.

Given the critical importance of protecting the rural character and agricultural use in the George Street area, Barrington should work to establish a dialog with the Towns of Seekonk and Swansea as well as East Providence to determine whether there is support among the municipalities to take additional action to further this Plan’s goals for the area – such as zoning changes or development rights acquisition.

George Street

In 2012, the Town rezoned all of the Residence 40-zoned parcels in the George Street area to Residence 40-Conservation Development.. The zone is intended to allow the clustering of houses to preserve critical open space. No subdivisions have been filed under this new zone.

The R40-CD zone did not result in a lower number of units compared to what would be

Figure 1: Definition of “Farming” - Barrington Zoning Ordinance

The raising and keeping of cattle, horses, sheep or goats (but not swine, poultry or fur animals, or kennels for the raising or keeping of dogs or cats), and the growing of all agricultural products for commercial purposes, including fruits, vegetables, hay and grain; provided, however, that all structures used wholly or in part for the keeping or raising of animals or livestock shall be located a minimum of 100 feet from the nearest adjoining lot line. [Sec. 185-5 *Terms Defined*]

Source: Barrington Zoning Ordinance

allowed under the previous the R40 zoning. An issue is whether the R40 density is appropriate for the area given the number of issues specific to the George Street area and cited elsewhere in this plan. These include:

- A lack of available public water or sewer;
- The remote location of George Street, making delivery of services problematic;
- The goal of preserving farming as a viable economic use in this area. New housing units in the area could create conflicts due to noise from farming operations, such as dust and noise.
- The preservation of the historic rural landscape. Research has revealed the importance of the George Street in the early settlement of the region. The Allen-West House (circa 1763), added to the National Register in 2014, was once part of a much larger farmstead and today serves as a reminder of this area’s lengthy rural past.
- The goal to protect community character—the rural, very low density character of George Street—would quickly become compromised with new development in the area.

The Town should re-evaluate the R40-CD zoning to determine whether additional measures are needed, including zoning revisions, to better address the above cited issues. Examples include establishing a rural residential zoning district—which is a common practice in more rural communities. For example, Cumberland has established agricultural districts requiring

80,000 to 5-acre minimum lot area. In Scituate’s most rural districts, lots must be no less than 120,000 square feet in area. In another zone, Scituate requires an additional 20,000 square feet, for a total of at least 80,000 square feet, if there is no public water—as is the case on George Street.

The Town’s Zoning Ordinance also is restrictive as to agricultural uses permitted in the George Street area— despite its historic ties to farming. For example, the use table has just three agricultural-related uses listed: farming, fruit or vegetable stand and commercial nursery or greenhouse. “Farming” is a fairly broad definition, relating to the raising of certain animals and the growing of agricultural products (see **Figure 1**). However, all three of these agricultural uses all require a special use permit, even in the R40-CD zone, which is only located in the George Street area. It is unclear why these—and possibly other agricultural uses—should not be changed to permitted, as-of-right uses in this area.

Future Use of Former Zion Bible Institute Campus

Given the limited supply of land in town for meeting future land use needs—housing, economic development, parks and recreation facilities, community facilities — careful planning is needed to ensure the community’s goals are met to the extent possible when major parcels are developed or redeveloped. One of the significant sites identified in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan—the Sowams Nursery property on the east side of Sowams Road—is in the

¹ In 2014, a Superior Court judge affirmed the Planning Board’s approval of the Palmer Pointe comprehensive permit.

Figure 2: Limited Manufacturing Property on Allin's Cove

The Town's last remaining Limited Manufacturing-zoned parcel (see arrow above) abuts Allin's Cove

plan review process. The master plan for 40 new affordable housing units received master plan approval in 2013.¹

The redevelopment of the former Zion Bible Institute property—identified in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map as suitable for a "Mixed-Use Village" — remains an unresolved issue. The Zion Bible Institute site (zoned Recreation and Education) was identified in the 2008 "Housing and Land Use Study" as a site for potential redevelopment, due to factors including land area, extent of environmental and other constraints, availability of infrastructure (water and sewer), and access to roads.²

The Zion site is unique in terms of size, with almost 40 acres, and because the fact that the site is in transition with the buildings mostly vacant after the Zion Bible Institute vacated the premises. The site also contains an important historic resource, Belton Court, and a

number of campus buildings, many of which are outdated, including noncompliance with fire codes.

The new owner in 2014 presented a concept to develop a senior residential community at the site, with more than 200 housing units, a memory care wing and an assisted living facility, as well as other uses. The proposal would require the establishment of a new zone, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The Town's goals future use of the Zion site – Appendix II: Developer Guidance—originally was added to the Comprehensive Plan approved by the State in January 2010. The guidance provides a means to evaluate proposed development projects and/or proposed new zoning for the site. With the 2015 update, the guidance has been revised to place greater emphasis on the development of senior housing, to achieve one of the major Comprehensive Plan themes—meeting the needs of an aging population.

² Communities with ample land for future growth often plan for large areas involving many property owners; however, because of the limited amount of land left, the Zion site is identified specifically as an opportunity area for meeting multiple land use objectives.

See the Implementation element for information on implementation schedule, priorities, estimated costs, responsibilities and action types.

Other Land Use Issues

- *Allin's Cove—Limited Manufacturing Site.* This property (see **Figure 2**, previous page) is the last remaining LM-zoned site in Barrington. As the site has significant development constraints due to its proximity to Allin's Cove, the suitability of the existing zoning of the property (LM and R10) should be evaluated.
- *The commercial zones in the Maple Avenue and Bay Spring Avenue areas,* which are mostly developed but contain opportunities for redevelopment of under-utilized properties. The Maple and Bay Spring Avenue areas, in particular the Neighborhood Business districts, are identified in the Comprehensive Plan Update for increased commercial activity (Economic Development goals) and higher residential densities and varying housing types (Housing goals).
- *The former site of "The Place."* The 5-acre site, is zoned "Open Space-Active." The property has remained vacant since a barn that served as "The Place" was demolished in the mid-2000's. The use of the site remains an open issue, as cited in the Open Space & Recreation element.
- *Bed and breakfast inns.* The Economic Development element recommends allowing bed and breakfast inns in town. This will require establishment of appropriate regulations to limit impacts such as parking and noise.

Inconsistencies with Future Land Use Map

After the last Comprehensive Plan update, the Town rezoned approximately 100 parcels to bring the Zoning Map in line with the Future Land Use Map.

The new Future Land Use Map (FLUM) (Map LU-6) requires far fewer actions by the Town—see **Map LU-7**. The most significant potential change is to the George Street area, where the Comprehensive Plan recommends a re-evaluation of the zoning to encourage continued agricultural use and protection of existing rural character. This will require further study and a public process to determine how zoning should be adjusted.

Other areas identified on Map LU-7 include:

- The former Zion Bible Institute campus (#2 on the map). Appendix II outlines Developer Guidance for creating a new zone for the site, dependent on application by the property owner/developer.
- The Sweetbriar development site. The affordable housing development was approved under the comprehensive permit process, such that revisions to the Zoning Map are not required.
- The Sowams Nursery Site (#4 on the map) on the east side of Sowams Road. The Planning Board has approved a comprehensive permit for the property—the "Palmer Pointe" neighborhood. As with Sweetbriar, creation of a new zone is not required.
- The rear portion of a parcel (#5 on the map) abutting a paper street ("Bosworth Street Extension") zoned Business and conservation land—the "Brickyard Wetlands." Rezoning to a zone that is consistent with the "Conservation" FLUM designation is recommended.

See also Table 9A in the Implementation Element (Page 181) for the schedule for revising the Zoning Map to correct inconsistencies with the FLUM.

The Town has identified on the FLUM another inconsistency that requires further action: the location of the Urban Services Boundary as mapped by the State. The current boundary

encompasses Barrington in its entirety. This includes areas in the vicinity of George Street, where the Comprehensive Plan has multiple goals for protecting the existing agricultural use and rural character, as well as limiting impacts on One Hundred Acre Cove and the Douglas Rayner Refuge at Nockum Hill. The area's isolated location also makes it problematic for extending public services and facilities. Currently the George Street area, with the largest farming operation in town, lacks water and sewer infrastructure and adequate roadways.

The Future Land Use Map shows the Town's recommended revision to the Urban Services Boundary, which requires further action by the State to make official. (The location of the East Providence Urban Services Boundary in this area should be evaluated, as similarly rural areas are also inside the boundary.)

Goals, Objectives, Policies and Actions

Goal LU-1: Preserve the predominant residential character, while providing open space and limited commercial, industrial and institutional land uses to serve the needs of the community.

Policy LU-1.1.1: Emphasize the re-use of underutilized parcels in areas with adequate infrastructure and access to public services.

Policy LU-1.1.2: Ensure future development is compatible with adjoining land uses, the natural environment, available or planned community services and existing historic and cultural features.

Actions

Housing & Neighborhoods

A. Establish Senior Residential Village zone for the former Zion Bible Institute campus upon application and findings of consistency

with Developer Guidance as outlined in Appendix II. [Goal HN-1, Action A]

- B. Establish new zoning at the Allin's Cove and Former O'Bannon Mill Sites, as identified in the 2018 Bay Spring Corridor Zoning Study, consistent with the Appendix IIA of the Comprehensive Community Plan (as amended, 2019). [Goal HN-2, Action B]
- C. Consider new residential zones to preserve community character in areas where the dimensional regulations such as minimum lot sizes are inconsistent with the existing built environment. [Goal HN-2, Action E]
- D. Revise Zoning Ordinance to establish one-step density increase for comprehensive permit applications. [Goal HN-3, Objective 3.2, Action A]

Economic Development

- E. Allow limited non-residential development in Senior Residential Village [Goal ED-3, Action A]
- F. Amend zoning to allow bed and breakfast inns in suitable locations with appropriate standards to protect neighborhoods from adverse impacts. [Goal ED-3, Action C]
- G. Consider creation of a new zoning district, modifying the Neighborhood Business or Business zone, to promote a more cohesive retail environment in the Village Center. [Goal ED-5, Action A]
- H. Evaluate amending zoning of areas where established uses, such as commercial uses within R10 sections of Bay Spring Ave.—are nonconforming. Evaluate future zoning of remaining LM-zoned land within town. [Goal ED-5, Action B]
- I. Evaluate whether revisions to restrictions in the Zoning Ordinance are needed related to agricultural uses, to include uses such as farms, farm stands and farmer's markets. [Goal ED-6, Action A]
- J. Amend or establish new zoning district for the George Street area to preserve rural

character / promote farming. [Goal ED-6, Action C] [See also Goal NCR-6, Action A]

Community Services & Facilities

- K. Work with State to amend State's Urban Services Boundary as shown on Maps LU-6 and LU-7. [Goal CSF-2, Action F]
- L. Consider appropriate use of the former site of "The Place" on Middle Highway, the Hampden Meadows Volunteer Fire Department property on Sowams Road and the Bristol County Water Authority facility on Nayatt Road; rezone as necessary. [Goal CSF-2, Action G]

Natural & Cultural Resources

- M. Rezone land abutting "Bosworth Street Extension" paper street to a zone consistent with the FLUM designation (see also Map LU-7). [Goal NCR-1, Objective NCR-1.1, Action F]
- N. Amend Zoning, Subdivision Regulations to ensure open space is dedicated in a manner consistent with the Town's open space acquisition criteria (see Open Space & Recreation Policy 3.1.2). [Goal NCR-1, Objective 1.2, Action D]

Natural Hazards

- O. Consider requiring smaller lot sizes, such as through a cluster subdivision design, to ensure development is outside the existing or projected floodplain, reducing potential impacts of rising sea levels. [Goal NH-1, Action C]