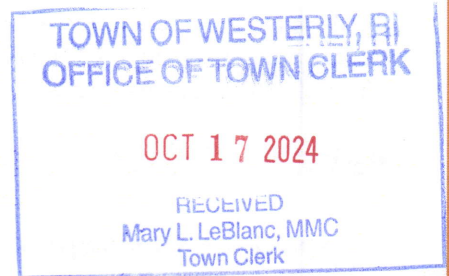


TOWN OF WESTERLY, RHODE ISLAND
PLANNING OFFICE

PLANNING BOARD
2023/2024 ANNUAL REPORT

August 20, 2024



Prepared by:

Planning Office

Nancy E. Letendre, AICP, Town Planner/Administrative Officer
Aidan F. Adams, Principal Planner

Prepared for:

Shawn M. Lacey, Town Manager

and

Honorable Members of the Westerly Town Council

"The vision for the Town of Westerly is to preserve and enhance its quality of life for all generations as a safe, resilient, and compassionate community with a healthy environment, a distinctive heritage, extraordinary cultural and natural resources, a strong, stable, equitable economy, and a responsible and publicly engaged government."

– Town of Westerly, Rhode Island Comprehensive Community Plan, 2020-2040

PLANNING BOARD | 2023/2024 ANNUAL REPORT

The following report provides a description of the key accomplishments of the Planning Board and the Planning Office **from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024** (as required under RIGL 45-22-8 and [Part I, Chapter 5, Section 21](#) of the Town of Westerly's Code of Ordinances). In 2023-2024 there were three (3) additions to the member composition of the Planning Board. No vacancies remained. Members of the Planning Board, on June 30, 2024, include the following:

- ✓ Justin M. Hopkins, Chairman,
- ✓ Richard W. Constantine, Vice Chair
- ✓ Andrew Delisio, Secretary
- ✓ Matthew O'Neil, Member
- ✓ Christopher Lawlor, Member
- ✓ John Armstrong, Member
- ✓ Jean Gagnier, Member
- ✓ Karen Lentz-Madison, Alternate Member

The Planning Board is supported by the Town Planner Nancy Letendre, who is also the Administrative Officer, Principal Planner Aidan F. Adams, and the Assistant Solicitor for Planning & Zoning Attorney Scott D. Levesque, Esq., of the Law Office of Kelly Souza Parmenter.

Part 1 2023/2024 HIGHLIGHTS

Section 1.1 – Development Project Status Report

In 2021, the Planning Office/Board began reporting on the status of active development projects in Westerly. The Development Project Status Report was created to indicate the current status of projects under review by the Boards and under construction. The report is updated by Planning, Zoning and Building monthly and is linked to the agenda of the Planning Board regular monthly meeting. The report is also provided to the Town Manager, Department Heads, and the Town Council to keep all informed regarding active projects in Town. The report is also available to the Public.

Section 1.2 – Comprehensive Community Plan Implementation

Fiscal year 2024-2025 is year four (4) of the 20-year implementation horizon of Westerly's Comprehensive Plan.

The implementation horizon of Short-Term (ST) has been assigned to actions to be executed by the conclusion of year five (5) or evaluated and reassessed. *Appended to this report is the Implementation Matrix from the Comprehensive Plan with status updates.* Some Action Items are ongoing actions that the Planning Office and Planning Board have continued, whereas others are discrete items to be completed and achieved.



Section 1.3 – Zoning Ordinance Amendments

In November of 2023, the Board provided a recommendation to the Town Council amending Section 260-50 “Affordable Housing” consistent with the changes made by the RI General Assembly. The amendments have not been considered by the Council as of yet, but it continues to be a priority of the Planning Board. Delay in consideration can be attributed to further State law revisions that took effect in June 2024 and anticipation of zoning revisions to be considered following Housing Study and Needs Assessment which was completed in June 2024.

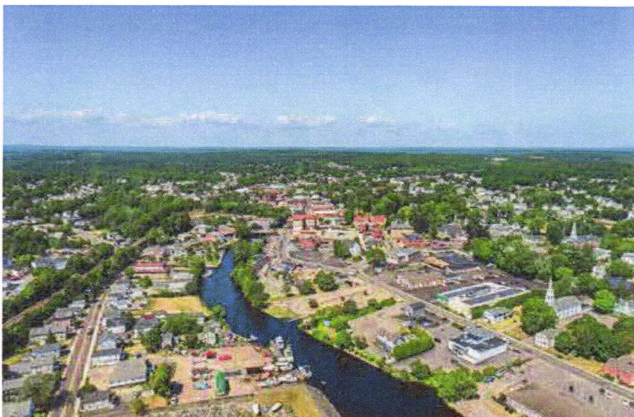
In February 2024, the Planning Board provided a recommendation to the Town Council on a Overlay District and map amendment to allow the development of a golf resort at the Winnapaug Country Club. The Town Council denied the amendment.

Section 1.4 – Housing Needs Assessment and Market Study

The Planning Office received a RI Housing Technical Assistance grant for the hiring of CAMOIN Associates resulting in the completion of a Housing Needs Assessment and Market Study early in May 2024. With the assistance of the Planning Board and Ad Hoc Affordable Housing Committee, the Town has a better understanding of the existing housing conditions, and the housing needs of the community. The resulting public centered strategic housing production plan and ordinance amendments will be addressed in 2024-25. The plan will include strategies for generating the amount and type of housing needed to keep up with current and future demands and to help support the local workforce. LMI qualifying (10%) deed restricted affordable housing will be a major component of the plan and a variety of housing types will be considered.

Section 1.5 – Downtown Stormwater & Revitalization

FY 2023-2024 was year 3 of the Town of Westerly partnership with the Southern Rhode Island Conservation District (SRICD), and with the support of the Planning Board and the EDC, the Downtown stormwater project called Westerly’s “Resilient Riverfront Renewal” hit the streets, literally. The project for revitalization of Main Street includes installation of green stormwater infrastructure and creation of a “green streetscape,” with the potential for walking and biking trails along the river. The project is intended to provide a variety of co-benefits that will help both the natural and built environment in Downtown Westerly by managing and treating stormwater, increasing greenspace, and providing a more walkable and bikeable, welcoming economic center for Westerly.



We are also collaborating with RIDOT to implement stormwater management features toward their consent decree with EPA. The project includes both municipal and private property and is funded by a number of state and federal grant programs. CRMC approval of site plans for the Riverside Housing property at 107 Main Street in Westerly and the shared boundary area with the adjoining RIDEM property 106 Main Street has been requested.

The last year saw robust public engagement including site visits, interpretive signage, guided walks, stakeholder meetings, and public work sessions. A written survey of assets and obstacles to redevelopment, an online visual preference survey and online input map were all added to the ArcGIS StoryMap for the Resilient Riverfront Renewal Project.

Part 2 PLANNING BOARD ACTIVITIES & STATISTICS

Section 2.1 – Meetings

In **July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024**, the Planning Board held **20 meetings in 12 months**. Meetings averaged about 3 hours, for a total of 59.8 hours of volunteer work per member on behalf of the Board, not including an average of 4 additional hours each member spends preparing for each meeting.

- ✓ Twelve (12) Regular monthly meetings
- ✓ Eight (8) Special meetings

Regular Meetings

- ✓ July 18, 2023
- ✓ August 15, 2023
- ✓ September 19, 2023
- ✓ October 17, 2023
- ✓ November 14, 2023
- ✓ January 16, 2024
- ✓ February 20, 2024
- ✓ March 19, 2024
- ✓ April 16, 2024
- ✓ April 23, 2024
- ✓ May 21, 2024
- ✓ June 18, 2024

Special Meetings

- ✓ October 3, 2023
- ✓ November 7, 2023
- ✓ December 5, 2023
- ✓ February 6, 2024
- ✓ March 5, 2024
- ✓ April 2, 2024
- ✓ May 7, 2024
- ✓ June 4, 2024

Section 2.2 – Applications Reviewed

From July 2023 – June 2024, the Planning Office **reviewed 37 projects**, including 8 administrative subdivisions and several multi-phased reviews - 6 minor subdivisions, 6 major land developments, 10 development plan reviews, and 7 comprehensive permits.

8 Administrative Subdivisions:

- ✓ 2023-ADM-08: Frechette Administrative Subdivision (23-25 Happy Valley Road & 2 Ice Pond Road | AP 138, Lots 30 & 40E & AP 137, Lot 27)
- ✓ 2023-ADM-09: Hickory Knoll Estates Administrative Subdivision (0 Post Road | AP 114, Lots 96-14 & & 96-7)
- ✓ 2023-ADM-10: Arsego Administrative Subdivision (13 & 15 Scenic Heights Drive | AP 139 Lot 4 & AP 152 Lot 98)
- ✓ 2023-ADM-11: Lupinacci Administrative Subdivision (38 Beatrice Street & 3 Terry Circle | AP 26, Lots 132 & 133)
- ✓ 2024-ADM-01: Augeri Administrative Subdivision (46 Pearl Street & 8 Taylor Court | Assessor's Map 37, Lots 151 & 151B)

- ✓ 2024-ADM-02: Harkins-Dooney Administrative Subdivision (21 & 19 East Hills Road | AP 163, Lots 29 & 31)
- ✓ 2024-ADM-03: Hence Administrative Subdivision (26 Haversham Road | AP 134, Lot 3A-1)
- ✓ 2024-ADM-04: Donaldson Administrative Subdivision (7 Browning Road & 50 Ocean View Highway | AP 174, Lot 1 & Lot 3)

6 Minor Subdivisions:

- ✓ 2022-MNS-01: Airport Road Commercial Park (AP 118, Lot 17) Preliminary & Final
- ✓ 2022-MNS-02: Trendsetter Properties, LLC (AP 66, Lot 91) Final
- ✓ 2023-MNS-01: Maccione Subdivision (43 Bellevue Avenue | AP 57, Lot 343) Preliminary & Final
- ✓ 2023-MNS-02: Bick Minor Subdivision (AP 8, Lot 4) Preliminary
- ✓ 2024-AdMNS-01: Immaculate Conception Church (AP 57, Lot 28) Preliminary
- ✓ 2024-AdMNS-02: Burke Minor Subdivision (14 Masschaug Road | AP 173, Lot 46) Preliminary

6 Major Land Developments:

- ✓ 2020-MJLD-08: Harbor Ridge (165 East Ave | AP 107, Lot 57) Bond Reduction
- ✓ 2023-MJLD-01 Former Staples Ministorage (16 Post Road | AP 99, Lot 3A) Preliminary
- ✓ 2024-MJLD-01: State Street Elementary School (35 State Street | Assessor's Map 87, Lot 67) Combined Master & Preliminary

10 Development Plan Reviews:

- ✓ 2019-DPR-15-Reinstatement: Solar Facility (20 Frontage Road | Assessor's Map 39, Lot 36) 2022-DPR-06: Trestle Park Storage (123 Oak St | AP 48, Lot 79) Final
- ✓ 2023-DPR-01: Weekapaug Golf Club Cold Storage Garage (265 Shoe Rd | AP 131, Lot 23A) Final
- ✓ 2023-DPR-02: Champlin Woods (Shore Road | Assessor's Map 139, Lot 1D) Preliminary
- ✓ 2023-DPR-04: Chase Bank (143 Franklin Street | Assessor's Map 98, Lot 9) Preliminary
- ✓ 2023-DPR-05: Premier Physical Therapy Addition (50 Airport Road | Assessor's Map 108, Lot 17) Final
- ✓ 2023-DPR-06: Eminel Holdings, LLC (24 Frontage Road | Assessor's Map 49, Lot 36B) Preliminary
- ✓ 2023-DPR-07: Deck Access Door Replacement (113 Bay Street | Assessor's Map 185, Lot 32D-4)
- ✓ 2024-DPR-02: Springbrook Elementary School (39 Springbrook Road | AP 17, Lot 17) Preliminary
- ✓ 2024-DPR-03: Dunn's Corners Elementary School (8 1/2 Plateau Road | AP 121, Lot 65) Preliminary

7 Comprehensive Permit Reviews:

- ✓ 2023-LMIH-02: 37 & 37A Canal Street (37 & 37A Canal Street | AP 46, Lot 25 Combined Master & Preliminary
- ✓ 2023-LMIH-03: Trendsetter Multifamily Residential (26 and 28 School Street | Assessor's Map 66, Lots 91 & 91A) Combined Master & Preliminary
- ✓ 2023-LMIH-04: Winnapaug Residences (over several parcels associated with Winnapaug Golf Course at 184 Shore Road) A.P. 141, Lot 94; A.P. 119, Lots 3P & 5E3; A.P. 129, Lot 2; A.P. 130, Lots 4 & 6; A.P. 140, Lots 4, 10, & 13; A.P. 141, Lots 25, 95, & 191) Master Plan
- ✓ 2024-LMIH-01: Winnapaug Golf Course Resort
- ✓ 2024-LMIH-02: Sandpiper Landing Development (4, 12, 18 Chamber Way & 92-98, 100 Post Road | Assessor's Maps 109 & 110, Lots 21,22,23 & 34, 35) Pre-Application
- ✓ 2024-LMIH-03: Robin Hollow Lane (Assessor's Map 114-96, Lots 2-11 & 15) Pre-Application
- ✓ 2024-LMIH-04: Trombino- Pleasant Street Multi-Family (79 & 83 Pleasant Street | Assessor's Map 46, Lots 40 & 41) Pre-Application

Section 2.3 – Advisory Opinions/Resolutions Issued

The Planning Board **issued 3 advisory opinions** to the Town Council on a variety of topics, including the Zoning Ordinance, Town-owned properties, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects, and grant applications.

2 Advisory Opinions to the Town Council on Zoning Ordinance Amendments

- ✓ 2024-ATC-01: Zoning Amendment – Golf Course Overlay District & Zone Change (several parcels associated with 184 Shore Road| Assessor’s Map 141, Lot 94 & A.P. 119, Lots 3P, 5E3; A.P. 129, Lot 2; A.P. 130, Lots 4, 6; A.P. 140, Lots 4, 10, 13; A.P. 141, Lots 25, 95, 191)
- ✓ 2024-ATC-1: Retail Cannabis

1 Advisory Opinion to the Town Council on grant applications

- ✓ Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Year 2023 project recommendations

The Planning Board also passed **1 resolution** recognizing awareness programs.

- ✓ Fair Housing Month (April 2024)

Section 2.4 – Collaborations

The Planning Board thanks the volunteers of the Ad Hoc Affordable Housing Study Committee for their many hours of research, interviews and meetings throughout the fiscal year, and for the well-informed report of the committee’s findings. The Committee’s Study reflects the complex discussion of affordable housing and the need for a coordinated housing affordability program. The Planning Board and Ad Hoc Committee shared information throughout the year. The Planning Board invites members of the former committee to participate in future housing discussions.

Part 3 2024/2025 OUTLOOK

Section 3.1 –Zoning Ordinance Revisions

The Planning Board has determined that **Zoning Ordinance Revisions shall be a priority in FY2024-2025**. *The Offices of Planning and Zoning along with the Assistant Solicitor for Planning and Zoning are preparing to present their work to both the Planning Board and Town Council.*

At least once every two years, the Planning Board is required by the Town Code to review the Zoning Ordinance and make recommendations concerning its revision to the Town Council, Section 5-21. In furtherance of its responsibility, the Planning Board began review of the Zoning Ordinance in 2022. In 2022, the Planning Board authorized the Planning Office to proceed with working with the Zoning Official and legal counsel on “administrative” changes to the Zoning Ordinance, such as grammatical corrections, consistency with State laws, removal of redundancies, process and application related changes, and reorganization and reformatting. Many of those changes have been drafted.

Zoning Ordinance revisions were put on hold when, in early 2023, it became apparent that the RI General Assembly was poised to make significant changes to both procedural and substantive matters relating to all land-use decision making. Following the 2023 Session of the General Assembly, new and significant revisions to the Town Zoning Ordinances became necessary in order to keep up with the State’s changes in land-use policy. 2023 State law changes also affected how affordable housing is developed in Town, resulting in the need to revisit the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Permit Ordinance. Those changes have also been drafted and amended again following changes made by the General Assembly in 2024.

Other Zoning Ordinance revisions for mixed-use development recommended in the Route One Corridor Study also require further consideration, including amendment of the Granite Street and Bed and Breakfast Overlay Districts, off-street parking ordinance, multifamily ordinance. Results of the Low Impact Development (LID) Municipal Self-Assessment, which was completed in late 2022, and the Hazard Mitigation and Flood

Management Plan completed in 2023 will also guide ordinance revisions to reduce the Town's development footprint, incorporate green infrastructure, and improve stormwater management throughout Town.

Section 3.2 – Infrastructure Assessment

The Town of Westerly 2020-2040 Comprehensive Community Plan vision for Westerly in 2040 includes:

5. Protect and expand critical public services, especially public water supply quality and availability and wastewater treatment facilities. Water supply protection and potential expansion, and protection by a berm or otherwise, of the Town's wastewater treatment plant are highly important issues for immediate consideration."

The Board recognizes the Comprehensive Plan requires a thoughtful strategy. To ensure "orderly and efficient provision of facilities and services" the Planning Board intends to pursue long-range capital facilities planning. The Board recognizes the Town's five-year capital improvement program including land acquisition, infrastructure improvements, and a robust municipal water enterprise fund. The Board also supports a wastewater enterprise fund in the plan for future upgrade and potential growth. Progress must begin with addressing deficiencies required by the Westerly Wastewater Treatment Facility Permit No. RI0100064 Consent Agreement No. RIA-435 dated November 23, 2021. Maintaining the adopted level of service and water quality standards through sound and timely investment in the Town's capital resources must be considered in every annual budget. The Board recognizes that the Town of Westerly is presently addressing regulatory requirements and level of service standards at the municipal wastewater treatment facility, and current conditions limit further development. In particular, any housing production strategy must include careful consideration of public services, ensuring growth does not outpace the availability of quality potable water and the wastewater treatment facility.

Section 3.3 – Comprehensive Plan Amendments

The Planning Board shall once again pursue Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

The **Route One Corridor** Study was completed in 2022 and accepted and referred to the Planning Board by Town Council in spring 2023. In FY 2023-2024, the Planning Board recommended certain amendments to the Comprehensive Plan intended to incorporate the existing conditions assessment and the goals of the Route One Study. The Planning Board reviewed the recommended changes, and the amendments were presented to the Town Council on February 20, 2024.

The **Housing Needs** Assessment and Market Study (2024) was accepted by the Town Council and referred to the Planning Board for the consideration of Comprehensive Plan Amendments and the development of a Strategic Plan for Affordable Housing, including the State required strategies to reach the goal of 10% LMI. The Planning Board intends to begin work on a Strategic Plan for Affordable Housing in the next year.