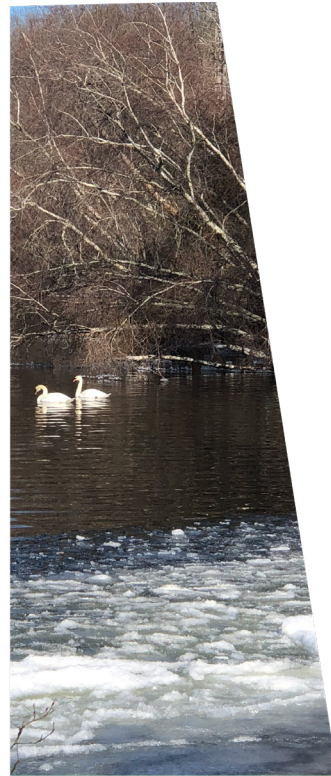




TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

FEBRUARY 2024

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1

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Plan Structure

This introduction section provides an overview of the comprehensive plan landscape in Rhode Island as well as a brief description of the history of Scituate and the overarching issues facing the community. This is followed by a brief discussion of the background of the comprehensive plan in Scituate. The plan then presents A Vision for Scituate: 2044, outlining major focus areas for the Town over the next 20 years. A demographic profile for community is presented to inform each of the chapters that follow, as well as an overview of the process and the public participation approach that was implemented. The goals, policies, and actions associated with each element are presented at the front of the comprehensive plan, as this provides the essential roadmap that will guide policy decisions and actions the community will engage moving forward. This section is followed by the following chapters:

- Land Use
- Natural Resources
- Historic and Cultural Resources
- Recreation
- Services and Facilities
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Natural Hazards and Climate Change
- Energy

The development of the Comprehensive Plan is the first step in preparing Scituate for the future. This preparation for the future attempts to balance the needs of the residents while recognizing and protecting the Town's important resources and character.

1.2 Major Themes

Many issues presented in this Comprehensive Plan straddle elements and topics. In an attempt to unify chapters, the Plan Commission adopted some major themes that run throughout the Plan. These major themes provided guidance during the development of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan and assist in prioritizing goals, policies, and actions for implementation moving forward. The adopted major themes are:



Protect and conserve unique and important resources within Scituate



Attempt to meet the housing needs of existing and future Scituate residents



Increase the Town's resilience and ability to respond in a constantly changing environment



Promote a diverse and appropriately scaled economic base to serve the needs of Scituate residents



Strengthen and improve upon town services, programs, and regulatory framework to increase resident's connection to the community and provide streamlined service to the public.

These themes are presented throughout the elements of this Plan and should be used to assist the Town on how to focus its limited resources and balance competing needs. Scituate must work to address and balance a host of issues and requirements in the face of increasingly challenging circumstances. Addressing affordable housing, promoting appropriate economic development, maintaining, and enhancing recreation and open space resources, protecting natural, historic, and cultural resources, and addressing energy usage, natural hazards, and climate change impacts is a significant challenge for a community with limited resources. This is compounded significantly by the presence of the Scituate Reservoir. This important statewide resource presents a set of unique challenges and opportunities experienced nowhere else in the State.

1.3 The Comprehensive Plan Landscape

In 1988 the State of Rhode Island enacted the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (the Act) requiring all 39 cities and towns in the state to prepare and adopt a local Comprehensive Plan. The Act, RIGL §45-22.2, was amended in 2011 and requires that all municipally adopted comprehensive plans be brought into conformance with the updated Act by June 1, 2016. This plan was prepared in response to that mandate and supersedes all previous Comprehensive Plans for the Town of Scituate.

The Act sets forth the following goals, which are intended to guide both State and municipal decision making.

1. To promote orderly growth and development that recognizes the natural characteristics of the land, its suitability for use, the availability of existing and proposed public and/or private services and facilities and is consistent with available resources and the need to protect public health, including drinking water supply, drinking water safety, and environmental quality.
2. To promote an economic climate which increases quality job opportunities and the overall economic well-being of each municipality and the state.
3. To promote the production and rehabilitation of year-round housing and to preserve government subsidized housing for persons and families of low and moderate income in a manner that: considers local, regional, and statewide needs; that achieves a balance of housing choices for all income levels and age groups, recognizes the affordability of housing choices for all income levels and age groups, recognizes the affordability of housing as the responsibility of each

municipality and the state; takes into account growth management and the need to phase and pace development in areas of rapid growth; and facilitates economic growth in the state.

4. To promote the protection of the natural, historic, and cultural resources of each municipality and the state.
5. To promote the preservation of open space and recreational resources of each municipality and the state.
6. To provide for the use of performance-based standards for development and to encourage the use of innovative development regulations and techniques that promote the development of land suitable for development while protecting our natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources, and achieving a balanced pattern of land uses.
7. To promote consistency of state actions and programs with municipal comprehensive plans and provide for review procedures to ensure that state goals and policies are reflected in municipal comprehensive plans and state guide plans.
8. To ensure that adequate and uniform data are available to municipal and state government as the basis for comprehensive planning and land use regulation.
9. To ensure that municipal land use regulations and decisions are consistent with the comprehensive plan of the municipality, and to ensure state land use regulations and decisions are consistent with state guide plans.
10. To encourage the involvement of all citizens in the formulations, review, and adoptions or amendment of the comprehensive plan.

The Act was designed to create a reciprocal system, where State goals and policies are reflected locally, and local plans assist in guiding State actions. All local comprehensive plans are required to be submitted to the State of Rhode Island Division of Planning for review and approval. The Division of Planning is responsible for ensuring consistency with the goals and intent of the Act and the State Guide Plan. The State Guide Plan is Rhode Island's long-range planning document, assembled as a collection of plans that have been adopted and amended over many years. This collection covers a wide range of topics and provides an important connection between local municipal comprehensive plans and the State Guide Plan documents. This cohesive comprehensive planning structure ensures:

- That local discretion of land use decision-making is maintained.
- That each municipal comprehensive plan meets delineated minimum standards.
- That local zoning provisions are consistent with the municipality's comprehensive plan.
- Provides for a mandatory review and amendment process of local comprehensive plans no less than every ten years.

The purpose of the Scituate Comprehensive Plan is to set a vision and chart the future for the community by outlining long range goals and accompanying policies and actions required to achieve them. The Town of Scituate first adopted a comprehensive plan in 1991 and completed an update of that plan in 2003. This re-write is part of an ongoing evolution of policy setting and decision making as the Town continues to grow and move forward with each passing year.

1.4 Scituate's Development History

1.4.1 *The Seventeenth Century*

Seventeenth century Scituate was shaped by matters related to land ownership and land claims. In 1638, Roger Williams received a deed to land reaching to the Pawtuxet River from Canonicus and Miantonomi, sachems of the Narragansett Indians. There were conflict claims and much of present-day Scituate was involved in this dispute. In 1660, after the task of defining boundaries was completed, the Providence Plantations consisted of the combined areas of two purchases. Land lying within a north-south dividing line, drawn seven miles west of Fox Point in Providence, was known as "the inlands". The area between seven and twenty miles west of Fox Point, the territory now comprising the towns of Scituate, Foster, Glocester, and Burrillville, was known as "the outlands", or "the Providence woods". Part of the eastern boundary of present-day Scituate lies along the seven-mile line.

The lands south of the Ponaganset River were acquired in 1662 by William Vaughn and his associates from the Sacehms, Newcom and Awashouse. A second deed in this land transaction, known as the Westconnaug Purchase, was secured by Zachariah Rhodes and Robert Wescott, also in 1662.

Land divisions occurred across a long period of time. From 1864 to 1755, there were thirteen divisions of "the outlands" before the entire tract was officially laid out. Although some of this land was allocated in the late seventeenth century, there was only one European settler in the area consisting of present-day Scituate before the century's end. John Mathewson took up residence in a primitive structure near the north end of Moswansicut Pond in 1694.

1.4.2 *The Eighteenth Century*

Emigration into Scituate began in earnest soon after 1700. In 1703, Joseph Wilkinson settled in the northwestern part of town. He is said to have brought the first cow into Scituate and to have built the first barn. Many other settlers followed, establishing homesteads throughout the town. Many acquired large tracts of land as the century was dominated by an agricultural economy. Sons and daughters established their own farmsteads and population grew rapidly. By century's end most of the landscape of Scituate had been transformed from woods to the open spaces of fields and pastures.

Early eighteenth-century development triggered a need for the establishment and increase of services. As new settlers cleared land and established farmsteads it became clear that a roadway system was needed. The Rhode Island General Assembly, seeking to promote commercial connections between the city and its hinterlands and adjacent colonies, established a number of highways. In 1711, a road was ordered laid out from Weybosset Bridge in Providence to the colony line to meet a road coming from Plainfield, Connecticut. The road, which follows present day Plainfield Street in Providence and Plainfield Pike in the several towns it passes through, was completed in Scituate in 1714, where it was officially named Old North Road.

1.4.3 *The Nineteenth Century*

The nineteenth century brought with it remarkable wide-spread industrial development along the Town's numerous rivers and streams. This brought about dramatic changes in Scituate as sleepy hamlets were converted into bustling and prosperous mill villages. Turnpikes assisted in the flow of goods between rural villages and the port city of Providence. This booming growth of industry, combined with competition from western farmers with the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, all but secured the decline of agriculture as the major component of Scituate's economy. By the middle of the century,

manufacturing was the most important economic force, and continued to be so throughout the remainder of the century.

1.4.4 *The Twentieth Century*

As the twentieth century began Rhode Island's agriculture declined precipitously, a decline which had its origins in major economic and demographic shifts dating at least to the mid-nineteenth century. In Scituate, as in many other neighboring towns, thousands of acres of fields and meadows—land open for two centuries and defined by miles of stone walls—were abandoned and gradually reforested. The development of the Scituate Reservoir propelled the re-ruralization of Scituate at a much greater rate than the surrounding area. Developed between 1920 and 1926, and built to serve the City of Providence, the Scituate Reservoir, and its protected, forested watershed, occupy approximately 42% of the Town's land area. This, more than anything in the preceding centuries, shaped present-day Scituate, recasting the Town's geography, economy, and population.

2

CHAPTER 2

SCITUATE 2040: A VISION

2.0 SCITUATE 2044: A VISION

SCITUATE 2044: A VISION

Scituate will strive to continue to be a vibrant, naturally beautiful, and welcoming community, in which historic village development is preserved, while new development is balanced with the community's rich historic, cultural, and natural resources.

Scituate will continue to value and recognize the needs of its residents and businesses and encourage their participation in policy and decision making.

Scituate officials will guide and make decisions based on community input, the value of the community's natural, historic, and cultural resources, economic sustainability, and the desire to preserve and protect community character.



3

CHAPTER 3

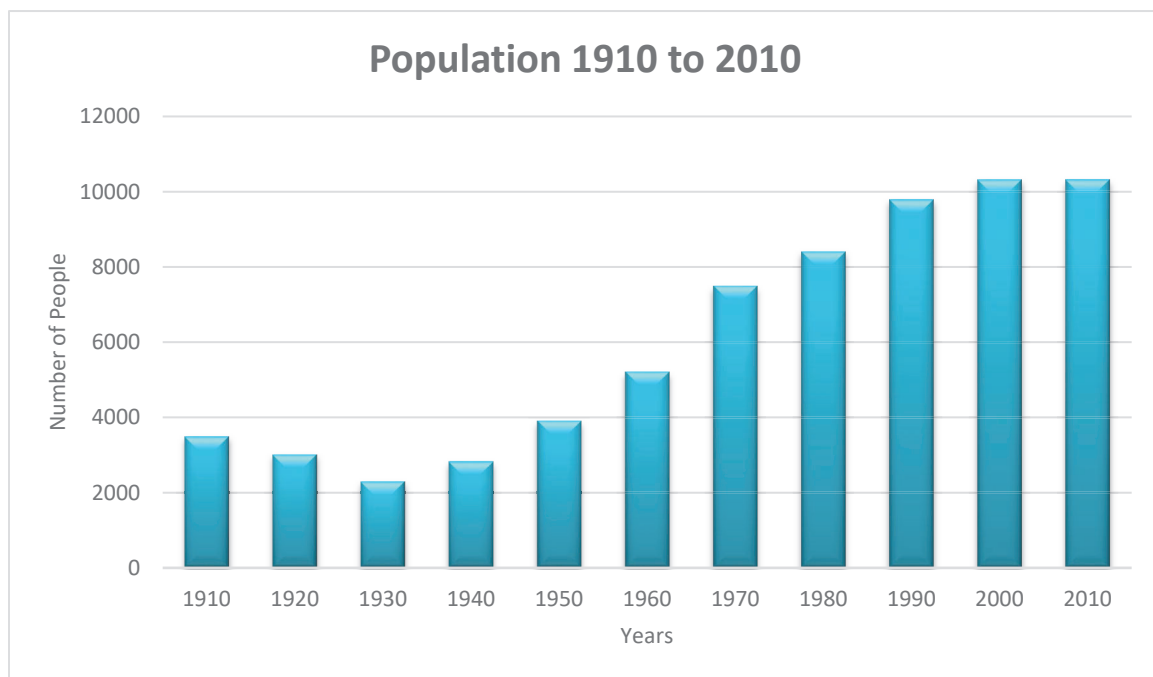
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

3.0 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The characteristics of a population affect how the community's needs are identified and defined. A critical component of drafting a comprehensive plan that will appropriately address a community's future needs, is to first define and understand the characteristics of the people that live in that community. When planning for land use, housing, economic development—and all the other topics within a comprehensive plan—a fundamental understanding of the community, and who it is made up of, is necessary. This chapter provides information on recent and historic community characteristics that inform the goals and policies contained within each of the elements of the plan.

Many of the figures contained within this chapter are intended to provide baseline data that is relevant to multiple elements of the comprehensive plan. This baseline information includes data on population and population projections, race, ethnicity, education, income, and age.

Table 3-1: Population



Source: U.S. Census

Table 3-1 above indicates that Scituate's population has grown relatively steadily since about 1940 up until around 2000, where it essentially leveled off and has remained relatively stable since. According to QuickFacts by the U.S. Census Bureau, Scituate's estimated 2019 population was 10,634 residents (Census, 2019 ACS). This represents a continuation of the essential leveling off of the population since 2000, projecting only a .4% increase in population since 2010.

The Rhode Island Division of Planning provides population projections for each community in Rhode Island. Table 3-2 presents the population projections for 2020 through 2040 for the Town of Scituate. The projections provide for a much slower growth rate than experienced during a majority of the previous

century. Although, the population estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau indicates Scituate is growing at a more rapid pace than projected by the Rhode Island Division of Planning.

Table 3-2: Population Projection, 2020-2040

20-Year Population Projections				
2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
10,383	10,535	10,648	10,702	10,685

Source: RI Dept of Administration, Division of Planning

Tables 3-3 through 3-7 below provide further demographic information related to age, educational attainment, race and ethnicity, and household income.

Table 3-3: Population Age

Age	Population	% of Population
Under 5	242	2.3%
5 to 9 years	494	4.6%
10 to 14 years	497	4.7%
15 to 19 years	794	7.5%
20 to 24 years	732	6.9%
25 to 29 years	535	5.0%
30 to 34 years	419	3.9%
35 to 39 years	455	4.3%
40 to 44 years	552	5.2%
45 to 49 years	906	8.5%
50 to 54 years	876	8.2%
55 to 59 years	1,198	11.3%
60 to 64	949	8.9%
65 to 69	530	5.0%
70 to 74	610	5.7%
75 to 79	158	1.5%
80 to 84	179	1.7%
85 years and over	508	4.8%
TOTAL	10,634	

Source: U.S. Census, 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) DP05

Table 3-4: Population Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Population	% of Population
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	54	0.5%
Not Hispanic or Latino	10,427	99.5%
TOTAL	10,481	

Source: U.S. Census, 2016 American Community Survey (ACS)

Table 3-5: Population Race

Race	Population	% of Population
White	10,250	97.8%
Black or African American	12	0.1%
American Indian & Alaskan Native	43	0.4%
Asian	31	0.3%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%
Two or More Races	145	1.4%
TOTAL	10,481	

Source: U.S. Census, 2016 American Community Survey (ACS)

Table 3-6: Population Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Population 25-Years & Older	% of Population 25-Years & Older
Less than 9 th grade	122	1.6%
9 th to 12 th grade, no diploma	337	4.3%
High School Diploma or GED Equivalency	2,321	29.8%
Completed Some College	1,251	16.1%
Associate Degree	898	11.5%
Bachelor's Degree	1,722	22.1%
Professional Degree	197	2.5%
Doctorate Degree	113	1.5%
TOTAL	7,793	

Source: U.S. Census, 2016 American Community Survey (ACS)

Table 3-7: Household Income

Household Income	Households	% of Occupied Households
Less than \$10,000	97	2.3%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	152	3.6%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	321	7.7%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	203	4.9%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	344	8.2%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	703	16.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	575	13.8%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	829	19.9%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	449	10.8%
\$200,000 or more	503	12.0%
TOTAL	4,176	

Source: U.S. Census, 2016 American Community Survey (ACS)

Directly related to household income, is the type of employment and the specific occupations of the residents of Scituate. Figures 1 and 2 below provide a more up-close view of how the residents of Scituate are earning a living.

4

CHAPTER 4

PROCESS & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.0 PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The development of this plan was guided by the Scituate Plan Commission with the assistance of boards and commissions, town staff, private groups, and the general public. This plan is the result of a yearlong collaborative effort, culminating in a plan that presents a 20-year vision for the future of Scituate.

The Plan Commission engaged in over 20 public meetings where they discussed and vetted the language, goals, policies, and actions contained within. The Town created a dedicated page on their website to post information related to the process and provide the community with the opportunity to view drafts as they were being constructed and amended. A public online survey was created (see Figure 4-1) that asked respondents a variety of questions ranging from how long they have lived in Scituate to ranking how important certain aspects of the Town are to their quality of life. The results of this survey in their entirety are contained in Appendix A. They were used to guide goals, policies, and actions contained within the plan.



Town of Scituate Comprehensive Plan Rewrite Resident Survey

Thank you for taking the time to take this survey. The Town of Scituate is in the process of rewriting their Comprehensive Plan. This important document provides the Town with a blueprint for the future, guiding the decisions and policies of the Town for the next 20 years. That is why your input is so valuable!

The Town's current Comprehensive Plan was approved in 2003 and is in need of an overhaul to bring it up to date and representative of the current needs of the community. A comprehensive plan is a crucial component of municipal decision making. The plan is designed to forecast goals and policies utilizing a 20-year planning horizon. Public participation is an important component of plan drafting and your input is needed. Please take a few minutes to answer the question below and we welcome you to join the Plan Commission meetings on the third Tuesday of each month, where a majority of this work is being conducted. There is additional information on the progress of this undertaking on the Town's website. This survey is also available in paper form at the North Scituate Library and the Hope Library. Please spread the word, the more response received the better informed the plan will be!

Figure 4-1. Scituate Resident Survey Introduction

In addition to the survey, two public workshops were held on March 20, 2024, and March 21, 2024, to review draft elements and gather resident feedback. The first workshop was held at the Hope Community Center in Hope and the second workshop was held at the Scituate High School in North Scituate. Story boards for each element were created and posted on the Town's website to provide an overview of key issues, major themes, and the goals, policies, and actions of each element. Story boards for each element are contained at the beginning of each chapter.

To complete the final plan, the Plan Commission factored in input from the public as well as comments from the State, other boards and commissions, private organizations, and town staff. On May 30, 2024, the Plan Commission and Town Council held a joint public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan. At the

conclusion of the joint public hearing the plan was adopted on a unanimous vote by both the Plan Commission and Town Council.

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CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Drafting and adopting this Comprehensive Plan has been a yearlong collaborative effort by many dedicated staff, volunteers, and residents of the Town of Scituate. That hard work was just the beginning of the process, as much work remains for the plan to be successfully implemented. This implementation involves adopting new policies, revising regulations and ordinances, drafting new regulations and ordinances, conducting studies, and adjusting and adapting current practices to implement the goals, policies, and actions contained in this element. In this element three types of initiatives are identified:



These stated goals, policies, and actions provide a roadmap for the Town to move the plan forward. Goals provide overarching desired outcomes, while policies guide municipal decision making and actions provide measurable acts that achieve implementation. When all three initiatives work together the Town can make considerable strides towards achieving the stated goals. The matrix provided in this element has several important functions. First it states each particular element's goals and policies. This is followed by actions. For each action a timeframe and responsible parties are identified. This is done to provide guidance to those involved in implementation in what time frame the action is anticipated to take place and who will be responsible for initiating and supporting each action item. These considerations will vary based on circumstances at the time and this information is provided as a guide. The following key should be used when reviewing the matrix:

Timeframe. Factors used to determine the timeframe for specific actions include priority level, cost/budget, staff time, and overall length of time for a particular action item to be initiated and completed. Timeframes are categorized as follows:

Short-term (S): 0 to 3 years

Medium-term (M): 4-7 years

Long-term (L): 8 to 10 years

Ongoing (O): Continuous

Several action items are identified with an initial time frame (S, M, or L) and are also designated as ongoing (O). This means that the initial action will take place in either a short, medium, or long-time frame and the action item will require ongoing maintenance or monitoring.

Responsibility. Each action has at least one responsible party identified. In many cases there are two or more responsible parties identified. Those listed in bold in the matrix are the lead responsible party, with those listed beneath it identified as support parties. The lead responsible party should be those directly

CC	Conservation Commission	PW	Public Works
DH	Department Heads	PWSB	Providence Water Supply Board
DWP	Department of Public Works	RC	Recycling Committee
EM	Emergency Management	RD	Recreation Department
FD	Fire Departments	SBA	Scituate Business Association
FEB	Fire Engineering Board	SC	School Committee
FMT	Facilities Management Personnel	SD	School Department
HA	Hope Associates	SPS	Scituate Preservation Society
HHS	Hope Historical Society	SSC	Senior Services Coordinator
HS	Human Services	TA	Tax Assessor
KCWA	Kent County Water Authority	TC	Town Council
LBT	Library Board of Trustees	TCO	Town Clerk
LC	Local Colleges	TE	Town Engineer
LT	Land Trust	TT	Town Treasurer
PC	Plan Commission	VOC	Village Overlay Committee
PO	Police	ZO	Zoning Official

involved in conducting a study or implementing an action or policy. Those identified as support parties should be those that will play a role in the implementation or action, but are not leading the charge, only providing support to those that do.

Major Themes. As identified earlier in Section 1.0, the plan is based on several major themes that occur throughout. Those themes extend to the goals, policies, and actions as well. The matrix provides recognition of each action items connection to a major theme by identifying which themes are touched upon by the action item. The major themes identified in Section 1.0 are reiterated below.



Protect and conserve unique and important resources within Scituate



Attempt to meet the housing needs of existing and future Scituate residents



Increase the Town's resilience and ability to respond in a constantly changing environment



Promote a diverse and appropriately scaled economic base to serve the needs of Scituate residents



Strengthen and improve upon town services, programs, and regulatory framework to increase resident's connection to the community and provide streamlined service to the public.

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
Land Use							
Goals							
Goal LU-1: Achieve a balanced, orderly, and harmonious land use pattern that preserves current residential densities, historic and cultural resources, supports appropriate economic growth, provides ample recreation and open space, protects the natural environment, and supports a high quality of life for the residents.							
Goal LU-2: Protect the quality of the Scituate Reservoir by appropriately managing land use within the watershed.							
Goal LU-3: Improve the tax base and provide jobs through development of land that is consistent with the Future Land Use Map, Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance and Land Development and Subdivision Regulations.							
Policies							
Policy LU-1: Retain the distinctive character of the Villages.							
Policy LU-2: Protect Rural Scituate through flexible zoning and land use controls.							
Policy LU-3: Ensure that the regulatory framework supports and encourages responsible, thoughtful, and appropriate residential development with regard to overall density and site design.							
Policy LU-4: Support smart growth principles by encouraging infill and new commercial development along existing commercial corridors utilizing site plan review procedures as a regulatory device.							
Policy LU-5: Continue the enforcement of design standards and setbacks for sensitive areas such as watershed tributaries and hydric soils.							
Policy LU-6: Prohibit land uses with high potential to contaminate water quality and carefully regulate other uses in all areas of Town, with specific concerns for those areas within the Scituate Reservoir watershed.							
Policy LU-7: Continue to work with residents, land trusts, nonprofits, and other appropriate partners to maintain and enhance open space and land preservation within the Town.							
Policy LU-8: Preserve and protect forest, farmlands, agricultural lands, and the overall rural character of Scituate as essential elements of the community, economic vitality, and quality of life.							
Actions							

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
LU-1. Review and update the Village Overlay districts for mixed use development, balancing support for the expansion of business activity while maintaining village character and integrity.	X	X		X	X	O	TC PC
LU-2. Review and modify the existing flexible zoning regulations to improve the application process and clarify the applicability requirements	X		X	X	X	S	TC PC
LU-3. Update all Subdivision and Land Development Regulations and associated checklists and the zoning ordinance to reflect updated development practices and concepts, as well as making them statutorily consistent with state enabling legislation.	X	X		X	X	S	PC TC
LU-4. Encourage the appropriate utilization and expansion of existing business districts through updating and improving the regulatory framework and exploring opportunities to establish additional business and mixed-use zoning districts.	X	X		X	X	O	PC
LU-5. Review and assess existing residential zoning districts.		X			X	O	PC TC ZO
LU-6. Review and revise special overlay districts and restriction in the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision & Land Development Regulations, as necessary.	X	X		X	X	O	PC TC
LU-7. Revise the zoning ordinance (including the table of uses) to reflect updated and more modern land uses	X	X	X	X	X	S	PC TC ZO
LU-8. Inform and educate property owners of opportunities related to the Farm, Forest, and Open Space Act	X		X		X	O	TC PC TA

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
LU-9. Consider the adoption of cluster or conservation development as a smart growth tool to provide for more thoughtful and environmentally sensitive development.	X		X		X	M	TC PC
Natural Resources and Open Space							
Goals							
Goal NR-1: Preserve, conserve, and protect the valuable natural resources, habitat, conservation areas, and open spaces of Scituate in order to promote ecological diversity, resilience, and rural character, and acknowledge the value of these assets to individuals and the community as a whole.							
Goal NR-2: Protect the quality of the Scituate Reservoir by managing development and other potentially threatening activities within the watershed to the extent feasible.							
Goal NR-3: Respect and conserve the Town's surface and groundwater water resources for future use and benefit of the Town.							
Goal NR-4: Encourage agricultural and forestry activities that promote health management and protection of the resources.							
Goal NR-5: Ensure that current and future development has minimal adverse impacts on natural resources, and that environmentally sensitive areas are protected, especially water supply and water quality.							
Goal NR-5: Prioritize open space protection for both natural resource management and opportunities for passive recreation.							
Policies							
Policy NR-1: Limit development impacts through land development techniques such as conservation development and overlay districts in environmentally sensitive and rural areas and encourage infill development where possible to protect the Town's resources and character.							
Policy NR-2: Work with Providence Water to protect the Scituate Reservoir as a surface water resource for the State of Rhode Island that offers many associated ecological values.							
Policy NR-3: Continue to protect and manage groundwater recharge areas ,including wellhead protection areas, to ensure the quality of groundwater supplies.							
Policy NR-4: Preserve and protect forest, farmlands, agricultural lands, and the overall rural character of Scituate as essential elements of economic vitality, quality of life and the community.							
Policy NR-5: Adopt and implement programs to protect natural resources and conservation areas through acquisition, conservation easements, and other measures.							
Policy NR-6: Ensure that Town policies, programs, and ordinances support working farm and forest viability (specifically forestland of statewide importance), including an emphasis on the Farm, Forest, and Open Space program.							

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
Policy NR-7: Continue to implement wastewater management techniques and cesspool phaseout to protect the natural resources.							
Actions							
NR-1. Consider instituting a “dark sky” or similar lighting ordinance that would minimize the intensity of outdoor lighting on natural resources. Consider assessing existing lighting throughout Town and determine where lighting impacts could be reduced.	X		X		X	S	PC TC
NR-2. Consider implementing a local transfer of development rights program to preserve sensitive land and transfer development opportunities to more appropriate locations.	X		X		X	L	TC PC LT
NR-3. Create and administer a public education campaign on OWTSSs, alerting individuals to maintenance needs and the possible warning signs and impacts related to failures, and promote participation in the Community Septic System Loan Program (CSSLP) to replace failing OWTSSs..	X				X	S/O	TC PC
NR-4. Explore implementing performance standards within land use regulations that limit the site disturbances and alterations affecting critical natural resources in line with the Rhode Island Low Impact Development Site Planning and Design Guidance Manual.	X				X	M	PC CC
NR-5. Consider new, and improve upon existing, land use techniques that encourage the conservation of the Town's farm and forestland including the purchase of development rights,	X		X		X	L	TC PC

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
promotion of the Farm, Forest, and Open Space program, innovative zoning techniques, and outright purchase.							
NR-6. Explore opportunities, and work with the State, to implement best practices regarding road salting and salt storage to minimize impacts on surface and drinking water supplies.	X		X		X	M	TC DPW
NR-7. Review and update the land development regulations to require developers to retain existing trees and valuable forested areas where possible and to provide deciduous street trees in new developments and redevelopments.	X		X		X	M	PC CC
NR-8. Continue strong enforcement of the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance and review and revise as necessary.	X				X	M/O	TC PC ZO
NR-9. Continue and strengthen the relationship between the Town, through the Conservation Commission and Land Trust, and Hope Associates towards the common goal of improving water quality, through open space acquisition, on the North Branch of the Pawtuxet River.	X		X		X	O	CC / LT / HA TC
NR-10. Develop a priority list and map of parcels and areas in Town for potential acquisition to build upon existing open space and conservation areas, as well as establish greenway connections between areas, to create a more cohesive network of open space within the Town.	X				X	S/O	CC / LT TC
Historic & Cultural Resources							

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
Goals							
Goal HCR-1: Preserve, protect, and maintain the Town's historic, cultural, and archeological resources as a representation of the Town's heritage.							
Goal HCR-2: Use innovative regulations and techniques to promote the development of suitable land, while protecting the cultural and historical resources achieving a balanced pattern of land uses.							
Goal HCR-3: Deepen public knowledge of the history of marginalized communities, especially the Nipmuc native peoples.							
Policies							
Policy HCR-1: Promote and support state, local, non-profit, and other groups in their efforts to inform and educate the community on appropriate mechanisms to protect and manage historic and cultural resources in the Town through research, public education, and public events.							
Policy HCR-2: Ensure that the preservation and proper management of historic and cultural resources are considered as part of the land development review and approval process.							
Policy HCR-3: Promote the Town's rich historic heritage to attract visitors and other viable economic development opportunities that are appropriate for historic and cultural resources.							
Policy HCR-4: Preserve the visual qualities of Scituate's historic areas and scenic roadways and vistas.							
Actions							
HCR-1. Work with the RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission to document and preserve significant historical, cultural, or archeological resources in the Town, specifically looking at structures and places that were noted in their 1980 report for consideration for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.	X					M/O	PC TC
HCR-2. Review and update existing zoning overlays, including a GIS delineation of overlay boundaries, and consider revising the existing review and approval procedures	X					S/O	TC PC
HCR-3. Support efforts to maintain and document the Town's historic cemeteries and stone walls.	X					S/O	TC PC

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
HCR-4. Review and amend the development review regulations to incorporate consideration of historic and cultural resources.	X				X	L	PC TC
HCR-5. Identify roadways, or segments of roadways, in Scituate that have scenic value and consider preparing a plan for their preservation, including the possibility of designation by the State as a Scenic Highway.	X					S	TC PC
HCR-6. Develop an education program, working with the Scituate Preservation Society, Hope Historical Society, and public libraries to increase public awareness of the significance of historic and cultural resources.	X				X	S/O	TC PC SPS HHS LBT
HCR-7. Explore options for creating or securing local and State incentives to encourage the preservation of privately-owned historic buildings and resources.	X					O	TC PC
HCR-8. Work with and encourage the schools to expand educational efforts and resources committed to teaching about local history.	X				X	S/O	SC SD
HCR-9. Develop relationships with the Nipmuc and other Native American tribes to promote the identification and preservation of historic sites in Scituate.	X			X	X	S/O	TC SPS
Recreation							
Goals							
Goal R-1: Provide an array of active and passive recreational areas and facilities throughout the community to serve a wide range of populations and activity levels.							
Goal R-1: The changing recreational needs of the community will be met in accordance with the Town, State, and Federal standards.							
Goal R-1: Continue to provide a high level of recreation service in both quantity and quality by upgrading and maintain existing facilities							
Goal R-1: Foster an inclusive recreation environment that enhances information and communications systems.							

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
Goal R-1: Continue to improve access to recreational areas, facilities and services by identifying and removing barriers to access							
Policies							
Policy R-1: Support the Recreation Department programming and facilities by continuing to adequately fund and staff the department							
Policy R-2: Continue to provide an active maintenance and rehabilitation program and schedule to maintain and upgrade existing facilities.							
Policy R-3: Prioritize projects that build upon existing infrastructure and resources, ensuring that new recreational facilities are well-connected and meeting the needs of the community.							
Policy R-4: Increase the public's awareness of recreation opportunities, including using social media, the Town website, workshops, and other outreach efforts to inform residents of recreation programs and provide for a means of public input.							
Policy R-5: Explore options to add to the Town's existing recreation facilities and resources.							
Actions							
R-1. Continually assess the Recreation Departments facilities, programs, and staff to ensure they are adequate for the needs of the community. Develop new programs and facilities, or expand upon existing ones, as needed.					X	O	TC RD
R-2. Consider establishing a recreation center.					X	O	TC RD DPW
R-3. Continue to adequately fund and support the DPW in their role in maintaining recreation facilities, ensuring that adequate staff and equipment are available.					X	LO	TC RD DPW
R-4. Explore opportunities to establish a skate park facility in Town.					X	L	TC RD DPW
R-5. Update the Town's Recreation Department webpage to include more information about available programs and facilities to increase public awareness and utilization.					X	S	TD TCO

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
R-6. Explore opportunities to establish a dog park facility in Town.					X	M	TC RD DPW
R-7. Upgrade lighting at Gorham Field.					X	S	RD TC DPW
R-8. Resurface and strip the tennis courts at Berkander Field and Hope Park.					X	S	RD TC DPW
R-9. Install irrigation at the Hope Park baseball field.					X	S	RD TC DPW
R-10. Renovate the old baseball field at North Doctor's Lane into a multipurpose use field.					X	L	RD TC DPW
R-11. Survey residents to determine the types of facilities they would like to see considered.					X	M	TCO
R-12. Make improvements to Caito field to make it viable and useable, including adding lighting.					X	M	SD TC RD
R-13. Make improvements to Manning Field to bring it up to current standards.					X	S	SD TC RD
R-14. Develop a pickle ball court in Hope.					X	S	RD TC
Services and Facilities							
Goals							
Goal SF-1: Provide the necessary infrastructure and tools to maintain and enhance a strong educational program.							
Goal SF-2: Provide a well-planned and economically responsible network of community facilities and services for Scituate's current residents and expected future population needs.							
Policies							
Policy SF-1: Support the School Department and School Committee in their efforts to provide students access to a high-quality educational environment and experience.							
Policy SF-2: Ensure that public safety services and facilities are well maintained and adequately staffed throughout the Town.							

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
Policy SF-3: Provide Town departments with adequate staff and resources so as to provide a sufficient level of service to the community.							
Policy SF-4: Maintain and enhance the services provided by the Public Works Department related to Town infrastructure and programs.							
Policy SF-5: Promote recycling in municipal buildings and by all residents by providing up-to-date information in Town Hall and on the Town's website to reach State mandated recycling and diversion rates.							
Actions							
SF-1. Continue to modernize and upgrade Town schools and school related facilities to meet or exceed State educational standards.					X	L/O	SC SD TC
SF-2. Modernize and expand municipal facilities and libraries as deemed necessary. Consider conducting a study of existing library buildings and services to determine if upgrades are needed.					X	L/O	TC LBT FMP
SF-3. Support the Town's four fire departments and encourage the continuation of the present volunteer nature of the departments. Work with the individual departments to determine and implement future needs related to stations and equipment.					X	S/O	TC FD FEB
SF-4. Assess and study areas of Town known to have drinking water contamination issues and determine potential solutions. Potential solutions could be related to addressing water service expansions, providing sewer service, establishing package treatment, or OWTS contamination issues.	X		X		X	L	TC PWSB KCWA
SF-5. Investigate additional possibilities for reducing municipal costs through regional cooperative efforts to pool services as has been accomplished between the Town and School					X	S/O	TC TT TOC

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
Department previously with energy upgrades.							
SF-6. Continue to support public safety efforts and officials with adequate staffing, equipment, and infrastructure as community needs change.					X	S/O	TC EM DPW PO FD
SF-7. Continue to fulfill of the Rhode Island Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Storm Water Discharge from Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems and from Industrial Activity at Eligible Facilities Operated by Regulated Small MS4s.	X				X	O	TC TE
SF-8. Adopt a wastewater management district, specifically related to the analysis of locations in Town with known well contamination issues.	X				X	L	TC PC TE
SF-9. Continue to prepare and implement a capital budget for equipment and maintenance expenses.					X	O	TC/PC DH
SF-10. Educate the public about the recycling program by providing information on the Town's website and in Town Hall, and work with the School District to provide education on recycling to children in an attempt to increase the Town's recycling rates.					X	S/O	TC/RC DPW SD
SF-11. Continue to support services and programs at the Chopmist Hill Senior Center and evaluate future needs as programs and services evolve and population dynamics change.					X	S/O	TC DPW SSC
SF-12. Consider renovating making the necessary upgrades to the existing Town Hall to provide additional office space on the second floor.						M	TC

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
Transportation							
Goals							
Goal T-1: Maintain and enhance a cost-effective, efficient, safe, and accessible multi-modal transportation system that is sensitive to and respectful of the Town's small-town rural character.							
Goal T-2: Support efforts to enhance and increase alternative modes of transportation such as ride shares, bicycling, and public transportation with an eye towards reductions in greenhouse gases and air pollution.							
Policies							
Policy T-1: Implement road design and maintenance standards and procedures that protect, promote, and encourage existing development patterns and neighborhood character.							
Policy T-2: Maintain a formal program for road maintenance, new road construction, and accompanying drainage infrastructure that is economically responsible and implementable.							
Policy T-3: Promote cooperative state/local efforts in transportation planning, ensuring that the Town's rural qualities are maintained throughout any transportation planning and construction projects.							
Policy T-4: Encourage alternative modes of transportation and increase opportunities in Town for access to biking, walking, and carpooling.							
Actions							
T-1. Review and update the Town's road design and parking standards to ensure aesthetics and environmental quality are appropriately and adequately addressed, while allowing flexibility in the application of the standards depending upon the location and use proposed.					X	M	TC PC DPW
T-2. Participate in the State's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to ensure that state roads in Town are adequately maintained and improved, including maintaining a local priority list for inclusion on the TIP.					X	O	TC DPW PC
T-3. Maintain and strengthen the relationship with the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority to continually assess and update the level of bus service in Town.					X	O	TC
T-4. Work with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation to					X	O	TC DPW

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
implement upgrades to major thoroughfares in Town.							
T-5. Work to improve access to safe and convenient alternative modes of transportation such as biking, walking, and carpooling.	X				X	S/O	TC DPW
T-6. Continue to provide and increase funding for locally maintained transportation infrastructure (roadways and drainage) to ensure a high level of services to the community.					X	S/O	TC DPW
T-7. Continue to support the Department of Public Works by providing and maintaining the necessary equipment and personnel to maintain roadways, sweep streets, remove snow, and maintain drainage infrastructure.					X	O	TC DPW
T-8. Consider establishing a scenic roadway inventory and ordinance to protect the visual quality of scenic roadways throughout Town.	X				X	M	PC TC DPW
T-9. Consider ways to improve bike and pedestrian access throughout the community and pursue opportunities to connect to existing bicycle paths and access ways in Cranston and Johnston.					X	L	RD PC DPW
Economic Development							
Goals							
Goal ED-1: Encourage and support economic development that is in keeping with the Town's rural character while expanding and diversifying the Town's tax base.							
Goal ED-2: Work towards creating a business environment that hold commercial and industrial development to a high standard while providing for a streamlined regulatory process to establish and expand economic opportunities in the community.							
Goal ED-3: Scituate will maintain its intellectually rich workforce by offering continuing education and training opportunities to all ages and levels of experience							
Goal ED-4: Scituate will foster an inclusive economy that provides opportunities for job growth for underserved populations of all ages and experience levels.							

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
Policies							
Policy ED-1: Reduce the financial tax burden on residential development by expanding the Town's tax base through encouraging an appropriate scale of business.							
Policy ED-2: Encourage small scale and home-based businesses in appropriate areas with reasonable safeguards designed to protect neighboring properties and sensitive natural resources.							
Policy ED-3: Support local tourism efforts that highlight the rural character and abundant natural resources of the Town through cultural events and agriculturally based tourism.							
Policy ED-4: Promote and encourage agriculture as a way to preserve existing farms, supporting and introducing efforts to capitalize on agricultural tourism opportunities, working with the Scituate Business Association and other local business and agricultural organizations.							
Policy ED-5: Support and encourage partnerships with local organizations (such as the Scituate Business Association) and existing businesses to enhance and promote the attractiveness of commercial districts for employers, workforce, and visitors.							
Policy ED-6: Coordinate with local educational institutions and other entities that provide career growth counseling, technical education and training opportunities and management of apprenticeship / internship programs.							
Actions							
ED-1. Update the Land Development and Subdivision Regulations to clarify and streamline application procedures and ensure the regulations are consistent with state law and provide clear and easy to follow application instructions and processes. The Town should consider implementing a development plan review process for new smaller scale commercial projects and expansions of existing businesses.	X				X	M/O	PC TC
ED-2. Update the Town's Zoning Ordinance to reflect current land uses and encourage home based businesses and suitable business development in appropriate locations, taking into consideration potential impacts on natural resources.	X				X	M	PC TC
ED-3. Update the Village Overlay District as needed requirements to promote appropriate development at a	X	X		X		M/O	PC VOC ZO

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
scale and quality that compliments the existing fabric of the villages.							
ED-4. Support local landowners under the State's Farm, Forest, and Open Space program.	X				X	O	TC PC TA
ED-5. Evaluate current Town ordinances for their impact on the Town's economic development competitive advantage and propose amendments accordingly.	X			X	X	M/O	TC PC
ED-6. Amend the zoning ordinance to encourage home based businesses and streamline the permitting process to reduce barriers.	X			X	X	M	PC ZO TC
ED-7. Work with the Scituate Business Association to support existing local businesses and provide incentives for new businesses to locate within the Town.				X	X	S/O	TC SBA
ED-8. Inventory, maintain and actively publicize a list of all state and local workforce education and training programs.				X	X	S/O	TC HS
ED-9. Pursue the establishment of public / private partnerships to support adult education and training as well as apprenticeship / internship programs to improve the Scituate workforce.				X	X	S/O	TC HS LCs
Housing							
Goals							
Goal H-1: Provide a diversity of safe and high-quality housing opportunities for current and future residents of Scituate.							
Goal H-2: Ensure that future residential development is compatible with the character of Scituate in general as well as that of individual neighborhoods and villages.							
Goal H-3: Provide affordable housing in a manner that does not conflict with the environmental constraints, community character, and general development patterns of the Town.							

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
Policies							
Policies H-1: Attempt to strike a balance between the need to provide diverse housing options with the significant environmental constraints to development prevalent throughout much of the Town.							
Policies H-2: Ensure that housing that is developed is sensitive to environmental constraints, aesthetic quality, and rural development patterns in Scituate.							
Policies H-3: Support increased housing density commensurate with that of existing village areas that are served by public water and/or sewer.							
Policies H-4: Collaborate with local non-profit housing advocacy groups to assist with financing of affordable housing and homebuyer education programs for residents.							
Policies H-5: Actively participate in state level discussion regarding affordable housing and work with other communities and organizations to provide affordable housing in a manner that is appropriate on a community-by-community basis, recognizing individual strengths and weaknesses in an attempt to approach housing issues on a more holistic level, straddling political boundaries.							
Actions							
H-1. Consider areas of Town where infrastructure could be expanded to support additional housing density.		X				M	PC TC
H-2. Review and update, as deemed necessary, portions of the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations related to housing development including but not limited to residential compounds, village districts, and in-law or accessory apartments to ensure that appropriate density and development standards are in place to meet the housing needs of the community.		X				S	PC TC ZO
H-3. Support infill and rehabilitation development, along with affordable housing, in higher density areas where public infrastructure and environmental conditions can support a density increase.		X				O	PC TC
H-4. Investigate options for participation in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program through assistance with a local		X				O	TC PC TT

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
non-profit to provide for funding for affordable housing construction and rehabilitation.							
H-5. Consider creating a Scituate Affordable Housing Committee to monitor and assist with the implementation of affordable housing strategies, as well as pursuing appropriate opportunities to increase the number of LMI units within the Town		X				S	TC
H-6. Build community support for affordable housing by educating residents on who affordable housing is designed for and how it can be appropriately integrated into the existing community.		X				S/O	TC PC
H-7. Work with the state and other municipalities to actively participate in ongoing discussions related to RIGL 45-53 to improve the law to be more equitably imposed on communities and ensure that the law relates directly to a community's ability to develop affordable housing while also providing the resources needed for residents of that housing.		X				O	TC PC
H-8. Revise the zoning ordinance to include a section that addresses comprehensive permit applications and include requirements for application and review that are consistent with RIGL 45-53.		X				S	PC TC
H-9. Revise the zoning ordinance to permit multi-family housing in additional zoning districts as appropriate.		X				S	PC TC
H-10. Work with the Scituate Housing Authority and other social service		X				L	TC SCHA

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
providers on the creation of LMI units for the elderly and special needs population.							
H-11. Develop new relationships with nonprofit affordable housing developers to pursue LMI housing development in projects with a majority of LMI units.		X				S/O	TC PC
Natural Hazards and Climate Change							
Goals							
Goal NHCC-1: Reduce the risks associated with natural hazard events on residents, infrastructure, and the environment.							
Goal NHCC-2: Increase the Town's resilience to the impacts of climate change and adapt the Town's mitigation strategies for a changing environment.							
Policies							
Policy NHCC-1: Protect and maintain the ongoing operations and functionality of critical facilities.							
Policy NHCC-2: Consider climate change in local decision making as appropriate.							
Actions							
NHCC-1. Create an inventory and map of all critical facilities and infrastructure in Town.			X		X	S	TC PC PW
NHCC-2. Conduct an assessment of back-up power capabilities for critical public buildings to power necessary facilities during hazard events.			X			S	DPW TC
NHCC-3. Maintain and update the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan at least every five years.			X		X	M/O	EM TC
NHCC-4. Pursue available funding opportunities to implement actions of this plan and the Hazard Mitigation Plan.			X		X	M/O	EM TC
NHCC-5. Work with property owners and RIDEM to compile and update emergency action plans for high and significant hazard dams.			X		X	S/O	TC EM
NHCC-6. Continue to enforce, and update as needed, the Town's floodplain			X		X	M/O	ZO PC

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
district regulations outlined in the Zoning Ordinance.							
NHCC- 7. Maintain updated communication systems between Emergency Management staff, police, fire, town administration, and residents.			X		X	S/O	EM / PO / FD TC
Energy							
Goals							
Goal E-1: Ensure safe, cost effective, and plentiful energy for all residents and efficient energy usage at Town facilities.							
Goal E-2: Continually evaluate and consider diverse and innovative sources of energy for appropriate applications within Town.							
Goal E-3: Provide resources and set policies to achieve the Town's energy efficiency goals.							
Policies							
Policies E-1: Increase energy efficiency of municipal and school department facilities and vehicles.							
Policies E-2: Ensure that municipal and school department outsourcing and procurement procedures contain performance based evaluation measures related to energy efficiency.							
Policies E-3: Through public education and awareness, encourage residents and businesses to reduce their energy consumption and implement energy-efficiency measures.							
Policies E-4: Support renewable energy development that is sustainable, environmentally sensitive, appropriately scaled, and sited, and in accordance with the Town's Future Land Use Map.							
Actions							
E-1. Study energy usage by municipal buildings, equipment, and vehicles to determine where improvements in energy conservation and efficiency can be most effectively accommodated.	X		X		X	S	DPW TC
E-2. Coordinate with the Scituate School Department to investigate and implement ways to improve energy efficiency in school buildings and vehicles.	X		X		X	S/O	SD TC
E-3. Amend the zoning ordinance and adopt performance standards and siting guidelines for the development of renewable energy production.			X			M	TC PC

Goals, Policies, & Actions	Significant Major Themes					Time Frame & Responsibility	
						Time Frame	Responsibility
E-4. Work with Federal, State, regional, and utility partners to capitalize on grants and other incentives to help fund public and private energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.	X				X	O	TC PC
E-5. Consider development and implementation of a town-wide energy efficiency program where residents, businesses, and other entities can be rewarded with certification and recognition based on a set of established energy efficiency criteria.	X				X	S/O	TC PC
E-6. Implement a renewable energy and energy resilience education program through the Town and School Department to increase public awareness of the importance of energy conservation and resiliency practices.	X		X		X	S/O	TC SD

6

CHAPTER 6

LAND USE



Town of Scituate, Rhode Island

Community Comprehensive Plan Update

Land Use

Background

The Land Use element's purpose within the Comprehensive Community Plan is to establish a plan for land use in Scituate over the next 20 years. This involves updating current, as well as proposing new, land use controls and regulations designed to implement this plan. As defined by the State Planning Council's Guidance Handbook #13, Planning for Land Use, implies creating a balance of uses that is appropriate for achieving the community's goals and is reflective of the natural characteristics of the land, its suitability for use, and the availability of existing and proposed public and/or private services and facilities. Land use planning must be consistent with available resources and the need to protect public health, safety, and welfare.

Scituate has a relatively unique land use dynamic with 84% of the Town's land being within the watershed of Scituate Reservoir, which is the principal drinking water reservoir for Providence Water and, therefore, provides potable water for the population of approximately two-thirds of the State of Rhode Island.

Policies

1. Retain the distinctive character of the Villages.
2. Protect Rural Scituate through flexible zoning and land use controls.
3. Ensure that the regulatory framework supports and encourages responsible, thoughtful, and appropriate residential development with regard to overall density and site design.
4. Support smart growth principles by encouraging infill and new commercial development along existing commercial corridors utilizing site plan review procedures as a regulatory device.
5. Continue the enforcement of design standards and setbacks for sensitive areas such as watershed tributaries and hydric soils.
6. Prohibit land uses with high potential to contaminate water quality and carefully regulate other uses in all areas of Town, with specific concerns for those areas within the Scituate Reservoir watershed.
7. Continue to work with residents, land trusts, nonprofits, and other appropriate partners to maintain and enhance open space and land preservation within the Town.
8. Preserve and protect forest, farmlands, agricultural lands, and the overall rural character of Scituate as essential elements of the community, economic vitality, and quality of life.

Goals



Achieve a balanced, orderly, and harmonious land use pattern that preserves current residential densities, historic and cultural resources, supports appropriate economic growth, provides ample recreation and open space, protects the natural environment, and supports a high quality of life for the residents.



Protect the quality of the Scituate Reservoir by appropriately managing land use within the watershed.



Improve the tax base and provide jobs through development of land that is consistent with the Future Land Use Map, Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance and Land Development and Subdivision Regulations.

Actions



Review and update the Village Overlay district for mixed use development, balancing support for the expansion of business activity while maintaining village character and integrity.



Review and modify the existing flexible zoning regulations improve the application process and clarify the applicability requirements.



Update all Subdivision and Land Development Regulations and associated checklists and the zoning ordinance to reflect updated development practices and concepts, as well as making them statutorily consistent with changes to state enabling legislation.



Encourage the appropriate utilization and expansion of existing business districts through updating and improving the regulatory framework and exploring opportunities to establish additional business and mixed-use zoning districts.



Revise the zoning ordinance (including the table of uses) to reflect updated and more modern land uses.



Review and revise special overlay districts and restriction in the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision & Land Development Regulations, as necessary.



Consider the adoption of Conservation Development as a smart growth tool to provide for more thoughtful and environmentally sensitive development.



Inform and educate property owners of opportunities related to the Farm, Forest, and Open Space Act.



Review and assess existing residential zoning districts.

6.0 LAND USE

Scituate will be a community where cost-effective, high-quality municipal services and well-maintained public facilities meet the changing needs of current and future residents.

The Land Use element's purpose within the Comprehensive Community Plan is to establish a plan for land use in Scituate over the next 20 years. This involves updating current, as well as proposing new, land use controls and regulations designed to implement this plan. As defined by the State Planning Council's Guidance Handbook #13, Planning for Land Use, planning for land use implies creating a balance of uses that is appropriate for achieving the community's goals and is reflective of the natural characteristics of the land, its suitability for use, and the availability of existing and proposed public and/or private services and facilities. Land use planning must be consistent with available resources and the need to protect public health, safety, and welfare.¹

Scituate has a relatively unique land use dynamic with 84% of the Town's land being within the watershed of Scituate Reservoir, which is the principal drinking water reservoir for Providence Water and, therefore, provides potable water for the population of approximately two-thirds of the State of Rhode Island.

The land use element is the centerpiece of comprehensive planning, connecting all other elements of the plan, serving as a guide for thoughtful municipal decision making on how to best manage land in the Town. This element discusses the following topics:

- The existing conditions in Town, including land use, zoning, development and demographic trends, the tax base related to land development, and a residential buildout analysis ([Section 6.1](#)).
- A future land use map ([Section 6.2](#)).
- A discussion of the inconsistencies between the future land use map and current zoning ([Section 6.3](#)).
- Proposed amendments to the zoning ordinance ([Section 6.4](#)).
- An overview of the public survey as they relate to land use ([Section 6.5](#)).

The following considerations are of high priority to the Town when planning for future growth and redevelopment.

- Protection of critical environmentally sensitive areas of Town ([Policy #4, #5, #6, #7, #8, Action #2, #3, #6, #7, #8, #9](#)).
- Providing for a range of housing options and prices ([Policy #1, #2, #3, Action #1, #3, #5, #7](#)).
- Appropriately balancing the desire to protect community character with the pressure to develop and increase the town's tax base ([Policy #1, #3, #8, Action #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7, #9](#)).

These issues are touched upon in other plan elements, although Land Use is an overarching element that ties these issues together. This cross-pollination of issues results in the planning for land use, and

¹ Guidance Handbook Number 13, Planning for Land Use, RI Comprehensive Planning Standards, January 2016.

specifically the creation of a future land use map (FLUM) being the culmination of the assessments, analysis, goals, policies, and implementation actions flowing from all other elements of the plan.

This element examines existing land uses and current zoning, along with a discussion of recent development trends and desired development outcomes. Recommended future land uses, based on the goals and policies of the various elements of this plan, are depicted as a FLUM. This is then compared to the current zoning map and inconsistencies between the two are identified along with proposed resolutions. This comparison, along with the proposed resolutions, lead to the creation of an updated Official Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance. It is the overall intention of this planning effort to maintain, to the extent possible, the current relative balance of uses, general development patterns, scale, and densities of land uses in all current zoning districts and any newly created districts.

6.1 Existing Conditions

Conceptually, Scituate can be divided into three parts – the reservoir, the villages, and rural Scituate.

The Reservoir

Land and water areas owned by Providence Water cover approximately one-third of the Town. Scituate Reservoir's presence in Town has significant implications for future land uses. In 2012, the Rhode Island State Planning Council adopted State Guide Plan Element 721, *Rhode Island Water 2030*. The revised State Guide Plan Element 721 consolidated and replaced five potable water elements of the State Guide Plan including 1990 *Scituate Reservoir Watershed Management Plan* (Element 125). The purpose of Element 721 is to guide public and private stewardship of drinking water supply resources in the State. In part, this land use element seeks to be consistent and compatible with Element 721 in its goals and policies.



Figure 6-1. Scituate Reservoir

The Villages

Prior to the completion of the Reservoir in 1926, Scituate was comprised of a number of villages relating to a variety of mills, originally established to take advantage of the waterpower offered by local streams. Much of this land was taken and flooded for the creation of the Scituate Reservoir. After the Reservoir was completed, Scituate was reduced to the widely separated villages of North Scituate, Hope, and Clayville. Today, these villages are virtually the only urbanized sections of the Town. Each village has strong historical associations and a unique identity that was shaped by village residents.



Figure 6-2. Hope Village

Rural Scituate

Rural Scituate is comprised of those portions of Town that were the most significantly impacted by the desire for rural large lot development that dominated the development landscape over the last 20 years.



Figure 6-3. Lawton Farm

Except for a few areas near Hope and a few commercial areas, rural Scituate remains primarily zoned for three-acre, single-family residential development. Smart Growth land development principles have shifted the focus from large lot development to more creative land use tools to maintain rural character. These include mixed-use zoning for village areas, conservation development, cluster subdivisions, open space preservation, and others. The Town should explore these options as a mechanism to protect Scituate's rural character.

6.1.1 Commercial and Manufacturing

Scituate currently has a limited amount of land available for commercial development. Retail businesses are located sporadically throughout the Town with the greatest concentrations in North Scituate Village and along Route 6 (Johnston Town line to Danielson Pike). The Town has two commercial zoning districts, Limited Business (BL) and General Business (BG). The locations of the parcels within these zoning districts can be seen on the current zoning map, Map LU-1

There are two distinct areas of Town zoned for manufacturing use. One area is located within the Scituate Reservoir watershed in North Scituate and was used by Peerless Aluminum. The other is outside of the watershed and is occupied by the Hope Mill, which is discussed in more detail below. In addition to these areas, there are parcels zoned for manufacturing use along Darby Road. These parcels are not currently used for manufacturing and contain residential homes. These parcels should be rezoned to low density residential, as the potential manufacturing uses allowed by the current district represent a substantial risk to drinking water supply given their proximity to the Reservoir.

6.1.2 The Hope Mill

The Hope Mill was in operation in 2007, with the last textile manufacturing occupant Just-A-Stretch, weaving elastic fabrics. The Hope Mill property has been in receivership since 2008 and has been severely neglected since about 2010. Between 2016 and present the roofs and walls of the main building, and several outbuildings, have collapsed.

In 2018 a developer proposed a low to moderate income housing project on the Hope Mill property. The project proposed to utilize some of the existing buildings, and to build additional structures for apartments. The proposed project was approved at the preliminary plan stage of review by the Scituate Plan Commission on June 5, 2019. The Plan Commission approved the project with a total of 175 units, with 40% of the units being income restricted for low- and moderate-income households. See Chapter 13 *Housing* for more information on this housing project.

6.1.3 Existing Land Use

The Town of Scituate has a land area of approximately 35,077 acres. Of the total area, 15,004 acres is owned and maintained by the Providence Water Supply Board (PWSB). Consequently, approximately 43 percent of the Town is devoted exclusively to the production of water for over 600,000 Rhode Island residents. The dominance of water production as a land use in Scituate is further demonstrated by the fact that 84 percent, or just over 29,519 acres, of the Town is within the Scituate Reservoir's watershed and constrained to development. Table 6-1 below provides a breakdown of land cover based on Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS) data. This data set, often referred to as LULC for land use land cover, documents how much of an area is covered by forests, wetlands, impervious surfaces, agriculture, and other land and waters. Land use shows how people use the land – whether for development, conservation, or other uses. The information represented in Table 6-1 is for illustrative purpose and should not be construed to be an actual representation of acreage for a particular classification.

Table 6-1. Existing Land Use

Land Use	RIGIS LULC Code 2011	RIGIS LULC Description (2011)	Scituate Land Area (Acres)	% of Scituate Land Area
Residential	111	High Density Residential (<1/8 acre lots)	3.34	0.01
	112	Medium High Density Residential (1/4 to 1/8 acre lots)	99.52	0.28
	113	Medium Density Residential (1 to 1/4 acre lots)	2,196.12	6.26
	114	Medium Low Density Residential (1 to 2 acre lots)	628.33	1.79
	115	Low Density Residential (>2 acre lots)	430.51	1.23
	Total Residential		3,357.82	9.57
Commercial	120	Commercial (sale of products/services)	78.93	0.23
Industrial	130	Industrial (manufacturing, design, assembly, etc.)	17.01	0.05
Transportation and Utilities	144	Water and Sewage Treatment	25.90	0.07
	145	Waste Disposal (landfills, junkyards, etc.)	54.93	0.16
	146	Power Lines (100' or more in width)	38.29	0.11
	147	Other Transportation (terminals, docks, etc.)	0.82	0.00

Table 6-1. Existing Land Use

Land Use	RIGIS LULC Code 2011	RIGIS LULC Description (2011)	Scituate Land Area (Acres)	% of Scituate Land Area
Total Transportation and Utilities			215.88	0.62
Developed Recreation	161	Developed Recreation (all recreation)	103.23	0.29
Cemeteries	163	Cemeteries	12.98	0.04
Institutional	170	Institutional (schools, hospitals, churches, etc.)	123.85	0.35
Agricultural	210	Pasture (agricultural, not suitable for tillage)	445.35	1.27
	220	Cropland (tillable)	506.06	1.44
	230	Orchards, Groves, Nurseries	166.58	0.47
	250	Idle Agriculture (abandoned fields and orchards)	28.13	0.08
	Total Agriculture		1,386.18	3.94
Undeveloped/Unprotected	162	Vacant Land	18.17	0.05
	300	Brushland (shrub and brush area, reforestation)	370.40	1.06
	410	Deciduous Forest (>80% hardwood)	14,807.43	42.21
	420	Softwood Forest (>80% softwood)	3,535.94	10.08
	430	Mixed Forest	6,914.27	19.71
	740	Mines, Quarries, and Gravel Pits	28.26	0.08
	750	Transitional Areas (urban open)	64.74	0.18
	Total Undeveloped/Unprotected		25,739.21	73.37
Water	500	Inland Waters	4,234.69	12.07
Wetland	600	Wetland	138.95	0.40
Total			35,077.38	100%

Source: RIGIS Land Use Land Cover, 2011

Overall land use within the Town, based on a review of RIGIS maps and Scituate Tax Assessor data, shows that residential uses occupy about 90% of developed land within the Town.

6.1.4 Existing Zoning Districts

The allowable use of land is determined by the designation of a zoning district, which is established in the zoning ordinance. The zoning ordinance is responsible for establishing the zoning districts in Town and determining which uses are allowed in each district. Below is an explanation of each current zoning district in Scituate.

RR-120 Rural Residential – this district covers a significant portion of the land area not included within the Watershed District (W). This district is not expected to be served by public water and is designed to

require low density to protect the watershed. This residential zoning district allows housing development at a density of one dwelling unit for every 120,000 square feet.

RS-120 Single-Family Residence – this district covers a significant portion of the land area not included within the Watershed District (W). This district is not expected to be served by public water. Land use in this district is more restrictive than the RR-120 district and is designed to protect the watershed. This residential zoning district allows housing development at a density of one dwelling unit for every 120,000 square feet.

RRW-60/80 Rural Residential/Water – this district is located outside of the watershed, mostly in the Hope Village area of Town. Lots within the district which are served by a public water supply shall have a minimum area of 60,000 square feet, and lots which are not served by a public water supply shall have a minimum area of 80,000 square feet.

RSW-60/80 Single-Family Residence/Water - this district is located outside of the watershed, mostly in the Hope Village area of Town. Lots within the district which are served by a public water supply shall have a minimum area of 60,000 square feet, and lots which are not served by a public water supply shall have a minimum area of 80,000 square feet. This district is more restrictive than the RRW District in terms of allowed uses.

BL Limited Business – this district allows convenience type retail activities and tends to be more restrictive than the General Business District. There are no minimum lot area or frontage requirements in this district.

BG General Business – this district allows for a wide variety of business and convenience retail type uses. There are no minimum lot area or frontage requirements in this district.

M General Manufacturing – this district allows for light industrial and general business uses. Industrial uses identified as having potential adverse impacts are permitted by special use permit only.

W Watershed – this district applies to most of the land owned by the Providence Water Supply Board (some of the land owned by the Providence Water Supply Board is residentially zoned). Allowed uses include the collection, storage, processing, and distribution of water and accessory activities such as forest planning and harvesting and the production of electricity.

Flexible Zoning – a flexible zoning option is available for both the low and medium density residential areas. This flexible zoning is enabled in Article 4 of the Scituate Zoning Ordinance. This option allows for variations in lot dimensions and setbacks in order to encourage development which is consistent with the traditional features of Rural Scituate and protective of the natural environment. The flexible zoning provisions are currently vague and sometimes cause confusion as to when an application is appropriately approved to utilize the flexible zoning provisions. Updates and improvements to this section of the zoning ordinance are needed to ensure that the intended purpose of the provision is being realized and it is being applied appropriately.

6.1.5 Development Trends

Much like many other municipalities across the country, Scituate experienced a surge of single-family residential development from about 1997 through 2004, averaging 40 permits per year, after which requests for building permits began to drop off. Residential construction sharply declined around 2005 and stayed relatively low through 2017, averaging 12 permits annually. Figure 6-1 provides annual building permit data for Scituate from 1997 to 2017.

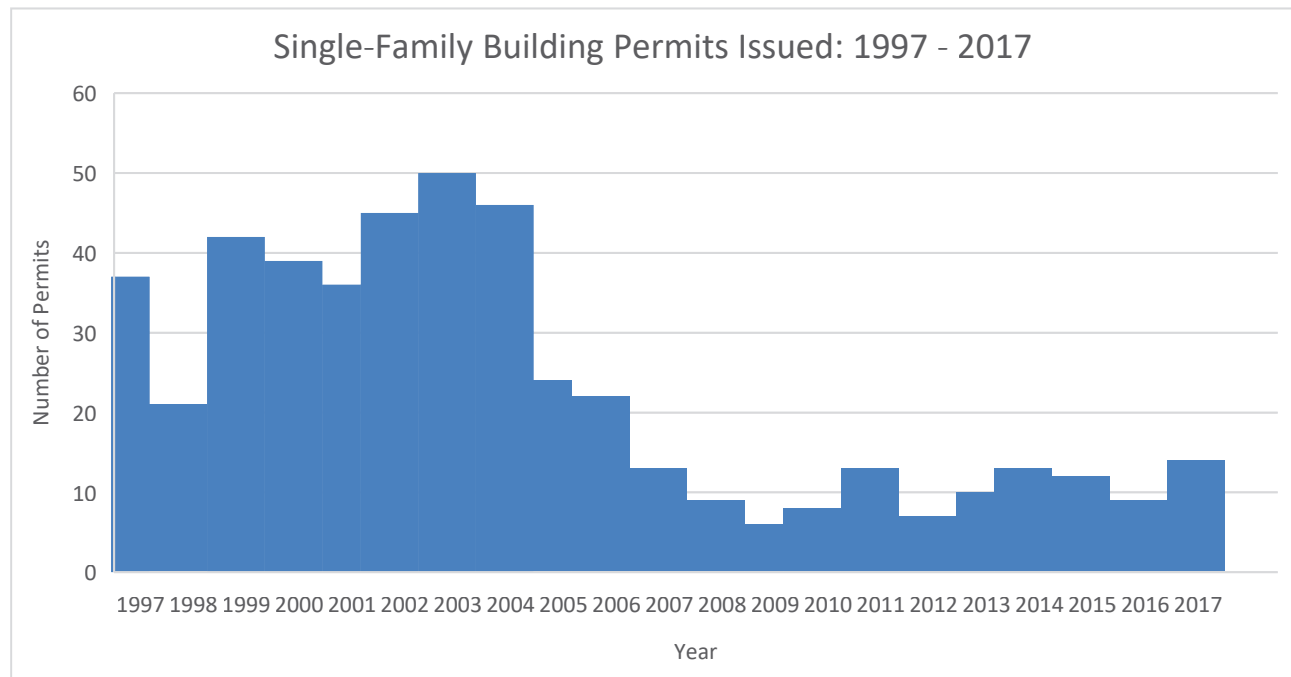


Figure 6-4. Building Permits Issued
Source: U.S. Census 1997-2017

Although approximately 84% of the Town is occupied by reservoir or watershed property, there is ample remaining land in private ownership for new construction.

6.1.6 Demographic Trends

Chapter 3 of this plan, titled *Demographic Profile*, provides an overview of Scituate's population characteristics. Scituate's population experienced steady growth from about 1940 to 2000, where it began to level off and remained fairly constant heading into 2020, with a 2019 (July) population of 10,634 residents (see Table 3-1). Refer to Chapter 3 *Demographic Profile* for further information regarding Scituate's demographics.

6.1.7 Tax Base and Future Land Use

With almost 55% of the land area within the Town zoned residential and 43% owned by Providence Water, there is a significant reliance on residential property taxes to finance the municipal budget. Scituate is a primarily residential community and has taken measures to retain its rural character. It is a constant balancing act to retain the existing rural charm but provide for community services that can play a role in serving the residents while lessening the tax burden shouldered by residents. From an economic perspective, the question is: how do we attract new business in order to give residential taxpayers some relief while still preserving Scituate's preferred rural character? However, from a land use perspective, the question is quite different. How much relief for residential taxpayers is actually possible given currently available land for occupation by new business?

Agriculture is an important component of the community but for purposes of discussing enhancements to the Town's tax base, it does not provide for substantial opportunity. It is important to the Town to

support and encourage local agriculture. Agriculture plays an important economic role in Scituate but is often forgotten or dismissed when discussing economic development. Agriculture is a business activity, but Scituate does not have a specific zoning district for agriculture, and it is currently permitted in all districts. Momentarily setting agricultural activity aside for these reasons, classic business activity in the economic development sense can currently take place in any of three zoning districts:

Limited Business (BL) – Approximately 30 acres of land is currently zoned Limited Business, contained in 36 parcels. Of this land area, there is a total of 14 parcels that are vacant, totaling just over five acres of land. This estimate of available land does not account for the subtraction of constrained land or the possibility of further subdivision of developed parcels with excess land area.²

General Business (BG) – A total of approximately 207 acres of land is currently zoned General Business, contained in 87 parcels. Of this land area, there is a total of nine parcels that are vacant, totaling just under 29 acres of land. This estimate of available land does not account for the subtraction of constrained land or the possibility of further subdivision of developed parcels with excess land area.²

General Manufacturing (M) – A total of approximately 27 acres of land is currently zoned General Manufacturing, contained in 11 parcels. Of this land area, there is a total of three parcels that are vacant, totaling just under 3 acres of land. This estimate of available land does not account for the subtraction of constrained land or the possibility of further subdivision of developed parcels with excess land area.²

In total, approximately .7% of the Town of Scituate's land area is designated as commercial or manufacturing zoning. This is partially the result of the development constraints associated with the Scituate Reservoir watershed. The Town has created an identity around the important task of protecting the Scituate Reservoir and the watershed that supplies it. Because of this important task, commercial and manufacturing development in the Town is limited and selectively located. This requires that Scituate think outside the box in terms of developing and securing a tax base outside of what is collected from residential housing. Scituate's natural beauty and proximity to Providence make it an attractive location and the Town should consider opportunities to promote and expand home based businesses as a supplemental stream of tax revenue. This concept is discussed in more detail in Chapter 12 *Economic Development*.

The ratio of municipal tax revenue as of 2023 stands at approximately 67% from residential property taxes and 28% from the commercial side. The Town should consider expanding upon its commercial and manufacturing zoning districts to further diversify the type of development allowed. Additionally, outdated use codes in the zoning ordinance can be barriers to economic development. When a use is not identifiable in the use table, it is an automatically prohibited use. When use codes are outdated and not reflective of current land uses, prohibitions due to a lack of being addressed in the zoning ordinance can significantly hinder development proposals. An effort by the Town to address these issues could make significant strides in promoting appropriate commercial development.

² Only vacant parcels were included in this analysis. Constrained land was not deducted from the total parcel area when present. More land is potentially available for development through the subdivision of developed parcels that contain excess land in addition to what is required for the existing structure.

6.2 Residential Buildout Analysis

Anticipating the impacts of future development is an essential duty of Town planning. The suitability, resiliency, livability, and safety of the Town are determined by growth and how we manage it. The Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, and Comprehensive Plan are the Town's governing doctrines to manage growth and development within the Town. Carefully implemented land use regulations assure residents that their quality of life will not be negatively impacted by unwanted nuisances of inappropriate development.

This section presents an assessment of future development capacity based on current zoning regulations and context. An estimate is presented of the total future population at anticipated buildout and the year by which residential buildout is anticipated, based on historic trends. While future buildout is unlikely to be achieved given current population projections, this type of analysis is useful in determining future water and housing needs and to determine whether any changes are needed in terms of regulations for future land use.

A residential buildout analysis is a tool utilized to assess the maximum future residential development potential. Conducting a buildout analysis is a multi-step process that seeks to achieve the following:

- Compile an inventory of the existing conditions and constraints, such as infrastructure, housing, land use, environmental constraints, natural resources, and deed-restricted conservation lands.
- Delineate the potential buildable land area.
- Determine the maximum number of dwelling units allowed under the existing development regulations.

6.2.1 Development Capacity Model

Total acreage of each residential zoning district was converted to net buildable area by removing developed and constrained land from total acreage. An estimate of future buildable dwelling units was made by dividing the net buildable area by the minimum lot size for the particular zoning district, accounting for roads and utilities needed. An average household size of 2.7 persons per dwelling unit was used to estimate associated population increases (2019 ACS).

- For this model, the following assumptions were made:
- Developable land does not include developed land, land with development constraints (wetlands, water bodies, and flood zones), or land with conservation restriction or conservation intent as identified by RIGIS data.
- Residentially zoned land can be fully developed despite access limitations, lack of water supply, or property ownership.
- Current access to and future development costs of municipal water and sanitary sewer services were not considered as restrictions.
- Minimum lot sizes per zoning district were used to determine total lot availability in each zoning district.
- Nonconforming undersized lots of record were not included in this analysis as their potential future development is already restricted by lot size.

- An allowance of 30% to account for roads and utilities to support the potential development was made, deducting this amount from the total developable land in each zoning district.
- Existing dwellings in each zoning district were estimated in GIS through overlay analysis of town-supplied building and parcel GIS layers supplemented by a review of RIGIS aerial photographs (Spring 2018). Parcels identified as containing a structure of livable size were assumed to represent one existing housing unit.
- For each lot identified as developed, an area equivalent to the minimum lot size for the zoning district was deducted from the district's available acreage to account for the need to keep the minimum lot size dedicated to the existing dwelling. Any excess land outside of this minimum lot size area was considered to be developable land.
- An average household size of 2.7 persons per dwelling unit (as defined in the 2019 American Community Survey).
- This estimate is based on what would be allowed by right under current zoning. A variety of zoning relief mechanisms (comprehensive permits, variances, and special use permits) could allow for a higher number of units if approved through one or more of those mechanisms.

The residential buildout analysis involved the following steps:

- Mapping of environmental constraints, such as water bodies, wetlands, and flood hazard zones. The principal source of this information was the data from RIGIS and the Town GIS.
- Total developed and constrained land was removed from the total acreage of each zoning district to estimate the acreage of potentially developable land in Town.
- A deduction of land area, equivalent to 30% of the developable land, to allow for roads, utilities, stormwater infrastructure, and supporting development was applied to yield net buildable area.
- An estimate of future dwelling units was calculated by dividing the net buildable area by the minimum lot size for the particular zoning district.
- A calculation of the potential buildout population was established by multiplying the number of dwelling units times the average household size from the 2019 ACS of 2.7.

6.2.2 *Buildout Results*

The buildout analysis produced an estimated figure based on reasonably accurate and realistic values, however, the data produced through this exercise is not a prediction of future development, but instead an estimated inventory of what could potentially be built based on existing conditions and development regulations.

The buildout estimates an additional 2,546 dwelling units could possibly be developed by right based on the estimated buildable land area and the current minimum zoning requirements. Table 6-2 provides more detailed information on the residential buildout results. Based on this development capacity projection, Scituate can expect its total future buildout population to be 17,497 (the current population (10,634) plus the projected 6,863 additional residents that the analysis illustrates). Since 2005, Scituate has averaged 12 new units of housing per year. Based on that average, it could take the Town approximately 212 years to reach total buildout.

Table 6-2. Residential Buildout by Zoning District

Zoning District	Acres in Zoning District	Developed or Constrained Land (acres)	30% Infrastructure Deduction	Estimated Buildable Area (acres)	Estimated Buildable Units	Estimated Buildout Population
RR-120	10,374	3,474	2,070	4,830	1,756	4,741
RS-120	3,881	1,725	647	1,509	548	1,470
RRW-60/80 ^a	114	63	15	36	25	67
RRW-60/80 ^b	495	178	95	222	123	332
RSW-60/80 ^a	36	24	4	8	5	13
RSW-60/80 ^b	884	648	71	161	89	240
Total	15,784	6,112	2,902	6,766	2,546	6,863

Note:

- a. Buildout calculated on 60,000 square foot zoning
- b. Buildout calculated on 80,000 square foot zoning

6.3 Future Land Use Map

Setting a vision for the future growth of Scituate over the next 20 years, the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) presents a visual depiction of the community's desires for types, patterns, and intensities of development. The Future Land Use Map, Map LU-4, depicts those areas of the community that are currently dedicated for conservation through ownership, easement, and deed restriction as well as those lands intended for conservation in the future.

Future land uses in Scituate include:

- Residential land uses are intended to allow for the orderly development of residential dwellings designed to complement the natural features of the land, to promote suitable placement of buildings and appurtenances in relation to the site and surrounding areas, with adequate living and open space, to avoid overcrowding of land, to encourage good design, to avoid overburdening of municipal facilities, and to ensure compatibility with the immediate neighborhood and natural environment. Residential zoning categories are proposed to be combined into two categories, a reduction from the current number of four. Currently, both zoning districts designated with a 120 have the same dimensional requirements, as do the two districts designated with a 60/80. Use allowances within each set of zoning districts vary slightly. The intent in combining the similar districts into one single RR120 district and one single RRW 60/80 district is to reduce confusion and provided for a clearer zoning designation of parcels throughout the Town. The use tables within the zoning ordinance will need to be updated to reflect the combining of districts and remedy the discrepancies in use allowances. The proposed two residential categories are:
 - R120
 - RW60/80
- Business land uses are intended to provide areas for commercial establishments to serve the community with town-wide retail shopping and service needs. While moderately auto-oriented in nature, business land use in Scituate is intended to be more neighborhood village-like land

use rather than highway-based commercial in nature with large footprint buildings and large, towering signage. The two business zoning categories are:

- BL - Limited Business
- BG – General Business
- Manufacturing land uses are intended to encourage light clean industrial uses with proper safeguards for protecting nearby residential areas and environmentally sensitive areas. The only manufacturing zoning category is:
 - M – General Manufacturing
- Watershed land uses are those associated with the land owned by Providence Water under the jurisdiction of the Providence Water Supply Board. These areas are intended for the collection, storage, processing, and distribution of water and as an incident thereto, the planting and harvesting of forest products and the production of electricity. The only watershed zoning category is:
 - W – Watershed

6.4 Inconsistencies Between Future Land Use Map and Current Zoning

This section identifies the inconsistencies between the desired future of all land in Scituate as depicted on the FLUMs and Scituate's current Official Zoning Map.

The zoning map amendments that need to be made in order to create consistency between the FLUM and existing zoning are entirely related to the Town's decision to consolidate their residential zoning districts from four to two. The purpose of doing so is to create a less confusing and easier to implement zoning scheme throughout the Town. The Town currently employs two districts with the same dimensional requirements that require a minimum of 120,000 square feet per lot (RR120 and RS120). The major differences between these two districts have to do with the uses allowed in each district. The same is true for the two districts that require 60,000/80,000 square feet per lot (RRS 60/80 and RRW 60/80, depending on access to water service). The two current 120 designated districts are to be combined to create the new R120 district and the two current 60/80 designated districts are to be combined into the RRW 60/80 district, providing for two residential zoning districts in the Town, R120 and RW60/80.

The reason for this change is twofold:

- Create a more user friendly and clear residential zoning scheme for the Town.
- Correct mislabeled zoning parcels as they currently exist by creating two new districts and reclassifying every parcel in Town into one of the two new districts.

Several years ago, during a change over in valuation software, the zoning designation of the parcels on several of the Town's tax maps were incorrectly recorded into the new software. This has created a situation where many parcels in Town are incorrectly classified in the tax assessor's data base. The most effective way to remedy this issue is to create two new zoning designations and classify each parcel in Town into one of the new districts. This will be accomplished as presented in Table 6-3 below.

Table 6-3. Zoning Reclassification

Existing Zoning Designation	New Zoning Designation
RR120	R120
RS120	R120
RRW60/80	RW60/80
RSW60/80	RW60/80

The creation of these two new zoning districts, and the intent to migrate all the lots in Town into one of these two districts, as shown in Table 6-3, has created inconsistency between current zoning and the FLUM for every single residentially zoned lot in Town. The Town recognizes the creation of this inconsistency and will amend the zoning map and zoning ordinance to reflect this change within 18 months of the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, as is required by state law.

6.4.1 Lower Density Standards within Urban Development Area

In evaluating the suitability of certain areas for particular densities of development, Scituate must take into account both statewide planning efforts, as well as local limitations in creating a functional land use map. A small portion of southeastern Scituate in Hope Village contains parcels designated as “Urban Development” areas on the State Guide Plan’s 2025 Land Use Map. According to the state, these urban development areas must have a minimum residential density of 1 dwelling unit per acre. The area designated as “Urban Development” on the state map, includes parcels on or Route 116 (Main Street), Hope Road, Jackson Flat Road and Howard Avenue (or on local roads leading to the former). Though this area is designated as “Urban Development” only a portion of Hope Village has public water services, provided by the Kent County Water Authority. The availability of public water also affects wastewater disposal, which is an issue in Hope Village. A majority of Hope Village is directly adjacent to the Pawtuxet River and within the river’s watershed. The village is primarily built out and there is little opportunity in this area for future development outside of the parcel that contains the Hope Mill. The Hope Mill parcel was approved for approximately 175 residential units. Additionally, onsite wastewater treatment systems to serve higher density development may face issues in siting because of the generally high water tables. For these reasons, the Town of Scituate has designated these areas as RW 60/80, with a lower maximum density (1 dwelling unit per acre) than the state’s goal for typical Urban Development areas.

6.5 Zoning Ordinance Revisions

Scituate’s Zoning Ordinance regulates the development of land by detailing allowed uses, dimensional requirements, and other important parameters for development. The Zoning Ordinance must be aligned with the vision set forth in this Comprehensive Plan, as it is the primary tool to achieve it. To ensure consistency, comprehensive plans are required to set forth a schedule for making any necessary amendments to the zoning ordinance and map that may be necessary after the comprehensive plan has been adopted. This 18-month schedule is established in the Goals, Policies, Actions, and Implementation Element of this plan.

In addition to resolving the inconsistencies between the FLUM and the current Zoning Ordinance detailed in the previous section, there are a number of actions the Town should undertake in updating the Zoning Ordinance to not only bring it into consistency, but to bring clarity and efficiency to the document itself. These tasks include, but are not limited to:

- Modernize the tables that identify principle and accessory uses for each zoning district. Many important and innovative new land uses have emerged in recent years and need to be incorporated into Scituate's land use regulations.
- Consider renaming or updating the residential zoning categories. The current identification system should be refined, with distinctions between district allowances being clear and concise.
- Update and modernize the definition section of the ordinance.
- Update and expand upon the flexible zoning provisions. Provide clarity in application and set forth clear standards and allowances.
- Amend the ordinance to reflect comprehensive permits consistent with state enabling legislation.

6.6 Issues and Opportunities

Future long-term growth is highly dependent on the State's economy and the health of the housing market. For Scituate, the significant long-term factor related to growth is the presence of the Scituate Reservoir and the amount of land available for development in a manner and density that will not impact this important drinking water resource. According to build out estimate in this plan, Scituate has the land capacity for another approximately 2,500 homes, but it could take as much as 212 years to reach build out at the average rate of development. It also needs to be considered, that build out situation in Scituate is counterproductive to the role the Town plays as steward to a drinking water resource for one third of the State's population.

The Town of Scituate Zoning Ordinance is outdated and has not received a thorough review and update in many years. An antiquated use table, confusing and/or contradictory development provisions, and a lack of consistency with state law changes and updates makes land development less clear and streamlined than it could be. This poses a challenge for property owners, developers, and the Town. Clear and practical development standards provide for a uniform playing field and a straightforward development process. The Town should consider a review and update to the Zoning Ordinance for these purposes.

6.7 Opinion Survey of Scituate Land Use

In May 2021, the Town posted an online survey for residents as part of the comprehensive planning process. The survey asked several questions related to land use, both existing and future. A full summary of the survey results can be found in Appendix A. In summary, the survey reported the following principal findings related to land use:

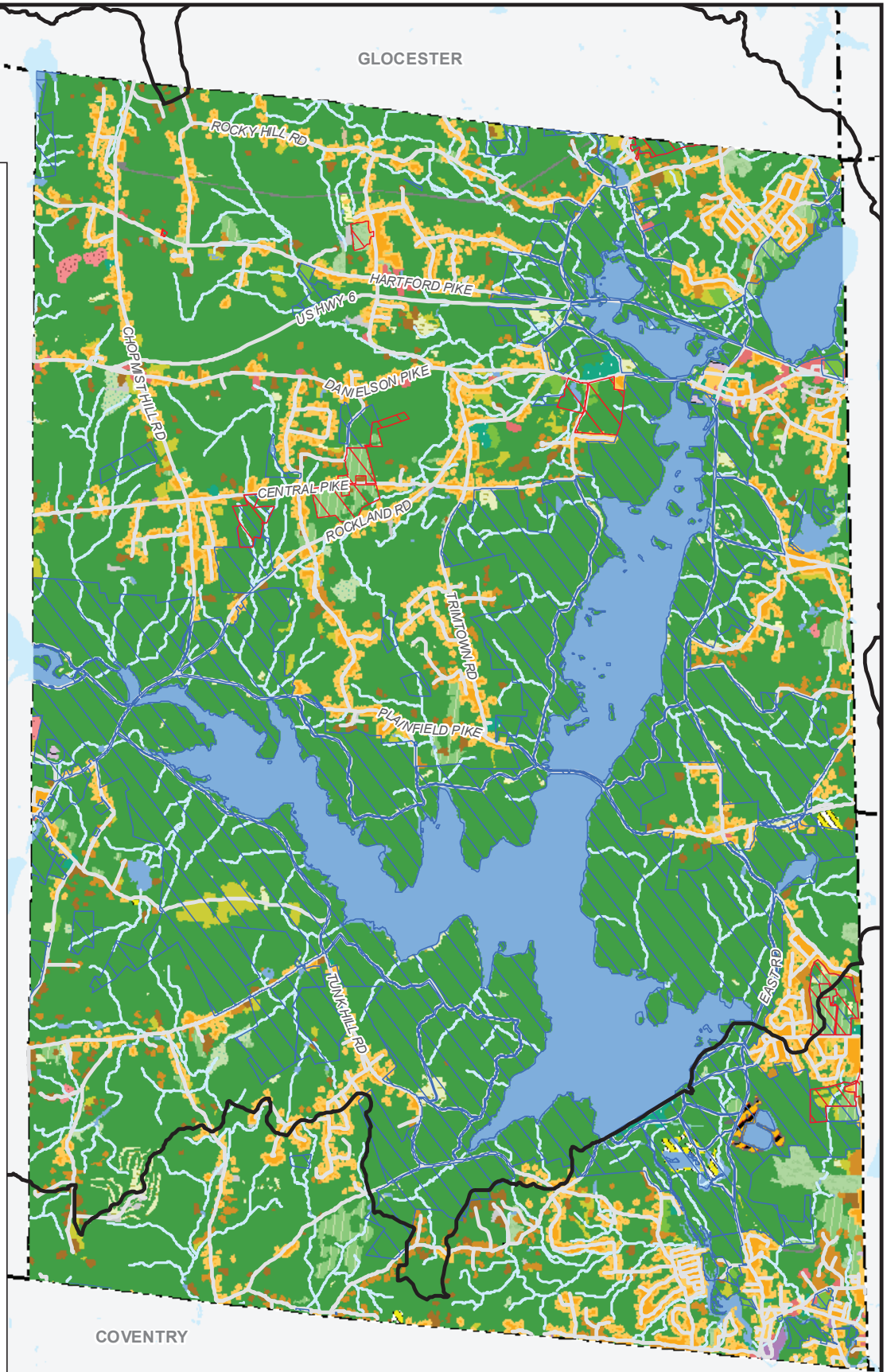
- When asked what respondents thought made Scituate a great place to live the number one options chosen was the rural setting. Second was the Town's natural beauty.
- When asked what types of development services the Town needs more of, less of, and the same amount of, most survey respondents (67.1%) felt that the Town had the correct amount of single-family residential development. Additionally, 54.3% of respondents answered that the Town needed less multi-family development and 62.7% answered that the Town needed less condominium development.
- Concerning retail development, 61.9% of respondents answered that the Town had the correct amount of retail with only 18.8% of respondents answering that the Town needed more retail.

- A majority of survey respondents (53.8%) answered that the Town needed more agriculture.
- When asked about senior housing, 57.1% of respondents answered that the Town has a sufficient amount of housing for seniors.
- When asked what types of activities respondents would support the Town pursuing a majority answered they would be very supportive of the following types of land use related activities:
 - Preserving the character of existing villages (64.2%)
 - Promoting and supporting agricultural activities (54.2%)
- Conversely, some survey respondents were less supportive of the following land use related activities, identifying them as not supportive:
 - Promoting development of vacant or underutilized properties through incentives (39.9%)
 - Sewer and water infrastructure (32.3%)
 - Affordability of housing (35%)
- When respondents were asked to rank how they felt about certain statements the following land use related responses were captured:
 - 64.4% of respondents answered that they either strongly agreed or agreed that the Town has an adequate amount of commercial development.
 - Related to that, only 31.8% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the commercial development in Town was appropriately located.
 - 64.8% of respondents answered that they strongly agreed or agreed that Town has an adequate amount of residential development, with 34.4% responding that the residential development is appropriately located.

These survey results indicate that a majority of respondents value the Town's rural setting and natural beauty more than any other attributes. Respondents also clearly feel that the Town does not need additional development, either residential or commercial in nature. While the notion that no further development will occur in Town is unreasonable, it does provide a better understanding of the sentiment of the community and encourages the Town to work closely with residents to plan carefully for future development to make sure that it is appropriately scaled and located.

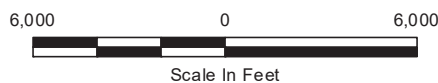
Legend

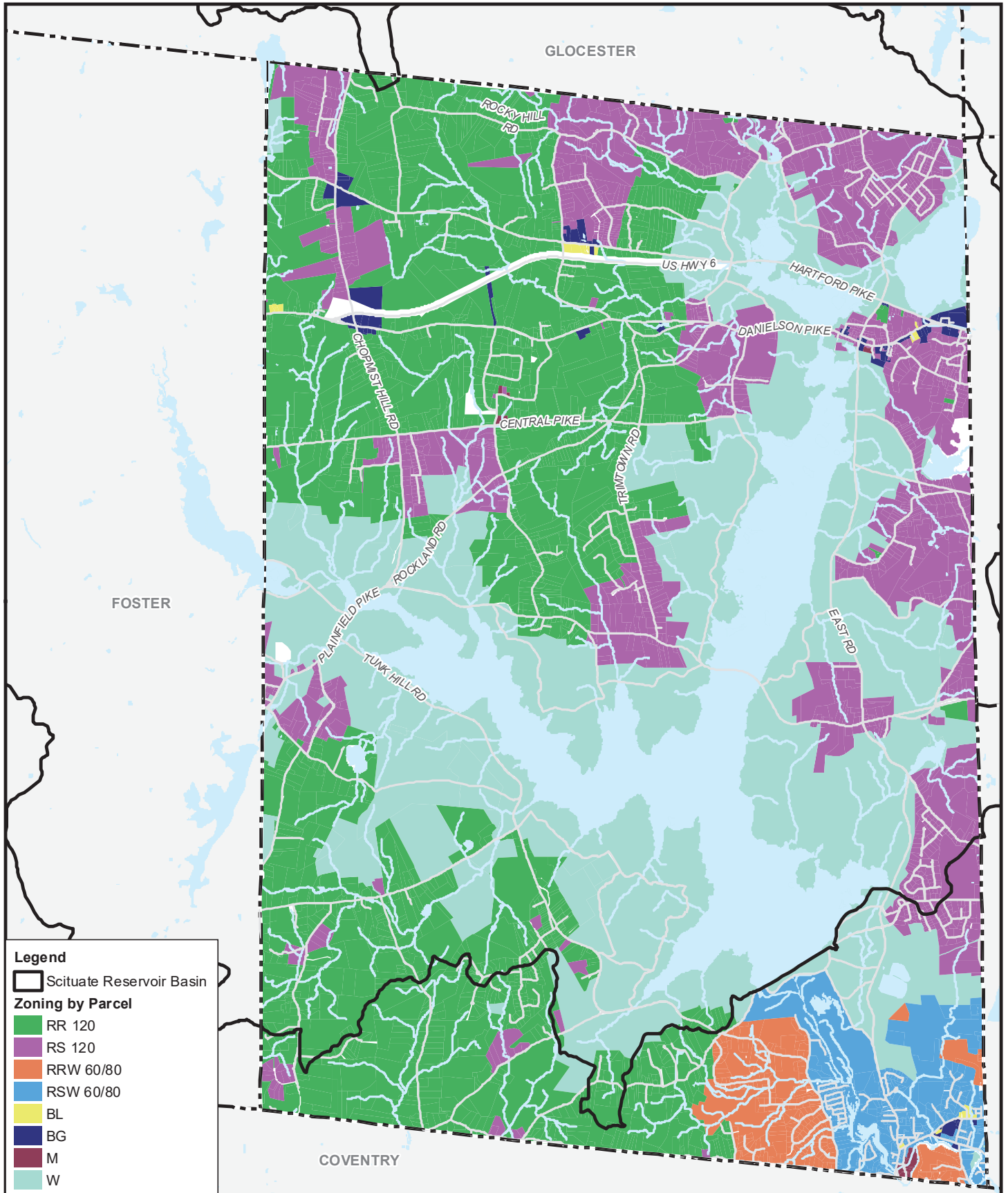
- Scituate Reservoir Basin
- State Conservation
- Local Conservation
- Rivers and Streams
- High Density Residential (<1/8 acre lots)
- Medium High Density Residential (1/4 to 1/8 acre lots)
- Medium Density Residential (1 to 1/4 acre lots)
- Medium Low Density Residential (1 to 2 acre lots)
- Low Density Residential (>2 acre lots)
- Commercial (sale of products and services)
- Industrial (manufacturing, design, assembly, etc.)
- Water and Sewage Treatment
- Waste Disposal (landfills, junkyards, etc.)
- Power Lines (100' or more width)
- Other Transportation (terminals, docks, etc.)
- Developed Recreation (all recreation)
- Vacant Land
- Cemeteries
- Institutional (schools, hospitals, churches, etc.)
- Pasture (agricultural not suitable for tillage)
- Cropland (tillable)
- Orchards, Groves, Nurseries
- Idle Agriculture (abandoned fields and orchards)
- Brushland (shrub and brush areas, reforestation)
- Forest
- Water
- Wetland
- Mines, Quarries and Gravel Pits
- Transitional Areas (urban open)
- Mixed Barren



MAP LU-1: EXISTING LAND USE

TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



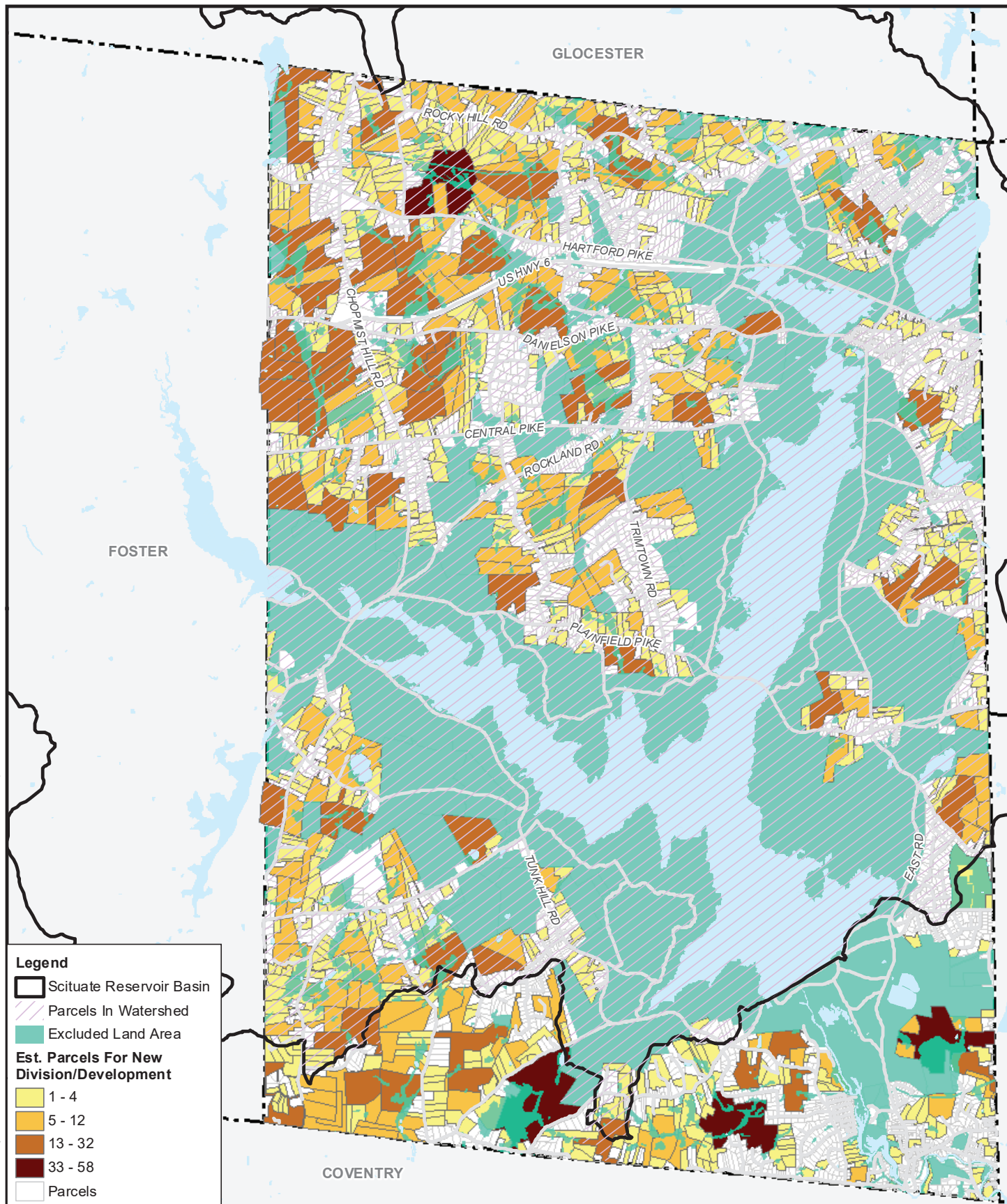


MAP LU-2: CURRENT ZONING MAP

TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



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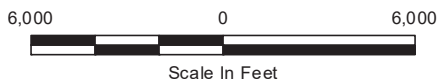


MAP LU-3: BUILD OUT ANALYSIS

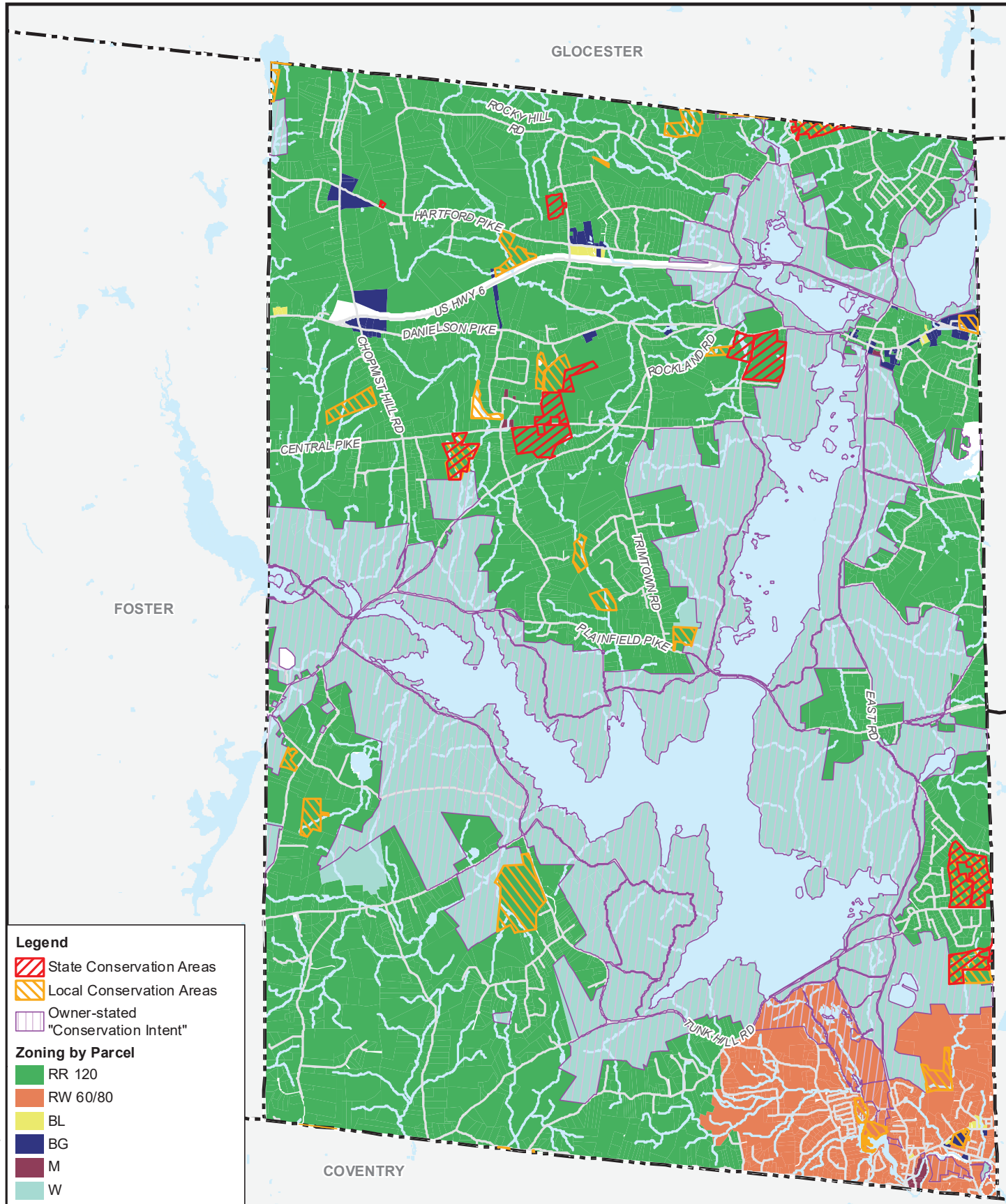
TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



Weston & Sampson



See report for Build out estimate methodology.

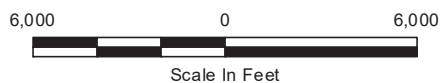


MAP LU-4: FUTURE LAND USE MAP

TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



Weston & Sampson



Flood Hazard, waterbodies, landuse, conservation, and municipal boundaries were obtained from RIGIS. Town base mapping data provided by Town of Scituate. Other derived data products made by Weston & Sampson from these sources.

This graphic is intended for general reference and is not a legally authoritative source as to the location of natural or manmade features or areas.

Zoning classification data obtained from the Town of Scituate was incomplete. Parcels without documented zoning classification were assumed to share the same zoning as their neighboring parcels. Blank areas in this graphic have not been assigned a zoning classification and include areas like rights of way, cemeteries, medians, etc.

7

CHAPTER 7

NATURAL RESOURCES



Town of Scituate, Rhode Island

Community Comprehensive Plan Update

Natural Resources, Open Space, and Agriculture

Background

Scituate's natural resources have played a defining role in the Town's development, settlement pattern, and character. Scituate enjoys a variety of important natural features and resources, including high quality agricultural lands and forests, but the Scituate Reservoir dominates the physical and natural environment, with the watershed occupying approximately 85% of the Town. Natural resources in Scituate play a role in recreation, economic health, scenic value, natural hazard mitigation, and overall rural character and quality of life for residents. Therefore, natural resource management and protection are critical components of this Comprehensive Plan and Scituate's future.

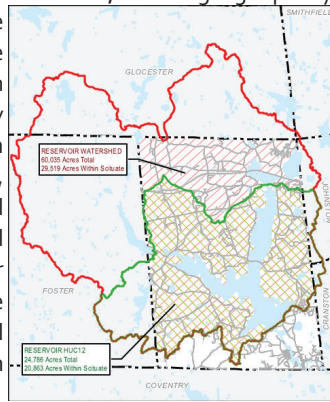


Figure 7-1. Scituate Reservoir Watershed

Policies

1. Limit development impacts through land development techniques such as conservation development and overlay districts in environmentally sensitive and rural areas and encourage infill development where possible to protect the Town's resources and character.
2. Work with Providence Water to protect the Scituate Reservoir as a drinking water resource for the State of Rhode Island that offers many associated ecological values.
3. Continue to protect and manage groundwater recharge areas, including wellhead protection areas, to ensure the quality of groundwater supplies.
4. Preserve and protect forest, farmlands, agricultural lands, and the overall rural character of Scituate as essential elements of economic vitality, quality of life and the community.
5. Adopt and continue to implement programs to protect natural resources and conservation areas through acquisition, conservation easements, and other measures. As part of this policy, maintain compliance with state and federal enforceable environmental policies such as the MS4 Stormwater General Permit.
6. Ensure that Town policies, programs, and ordinances support working farm and forest viability (specifically forestland of statewide importance), including an emphasis on the Farm, Forest, and Open Space program.
7. Continue to implement wastewater management techniques and cesspool phaseout to protect the natural resources.

Goals



Preserve, conserve, and protect the valuable natural resources of Scituate in order to promote ecological diversity, resilience, and rural character, and acknowledge the value of these assets to individuals and the community as a whole.



Protect the quality of the Scituate Reservoir by managing development activities within the watershed to the extent feasible.



Respect and conserve the Town's surface and groundwater water resources for future use and benefit of the Town.



Ensure that current and future development has minimal adverse impacts on natural resources, and that environmentally sensitive areas are protected, especially regarding water supply and water quality.

Encourage agricultural and forestry activities as a component of land development.

Prioritize open space protection for both natural resource management and opportunities for passive recreation.

Actions



Consider instituting a "dark sky" or similar lighting ordinance that would minimize the intensity of outdoor lighting on natural resources. Consider assessing existing lighting throughout Town and determine where lighting impacts could be reduced, including Town owned buildings and properties.



Consider implementing a local transfer of development rights program to preserve sensitive land and transfer development opportunities to more appropriate locations.



Create and administer a public education campaign on OWTs, alerting individuals to maintenance needs, and the possible warning signs and impacts related to failures, and promote participation in the Community Septic System Loan Program (CSSLP) to replace failing OWTs.



Explore implementing performance standards within land use regulations that limit the site disturbances and alterations affecting critical natural resources in line with the Rhode Island Low Impact Development Site Planning and Design Guidance Manual and the Rhode Island Stormwater Design and Installations Standards Manual.



Consider new, and improve upon existing, land use techniques that encourage the conservation of the Town's farm and forestland including the purchase of development rights, promotion of the Farm, Forest, and Open Space program, innovative zoning techniques, and outright purchase.



Explore opportunities, and work with the State, to implement best practices regarding road salting and salt storage to minimize impacts on surface and drinking water supplies.



Continue strong enforcement of the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance and review and revise as necessary.



Review and update the land development regulations to require developers to retain existing trees and valuable forested areas where possible and to provide deciduous street trees in new developments and redevelopments.



Continue and strengthen the relationship between the Town, through the Conservation Commission and Land Trust, and Hope Associates towards the common goal of improving water quality, through open space acquisition, on the North Branch of the Pawtuxet River.



Develop a priority list and map of parcels and areas in Town for potential acquisition to build upon existing open space and conservation areas, as well as establish greenway connections between areas, to create a more cohesive network of open space within the Town.

7.0 NATURAL RESOURCES, OPEN SPACE, AND AGRICULTURE

Scituate will be a community that has preserved and protected its abundant natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations.

Scituate's natural resources have played a defining role in the Town's development, settlement pattern, and character. Scituate enjoys a variety of important natural features and open space resources, including high quality agricultural lands and forests, but the Scituate Reservoir dominates the physical and natural environment, with the Reservoir's watershed occupying approximately 84% of the Town. Open space and natural resources in Scituate play a role in recreation, economic health, scenic value, natural hazard mitigation, and overall rural character and quality of life for residents. For all of these reasons, natural resource management and open space protection are critical components of this Comprehensive Plan and play an important role in planning for Scituate's future.

Because natural resources span so many topic areas it is important that this common theme is reflected in other elements of this plan. As an example, land use, economic development, and water supply are inextricably linked to open space and natural resources, as they are vital components of these other focus areas of comprehensive planning. In Scituate, to some degree, existing and potential economic development relies on natural resources being accessible, appropriately managed, and properly protected for the use and enjoyment of residents and visitors. The protected open space associated with the Scituate Reservoir ensures water quality for downstream water users. Water in itself is a natural resource, so planning for water availability and planning for natural resources are highly connected. These connections make open space and natural resource planning crucial to the overall health of a community.

This element has three primary goals: (a) the protection of the Scituate Reservoir watershed; (b) the protection of groundwater resources utilized for onsite well water supply; and (c) the protection of other open space and natural resources of local or statewide importance. Commonly, strategies designed and implemented for resource protection will have multiple benefits. For example, actions to protect the Reservoir will, in most cases, also protect groundwater quality and other natural resources. This element is categorized into the follow topics:

- An overview and inventory of the natural resources, open spaces, and agricultural activities within the community ([Section 7.1 and 7.2](#)).
- A discussion of the threats posed to the Town's natural resources ([Section 7.3](#)).
- A summary of the Scituate Reservoir and its watershed as a natural resource for the Town and state ([Section 7.4](#)).

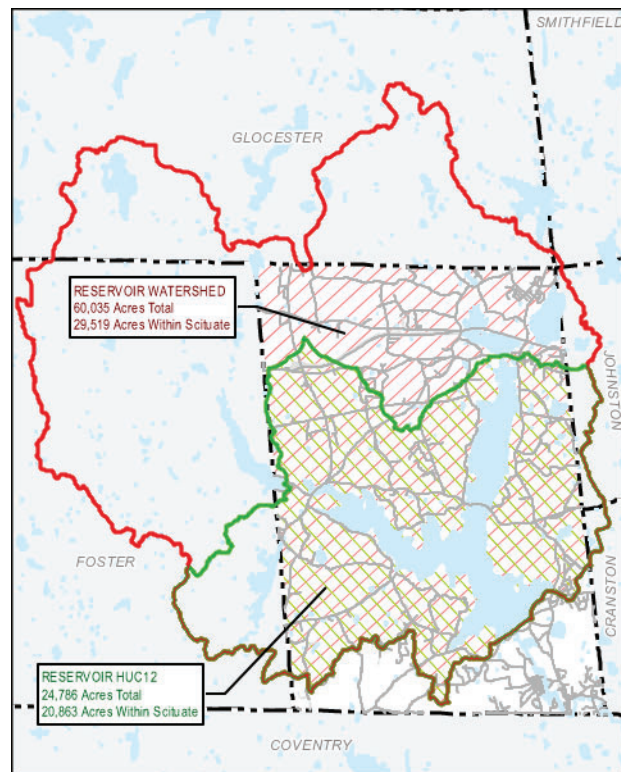


Figure 7-1. Scituate Reservoir Watershed

The following considerations are of a high priority when contemplating how natural resources should be managed and protected within the Town:

- Preserve and protect the valuable natural resources of the Town (Policy #1, #4, #5, #6, Action #2, #5, #7, #8)
- Reduce and manage the impacts of development on the Town's natural resources (Policy #1, #3, #5, Action #1, #2, #3, #4, #7, #8)
- Protect the Town's surface and groundwater resources for current and future populations (Policy #2, #3, #5, Action #2, #3, #6, #7, #8)

7.1 Natural Resources Inventory

In order to establish effective policies to protect the Town's natural resources, a proper inventory of these resources is required. This section includes an inventory of Scituate's natural resources under the following categories:

- Geology and soils
- Agriculture
- Floodplains
- Wetlands
- Habitat
- Surface water
- Groundwater

Due to the sensitive nature of the Scituate Reservoir and its associated watershed, the Town's natural resources have been extensively analyzed and mapped over the years.

7.1.1 Geology and Soils

For the purpose of comprehensive planning geology can largely be divided into two general categories, bedrock and surficial. Bedrock geology, in the form of granite gneiss, underlies most of the Town. Although generally not visible at the surface, there are areas where bedrock is exposed. Land with bedrock outcroppings or bedrock close to the surface can present significant development constraints.

Till, an unsorted glacial deposit of variable grain size, covers most of the Town with an average depth of under five feet. The presence of till influences development potential due to seasonally high-water tables and slow percolation rates. Depending on the depth of water tables in till soils, the need for onsite wastewater treatment systems can also limit development potential. Almost half of the Town's soils are poorly drained or have a water table within three feet from the surface, making them non-buildable or with severe constraints for septic systems (RI State Planning Council, 1990).

The surficial geology of Scituate is characterized as outwash plains with highly permeable soils with an average depth of fifty feet to bedrock. The rapid permeability of outwash plains (hydrologic soil groups A and B) has the potential to cause pollution where there is not sufficient depth to groundwater to capture pollutants. Soils with slower infiltration rates (hydrologic soil groups C and D) attenuate pollutants better than those with rapid percolation. See Map NR-1 for additional information on geology and soils in Scituate.

7.1.2 Agriculture

Scituate is home to many working and cooperative farms, which include pasture, cropland, orchards, and tree farms. Local farmers raise cows, sheep, hay, garden and orchard products and other popular produce that is either sold on premises, in farmers markets, or shipped to markets throughout the northeast. See Table 7-1 for an inventory of farms in Scituate.

Farm	Products	Location	Distribution
<i>Blanchard Farm</i>	Fruits, Vegetables, Meat, Fish	255 Greenville Road	Farm Stand
<i>Cedar Knoll Farm</i>	Meat	7 Old Harmony Road, North Scituate	Meat
<i>Barden Orchard</i>	Fruits, Vegetables, Apple Cider, Baked Goods	56 Elmdale Road, North Scituate	Farm Stand, You Pick
<i>Golden Rods Farm</i>	Meat	627 Central Pike	
<i>Hopkins Southdowns</i>	Meat, Grains and Feed, Fiber, Breeding Stock	1125 Danielson Pike, North Scituate	Market Mobile, Farmers Markets, Farm Stand, Wholesale
<i>Knowlton Farm</i>	Meat, Grains and Feeds	377 Central Pike, North Scituate	Wholesale
<i>Martinelli's Farm and Charcuterie, LLC</i>	Fruit, Vegetables, Herbs, Dairy and Eggs, Meat, Nursery and Flowers, Spreads, Specialty, Breeding Stock	56 Peeptoad Road	Market Mobile, Delivery, Pickup, Whole Foods, Dave's Markets, Farmers Markets, Farm Stand, Wholesale
<i>Red Dog's Roost</i>	Fruit, Vegetables, Herbs, Dairy and Eggs, Meat, Wood, Nursery and Flowers, Spreads, Baked Goods, Fiber, Breeding Stock	Hartford's Pike, North Scituate	Pickup, Farm Stand, Restaurants
<i>Sunset Orchard</i>	Apples, Apple Cider, Peaches	244 Gleaner Chapel Road, North Scituate	Farm Stand, You Pick
<i>Tall Pine Farm</i>	Meat, Grains and Feeds	49 George Washington Highway	Wholesale
<i>Timberdoodle Farm</i>	Vegetables, Herbs, Dairy and Eggs, Meat, Nursery and Flowers, Specialty, Breeding Stock, Family Fun	337 Central Pike	Pickup, Farmers Markets, Farm Stand, PYO, Restaurants, Wholesale

Source: Farm Fresh RI, <http://www.farmfreshri.org/>, 2021.

The amount of farmland in Scituate has decreased slightly in the last few decades, from 1,514 acres in 1988 down to 1,386 acres in 2011 (RIGIS). This matches the statewide recent trend of declining farmland (USDA, 2017). See Table 6-1 in the Land Use chapter for more detail. Crop and forestland agriculture is permitted in all districts in Scituate, while the raising of livestock and commercial nurseries are allowed on a more limited basis or by special use permit. Farmland is under pressure to become developed for

other profitable land uses, especially when property taxes are assessed based on a property's potential value for development. Several properties have been protected through the state's Farmland Preservation Program, which purchases development rights from farmers as well as the Farm, Forest, and Open Space Program (see Section 7.4 for more information). For more information on the economic activities related to agriculture in the Town, see Chapter 12, *Economic Development*.

Proper soil conditions are key to successful agricultural practices that concentrate on the growing of crops. Prime soils are valuable agricultural soils that should be considered when allocating future land uses to preserve farming activities. Currently, there is correspondence between the prime soils and areas being farmed (Town of Scituate, 2003). Map NR-2, located in Appendix B: Maps, shows the areas with prime agricultural soils in Scituate.

7.1.3 Flood Zones

Flood zones are those area subject to temporary inundation during storm events or seasonal increase in rainfall or snow melt. Flood zones are defined as areas with a 1% chance of flooding in any given year. These zones play an important role in naturally protecting a community from flood damage. Flood zones are commonly associated with waterbodies and are designated and mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) by category. Scituate contains flood zones X and A.

The Scituate Zoning Ordinance regulates development within all floodplains in the Town. The Scituate Building Official has the authority to require a development permit for construction within a floodplain, and special building standards apply to structures erected in a floodplain. Additionally, building standards related to floodplain construction are mandated by the Rhode Island State Building Code.

7.1.4 Wetlands

Wetlands generally occur in transitional areas between dry land and open water, and they support vital natural functions. They are typically areas of poor drainage and standing water, either on a seasonal or year-round basis. Rhode Island RIDEM identifies wetlands based on vegetation, water type, size, depth, soil types, and wildlife habitat. Only a site-specific evaluation by a trained professional can properly identify and define a wetland area. Wetlands in Rhode Island are divided into a number of categories, all with specific definitions. These categories define several ecological wetland types, thus protecting vegetated wetlands (such as swamps, marshes, and bogs) and open or flowing waterbodies (such as ponds, rivers, and streams). In addition, upland areas adjacent to vegetated wetlands and waterbodies are afforded certain protections.

These areas are legally considered wetlands and are defined as perimeter wetlands, riverbank wetlands, and floodplains. The alteration of wetlands and their associated jurisdictional areas are regulated by RIDEM (RIDEM, 2008).

Most wetlands are associated with streams and waterbodies. As such they serve a number of functions such as: protective flood storage, providing productive wildlife habitats, and improving and maintaining

Freshwater Wetland Regulated by RIDEM
 Swamps, Marshes, Bogs,
 Ponds, Rivers,
 Streams and Intermittent Streams,
 Emergent and Submergent Plant Communities,
 Forested Wetlands,
 Shrub Wetlands,
 Special Aquatic Sites,
 Perimeter Wetlands,
 100 Foot and 200 Foot Riverbank Wetlands,
 Floodplains,
 Areas Subject to Flooding, and
 Areas Subject to Storm Flowage.

Figure 7-2. Types of RIDEM Wetlands
 Source: RIDEM, *What's the Scoop on Wetlands*, July 2008

water quality through nutrient and sediment retention and pollution abatement. For these reasons, wetlands are a valuable resource to both people and the ecology of the Town.

Approximately 2,405 acres, or 7%, of the Town's land area comprises wetlands. Refer to Map NR-3 in Appendix B: Maps.

7.1.5 Important Habitat Areas

Scituate has a variety of wildlife habitats that play an important role in the ecological value of the area and the state. Rolling and forested terrain interspersed with large and small waterbodies and wetlands creates habitat for a variety of plant and animal species. This includes vernal pools, small wetlands that fill with water temporarily and are essential for amphibian reproduction. Many birds and mammals also make use of the contiguous, mature forest as their home. According to RIGIS's LULC data, 72% of the Town is forested, representing 25,258 acres. The predominant forest types are oak forest, mixed deciduous-conifer, forested swamp, and ruderal forests. The oak forest in particular faces challenges from lack of regeneration because of climate stress, deer browsing, and other factors.

The Rhode Island Ecological Community Classification (RIECC) was prepared to support development of a detailed ecological communities map and database to serve multiple conservation needs in Rhode Island. The classification was developed to produce a digital ecological communities GIS database intended to serve the entire conservation community, resource managers, and cities and towns in the state. The RIECC is an amalgamation of the Northeast Terrestrial Wildlife Habitat Classification (NTHC) and the Natural Communities of Rhode Island (NCRI). The RIECC is based on ecological systems which are defined as recurring groups of biological communities that are found in similar physical environments and are influenced by similar dynamic processes. They are intended to provide a classification unit that can be readily mapped, often from digital imagery, and readily identified by conservation and resource managers in the field (Enser, 2011). See Table 7-2 and map NR-4 for more information on ecological communities in Scituate.

Description	Area (acres)	Percentage of Town
Agriculture		
Hayfields	277.1	0.8%
Cropland	272.7	0.8%
Pasture	128.0	0.4%
Nursery/Christmas Trees	113.2	0.3%
Orchard	28.9	0.1%
Developed Land		
Impervious	1,651.9	4.7%
Medium Density Residential (1 to 1/4 acre lots)	1,578.1	4.5%
Medium Low Density Residential (1 to 2 acre lots)	524.4	1.5%
Low Density Residential (>2 acre lots)	362.9	1.0%
Urban/Recreational Grasses	204.6	0.6%
Medium High Density Residential (1/4 to 1/8 acre lots)	62.2	0.2%
Extractive Industry	27.0	0.1%
Water and Sewage Treatment	18.9	0.1%
Institutional (schools, hospitals, churches, etc.)	8.7	0.0%

Table 7-2. Ecological Communities		
Description	Area (acres)	Percentage of Town
Developed Recreation (all recreation)	2.2	0.0%
High Density Residential (<1/8 acre lots)	2.0	0.0%
Transitional Areas (urban open)	1.5	0.0%
Other Transportation (terminals, docks, etc.)	0.7	0.0%
Water/Wetlands		
Forested Swamp	2289.3	6.5%
Fresh Water	4202.4	12.0%
Shrub Swamp	69.6	0.2%
Emergent Marsh	45.6	0.1%
Shrubland/Forests		
Oak Forest	15464.1	44.1%
Mixed Deciduous/Coniferous Forests	4541.7	12.9%
Tree Plantation	2108.3	6.0%
Ruderal Forest	325.1	0.9%
Ruderal Grassland/Shrubland	766.1	2.2%

Source: Rhode Island Geographic Information System, <https://www.rigis.org/>

RIDEM, in coordination with the University of Rhode Island, The Nature Conservancy, and the Rhode Island Natural History Survey collect and analyze information on species occurrences in the state and the surrounding region. This ongoing effort produces a list of conservation interests for the state. Several of these areas, some of which are identified as Natural Heritage Areas, are located in Scituate. These areas are the estimated habitat and range of rare species and noteworthy natural communities throughout the state. Please refer to Map NR-5.

PW owns approximately 15,004 acres in Town, representing approximately 43% of the total area of the Town and 51% of the total watershed area that lies within Scituate. PW's ownership, although primarily for water supply protection purposes, provides a level of protection not provided under typical private ownership conditions, which helps to ensure the ongoing preservation of some of these important habitat areas. In 2011 Providence Water adopted an updated *Scituate Reservoir Watershed Property Plan: A Forest Stewardship Plan*. This plan was adopted to promote long-term ecosystem health by preserving natural riparian areas and forest cover that protect a high-quality water supply and other natural resources. The plan outlines Providence Water's active forest management strategies including harvesting timber to create growing strands of trees of all ages, reducing deer impacts to protect native plants and animals, managing invasive plants and promoting native vegetation, creating or restoring habitat for less common wildlife species, protecting older forest areas and artifacts of past settlement and land use, and proving appropriate opportunities for public visits and research (PWSB, 2011).

This watershed is also part of the Southern New England Heritage Forest (SNEHF), an almost 1.5-million-acre forest corridor that spreads across Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. This green oasis supports many species of wildlife who depend on its riparian corridors and forested habitat for survival. To protect this significant area, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was formed. Private owners of lands within the SNEHF are eligible for funding and technical support to develop forest management plans and manage their

woodlands for conservation. See Map NR-5 for the blocks of unfragmented forest habitat that occur in the Town.

Development of land can threaten important habitat areas by causing breaks in contiguous habitat as well as overall loss of habitat. Fragmentation has a profound effect on wildlife, on species diversity, and ecological functioning. See Section 7.2 for an inventory of protected open space and 7.3 for further discussion of threats to Scituate's natural resources by development.

7.1.6 Surface Water

Surface water is any body of water above ground, including oceans, streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, reservoirs, and creeks.¹ Surface water plays a vitally important role as it is relied on for many human uses. It is an important source of drinking water and is used for irrigation of farmland. A watershed is a land area that channels rainfall and snowmelt to these surface waterbodies. The health and quality of a watershed is directly linked to the health and quality of its receiving surface waterbodies. The Town is comprised of portions of seven watersheds, the most prominent being that of the Scituate Reservoir Watershed, which occupies 84% of the Town's area. Other watersheds in the Town are the Barden Reservoir Watershed, the Pawtuxet River Watershed, the Moswansicut Reservoir Watershed, the North Branch Pawtuxet River Watershed, the Flat River Reservoir Watershed, and the Westconnaug Reservoir Watershed. Out of a total of 35,077 acres of land, of which 4,224 acres are surface water and 2,405 acres are wetlands, surface water resources in the Town account for approximately 19% of the Town's total area. Also, it is important to recognize that all activities within the watershed can have an impact on these surface waters, and that is why land development and land use is closely tied to watershed protection measures. Human activity can have a significant impact on water quality.

Fresh surface water resources are classified by RIDEM regarding use and water quality goals. Table 7-3 below provides the five levels of freshwater water quality classification.

¹ National Geographic Resource Library, <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/surface-water/>, accessed August 25, 2021

Table 7-3. RIDEM Freshwater Water Quality Classifications

Classification	Description
AA	These waters are designated as a source of public drinking water supply or as tributary waters within a public drinking water supply, for primary and secondary contact recreational activities and for fish and wildlife habitat. These waters shall have excellent aesthetic value.
A	These waters are designated for primary and secondary contact recreational activities and for fish and wildlife habitat. They shall be suitable for compatible industrial processes and cooling, hydropower, aquaculture uses, navigation, and irrigation and other agricultural uses. These waters shall have excellent aesthetic value.
B	These waters are designated for fish and wildlife habitat and primary and secondary contact recreational activities. They shall be suitable for compatible industrial processes and cooling, hydropower, aquaculture uses, navigation, and irrigation and other agricultural uses. These waters shall have good aesthetic value.
B1	These waters are designed for primary and secondary contact recreational activities and fish and wildlife habitat. They shall be suitable for compatible industrial processes and cooling, hydropower, aquaculture uses, navigation, and irrigation and other agricultural uses. These waters shall have good aesthetic value. Primary contact recreational activities may be impacted due to pathogens from approved wastewater discharges. However, all Class B criteria must be met.
C	These waters are designed for secondary contact recreational activities and fish and wildlife habitat. They shall be suitable for compatible industrial processes and cooling, hydropower, aquaculture uses, navigation, and irrigation and other agricultural uses. These waters shall have good aesthetic value.

Source: RIDEM, *Water Quality Regulations*, 2009.

The classification of the Town's water bodies is provided in Table 7-4.

Table 7-4 Water Quality Classification for Scituate Water Bodies

Water Body	Classification	Water Body	Classification
Pawtuxet River Basin			
Barden Reservoir	AA	Pawtuxet River North Branch	B
Bear Tree Brook	AA	Peeptoad Brook	AA
Betty Pond	AA	Pierce Brook	B
Blanchard Brook	AA	Pine Swamp Pond	AA
Boyd Brook	B	Ponagansett River	AA
Brandy Brook	AA	Potterville Brook	AA
Brush Meadow Pond	AA	Quonopaug River	AA
Bullhead Brook	AA	Regulating Reservoir	AA
Burlingame Brook	B	Rush Brook	AA
Colvin Brook	B	Scituate Reservoir	AA
Cork Brook	AA	Soak Hide Brook	AA
Coventry Brook	AA	Spruce Brook	AA
Cranberry Brook	B	Swamp Brook	AA
Dolly Cole Brook	AA	Turkey Meadow Brook	B
Huntinghouse Brook	AA	Unnamed to Scituate Reservoir	AA
Kent Brook	AA	Unnamed #1 to North Branch Pawtuxet River	A
King Brook	AA	Unnamed #2 to North Branch Pawtuxet River	A
King Pond	AA	Unnamed from Moswansicut Pond	AA
Mosquitohawk Brook		Unnamed to Betty Pond	AA
Moswansicut Pond	AA	Unnamed to Westconnaug Reservoir	AA
Moswansicut Stream	AA	Westconnaug Reservoir	AA
Pawtuxet River North Branch	A	Westconnaug Stream	AA
		Wilbur Hollow Brook	AA

Source: State of Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Office of Water Resources, Water Body Classification. 2018-2020.

7.1.7 Groundwater

Generally, drinking water comes from surface or groundwater supplies. Groundwater water supplies can be tapped from rock, gravel, sand, and silt that hold water deep below the ground surface where it may collect in the voids of these unconsolidated materials. Large volumes of underground water-saturated materials are referred to as aquifers or sometimes groundwater reservoirs.

Groundwater also feeds surface waterbodies. Surface waters can be thought of as the combined expression of groundwater and collected surface flow from storm events. During wet periods stormwater contributes a larger fraction of flow but during dry periods groundwater feeds streams, lakes, ponds, and reservoirs and may prevent them from drying out.

Many of the protective measures put in place for the Scituate Reservoir have also contributed to the protection of groundwater resources in the Town. Except for a small area of Hope served by public water supplies, the majority of local water users rely upon individual drinking water wells. Although home to

the largest surface water reservoir in Rhode Island, only a small fraction of Scituate homes or businesses use water from the reservoir.

Outwash soils are the best source of groundwater in Scituate. Wells in typical outwash deposits will yield from 20 to 100 gallons per minute (gpm). As previously noted, outwash soils are susceptible to pollution because of their high permeability. This is highlighted in North Scituate Village where a concentration of homes and businesses on relatively small lots have experienced water quality problems due to improperly functioning onsite wastewater treatment systems. Many homes in the Village have more than one dwelling unit, exacerbating the issue. There is one community wellhead protection area and several wellhead protection areas in the northern portion of the town. Refer to map NR-3 for details.

Till and bedrock are less productive sources of groundwater. Commonly, yield from these soils is about five gpm. There have been reports of wells sited in till going dry. Please see Chapter 10 *Services and Facilities* for more information about the Town's water supplies.

7.2 Open Space

Open space is vital to a community's health, economy, and well-being. Open space serves many functions when we consider that many open space parcels have restricted access and conserve land for wildlife and resource protection. Some areas considered open space are also used for passive recreation. The Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act references open space and outdoor recreation together within the same section of the law (RIGL 45-22.2-6(b)(4)). This plan has intentionally placed the discussion and analysis of open space within the *Natural Resources* Chapter, as opposed to the *Recreation* Chapter, to avoid any confusion about open space solely being land that is set aside for recreation purposes. The term open space is often interpreted to include natural or conservation areas that are not intended for recreational use, although many open space areas allow for passive use such as hiking. Therefore, there is overlap between this Chapter and the *Recreation* Chapter, for these reasons.

7.3 Open Space Inventory

Maintaining adequate open space was identified in the 2021 Scituate Comprehensive Plan Community Survey as an issue of high importance among survey respondents (see Section 7.5 for further information on survey results). Natural resources occur throughout the town, and conservation land (or protected, undeveloped land) significantly contributes both to protecting natural resources and shaping Scituate's quality of life for residents. Of the 35,077 acres of land that comprise the Town, 25,739 acres are undeveloped, more than 73% of the Town's land area². Residents place a high value on open space preservation and access. Recreational use is only allowed in some conservation areas. See Chapter 9 *Recreation* for more information about recreational open space. There are no set standards for conservation areas except that the area cannot allow development and should be large enough to protect the resource of concern. Table 7-5 provides detailed information related to conservation and open space properties.

² Providence Water owns approximately 15,077 acres of land that contribute to the undeveloped land total but are not considered open space, as there is no public access permitted.

Table 7-5. Open Space Inventory

Property	Location	Type of Conservation Land	Acreage	Ownership	Uses
Harris Preserve	Harmony Road	Conservation Easement	50.4	Audubon Society of RI	Limited public access
Huntinghouse Brook	Rocky Hill Road/Tourtlot Road	Fee Interest	31.7	Audubon Society of RI	Limited public access
Otter Point	Robinwood Drive	Fee Interest	10.9	Audubon Society of RI	Limited public access
Pine Swamp/Cranberry Brook	Cranberry Drive	Easement	31.2	City of Providence/Audubon Society of RI	Limited public access
Adjacent to Beach area (Parcel A)	Ryefield Road	Fee Interest	5.7	Hope Associates	Limited public access
Barn and Land	Ryefield Road	Fee Interest	3.4	Hope Associates	Limited public access
Barrett Parcel	S Doctors Lane	Fee Interest	17.2	Hope Associates	Public access permitted
Brown University Parcels	North Road/Doctors Lane	Fee Interest	6.3	Hope Associates	Public access permitted
Jorgensen	Green Lane/Colvin Street	Conservation Intent	30.0	Hope Associates	Limited public access
Perry Parcel	N Doctors Lane	Fee Interest/Easement	10.4	Hope Associates	Public access permitted
Studly Bros, Inc.	Green Lane/Colvin Street	Conservation Intent	2.6	Hope Associates	Limited public access
Trott Parcel	N Doctors Lane	Easement	12.6	Hope Associates	Public access permitted
Lawton Farm	Seven Mile Road	Fee Interest	16.6	Scituate Land Trust	Public access permitted
Lawton Farm	Seven Mile Road	Fee Interest	39.5	Scituate Land Trust	Limited public access
Westconnaug Meadows	George Washington Highway	Fee Interest	28.8	Scituate Land Trust	Limited public access
Esek Hopkins Park	Danielson Pike/Battery	Fee Title	95.1	State	Public access

Table 7-5. Open Space Inventory

Property	Location	Type of Conservation Land	Acreage	Ownership	Uses
	Meetinghouse Road				permitted
Cork Brook	Gentry Lane	Fee Interest	16.8	Town of Scituate	Public access permitted
Darby Road Conservation Area	Darby Road	Fee Interest	41.5	Town of Scituate	Public access permitted
Doctors Field	N Doctors Lane	Fee Interest	3.2	Town of Scituate	Public access permitted
Huntinghouse Brook	Rockland Road	Fee Interest	7.9	Town of Scituate	Public access permitted
Old Clayville Dump	George Washington Highway	Fee Interest	37.3	Town of Scituate	Limited public access
Plainfield Pike	Plainfield Pike	Fee Interest	16.6	Town of Scituate	Public access permitted
Ridge Road	Ridge Road/Spruce Brook	Fee Interest	15.4	Town of Scituate	Public access permitted
Rocky Hill Road	Rocky Hill Road	Fee Interest	1.5	Town of Scituate	Public access
Rush Brook	Hartford Pike	Fee Interest	27.2	Town of Scituate	Public access permitted
Scituate Animal Shelter	George Washington Highway	Fee Interest	33.2	Town of Scituate	Public access permitted
Spruce Brook	French Lane/Spruce Brook	Fee Interest	17.5	Town of Scituate	Public access permitted
Swamp Brook	Chopmist Hill Road	Fee Interest	33.3	Town of Scituate	Public access permitted
Tasca Field	Hartford Avenue	Fee Interest/Easement	12.9	Town of Scituate	Public access permitted
Westconnaug Reservoir	Field Hill Road/George Washington Highway	Fee Interest	8.9	Town of Scituate	Public access permitted
Total Acres			665.6		

Source: Scituate Conservation Commission,

Table 7-5. Open Space Inventory

Property	Location	Type of Conservation Land	Acreage	Ownership	Uses
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<https://ridemgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=87e104c8adb449eb9f905e5f18020de5>

Land Conservation Priorities

The Town has developed land conservation priorities for the 20-year planning horizon. These are based on discussions with town officials and residents. The Town of Scituate seeks to continue to preserve natural aesthetic areas within the town over the next 20 years, balanced with limited and measured growth in open lots while ensuring the preservation of our historic landmarks, our farmland, our forests, and our scenic vistas. Protecting the valuable watershed continues to be a priority at the same time working with Providence Water to open selected protected areas to passive recreation such as walking, bird watching, hunting, and cycling without threatening the quality of drinking water. Specific topics to address over the next 20 years:

- Should there be constraints or a cap on residential growth? If so, when, and how much?
- Can we implement strategies for ensuring the quality and quantity of groundwater available to our residents (who rely on wells rather than reservoir water)?
- How do we build a constructive working relationship with the City of Providence regarding the preservation and stewardship of Providence Water land in Scituate?

Providence Water Supply Board

Scituate offers a significant amount of protected land by way of properties owned by PWSB, but this land is not open to the public for use. Because of this, percentagewise, Scituate has more area devoted to conservation than most other, if not all, communities in Rhode Island. Providence Water holds more than 15,000 acres for the production and storage of water within the state. Over 88% of the Providence Water's property holdings are within Scituate. Under the current policies of the PWSB, no unauthorized recreational use of watershed lands is permitted, though a managed deer hunt is part of the forest management program.

Conservation Land

In total, 665.6 acres of land in Scituate are protected from development as indicated in Table 7-5. See Map NR-5 for all conservation areas, including those held by state and local agencies.

The Town of Scituate and the Scituate Land Trust also own or hold conservation easements on just over 450 acres. Section 12 of the zoning ordinance authorizes the creation of permanent open space within a development, which can be conveyed to the Town or a nonprofit organization for protection.

Specific land holdings include the Alice Harris Memorial Wildlife Refuge (held by the Audubon Society and RIDEM), Darby Road Conservation Area (held by the Town), several sites associated with conservation developments, and important habitat along brooks, rivers, and reservoirs.

Scituate Land Trust/Conservation Commission

The Scituate Land Trust and Conservation Commission are established by statute as individual commissions of the Town, but have four seats with overlapping membership, serving on both boards. Because they work so closely, they have been conducting joint meetings and working together as a

group towards a common goal. The Conservation Commission primarily focuses on open space planning, while the Land Trust's focus is related to acquisitions and purchases and identification of open space for preservation. Both organizations work to preserve open spaces, natural areas, scenic areas, drinking water sources, farmland, forests, and historic sites for the Town.

Since the Land Trust's establishment in 1990, four conservation areas have been obtained: Lawton Farm, Tasca Field, Esek Hopkins, and Westconnaug Meadows. Each was chosen for its unique values. Lawton Farm, for example, includes nesting grounds for the eastern meadowlark and the bobolink, and has been a site of University of Rhode Island research. These sites are in addition to the conservation easements held by the Land Trust.

Hope Associates

Hope Associates, Inc. is a private, non-profit volunteer-based organization that is focused on the protection of open space in Scituate. Their overall mission is specific to provide passive recreation and conservation along the North Branch of the Pawtuxet River. An underlying focus of their open space and conservation efforts is to improve water quality in the Pawtuxet River. Properties owned by Hope Associates are reserved for Scituate residents only and they have a lease agreement with the Town for the use of their properties for Town events and functions. Hope Associates is primarily funded by benefactor funds from Alice Howland, which was left with the Rhode Island Foundation. They draw from this fund for their annual income, which is primarily used to pay for their insurance policies related to their property ownership. They also apply for grant funding to help fund land acquisition.

Hope Associates owns Hope Pond, which is the only waterfront property in Town available for public swimming. They maintain the property for a variety of recreational uses such as swimming, kayaking, picnic space, and meeting space. The Town's Recreation Department has permission under the lease with the Town for the summer recreation program to use Lil Salisbury Beach as a swimming beach for Scituate residents. The Hope Pond property also contains Howland Barn, which is a renovated cow barn that is now used as a community meeting space. Hope Associates would like to secure funding in the future to upgrade the structure to use the second floor and create a more permanent community space. Hope Associates purchased a blighted property in the center of Hope Village and converted the space into a village green that is used for concerts, weddings, and other community events.

The Town, through the Conservation Commission and Land Trust, recently applied for a RIDEM grant to secure funding to improve the trail system on the Trot Perry Preserve, which is owned by Hope Associates. The Town was awarded \$99,533 to improve the trails, add trail signage, trail kiosks, and a new parking area, which would be located on Town property. Please see Table 7-5 for a full list of conservation properties, including those held by Hope Associates.

Farm, Forest, and OpenSpace

The Farm, Forest, and Open Space (FFOS) program is administered by RIDEM under the Farm, Forest, and Open Space Act. The purpose of the program is to help conserve land that is considered farmland, forestland and wetlands, and open space through tax abatement. RIGL 44-27 allows property enrolled in the FFOS program to be assessed at its current use, not its value for development. The purpose is not to reduce property taxes, but to conserve Rhode Island's productive agricultural and forest land by reducing the chance it will have to be sold for development.³



Figure 7-3. Lil Salisbury Beach

³ A Citizens Guide to the Rhode Island Farm, Forest, and Open Space Act, http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/agriculture/documents/ffosa_citizens_guide.pdf

The act establishes three categories of land eligible for enrollment in the program and authorizes RIDEM to establish regulations governing farm and forestland enrolled. The open space classification is administered by the tax assessor of the community where the property is located.

As of May 2021, the Town of Scituate has 200 parcels enrolled in the FFOS program, accounting for a total of 13,668 acres. Some of the acreage enrolled represents portions of a parcel of land, while in other cases the entire parcel is enrolled in the program. This total includes land owned by PW. Table 7-6 provide a further breakdown of the amount of land enrolled in each FFOS program category.

Table 7-6. Farm, Forest, and Open Space Enrollment Acreage		
Farm	Forest	Open Space
303 acres	11,835 acres	1,530 acres

Source: Scituate Tax Assessor, retrieved April 2024

Land Classifications for Property Enrolled in the FFOS Program

Farmland

Ornamental Crops
Vegetable and Orchards
Dairy and Livestock (including forage crops)

Forest & Wetland

Open Space

Sligh soil limitations
Moderate soil limitations
Severe Soil limitations

7.4 Threats to Natural Resources

A variety of land uses, and human activities pose a threat to the Town's natural resources. This section presents the most notable threats to the natural resources in Scituate.

7.4.1 Failing and Substandard Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems

Apart from a small area in Hope Village connected to a sewer system, all of Scituate relies on onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS), which include both septic systems and cesspools, for wastewater treatment. OWTS are located underground and if they fail to function properly, have the potential to contaminate ground and surface water. A cesspool is a buried chamber that receives sewage from a building for disposal into the ground. Cesspools were previously unregulated in Rhode Island. The Rhode Island Cesspool Act of 2007 (RIGL§23-19.15), as amended in 2015, mandates that all cesspools within the state must, over time, be removed from service. The structure served by the cesspool must either be upgraded to a new OWTS or connected to a sewer line if one is available. Septic systems are typically reliable and effective for sewage treatment, but poor design, installation, or maintenance can cause a failure which can pose a threat to ground and surface water.

The Town adopted an onsite wastewater management plan (OWMP) in 2004. The primary purpose of the OWMP is to provide an opportunity to get poorly functioning OWTSs out of the ground, voluntarily through loan assistance. This is accomplished through Community Septic System Loan Program (CSSLP). The Town's OWMP also provides a set of strategies and implementation items to ensure the proper management, inspection, use and maintenance of OWTS in the Town. CSSLP supports replacement of these systems, by making funding available to homeowners with failed and substandard onsite wastewater treatment systems to access low-interest loans and upgrade their systems. CSSLP has been in existence for over 20 years and 16 Rhode Island communities currently participate in it.

The Town recognizes that poorly managed OWTS are prone to failure with age, overuse, poor soil conditions, or improper installation, repair, or maintenance and that they jeopardize the health, safety, and welfare of the community. A properly developed and implemented OWMP can help to mitigate these

circumstances and provide an efficient, environmentally safe, and cost-effective alternative to municipal sewers.

7.4.2 *Unmanaged Stormwater Runoff*

Stormwater is rainwater or melted snow that runs off streets, roofs, pavement, and other impervious surfaces as well as lawns, woodlands, and other more pervious areas as they become saturated. As the water flows over these surfaces, it can collect pollutants and sediment that can contaminate water bodies.

Stormwater management is addressed by federal, state, and local regulations. Scituate's zoning standards prohibit unmanaged discharge of stormwater from development. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has determined that municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s)⁴ are a major pathway for the introduction of pollutants to waterways and are a leading cause of the impairment of ambient water quality, for both fresh and coastal waters. The USEPA developed regulations and a general permit governing stormwater in association with industrial and construction activities and for MS4s in 40 CFR Part 122 and administers the regulations through an MS4 stormwater general permit. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) is delegated by USEPA to administer the program in Rhode Island and has written and enforces equivalent regulations under the *Rhode Island General Permit for Stormwater Discharge from Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s) and from Industrial Activity at Eligible Facilities Operated by Regulated Small MS4s* (MS4 Stormwater General Permit).

Scituate is one of the communities currently subject to MS4 jurisdiction in Rhode Island. Under this law, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management requires subject communities to develop stormwater management program plans (SWMPPs) to address six minimum control measures. The six minimum control measures required in the SWMPP are:

- Public Education and Outreach on Storm Water Impacts
- Public Participation / Involvement
- Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
- Construction Site Runoff Control
- Post-Construction Runoff Control
- Pollution Prevention / Good Housekeeping for Municipal Operations

The Town of Scituate is one of 36 municipalities in Rhode Island, which are required to comply with the MS4 Stormwater General Permit. In compliance with the MS4 Stormwater General Permit, the Town issues an annual report outlining the steps taken in each of the six control measure areas listed above.

7.4.3 *Unregulated Land Development*

Floodplains, wetlands, and unique habitat can be lost or degraded through certain development patterns. Providence Water owns approximately 15,000 acres directly adjacent to the reservoir, the majority of the watershed land outside that is in private ownership and is being increasingly fragmented by development (RIDEM, 2008). Land acquisition, conservation development techniques, and directing growth to appropriate locations are all strategies recommended for preserving valuable natural

⁴ An MS4 is a drainage system in an urbanized area. See <https://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater-discharges-municipal-sources> for more information about the regulation of MS4s.

resources in the *Scituate Reservoir Watershed Greenspace Strategy (2008)*. The plans also show areas where growth could continue, and indicate the historic densities, street layouts and development patterns that could be used in the design of new neighborhoods. Better and more strategic regulation of land development through these and other practices will assist in maintaining the water quality in the reservoir.

7.4.4 *Unmanaged Agricultural Activities*

Agriculture can have a positive or a negative effect on natural resources. Agriculture is an essential part of the social and economic fabric in Scituate. Properly operated and managed agricultural operations can provide wildlife habitat and open space while providing food and economic activity. However, improperly managed agricultural practices can cause erosion, degrade soil, pollute waterways, and reduce ecological resilience. Operations that can cause nonpoint source pollution include poorly managed animal feeding operations; overgrazing; improper plowing practices; and improper application of pesticides, irrigation water, and fertilizer. There are government programs through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) as well as best practice guidance through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) available that can help farmers with management of nonpoint source pollution. The Northern Rhode Island Conservation District (NRICD), through their partners at the USDA and NRCS, also provides free technical assistance and funding for implementing conservation practices on agricultural and forest land. One of the few certified organic operations in the state is in North Scituate, at the Elwood Orchard.

7.4.5 *Uncontrolled Erosion and Sedimentation*

Land development, when not properly managed, can also have a detrimental effect on surrounding infrastructure and functioning of the natural environment. When proper site preparation and maintenance does not occur during development, excessive quantities of soil can erode from the site. This can result in costly repairs and damage to the environment. The sediment can clog stormwater infrastructure, muddy streams, and leave deposits of silt in ponds and reservoirs and is considered a major water pollutant.

The Town has adopted an erosion and sediment control ordinance to prevent soil erosion and sedimentation from occurring as a result of development. The ordinance applies to most activities that involve disturbance to the land, terrain, topsoil, or vegetative ground cover on nonagricultural property in the Town.

7.4.6 *Other Pollution Sources*

Pollution sources come in various forms. Land uses like junkyards and salt storage areas pose a significant and obvious threat to natural resources, by degrading water resources and the species that depend on them. The Town does not allow junkyards as a permitted use, but often these items can accumulate on private property and pose a similar threat. These types of issues on private property often go undetected for long periods of time and can be more difficult to remedy once they have been discovered.

The Town does use road salt for winter roadway treatment. The salt is stored covered and protected from the weather to ensure that there is no threat to ground or surface water contamination from the storage piles. The Town will explore options to improve its storage practices and work with the state to implement best management practices for roadway application considering the sensitivity of the drinking water resource of the Scituate Reservoir.

In addition to large-scale sources, many households and small businesses contribute to pollution of the natural environment. Improper disposal and storage of paints, household cleaning chemicals, solvents, and waste oil can cause significant environmental pollution. Often, these issues can be avoided through proper education of residents on proper storage and disposal methods for various items.

Additionally, improper application of fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides can have dramatic effects on water quality and ecological resources. These are of specific concern within the Scituate Reservoir Watershed, and a collaborative effort was initiated in 1993 to educate the public about these threats, called the Scituate Reservoir Watershed Education Program. The Town has collaborated with the Northern Rhode Island Conservation District and Providence Water to co-sponsor the Neighbor-to-Neighbor Program, which gives new residents information about the watershed and land use activities.

Light can be a source of pollution that impacts not only humans, but wildlife. Artificial light can wreak havoc on natural body rhythms in both humans and animals. Light pollution is known to impact animal behavior such as migration patterns, wake-sleep habits, and habitat formation. The Town should make it a priority to minimize nighttime lighting on their Town owned properties and buildings, as well as during the site plan review process for new and rehab construction.

7.4.7 Climate Change and Invasive Species

Climate change poses many threats to and impacts on Scituate's natural resources. Rising temperatures will cause more heat waves that will exacerbate energy demands to keep the community cool, furthering a local heating effect. Heat may stress native species and lead to disease in plants and animals. The frost-free season and the growing season will lengthen in the Northeast, causing a mix of impacts. The subsequent shorter winters will help farmers in some ways but can also contribute to the rise of pests that affect economic activities and natural systems. Precipitation patterns are also projected to increase over the coming years, as observed already in the last decade of record. Heavy precipitation can lead to increased flooding and damage to forests and streams if stormwater management is not properly updated to accommodate climate change. This will also lead to more strain on local dams due to changing upriver flows. Also, climate change is predicted to cause stronger, more frequent, and more intense hurricanes. Changes in regional climates could also bring southern hurricanes into New England, which can defoliate forests or significantly change wildlife habitat with winds and intense rainfall.

"Changing weather and environmental conditions in Rhode Island caused by climate change are already placing communities, coastlines, forests and aging, vulnerable infrastructure at risk."

Source: Resilient Rhody: An Actionable Vision for Addressing the Impacts of Climate Change in Rhode Island

Climate change will affect local ecosystems and biodiversity. Changes in climate can also drive native species out of their homes or create inviting environments for invasive species. Invasive species drive out our native species and feed on or inhibit the growth of local crops. As sea levels rise, likely between one and eight feet by the year 2100, coastlines will be inundated with water and flooding, causing some people to relocate inland and putting further pressure on local resources. Planning for increased storms, heat, and other changes in climate should include consideration of nature-based solutions for resilience and protection of natural resources. Through planning, the effects of climate change can be somewhat mitigated by reducing fossil fuel consumption, water use, reducing waste, and sourcing products and services locally.

7.5 Scituate Reservoir

Developed between 1920 and 1926, and built to serve the City of Providence, the Scituate Reservoir and its protected, forested watershed occupy approximately 84% of the Town's land area. The creation of the reservoir greatly shaped the geography, economy, and population of present-day Scituate. Because several villages were displaced by construction of the Reservoir, the land area within Scituate is now dominated by rural watershed land with just a few settlements.

The lands south of the watershed boundary drain to the Pawtuxet River, and the land in the north part of the Town drains to the Reservoir. Fed by over 140 miles of streams and brooks, the total storage of the Scituate Reservoir system is 41.2 billion gallons, making it the largest fresh waterbody in the Rhode Island. An earth filled dam spans the North Branch of the Pawtuxet River, and an aqueduct transports water to the Phillip J. Holton water treatment plant. Average daily flow from the water treatment plant is 73.1 million gallons per day (mgd). The Gainer (Kent) Dam, while a significant structure in the Town, is not at a significant risk of failure as it is well maintained at this time (2016 HMP).

The Scituate Reservoir and its watershed are essential components of a system that provides drinking water for approximately 60% of Rhode Island residents. Incorporating the Scituate Reservoir and five tributary reservoirs, the system is fed by a 93 square mile watershed, which includes most of the Towns of Scituate and Foster, and portions of Glocester, Johnston, Smithfield, and Cranston. The watershed predominantly consists of sparsely developed areas and forested land, representing about 9% of the land area of the state (RI Division of Planning, 2012).

When considering protection of the Scituate Reservoir, one must consider the associated watershed, and not just the reservoir itself. The major threat identified for the Scituate Reservoir is land use change and development. Only the core of the Scituate Reservoir watershed (about 25%) is protected from development. The remaining watershed land in private development is regulated by each individual Town. The PWSB and watershed municipalities work together to protect the high-quality water of the watershed. Providence Water is actively monitoring the watershed, land use, and acquiring conservation land to protect water quality. Protecting the watershed's ability to filter surface runoff saves the City-owned public utility in Providence from having to invest in additional expensive treatment facilities.

Another concern with the reservoir is that water supply entitlements as stated in legislation exceed supplies, especially as future demands increase from growing communities. Recommendations for zoning changes that would protect the quality of the reservoir and guide future growth in Scituate, Foster, and Glocester were made in the 1998 *Scituate Reservoir Watershed Zoning Project*.

In 1990 the Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning completed and adopted the *Scituate Reservoir Watershed Management Plan*, State Guide Plan Element 125 (herein the "Scituate Reservoir Plan"). A major goal of the Scituate Reservoir Plan was to establish a long-term strategy to protect the water quality of the Scituate Reservoir. This Plan was incorporated into *Water Supply Plan 2030*, State Guide Plan Element 721 (herein "Water 2030") in 2012. The focus of *Water 2030* is similar to the Plan, but it takes a broader, more comprehensive look at water supply throughout the state. *Water 2030* sets two goals related to the Providence Water Reservoir System:

- Protect the health and ecological functions of the water resources (WRM-2)
- Ensure a reasonable supply of quality drinking water for the State (WRM-3)

For the Scituate Reservoir, achieving these goals means encouraging proactive watershed management and developing tools to minimize water quality impacts as well as pursuing water reuse, water efficiency, and promoting incentives to reduce demands. Recommendations for the Reservoir

from *Water 2030* also include forest management, land acquisition and conservation, water sampling and water quality protection, land use planning and policy engagement, and education and outreach.

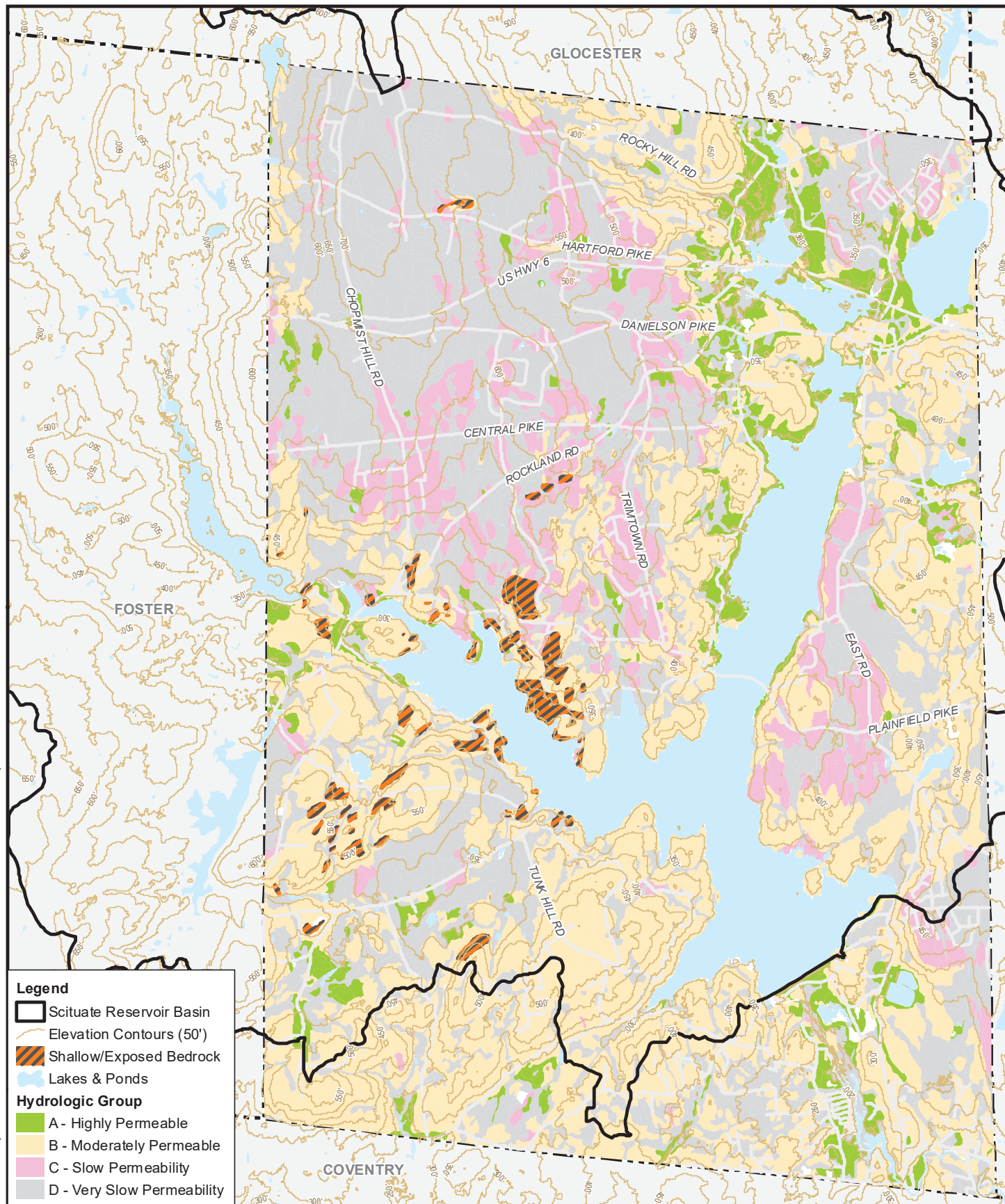
The *Scituate Reservoir Watershed Greenspace Strategy* report and associated 'greenspace maps' published in 2008 illustrate what Scituate Reservoir Watershed residents identify as the region's most important natural, cultural and recreational resources and how they think these resources should be protected. Physical plans and action strategies are identified for protecting the landscape and quality of life for residents throughout the watershed. Recommended actions include incorporating the findings into municipal Comprehensive Plans, and the policies and actions in this comprehensive plan reflect consideration of specific strategies to promote sustainable development while preserving community character and protecting the environment.

7.6 Opinion Survey of Scituate: Natural Resources

In May 2021, the Town posted an online survey for residents as part of the comprehensive planning process. The survey asked several questions related to the services and facilities provided by the Town and school district. A full summary of the survey results can be found in Appendix A. In summary, the survey reported the following principal findings related to natural resources:

- A majority of survey respondents ranked open space as either very important (63.2%) or important (28.2%) to their quality of life in Scituate.
- When asked what types of measures it is important for the Town to engage in, 65.4% of respondents identified natural resource protection as very important, while 27.8% of respondents identified it as important.
- Survey respondents were asked to identify the types of activities that the Town can take that would be supported. Respondents overwhelmingly (73.9%) identified conserving wildlife habitat, while 21.7% indicated they would be supportive of such efforts. Similarly, 54.2% of respondents indicated they would be very supportive of efforts to promote and support agricultural activities, while 29.4% of respondents indicated they would be supportive of such efforts.
- Survey respondents were asked to rate how they felt about certain statements. When asked if the Town has done a good job of protecting its natural and environmentally sensitive features, 18% of respondents strongly agreed while 39.1% reported agreeing with such a statement. Only 7.9% of respondents indicated they disagreed, with 3.8% strongly disagreeing, with that statement.

These survey results indicate that overall, residents are satisfied with the Town's level of effort regarding natural resource protection, and that the community is relatively supportive of continuing and improving upon these efforts. Survey respondents appeared to link the value of natural resources in Town directly to their quality of life and indicated that they would be supportive of the Town's continued efforts to protect these resources.



Legend

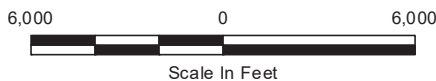
- Scituate Reservoir Basin
- Elevation Contours (50')
- Shallow/Exposed Bedrock
- Lakes & Ponds
- Hydrologic Group**
 - A - Highly Permeable
 - B - Moderately Permeable
 - C - Slow Permeability
 - D - Very Slow Permeability

MAP NR-1: GEOLOGY AND SOILS

TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



Weston & Sampson

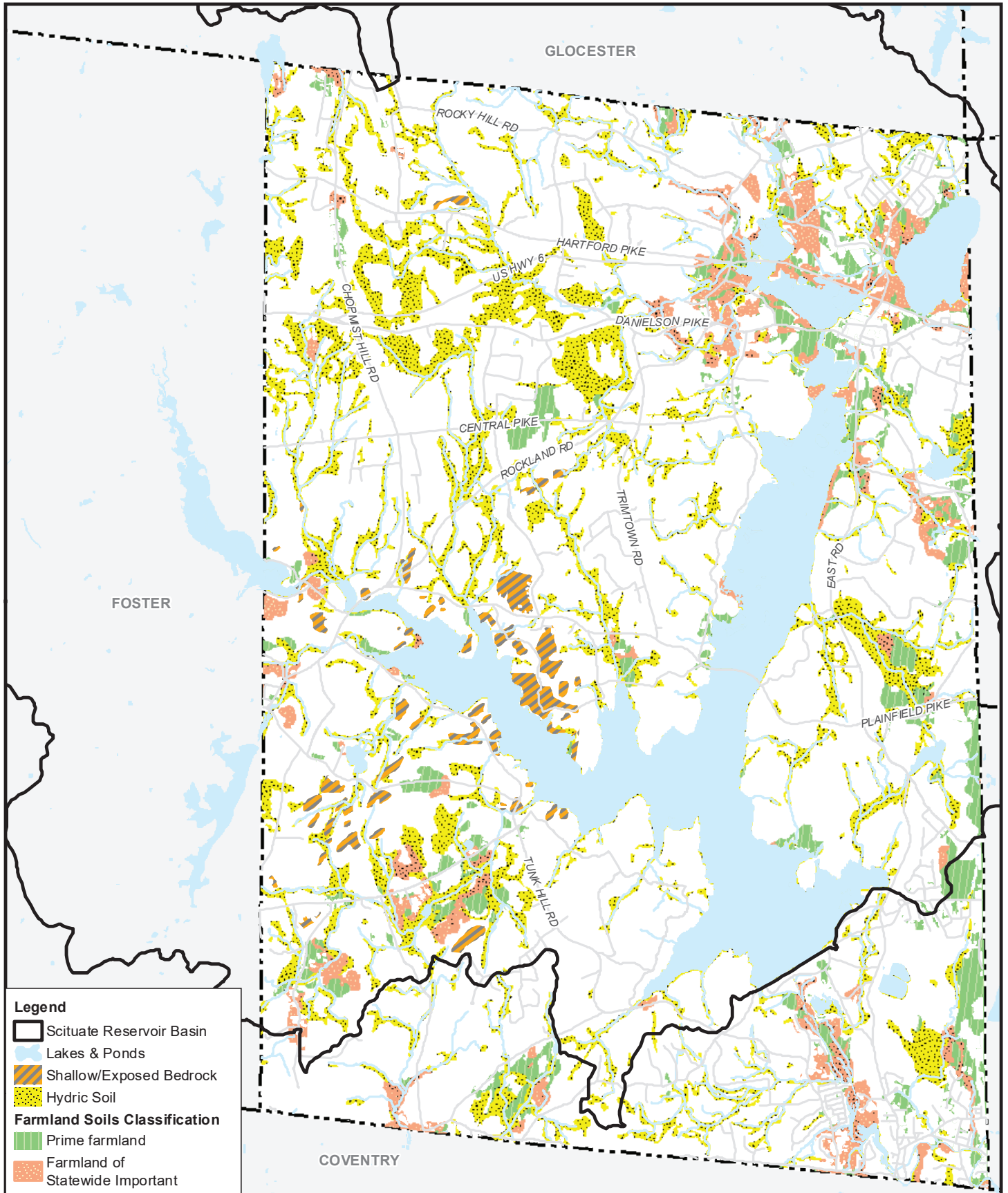


Flood Hazard, waterbodies, landuse, conservation, soils, topography and municipal boundaries were obtained from RIGIS. Town base mapping data provided by Town of Scituate. Other derived data products made by Weston & Sampson from these sources.

This graphic is intended for general reference and is not a legally authoritative source as to the location of natural or manmade features or areas.

Soils with no hydrologic soil group rating are shown as white. Shallow/exposed bedrock areas shown are those classified as "Bedrock" in the RIGIS "Glacial Deposits" dataset.

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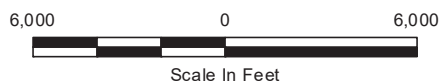


MAP NR-2: PRIME AGRICULTURAL SOILS

TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



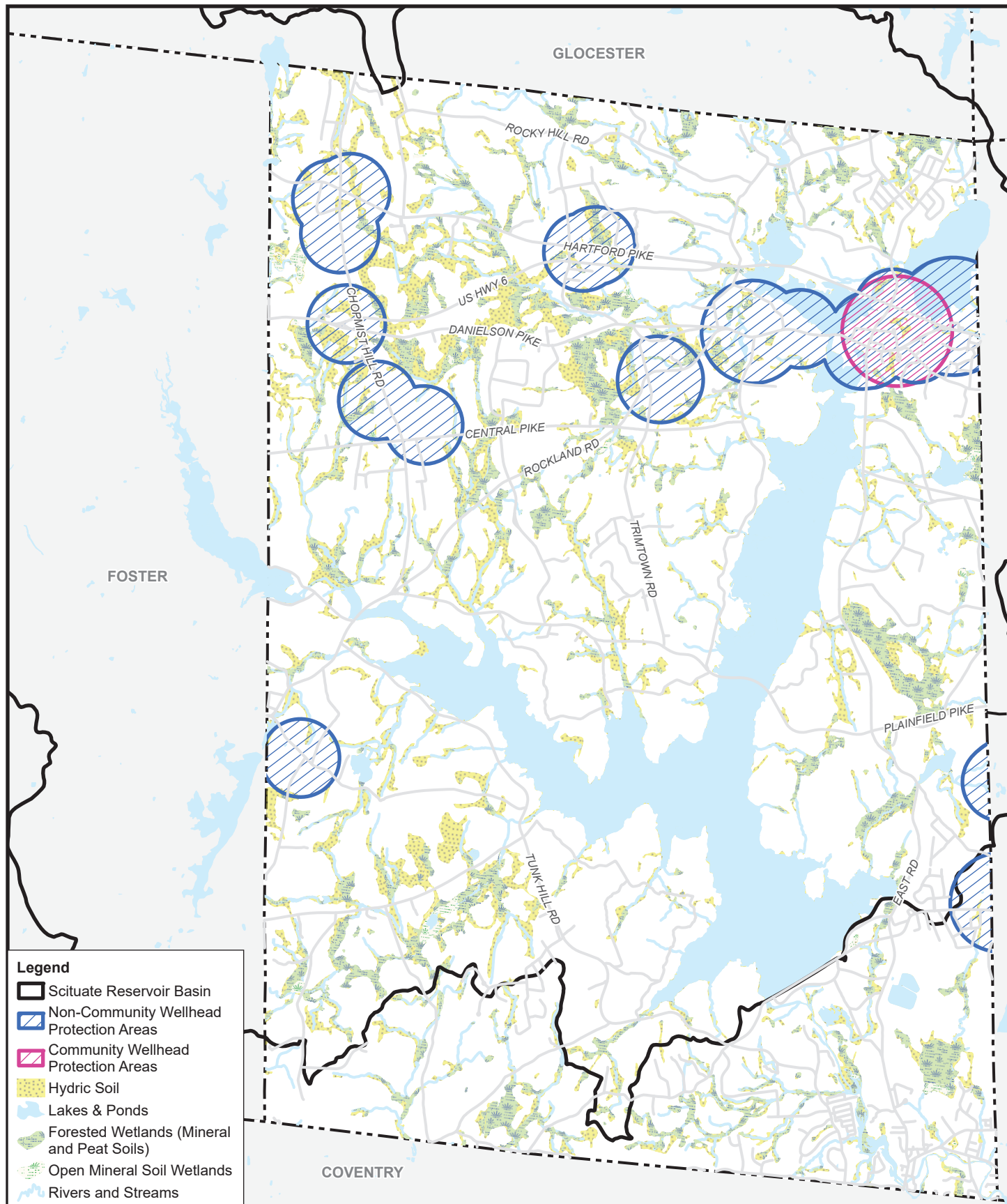
Weston & Sampson



Flood Hazard, waterbodies, landuse, conservation, soils and municipal boundaries were obtained from RIGIS. Town base mapping data provided by Town of Scituate. Other derived data products made by Weston & Sampson from these sources.

This graphic is intended for general reference and is not a legally authoritative source as to the location of natural or manmade features or areas.

Soils within developed areas noted in the RIGIS LULC 2011 dataset or coincident with waterbodies are not shown as they are assumed "unavailable".



Legend

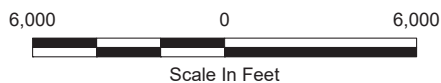
- Scituate Reservoir Basin
- Non-Community Wellhead Protection Areas
- Community Wellhead Protection Areas
- Hydric Soil
- Lakes & Ponds
- Forested Wetlands (Mineral and Peat Soils)
- Open Mineral Soil Wetlands
- Rivers and Streams



Weston & Sampson

MAP NR-3: SURFACE AND DRINKING WATER RESOURCES

TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



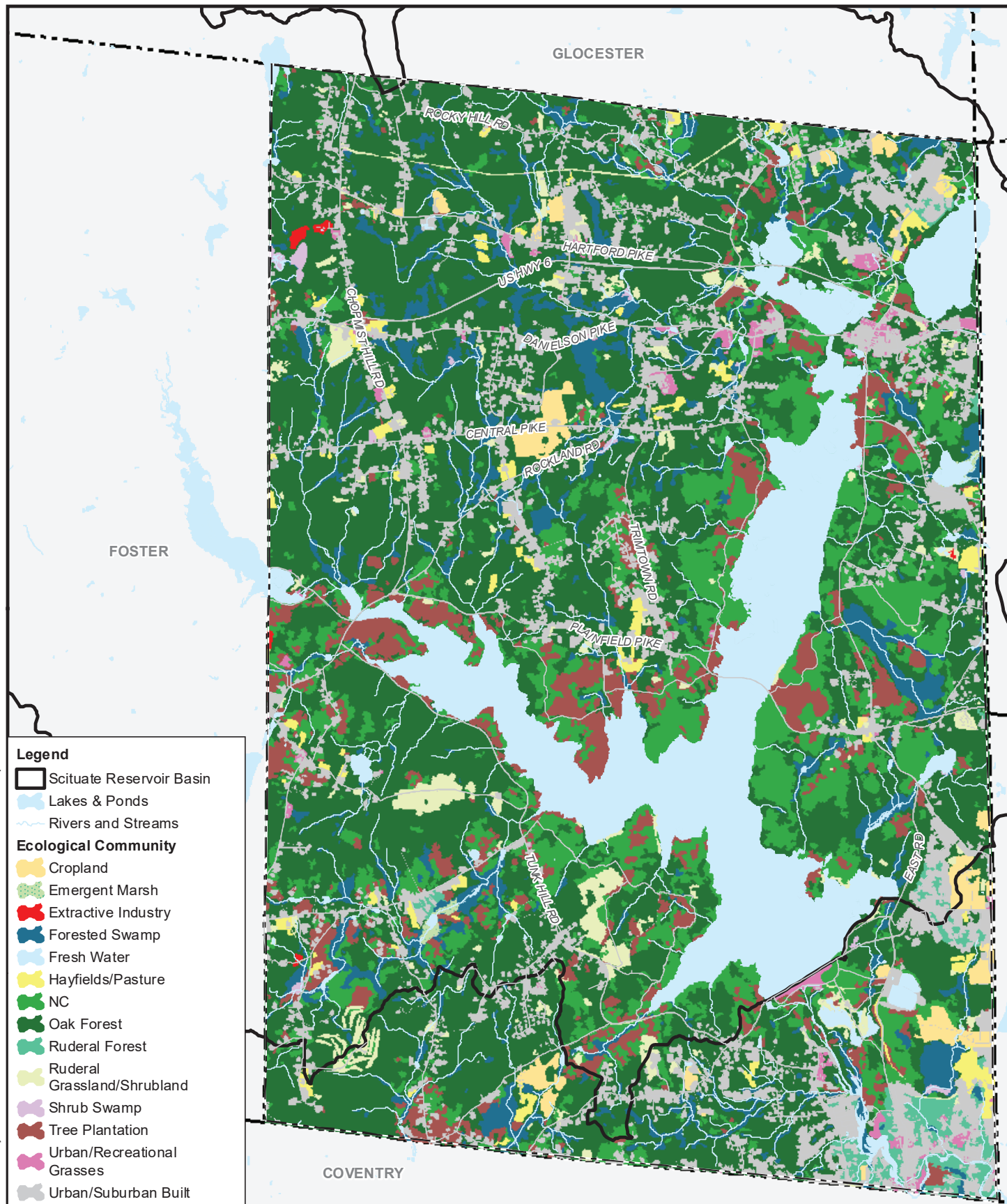
Flood Hazard, waterbodies, landuse, conservation, and municipal boundaries were obtained from RIGIS. Habitat assessment data from RIDEM. Town base mapping data provided by Town of Scituate. Other derived data products made by Weston & Sampson from these sources.

This graphic is intended for general reference and is not a legally authoritative source as to the location of natural or manmade features or areas.

Local Conservation Areas include property protected by: Egressed Conservation Intent by owner, Easements, Deed Restrictions, Fee Simple Interest.

Available data from RIGIS do not show any groundwater recharge areas or sole source aquifers within Scituate.

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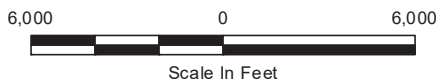


MAP NR-4: ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES

TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



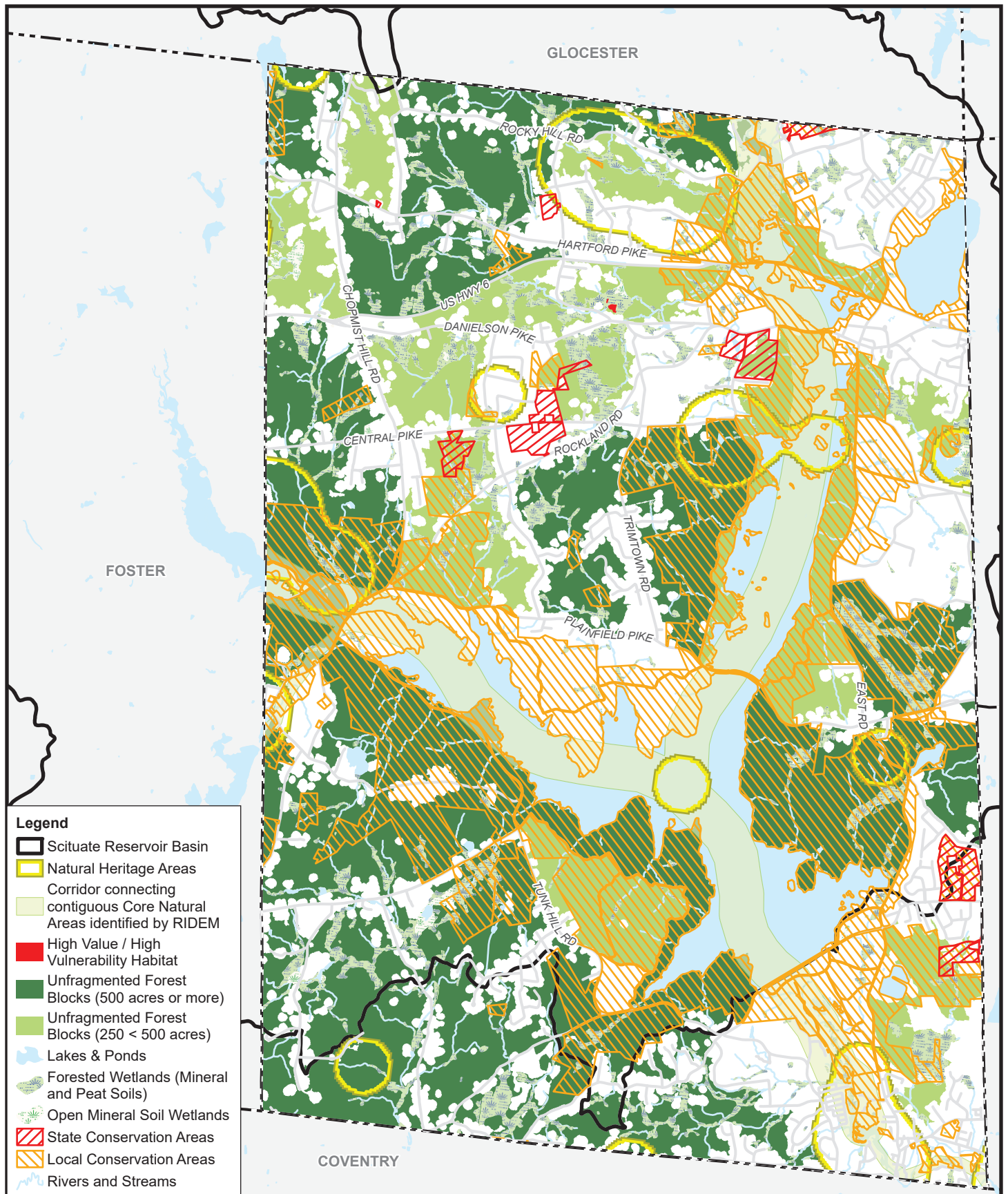
Weston & Sampson



Flood Hazard, waterbodies, landuse, conservation, and municipal boundaries were obtained from RIGIS. Habitat assessment data and Conservation Opportunity Areas from RIDEM. Town base mapping data provided by Town of Scituate. Other derived data products made by Weston & Sampson from these sources.

This graphic is intended for general reference and is not a legally authoritative source as to the location of natural or manmade features or areas.

Ecological Communities (2011) from RIGIS.



Weston & Sampson

**MAP NR-5: HABITAT AND
CONSERVATION AREAS**

TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI

2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

6,000 0 6,000

Scale In Feet

Flood Hazard, waterbodies, landuse, conservation, and municipal boundaries were obtained from RIGIS. Habitat assessment data and Conservation Opportunity Areas from RIDEM. Town base mapping data provided by Town of Scituate. Other derived data products made by Weston & Sampson from these sources.

This graphic is intended for general reference and is not a legally authoritative source as to the location of natural or manmade features or areas.

Local and State Conservation Areas include property protected by: Easements, Deed Restrictions/development right, and Fee Simple/Title Interest and are understood to be permanent. Property with "conservation intent" are understood to not be permanently protected.

8

CHAPTER 8

HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES



Town of Scituate, Rhode Island

Community Comprehensive Plan Update

Historic and Cultural Resources

Background

In order to properly plan for what a community is to become, an understanding of where that community came from is essential. A Town's heritage plays a crucial role in planning for the future. The physical remnants of that heritage provide a valuable glimpse into history, offering information on how people lived and worked, their values, and the roles they played in the community. It provides us with an understanding of how the built environment has changed over time. Historic and cultural resources within a community are indicators of this heritage and can include structures, properties, places, landmarks, archeological sites, landscapes, and natural areas that the community has determined to be noteworthy and of primary importance for recognition and protection.



Figure 1. Hope Mill
(Valley Breeze, 2020)

Policies

1. Promote and support state, local, non-profit, and other groups in their efforts to inform and educate the community on appropriate mechanisms to protect and manage historic and cultural resources in the Town through research, public education, and public events.
2. Ensure that the preservation and proper management of historic and cultural resources are considered as part of the land development review and approval process.
3. Promote the Town's rich historic heritage to attract visitors and other viable economic development opportunities that are appropriate for historic and cultural resources.
4. Preserve the visual qualities of Scituate's historic areas and scenic roadways and vistas.

Goals



Preserve, protect, and maintain the Town's historic, cultural, and archeological resources as a representation of the Town's heritage.



Use innovative regulations and techniques to promote the development of suitable land, while protecting the cultural and historical resources achieving a balanced pattern of land uses.



Deepen public knowledge of the history of marginalized communities, especially the Nipmuc native peoples.

Actions



Continue to work with the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission to document and preserve significant historical, cultural, or archeological resources in the Town, specifically looking at structures and places that were noted in their 1980 report for consideration for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.



Review and update existing village zoning overlays, including a GIS delineation of overlay boundaries, and consider revising the existing zoning review and approval procedures for properties in these historic villages.



Review and amend the development review regulations to incorporate consideration of historic and cultural resources.



Explore options for creating or securing local and State incentives to encourage the preservation of privately-owned historic buildings and resources.



Identify roadways, or segments of roadways, in Scituate that have scenic value and consider preparing a plan for their preservation, including the possibility of designation by the State as a Scenic Highway.



Develop an education program, working with the Scituate Preservation Society, to increase public awareness of the significance of historic and cultural resources.



Support efforts to maintain and document the Town's historic cemeteries and stone walls.



Work with and encourage the schools to expand educational efforts and resources committed to teaching about local history.



Develop relationships with the Nipmuc and other Native American tribes to promote the identification and preservation of historic sites in Scituate.

8.0 HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Scituate will strive to provide a balanced and appropriate development pattern that seeks to preserve community character, enhance fiscal stability, and protect the quality of the natural environment.

In order to properly plan for what a community is to become, an understanding of where that community came from is essential. A Town's heritage plays a crucial role in planning for the future. The physical remnants of that heritage provide a valuable glimpse into history, offering information on how people lived and worked, their values, and the roles they played in the community. It provides us with an understanding of how the built environment has changed over time. Historic and cultural resources within a community are indicators of this heritage and can include structures, properties, places, landmarks, archeological sites, landscapes, and natural areas that the community has determined to be noteworthy and of primary importance for recognition and protection.

The Historic and Cultural Element of the Comprehensive Plan is inherently integrated into other elements of the plan by virtue of the variety in type and location of a community's historic and cultural resources. A community's historic and cultural resources are closely linked with a community's natural and built physical environment.

The Scituate Preservation Society takes an active role in preserving and promoting historic and cultural resources in town. The Society's state goals are 1.) the identification, acquisition, preservation, restoration, and maintenance of historical, educational, and cultural objects within the Town of Scituate, State of Rhode Island, and 2.) to provide educational and informational resources to its members, citizens of Scituate and other interested parties.

The Town's topography and location have significantly influenced its development. Much of the land is now covered by the Scituate Reservoir, and its former agricultural character has been transformed into an essentially suburban community in a rural setting. This element discusses the following topics:

- A discussion of the historic settlement patterns in Scituate ([Section 8.1](#)).
- A review of existing historic districts within the Town ([Section 8.2](#)).
- An overview of existing and suggested sites and structures for the National Register of Historic Places ([Section 8.3](#)).
- A review of issues and opportunities relate to the Town's historic and cultural resources ([Section 8.4](#)).
- An overview of survey results related to historic and cultural resources ([Section 8.5](#)).

The following factors are of high priority to the Town when considering the recognition and protection of the community's historic and cultural features:

- Identify and protect historic and cultural resources of high importance ([Policy #2, #4, Action #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7](#)).
- Educate residents and property owners regarding the importance of historic and cultural resources ([Policy #1, #3, Action #7, #9](#)).

- Utilize innovative techniques, regulations, and programs to promote the significance of historic and cultural features towards achieving a balanced land use pattern in Town ([Policy #1, #2, #3, #4, Action #2, #4, #7, #8, #9](#)).

8.1 History

Native American hunters and gatherers were present in Scituate for thousands of years before the arrival of European settlers. Scituate was founded as a primarily agriculturally based rural community in the seventeenth century with colonists moving out from Rhode Island's earliest European settlement site at Providence, coming to what is now Scituate around 1700. In the eighteenth century the Town experienced intense agricultural development. With the onset of the 19th century, Scituate was swiftly transformed into a more diversified community of industrial settlements, commercial buildings, housing, and educational and religious institutions. Much of this taking place along the Town's numerous rivers and streams. A significant historical influence on the development of the Town was that of textile mill villages which encouraged dramatic growth. During the last half of the 19th century, agriculture and industry were on the decline and by 1900 Scituate had begun to revert to a rural community again. This effect was felt in other areas beyond Scituate, but a factor particular to Scituate that contributed to Town retaining its rural character was the construction of the Scituate Reservoir from 1920 to 1926. This factor, more than anything else, shaped present-day Scituate, recasting its geography, economy, and population.

8.1.1 Early Settlement and Agriculture

Native use of the land is an important aspect of the cultural history of the community. Little professional archaeological investigation, however, has been done to reveal more accurate information about these early inhabitants.

Colonists came to what is now Scituate around 1700. In 1703 Joseph Wilkinson Settled in the northwestern part of the Town. He is said to have brought the first cow into Scituate and to have built the first barn. Other settlers followed and cleared most of the land and established farms. The century was dominated by an agricultural economy with most of the families in Town tied to the land. Most farmers grew only enough food for their own use and little for purchase of necessities. This simple way of life was reflected in the construction of homes and outbuildings, which were solid and unadorned structures.

The latter half of the eighteenth century saw the construction of roads, small mills that served a local population, gristmills, and two iron manufacturing sites in Town. This time frame experienced the slow demise of the agricultural economy and although industry dominated Scituate's economy in the 19th century, agriculture continued to support rural areas, most prosperously prior to 1840. Fine and well-preserved farmhouses such as the Federal Style Dexter Arnold House (c. 1813) on Chopmist Hill Road are illustrative of many built in the late eighteenth century.

8.1.2 Industrial Development

The 19th century was a time of dramatic change in Scituate. Rhode Island's industrial transformation stormed the entire state converting sleepy hamlets into bustling and prosperous mill villages. Following the spread of textile manufacturing across the state, cotton mills and bobbin factories formed the cores of several industrial villages. Many of the Town's villages were destroyed for the reservoir project in the 1920s, but three survive. Despite modern intrusions, North Scituate retains much of its original character and architecture, including the Old Congregational Church and former Smithville Seminary. Clayville, once centered around several mills at the Foster Town Line, is now almost entirely residential. Hope, in

the southeastern corner of the Town, and the oldest village, had an operating mill until 2007. The remaining mill structures are in disrepair, and several have suffered roof collapses. Despite the continued deterioration of the mill structures, worker housing, a church and other 19th century buildings contribute to a well-preserved mill village.

One other notable industry, quarrying, began in the mid-19th century. The Nipmuc Quarry, a 12-acre site on Nipmuc Hill in southwest Scituate provided large quantities of gneiss¹ for the Providence market.

8.1.3 Churches and Schools

By the end of the 19th century, Scituate's many small churches provided services for residents of most of the villages and for the town's dispersed population. One notable church, the Old Congregational Church in North Scituate, was completed in 1831.

The Beacon Hill Academy on Chopmist Hill, used as a combined district schoolhouse and chapel, and another early schoolhouse the North Scituate Academy (1825), stand today. New school construction and education were stimulated by the passage of the state's Free School Law of 1828. Of the 19 schoolhouses built in response to this law, The Potterville School and Clayville School stand today, reused as community buildings.

Advanced education was limited to several private schools built throughout the Town. The Smithville Seminary opened in 1840 as a secondary school, and despite subsequent changes, this monumental Greek Revival Style building is architecturally perhaps the most distinguished building in Scituate.

8.1.4 Early 20th Century – The Scituate Reservoir

Two events early in this century changed the Town's development pattern, shaping present-day Scituate. First was the decline of agriculture, the abandonment and subsequent reforestation of farmland. Second was the construction of the Scituate Reservoir, now covering about 42% of the Town's area. Completed in 1926, the Scituate Reservoir project created the largest freshwater body in Rhode Island. The creation of the Scituate Reservoir and purchase of a large area of Town to create it, were devastating to Scituate's built environment. Four villages and 1,195 structures were lost to the 23.1 square mile area required for the reservoir. Perhaps because of this loss, North Scituate assumed greater primacy within the Town and civic buildings, schools, churches, and stores were built there. The Scituate Reservoir also disrupted the road pattern, requiring the construction of 25.4 miles of new roads. Many displaced families moved from Scituate. One such grudgingly relocated family, Joslin, built a large rural estate on Field Hill that is one of the most elaborate residential developments of the early 20th century in this part of the state.

Since its creation, the Scituate Reservoir has been the central feature of the Town – a protected natural reservation of woods and ponds. Within its fenced borders are the ruins of former mills, houses, churches, stores and other buildings, old cemeteries, and forest paths that were former roads. Some of these features can be seen from public rights-of way and contribute to the historic ambience of Scituate.

Other changes during this era are associated with early 20th century highway development and increased use of the automobile. The concrete arch Hope Bridge (1929-1930) over the North Branch of the Pawtuxet River and a small former gasoline station and store on Plainfield Pike are associated with this historic period.

¹ Gneiss is a metamorphic rock that is comprised of alternating layers of minerals. Gneiss is commonly used for building materials, including countertops, flooring, roofing, and exterior walls.

8.1.5 *Post-World War II*

Changes leading up the War included the consolidation of three new schools, replacing former one room schoolhouses. After WWII, residential development increased. Developments such as the Rice Plat in the northeastern part of the Town and Ring Rock Acres in the southeast are typical housing tracts of this period. Most new houses were built by individuals on large, newly created lots along existing roads. Some of the best examples are those along Rocky Hill Road and the eastern portion of Quaker Lane. Scituate's first high school was built in 1956 on Trimtown Road. A shopping center was built in North Scituate in 1974, shifting the commercial center of the Village to the east. Scituate today is essentially a suburban community in a rural setting. It has few industries and little commercial space. Most residents travel to work outside of the Town.

8.2 Historic Villages

Without a doubt, Scituate's historic villages comprise one of its most significant concentrations of physical cultural resources: North Scituate, Clayville, Hope, and the Hamlet of Potterville. Three of the villages, North Scituate, Clayville, and Hope have been recognized by entry on the National Register of Historic Places. Other villages to note are Chopmist, Rockland, and Fiskeville.

Straddling the Scituate-Foster border, Clayville Historic District contains several dozen structures, predominantly residences, and the sites of several former mills. These 19th century rubber and cotton mills were later condemned and demolished for the Scituate Reservoir project. Today the area is almost entirely residential.

Considered the modern-day Town Center, North Scituate Village includes approximately 110 vernacular buildings on 113 acres, representing construction and design based on utility and need. They date from the eighteenth century onward and are primarily residential. However, there are historically prominent churches and schools as well as commercial and municipal buildings. The district contains two large 19th century cemeteries.

Hope Village, on the Pawtuxet River in the southeast corner of Scituate, is a large, compact village consisting of an abandoned textile mill, mill housing, residences, and other structures and land uses originally associated with the mill. It contains the archaeologically important site of the Hope Furnace, an early iron manufacturing site. The village is significant not only for its history, but also because so much of it is physically extant, including the Hope Mill which was in operation until 2007.

The Hamlet of Potterville consists of the remnants of a linear settlement formerly associated with a spool and bobbin works begun in 1847. It is visually and historically distinct from its surroundings, but lacks the interactive land uses associated with a true village.

8.3 Historic and Cultural Structures and Sites

Scituate's historically significant structures are found throughout the Town. There are many houses, farmhouses, industrial remains, and other structures of historic importance in scattered sites and locations. These sites are often found along early roadways and are sited close to the roadway itself. Often these structures are tightly grouped and have now become interspersed with modern development. Map HC-1 identifies the location of these sites and Table 8-1 below identifies each of the numbered sites from the map.

Table 8-1. Historic and Cultural Site Identified on Map HC-1

Map ID	Resource	Location
1	Andrews Luther Farm	Elmdale Road
2	McGonagle Site (RI-1227)	Hartford Pike
3	Double L Site (RI-958)	Hartford Pike
4	Mill Race Site (RI 1039)	Hartford Pike
5	North Scituate Village	North Scituate
6	Smithville/Seminary Lapham Institute	North Scituate
7	Dexter Arnold Farmstead	Chopmist Hill Road
8	Amos Cooke House	Chopmist Hill Road
9	Batley-Barden House	Plainfield Pike

8.3.1 National Register of Historic Places

The *Historic and Architectural Resources of Scituate, Rhode Island: A Preliminary Report* identified historically significant buildings, sites, and areas within the Town. This inventory serves as the primary source for all local historic preservation efforts. Several sites/districts of historical significance are included on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register listing is assembled and maintained by the U.S. Department of the Interior. National Register properties gain recognition, protection, and financial assistance for preservation or restoration. In Scituate there are 13 National Register listings. This report, written by the Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) was issued in 1980 and made recommendations for additional potential National Register listings. The Town should reevaluate these locations and determine which have been added and which remain as undesignated to determine the feasibility of listing those properties. The Town should continue to work closely with RIHPHC on this. Table 8-2 provides further information.

Table 8-2. National Register of Historic Places

Resource	Location	Date Designated
Clayville Historic District	Foster and Scituate	December 29, 1988
Hope Village Historic District	Scituate and Coventry	August 8, 1995
Smithville/North Scituate Village Historic District	North Scituate	August 28, 1979
Amos Cooke House	Chopmist Hill Road	September 11, 1980
Dexter Arnold Farmstead	Chopmist Hill Road	November 25, 1977
Andrews-Luther Farm	Elmdale Road	June 19, 1985
Old Congregational Church	Greenville Road	January 11, 1974
Millrace Site	Hartford Pike (RI-1039)	September 12, 1985

Table 8-2. National Register of Historic Places

Resource	Location	Date Designated
Moswansicut Pond Site	Harford Pike (RI-960)	September 12, 1985
Double L Site	Hartford Pike (RI-958)	September 12, 1985
Smithville Seminary/Watchman Industrial School	Institute Lane	March 29, 1978
Bathey-Barden House	710 Plainfield Pike	August 28, 1980

In addition to the sites that are listed on the National Register several sites were listed in the preliminary report as being recommended for placement on the National Register. Those are listed below in Table 8-3.

Table 8-3. Recommended for Placement on the National Register of Historic Places

Resource	Location
S.P. Taylor House, Ridge Hill Farm	Burnt Hill Road
James Aldrich House, Florence Price Grant House	Danielson Pike
Former Field Farm	Tunk Hill Road
Joslin Farm	Field Hill
G.P. King House	Field Hill Road
Breezy Hill	Hope Furnace Road
Ralph House	Howard Avenue
Aldrich-Ide House	Ide Road
M. Potter House	Old Plainfield Pike
The Scituate Oak	Plainfield Pike
Brown Homestead	Rocky Hill Road
Aldrich House	Rocky Hill Road
Scituate Reservoir	-
G. Aldrich House	Trimtown Road

The *Historic and Architectural Resources of Scituate Rhode Island: A Preliminary Report* provides a thorough overview of historic and culturally significant structures, features, and areas in addition to those listed here in this plan. Other types of structures worth noting are as follows:

Bridges:

- Clayville Arch Bridge (1932)
- Hope Bridge (1930)
- Wilbur's Bridge (1912)

Mills and Millworks:

- Hope Mill buildings, dam, gatehouse, etc., (1806-1847)
- Peeptoad Pond Dam, Ponagansett Dam (c.1883)

- Seagrove Memorial Observatory (1914)
- (Scituate) Gainer Memorial Dam
- Gatehouse and Hydroelectric Station

8.3.2 *Cemeteries*

While the Town contains a number of cemeteries, only two, Smithfield Cemetery and New Rockland Cemetery, are recorded in the Historic and Architectural Resources of Scituate report. Scituate has a well-documented historical cemetery listing, separate from the cultural resources inventory, as well as many cemeteries marked by onsite signs. Others are known about by anecdote or recollection.

8.3.3 *Archeological Resources*

Mapped information provided to the Town under the RIGIS program shows 19 areas within Scituate Town boundaries where the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission has identified below ground archaeological resources. Four such sites have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. They include three pre-historic sites along the Hartford Pike on land owned by Providence Water Supply Board:

- Moswanicut Pond Site
- Millrace Site
- Double L Site

Also on Hartford Pike is the McGonagle site, important for 100 years of farming and activities of the Quakers (Society of Friends). The RIGIS map showing archaeological sites is on file in the Town Hall. In addition to recorded sites, there are others that deserve further study. Many former industrial sites, representing the vestiges of active manufacturing villages, are recorded in the Historic and Architectural Resources of Scituate. These include the sites of Harrisdale Mill, dam, and tenement housing, Rockland, and Ponaganset, destroyed by the Scituate Reservoir. One industrial site of potential importance is the Hope Furnace Site (1765); its precise location not determined. It is a rare pre-Revolutionary iron manufacturing company recorded on the Historic American Engineering Record. Its association with regional industry and national events may give this archaeological site National Register significance.

8.4 **Issues and Opportunities**

Scituate contains several varied types of physical environments that represent diverse and valuable experiences of place to residents and visitors. There is an ongoing need to educate Town residents about the role that historic and cultural resources play in making up these significant environments in Scituate. Many elements that are within control of the Town and property owners have a direct bearing on property quality, condition, and value. The sections below discuss how these significant environments are threatened and measures that can be taken to properly protect them.

8.4.1 *Threats to Rural Character*

Single-family residential development and undeveloped open land and woodland bordered fields predominate in much of Scituate, comprising a rural quality of life. Many historic houses and farms in this open landscape were traditionally associated with outbuildings, stone walls, and fences. Large historic farmhouses set on open fields with barns and other structures are a common site, as are smaller historic residences sited close to the road with few or no outbuildings. In both cases they appear compatible with their landscape and surroundings.

Development processes can threaten the integrity of historic houses and buildings as well as the setting in which they are located. An example of such a process is creating additional lots through subdivision. Despite the fact that low density is maintained and site review protects some aspects of character, this practice can have the effect of standardizing the rural environment and breaking the more irregular pattern of house and outbuilding siting that characterizes rural development. If not properly monitored linear strips and grid patterns of housing are superimposed, regardless of the natural features of the landscape on which they are sited.

The integration of new and historic residences constitutes another threat to rural Scituate's character. Often sited close to historic structures, new housing frequently does not mirror the design quality, materials, or sensitive siting of its predecessors, detracting from appreciation of existing architecture, and muddling the perception of historic settlement patterns. Educational efforts to raise awareness surrounding elements of locally appropriate architecture and sensitive site design should be pursued.

8.4.2 Threats to Village Character

Scituate's three distinct village centers, and to a lesser degree its one hamlet Potterville, exhibit the interactive land uses and coherent groupings that characterize typical 19th century New England villages. The Village of North Scituate perhaps best exemplifies these qualities in its mix of residential, commercial, municipal, and religious architecture, relatively uniform setbacks, narrow side yards, fences and walls, and traditional colors and building materials.

In some areas however, the qualities that lend distinction and cohesion have been eroded by new development, or by alterations to existing buildings that do not contribute to the historic visual character of the Village. This trend is potentially harmful in that, if left unchecked, it can gradually erode the qualities that have allowed North Scituate entry on the National Register.

The Village of Hope provides another interpretation of 19th century New England in its nearly intact illustration of a mill village, housing, and associated development. The Hope Mill Complex, including a 1840s stone textile mill and subsequent additions, ceased to operate in 2007. The last textile manufacturer that used the mill was a weaver of elastic fabrics. The mill

buildings have been in receivership since 2008 and are in various states of disarray including collapsed roofs and walls. While they retain the architectural styles and scale of the original settlement, many of the residential neighborhoods in Hope Village are threatened by deterioration. Incentives should be sought for rehabilitating these structures and their associated property in a manner that will not disrupt the cohesive whole of the Village.



Figure 8-1. Hope Mill, 2016

Source: Valley Breeze (Retrieved on 7/1/21)

8.4.3 *Incremental Development*

Like many predominantly rural communities with small village centers, development pressure is presently low, but its historic resources may nevertheless be threatened by the development that does occur incrementally over time. Loss of historic character typically occurs in areas that have no growth management plan or where weak land use controls permit haphazard or incompatible construction. Development which introduces uses without regard for neighborhood character or is otherwise uncoordinated with actual community needs is detrimental to overall community character. As a result of such “uncoordinated” growth, many historic buildings can become separated from the environmental context in which they are best appreciated, creating visual intrusions or conflicting uses that devalue historic properties and negatively affect quality of life. More sensitive land use controls and other measures to determine where development can best occur, similar to the site plan review process, are needed. Scituate has clearly recognized the desire for coordinated development in creating a comprehensive plan to guide the future it wishes to see.

8.4.4 *Threats to Archeological Sites*

Scituate has placed several known archaeological sites on the National Register, but there may be valuable resources from a variety of periods in history that are not currently protected. One area in particular that deserves investigation is Hope Village, where there may be many vestiges of former iron and textile mill activity preexisting from the eighteenth through early 19th centuries. Lack of knowledge of other existing sites is a threat that can be counteracted by continued surveying and use of predictive land use models in areas deemed archaeologically sensitive.

Further study is recommended for those sites that have been identified by the State survey and that may potentially be eligible for National Register listing. Coordination of mapped data with state and local agencies, such as RIDOT and the Scituate Plan Commission can help pinpoint archaeological resources before they are disturbed. A particularly low hanging fruit in this regard is the preservation of stone walls and historic cemeteries. As properties are developed these archeological resources can be threatened. Stone walls are often removed during development and historic cemeteries can be negatively impacted by development within close proximity. The Town should take steps to better regulate these resources during the development process.

8.5 **Historic and Cultural Resource Protection**

There are a variety of measures that can be implemented to protect the Town's many historic and cultural resources. These measures are presented below.

8.5.1 *Land Use Techniques*

There are a variety of land use techniques that can be implemented at the local level to require the protection of historic and cultural resources as part of the land development process.

Historic District Zoning

Under Title 45-24.1 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, the Town Council is empowered to designate mapped areas for designation of historic district zoning. This empowers the local Historic District Commission to grant or deny permissions for exterior alterations requiring a building permit within the district. Many alterations, such as color or maintenance, would not be affected as they do not trigger building permits.

The Town Council appoints membership to a Historic District Commission by virtue of interest or expertise in historic preservation. Each Historic District Commission should have representation from the area affected by historic district zoning, although this is not required by state statute.

Scituate does not currently have a Historic District Commission. The Town has adopted two village overlay districts that regulate certain design parameters for new construction and rehab of existing structures. Each village overlay district, Hope Village and North Scituate Village, have a specific village overlay commission. The Hope Village Overlay Commission is responsible for review and approval of renovations and new construction in the Hope Village Overlay District and the North Scituate Village Overlay Commission is responsible for the same within the North Scituate Village Overlay District. The boundaries of these districts are shown on Map HC-1.

Land Use Regulations

Whereas Historic District Zoning is quite limited in its scope, land use zoning covers a broad array of subjects codified in Scituate in zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations, ranging from advisory to mandatory. It is possible to include cultural resource protection in zoning and subdivision regulation. Common examples of doing so include requiring a special use permit prior to significant alteration of mapped cultural resources or including impacts on cultural resources in site or design review procedures.

Promoting infill development in village areas that enjoy historic district designation can be a good way to promote the reuse of historic structures within village areas. This can be accomplished by streamlining the permitting process, while still requiring building modifications to adhere to historic standards.

8.5.2 *National Register of Historic Places Nomination*

The National Register, maintained by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior, is a permanent record of structures, sites, areas and objects that have contributed importantly to American history and culture.

Tax benefits are available to owners of income-producing, National Register listed or eligible properties for rehabilitation work performed in accordance with the standards of the U.S. Department of The Interior. Furthermore, when federal funds are used for a project which may affect a National Register property (for example, a highway improvement), the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) requires environmental assessments and related mitigation measures to minimize damage to such properties. In addition, National Register listing confers benefits to eligible properties under specific circumstances. For example, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) may be used for historic rehabilitation for privately owned individual structures.

Table 8-3 provides a list of recommended buildings and sites for nomination to the National Register. At a minimum, Scituate should pursue adding these structures and sites to those already listed.

8.5.3 *Funding Sources*

Grants and other funding mechanisms are commonly used for the protection of historical and cultural resources.

Community Development Block Grants

The CDBG Program provides annual grants on a formula basis to states, cities, towns, and counties. This money may be used for a wide variety of development related activities which involve cultural resource protection. Such activities include, but are not limited to, rehabilitation of privately owned

properties if the beneficiaries are at least 51 percent low- and moderate-income households. It is possible to create a residential rehabilitation program combining the protection of historic homes with building code compliance rehabilitation.

CDBG funds may be applied to adaptive reuse projects if there are significant benefits to low/moderate income households involved. These grants have been significant in rehabilitation projects that respect the historic features and character of the original architecture and its setting.

These federal funds may also be used for streetscape and public spaces and park improvements, including the acquisition, and placing of period benches, lampposts, paving and other amenities.

Rhode Island Historic Preservation Commission Grants

Through its Certified Local Governments Program, the RIHPC awards 50% matching grants to eligible communities for a variety of historic preservation activities. In the past several years, these grants have been used for surveys to document local cultural resources, to prepare nominations for the National Register, to protect endangered resources, to develop local historic preservation plans and for public education programs, activities and publications. Certified Local Government grants are only available to municipalities that adopt Historic District Zoning and establish a Local Historic District Commission, per RIGL § 45-24.1. Scituate could apply for CLG grants once the Town has met all the criteria and been certified by Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC).

Rhode Island Council for the Humanities

As well as the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Commission, this agency provides grants for educational activities (slide shows, video, talks, books, etc.) relating to increasing awareness of cultural resources among local people.

Historic Preservation Loan Fund

This program is available to properties listed on the state's Register of Historic Places by providing loans to public, non-profit, or private owners. Loan money can be used for needed restoration work or, in some cases, for acquiring and rehabilitating an endangered historic property.

Historic Preservation Residential Tax Credit Program

This program provides a state income tax credit for approved rehabilitation work within the guidelines of the program. Properties have to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places prior to project competition to be eligible for tax credits.

8.5.4 Other Protection Mechanisms

Partial Fee Acquisition (or Easement)

By purchasing an easement to a cultural resource, an owner obtains less than the full bundle of rights normally associated with property ownership. In so doing, a partial fee acquisition or easement, effectively restricts an owner's right to develop or alter culturally significant resources by limiting the rights of ownership.

Purchase of Development Rights

Related to the purchase of preservation easements, this preservation tool allows a party to purchase the right to develop a property in a limited way. This method is of value in that the site or structure is protected without the costs of full purchase.

Ownership by an Agency, Organization, or Group

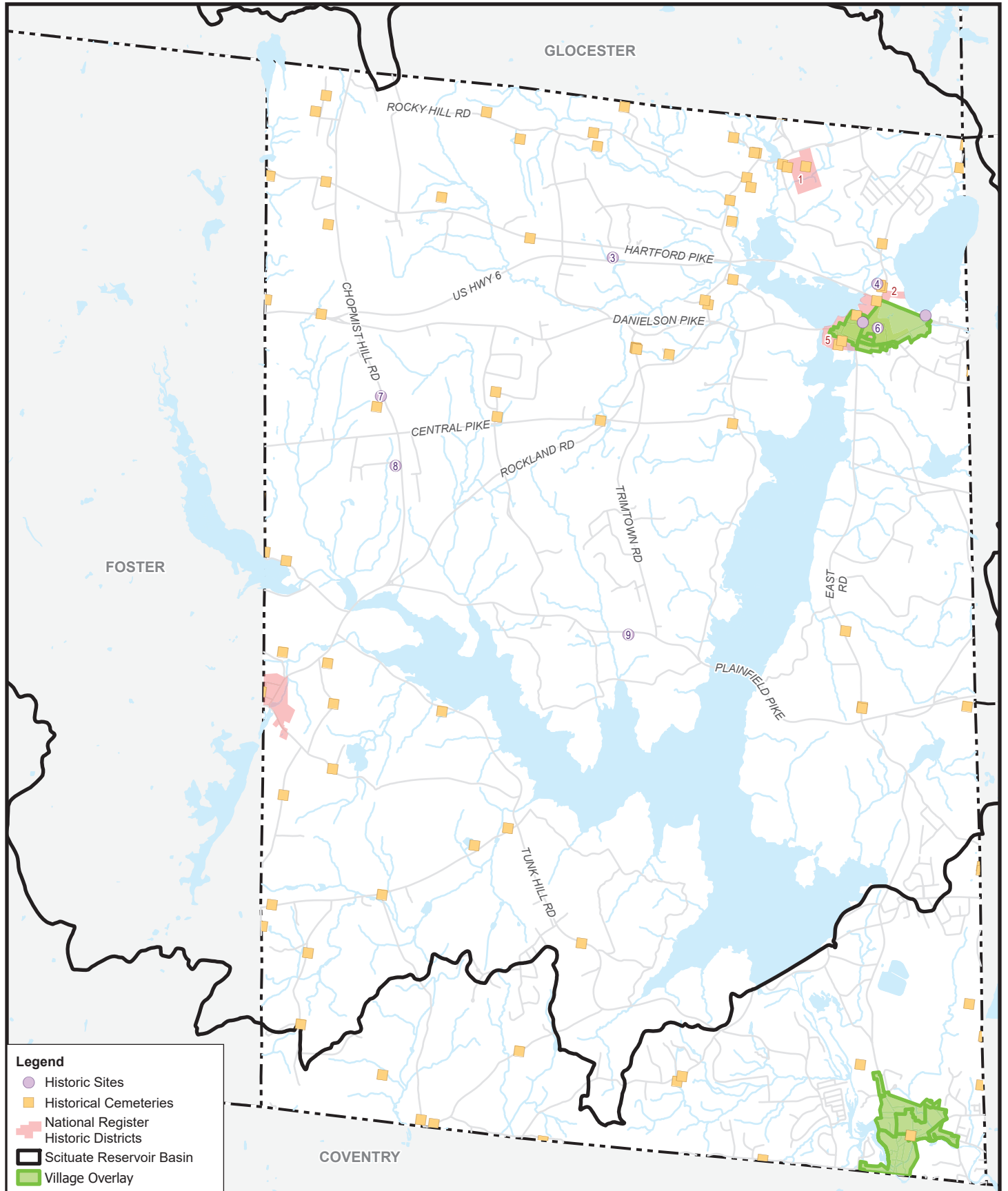
In situations where municipalities cannot afford to purchase cultural resources outright, the ownership of such resources by agencies, organizations, or groups may provide an effective preservation tool. In the hands of such a body which has no development agenda and which can afford routine maintenance costs, the resource may be more adequately protected than it would be if owned by another type of group. Support of this strategy, however, can only be obtained through education of the owning agency, since its primary function may not always be preservation.

8.6 Opinion Survey of Scituate: Historic and Cultural Resources

In May 2021, the Town posted an online survey for residents as part of the comprehensive planning process. The survey asked several questions related to the services and facilities provided by the Town and school district. A full summary of the survey results can be found in Appendix A. In summary, the survey results indicate the following principal findings related to historic and cultural resources:

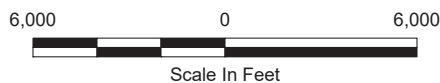
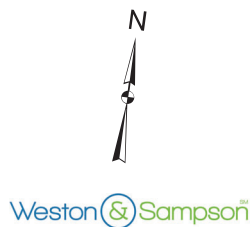
- Of survey respondents 68.3% reported that the preservation of historic character was very important to their quality of life while another 21.7% reported that it was important.
- Most survey respondents reported that the Town has adequate cultural activities, with 62.7% responding that the Town should maintain those at the same level they do now, with 31.1% of respondents indicating that the Town should have more of those types of activities. Only 6.2% responded that the Town should have less cultural activities.
- When respondents were asked what types of activities the Town should engage in 62.4% of survey respondents reported that they would be very supportive of historic preservation efforts, while 26.1% reported they would be supportive.
- Respondents were asked to rank the Town's performance for certain measures. When asked if the Town has done a good job protecting its historic and cultural resources, 13.3% of respondents strongly agreed and 43.7% agreed. 27.7% of respondents reported that they somewhat agreed with that statement while 11.4% disagreed.

These survey results indicate that the majority, almost 90%, of residents highly value the Town's historic resources, but only slightly over half believe the Town is adequately protecting them (57%). The Town will need to further assess how they can improve upon how they protect and value historic resources in response to resident's sentiment. According to the survey result, residents in general seem to feel that the Town provides appropriately for cultural activities such as parades and festivals. Public education to residents on what is currently done, along with input from the community on what other measures could be undertaken as a starting point for this community conversation.



MAP HC-1: HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



Flood Hazard, waterbodies, landuse, conservation, and municipal boundaries were obtained from RIGIS. Town base mapping data provided by Town of Scituate. Other derived data products made by Weston & Sampson from these sources.

This graphic is intended for general reference and is not a legally authoritative source as to the location of natural or manmade features or areas.

Historic sites/cemeteries/districts from RIGIS.

9

CHAPTER 9

RECREATION



Town of Scituate, Rhode Island

Community Comprehensive Plan Update

Recreation

Background

The Town's recreation resources are used by locals, residents in neighboring towns, and visitors to the region and state. Many local businesses receive direct and indirect benefits from the recreation assets within the Town, therefore contributing to the economic health of Scituate. The Town's outdoor recreation spaces and amenities serve a variety of purposes: youth and adult sports, walking, jogging, seasonal and community events, and others. These recreation resources are an asset to Scituate residents of all ages, as well as residents in neighboring towns and throughout the state. They contribute to creating a sense of community and provide enjoyment of the outdoors for a wide variety of individuals. Recreational opportunities play an important role in people's daily lives and contribute to quality of life within a community.

Policies

1. Support the Recreation Department programming and facilities by continuing to adequately fund and staff the department
2. Continue to provide an active maintenance and rehabilitation program and schedule to maintain and upgrade existing facilities
3. Prioritize projects that build upon existing infrastructure and resources, ensuring that new recreational facilities are well-connected and meeting the needs of the community
4. Increase the public's awareness of recreation opportunities, including using social media, the Town website, workshops, and other outreach efforts to inform residents of recreation programs and provide for a means of public input
5. Explore options to add to the Town's existing recreation facilities and resources

Goals



Provide an array of active and passive recreational areas and facilities throughout the community to serve a wide range of populations and activity levels



The changing recreational needs of the community will be met in accordance with Town, State, and Federal standards



Foster an inclusive recreation environment that enhances information and communications systems



Continue to improve access to recreational areas, facilities, and services by identifying and removing barriers to access

Actions



Continually assess the Recreation Departments facilities, programs, and staff to ensure they are adequate for the needs of the community. Develop new programs and facilities, or expand upon existing ones as needed.



Resurface and strip the tennis courts at Berkander Field and Hope Park.



Consider establishing a recreation center.



Install irrigation at the Hope Park baseball field.



Continue to adequately fund and support the DPW in their role in maintaining recreation facilities, ensuring that adequate staff and equipment are available.



Make improvements to Caito Field to make it viable and useable, including lighting.



Explore opportunities to establish a skate park facility in Town.



Renovate the old baseball field at North Doctor's Lane into a multipurpose field.



Update the Town's Recreation Department webpage to include more information about available programs and facilities to increase public awareness and utilization.



Make improvements to Manning Field to bring it up to current standards.



Explore opportunities to establish a dog park facility in Town.



Survey residents to determine the types of recreation facilities they would like to see considered.



Upgrade lighting at Gorham Field.

9.0 RECREATION

Scituate will provide a system of high-quality and well-maintained passive and active recreation sites, facilities, and programs that meet the changing needs of all residents.

The Town's recreation resources are used by locals, residents in neighboring towns, and visitors to the region and state. Many local businesses receive direct and indirect benefits from the recreation assets within the Town, therefore contributing to the economic health of Scituate. The Town's outdoor recreation spaces and amenities serve a variety of purposes: youth and adult sports, walking, jogging, seasonal and community events, and others. These recreation resources are an asset to Scituate residents of all ages, as well as residents in neighboring towns and throughout the state. They contribute to creating a sense of community and provide enjoyment of the outdoors for a wide variety of individuals. Recreational opportunities play an important role in people's daily lives and contribute to quality of life within a community.

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan provides an inventory of existing recreation assets as well as an analysis on the adequacy of these assets for future projected growth. Maintaining adequate recreation facilities was identified in the 2021 Scituate Comprehensive Plan Community Survey as an issue of high importance among survey respondents. The residents of Scituate place a high value on access to recreation facilities.

This chapter is categorized into the follow topics:

- An open space and recreation inventory of existing resources ([Section 9.1](#)).
- A discussion of the crossover between open space and recreation facilities ([Section 9.2](#)).
- An overview of the Recreation Department ([Section 9.3](#)).
- Issues and opportunities associated with recreational facilities and programs ([Section 9.4](#)).
- A recreational facility needs assessment ([Section 9.5](#)).
- An overview of recreation related survey results ([Section 9.6](#)).

The following considerations are of a high priority to the Town when taking into account how recreation plays a role in quality of life for Scituate residents:

- Provide a range of active and passive recreational areas and facilities throughout the community to serve a wide range of users ([Policy #1, #2 #3, #4, Action #1 #2, #4, #5, #6, #7, #8, #9, #10, #11, #12, #13, #14](#)).
- Ensure that the changing recreation needs of the community are met ([Policy #1, #3, Action #1, #2, #4, #6, #7, #8, #9, #10, #11, #12, #13, #14](#)).
- Continue to provide a high level of recreation service in both quantity and quality by upgrading and maintain existing facilities ([Policy, #1, #2, #3, #4 Action #1, #3, #7, #8, #9, #10, #11, #12, #13, #14](#)).

9.1 Recreation Inventory

An important function of the Recreation chapter of a comprehensive plan is to inventory a community's existing resources. This helps the community to determine where there are gaps in service for such

types of amenities and provides guidance as to what areas of Town are lacking adequate recreation amenities. This section provides an overview of the types of these facilities and where they are located throughout Town.

9.1.1 Recreation Facility Types

The recreation facility types described below are from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Standards. They have established standards for service area, size, and population needs relative to park type. In a community like Scituate, which is mostly rural with a sprawling development pattern, the desirable size and service area established by NRPA is less appropriate than for a more urban or densely populated area. For this reason, service area and facility size are not considered of high importance and all recreation facilities are deemed to have a town wide service area.

Mini Park

A specialized facility that serves a concentrated or limited population or specific group such as young children or senior citizens.

Playgrounds

Playgrounds are characterized as active recreation areas for children, generally between the ages of five and 12, but can also include tot lots and trike parks for ages one through five. Many playgrounds are combined with passive park recreation areas, serving both purposes by providing both apparatus and a field area for games and informal play. Playgrounds are often associated with schools and range in size.

Neighborhood Park

Playfields typically range in size from 12 to 20 acres and are equipped with facilities for active sports such as basketball, baseball, tennis, and soccer. Playfields generally serve ages 13 and older but can be used by younger children. Playfields are often associated with schools and are ideally geographically centered with safe walking and biking access.

Community Park

Community parks are often a combination of the parks described above providing playfields, playgrounds, athletic complexes, and areas of natural space for outdoor recreation such as walking, viewing, picnicking, and other passive forms of recreation.

Linear Parks

Linear parks typically refer to some form of recreation travel, such as walking, biking, canoeing, and hiking. Such facilities often serve as a regional resource and may be related to a unique feature or available corridor such as those provided by a utility right-of-way. A bike path or a hiking trail would be considered a form of a linear park.

Conservation Areas

Conservation areas are used for the protection and management of the natural or cultural environment with recreation as a secondary objective. These areas are discussed in detail in Chapter 7 *Natural Resources and Open Space*.

9.1.2 Recreation Inventory

Table 9-1 below provides an overview of the different recreational facilities in Town. The table provides the acreage, facility type, service area, and amenities offered at each site. Additionally, each property has a map ID, which correlates to Map REC-1, showing the locations of the Town's recreational facilities. Several of these facilities overlap with those presented in Table 7-5 of the *Natural Resources and Open Space* chapter, which provides a similar inventory of open space amenities. See Section 9.2 for further information on the relationship between recreation and open space.

Table 9-1. Existing Recreational Facilities in Scituate						
Map ID	Location (map/lot or address)	Facility	Acreage	Type	Service Area	Amenities
State of Rhode Island						
1	32-39	Esek Hopkins Park	69.4	CP, PG	Town	Picnic area, winter sledding, Rotary Club playground
2	32-7	Hopkins Grove	24.7	CP	Town	Picnic area
3	46-29	Ponagansett Grove	1.0	CP	State	Picnic area
Town of Scituate						
4	16-25	North Scituate Elementary School	3.4	PG	Neighborhood	Playground, basketball
5	16-14	Bandstand Lot	2.0	CP	Town	Summer concerts, Christmas tree lighting, Santa letter mailbox
6	16-13	Berkander Field	3.9	CP	Town	Softball field, tennis, volleyball
7	51-11	Clayville Elementary	1.0	PG	Neighborhood	Playground
8	51-54	Clayville Field	1.0	CP	Town	softball
9	32-39	Dean Andrews Memorial Field	2.5	CP, PG	Town	Softball, playground, walking trails
10	800 Hartford pike (29-8)	Gorham Field	13	CP	Town	Baseball, multipurpose/football practice field
11	391 North	Hope Elementary	1.0	PG	Town	playground
12	2-34	Hope Park	11.0	CP, PG	Neighborhood	Basketball, tennis, baseball, playground
13	32-9	Manning Field	22.1	CP	Town	Baseball, softball, soccer, cross country trails
14	33-14	Scituate Middle/High School (Caito Field)	10.0	CP	Town	Football, track & field
15	38-11	Tasca Field	12.9	CP	Town	Soccer, walking trail
Private and Semi-Public						
16	5-11	Hope Gazebo/Colvin	.8	CP	Town	Gazebo, summer

Table 9-1. Existing Recreational Facilities in Scituate

Map ID	Location (map/lot or address)	Facility	Acreage	Type	Service Area	Amenities
		Park				concerts
17	7-35	Hope Pond Recreational Area	3.4	NP	Neighborhood	Swimming, boating, beach, Scituate Summer Camp program, basketball, walking trails

Source: Scituate Recreation Department, Tax Assessor Records

Notes:

Facility Type: M=minipark; PG=playground; NP=neighborhood park; CP=community park; LP=linear park

Service Area: N=neighborhood; T=Town; R=region; and S=state

9.1.3 Recreation Facilities

The Town of Scituate offers a variety of recreational opportunities. Although a significant portion of the Town is undeveloped, much of this land is owned by Providence Water and is not accessible to the public for active or passive use. Table 9-1 provides a summary of facilities that range from properties that offer walking trails to organized sports fields. Section 9.5 below takes a closer look at the recreation needs of the community and how they are and are not currently being met.

The Town's Recreation Department (discussed in more detail in Section 9.3) works closely with the Department of Public Works (DPW) to maintain the Town's recreation facilities. Facility maintenance is a daily responsibility of the DPW, and staff work closely with the Recreation Director to ensure that fields are groomed and maintained, and facilities are functioning properly.

9.2 Recreation and Open Space

The Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (the Act) references open space and outdoor recreation together within the same section of the general laws. The Act defines open space as "any parcel or area of land or water set aside, dedicated, designated, or reserved for public or private use or enjoyment or for the use and enjoyment of owners and occupants of land adjoining or neighboring the open space; provided that the area may be improved with only those buildings, structures, streets, and off-street parking, and other improvements that are designed to be incidental to the natural openness of the land." This definition seems to imply that open space is only land that is designated for recreation purposes; however, many interpret the term open space to only include natural or conservation areas that are not intended for recreational use. To avoid confusion between open space and recreational lands, a discussion of open space is contained in Chapter 7 *Natural Resources and Open Space*, while recreational facilities and amenities are discussed in this chapter. There is overlap between the two and the inventory tables in each chapter have repetitive entries due to the natural crossover between open space and recreation amenities.

Both recreational and open space amenities play an important role in quality of life, although they serve somewhat different purposes. For this comprehensive plan open space amenities are those that provide an opportunity to individuals to visit nature, observe wildlife, and conduct passive activities such as hiking, walking, bird watching, and the like. Recreational amenities are those that provide for a more active enjoyment of nature and the outdoors, providing opportunities for more active recreation such as sports activities, community events, and recreation programs. Section 9.3 below provides an overview of such activities that are provided by the Scituate Recreation Department.

9.3 Recreation Department

The Town offers a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities and a robust recreation program administered by the Scituate Recreation Department. This section provides an overview of existing recreation facilities and programs in the Town.

In addition to the Town sports programs, the Town also runs a Youth Drama club. The club was established in 2013 and puts on two major productions each year. One for the elementary and middle school age bracket and one for the high school and early college age bracket. The program currently officially incorporates all three elementary schools in the district. In addition to the productions, the program also hosts workshops from theatre professionals, talent competitions and summer camps.

9.3.1 Recreation Programs

The Scituate Recreation Department offers a variety of programs from an annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony to a summer camp for kids.

Summer Camp

The Town offers an eight-week summer camp for Scituate families, serving kids in grades Kindergarten through grade eight. The camp offers swimming, crafts, and a full schedule of activities throughout the program term. The camp has certified lifeguards and operates with a full staff of counselors, many of which return year after year providing a great opportunity for campers and counselors alike.

Youth Sports

The Department runs a variety of sports programs by age group and season. They operate a sports program for kids aged 5-12 and another program for children aged 13 and up. The Recreation Department offers baseball and softball in the spring, football and soccer in the late summer through fall, and basketball in the winter. They manage competitive leagues, which run year-round for baseball, basketball, and soccer, as well as recreational leagues that run seasonally.

Seasonal Activities and Programs

The Department works with Scituate Youth Drama, Student Council, and other youth leagues and organizations to organize after school and weekend activities. These include movie nights, homecoming, and two sessions of open ice skating at the Smithfield Ice Rink where they rent the facility for the benefit of Scituate residents. The Department also works closely with Scituate Business Association for holiday events such as the annual tree lighting and the decorating of North Scituate and Hope Villages during Christmas time. The Department also runs a summer concert series at North Scituate Gazebo and Hope Pond.

9.3.2 Fee-in-lieu of Open Space Recreation Areas

Section 14-28(f) of the Scituate Land Development and Subdivision Regulations requires that all land developments and subdivisions dedicate seven percent of the land being subdivided for the purposes of open space and park and recreational facilities. This land dedication is intended to serve present and future residents of the development. The regulations allow for the Planning Board to accept a payment of a fee in lieu of land dedication as an alternative to the dedication of land. This fee in lieu has become the preferred method over time, as it allows the Town to determine where to best direct the funds in order to provide appropriate open space and recreation opportunities. The dedication of land can result

in small pockets of Town owned land that increase maintenance costs overall because of their fragmented nature. Table 9-2 provides an overview of fees collected and expended from FY 17-18 through FY 19-20.

Table 9-2. Fee In Lieu of Land Dedication Accounting FY 17-18 through FY 19-20			
Fiscal Year	Amount Collected	Amount Expended	Fund Balance
FY 17-18	\$97,351 (previous balance)	\$43,593	\$97,352
FY 18-19	\$69,625	\$45,625	\$77,994
FY 19-20	\$41,000	\$0	\$118,995
FY 20-21	\$0	\$0	\$118,995

Source: Recreation Department, October 2021

In total over the last five years, expenditures totaling \$89,218 have been expended from the fees collected. Since 2017, approximately \$43,000 on lighting at Gorham Field, new fencing around tennis courts at Berkander Field, and renovations to fencing at Gorham Field. This revenue source is used by the Town for upgrades to recreation facilities as well as to purchase and maintain open space properties. Since Table 9-2 shows that no funds were collected or expended during FY 20-21. This is due to an economic downturn and the full and partial shutdowns of activities related to the COVID 19 pandemic. Historically, fee in lieu of land dedication has provided a stream of revenue to ensure that public parks and recreation spaces are available and maintained for the enjoyment of new and existing residents of Scituate. It is expected that will continue into the future as we move forward, and development projects are initiated once again

9.4 Issues and Opportunities

The Recreation Department, in many circumstances provides the municipal connection between recreational opportunities and the residents of Scituate. The department organizes events, schedules facility usage, runs a summer camp program, and works with the Department of Public Works to maintain and upgrade the facilities.

9.4.1 Facility Upgrades

The Recreation Department had identified a number of facility upgrades that will be addressed in the next several years. These include:

- Installation of lighting at Gorham Field
- Upgrades to fencing at Gorham Field
- New fencing at Berkander Field

In addition to planned upcoming maintenance work, a new concession stand was built at Dean Andrews field in 2021.

9.4.2 Additional Facility Needs

- In the process of resurfacing and striping the basketball court at Berkander Field.
- Resurface and stripe the tennis courts in Berkander Field (4) and Hope Park (2). Berkander Field tennis courts are used by the high school and are priority for upgrades and maintenance.
- Install irrigation in Hope Park baseball field.
- Renovate an old baseball field (for older kids) at North Doctors Lane that was previously used but has since been abandoned.

Facility use is scheduled through the Recreation Department and although facility use is high, there are no issues with overbooking or facilities being unavailable due to over demand. With the Town population anticipated to remain relatively constant, it is not anticipated that the demand for recreational facilities will increase significantly in the future. See Tables 9-3 and 9-4 for an overview of anticipated recreational needs.

The Town coordinates organized recreation with the School Department to utilize facilities located at various schools throughout the Town. School fields are currently used for youth sports activities such as baseball, basketball, cheerleading, and others. The Town does lack a recreation center. A physical structure that could be used for family events, indoor sports activities, summer camp, and other such programs would provide an enhanced recreation benefit to the community. It would allow the Town to expand their programs and events and offer year-round opportunities that were not weather dependent.

Additionally, there are existing facilities that are in need of improvements beyond those that are identified above as scheduled maintenance. Gorham Field, located on Route 101, is used for multiple sports and practices. There are some parking issues related to the high facility use of this field and parking spill out on to Route 101 causing congestion during busy times. Additional parking would help alleviate this issue. The Recreation Department has expressed a desire to investigate the possibility of both a skate park and a dog park to add to the list of facilities the Town offers. Residents have been requesting these facilities of the Recreation Department on a regular basis for several years.

9.4.3 Staff Capacity

The Recreation Department currently has one full time staff, who serves as the department Director. The Town hires part-time staff for summer programming, but there are no other full-time staff during the remainder of the year. The Town should continue to assess the need to add additional full-time staff in the future as recreation demands may warrant.

9.5 Recreation Needs Assessment

When conducting a needs assessment for recreation, three issues must be considered: geographic distribution of recreational assets, suitability of recreation options, and access to recreation. This section provides an overview of the site (space) type needs and facility needs in accordance with minimum standards as provided by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).

In order to assess the adequacy of recreation space and facilities, a projected growth rate needs to be established. Population projections for each community were established by Statewide Planning and are reported in Chapter 3 *Demographic Profile* of this plan. For the purposes of this analysis the following population information was used:

- 2010 population of 10,329¹
- 2019 population projection of 10,634²
- 2035 population projection of 10,702³

Space and facility need, for the 2019 baseline and projected to 2035, are represented in Table 9-3 and 9-4, respectively.

Table 9-3. Existing and Future Active Recreation Acreage Needs^a

Facility Type	Acreage Standard per Population	Existing Acreage	2019 (Population: 10,634)		2035 (Population: 10,702)	
			Acres Needed ^b by Population	Deficit	Acres Needed ^b by Population	Deficit
Pocket/Mini Park	1:4,000	0	3	3	3	3
Playground	1:2,000	8.9	6	None	6	None
Neighborhood Park	1:1,000	3.4	11	7.6	11	7.6
Community Park	1:200	163.3	54	None	54	None

Notes:

- Based on NRPA Standards, 2015 census and projected 2025 population.
- Acreages needed are rounded up to next acre.

Table 9-4. Existing and Future Active Recreation Facility Needs^a

Facility	Unit Standard per Population	Existing Facilities	2019 (Population: 10,634)		2035 (Population: 10,702)	
			Units Needed ^b by Population	Deficit	Units Needed ^b by Population	Deficit
Basketball Courts	1:2,000	6	6	None	6	None
Tennis Courts	1:2,000	6	6	None	6	None
Baseball Fields	1:4,000	4	3	None	3	None
Soccer Fields	1:2,000	2	6	4	6	4
Softball Fields	1:3,000	3	4	1	4	1

Notes:

- Based on NRPA Standards, 2015 census and projected 2025 population.
- Acreages needed are rounded up to next acre.

¹ US Decennial Census 2010

² U.S. Census 2019, ACS

³ RI Department of Administration, Division of Planning

According to the information provided in Table 9-3, the Town is relatively well equipped with park and playground amenities. Although the Town does fall short of providing mini parks and neighborhood parks at an adequate level, they far exceed the standards (by 109.3 acres) for community parks. Due to the Town's rural and spread-out development pattern, creating a series of neighborhood scale parks would be prohibitive for the limited maintenance resources the Town has. Having larger community scale amenities is more cost effective and seems to serve the needs of the residents adequately.

Table 9-4 provides an overview of the standards for recreation facilities. The Town meets or exceeds the standards for basketball, tennis, and baseball facilities, but does lack soccer and softball facilities according to the recreational needs assessment. The Town Recreation Department indicated that the current demand for soccer and softball fields are being met with existing facilities. The Town should consider opportunities to enhance facility access for these two sports in particular, as any future increase in demand may result in a lack of adequate facilities.

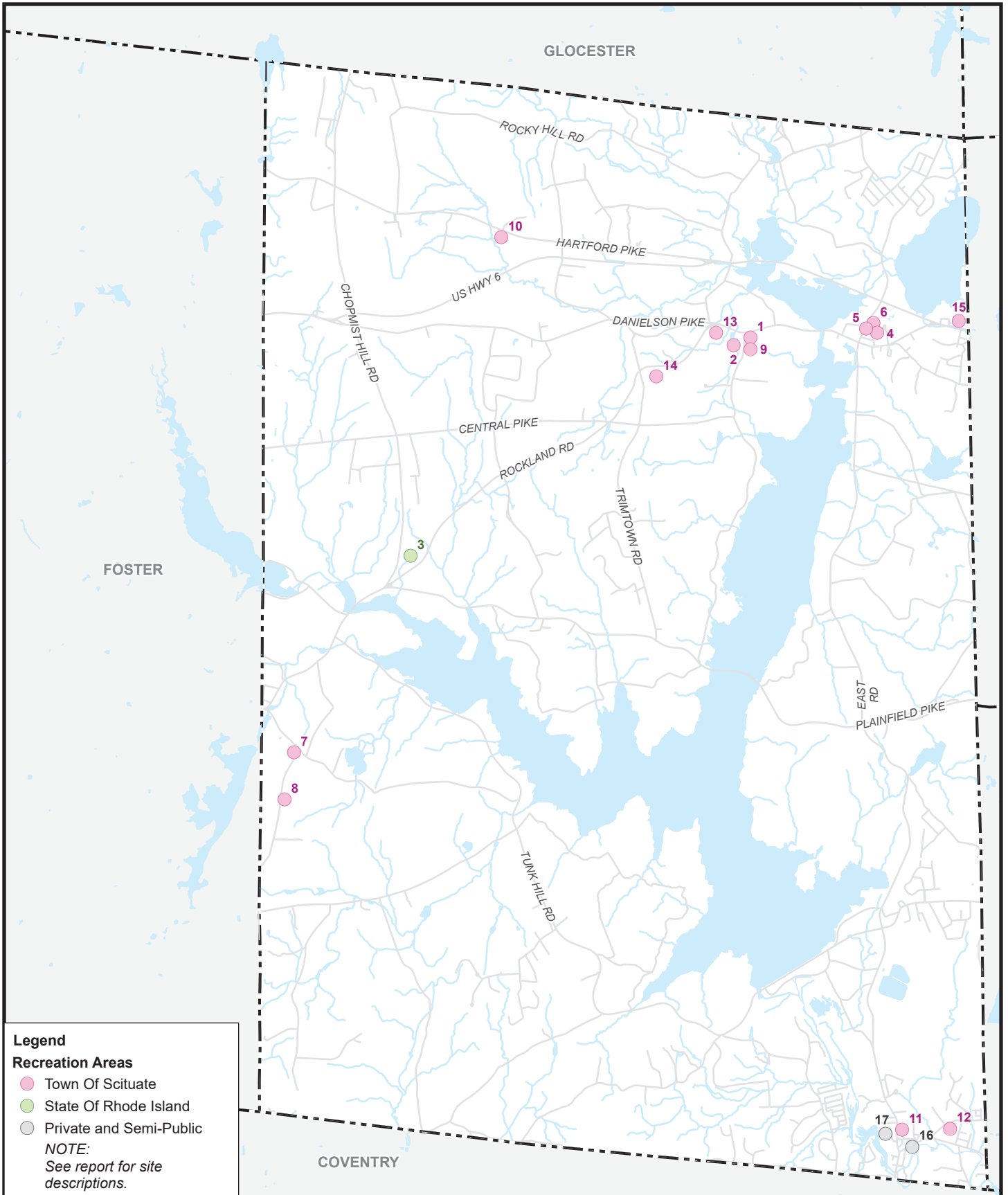
9.6 Opinion Survey of Scituate: Recreation

In May 2021, the Town posted an online survey for residents as part of the comprehensive planning process. The survey asked several questions related to recreation. A full summary of the survey results can be found in Appendix A. In summary, the survey reported the following principal findings related to recreation:

- Survey respondents were asked to rank the importance of certain issues to their quality of life. When asked about recreational resources, 26.4% of respondents ranked that as very important, 45.3% ranked it as important, 20.8% ranked it as somewhat important while 7.5% ranked it as not important.
- Respondents were provided with a list of areas that can be addressed in a comprehensive plan and asked to rank the importance of the issue. When asked about active recreational resources 21.5% of respondents indicated that it was very important, 36.2% indicated it was important, 34.4% indicated it was somewhat important, while 8% of respondents indicated it was not important. When asked about passive recreational resources 23.3% indicated that was very important, 41.5% indicated it was important, 27.7% indicated it was somewhat important, while 7.5% indicated it was not important.
- Survey respondents were asked about the types of development services the Town of Scituate needs more of, less of, or the same amount of. When asked about active and passive recreation 45.9% of respondents indicated the Town needed more, 47.2% indicated the Town needed the same amount, and 6.9% indicated the Town needed less.
- Survey respondents were provided with examples of activities and initiatives that the Town could take. Respondents were asked to rank their support for various items. When asked to rank their support for improving and/or maintaining recreation resources, parks, and playgrounds 49.9% of respondents indicated they would be very supportive, 36.9% indicated they would be supportive, 12.5% indicated that they would be somewhat supportive, and 1.3% indicated that would not be supportive of such measures.
- When asked about how supportive respondents would be about the establishment of a dedicated recreation center 21.3% indicated they would be very supportive, 28.1% indicated they would be supportive, 32.5% indicated they would be somewhat supportive, while 18.1% responded that they would not be supportive of such a measure.

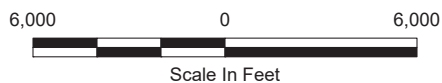
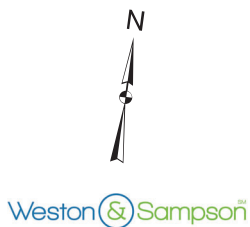
- A final survey question asked respondents to rate their feelings about a series of statements. When asked if they agree that Scituate provides adequate recreational opportunities for residents 8.9% of respondents felt that they strongly agreed, 35.4% indicated they agreed, 32.3% indicated that they somewhat agreed, while 17.7% and 5.7% reported that they disagreed or strongly disagreed, respectively.

These survey results indicate that overall Scituate residents are supportive of recreation programs and amenities and feel that they contribute to their quality of life. Respondents were somewhat more equally divided on the issue of adding more active and passive recreation opportunities, with just about half of respondents indicating more was needed and half of respondents indicating that there was enough provided. Overall, Scituate residents are in favor of improving and maintaining the existing recreational facilities. There is also general support for the establishment of a recreation center, with just over 80% of respondents indicating some level of support for such an effort. About one quarter of respondents indicated that the Town is not providing adequate recreational opportunities, which is an indication that the Town can improve current programs and opportunities to reach a broader audience.



MAP REC-1: RECREATION AREAS MAP

TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



Flood Hazard, waterbodies, landuse, conservation, and municipal boundaries were obtained from RIGIS. Town base mapping data provided by Town of Scituate. Other derived data products made by Weston & Sampson from these sources.

This graphic is intended for general reference and is not a legally authoritative source as to the location of natural or manmade features or areas.

Recreation area locations obtained from the Town of Scituate.

10

CHAPTER 10
Services and Facilities



Town of Scituate, Rhode Island

Community Comprehensive Plan Update

Services & Facilities

Background

In the tradition of rural communities, the Town provides limited public services and does not provide many that are taken for granted in more urban areas. An important component of the “rural character” enjoyed in Scituate comes from small town traditions like supporting volunteer fire districts, appreciating the night sky without the interruption of streetlights, and recognizing members of the community in the grocery store or at the park. The Town must cope with an ever-increased burden to maintain the services it does provide in the face of increasing school budgets, funding cuts from the state level, and other factors associated with a challenging economic climate.



Figure 1. Scituate
Police Station (Sugrue
& Associates, Inc.)

Goals



Provide the necessary infrastructure and tools to maintain and enhance a strong educational program.



Provide a well-planned and economically responsible network of community facilities and services for Scituate’s current residents and expected future population needs.

Policies

1. Support the School Department and School Committee in their efforts to provide students access to a high-quality educational environment and experience.
2. Ensure that public safety services and facilities are well maintained and adequately staffed throughout the Town.
3. Provide Town departments with adequate staff and resources so as to provide a sufficient level of service to the community.
4. Maintain and enhance the services provided by the Public Works Department related to Town infrastructure and programs.
5. Promote recycling in municipal buildings and by all residents by providing up-to-date information in Town Hall and on the Town’s website to reach State mandated recycling and diversion rates.

Actions



Continue to modernize and upgrade Town schools and school related facilities to meet or exceed State educational standards.



Modernize and expand municipal facilities deemed necessary. Consider conducting a study of existing library buildings and services to determine if upgrades are needed.



Support the Town’s four fire departments and encourage the continuation of the present volunteer nature of the departments. Work with the individual departments to determine and implement future needs related to stations and equipment.



Assess and study areas of Town known to have drinking water contamination issues and determine potential solutions. Potential solutions could be related to addressing water service expansions, providing sewer service, establishing package treatment, or OWTS contamination issues.



Investigate additional possibilities for reducing municipal costs through regional cooperative efforts to pool services as has been accomplished between the Town and School Department previously with energy upgrades.



Continue to prepare and implement a capital budget for equipment and maintenance expenses.



Explore the possibility of establishing a wastewater management district, specifically related to the analysis of locations in Town with known well contamination issues.



Continue to fulfill the requirements of the *Rhode Island Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Storm Water Discharge from Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems and from Industrial Activity at Eligible Facilities Operated by Regulated Small MS4s*.



Continue to support services and programs at the Chopmist Hill Senior Center and evaluate future needs as programs and services evolve and population dynamics change.



Educate the public about the recycling by providing information on the Town’s website and in Town Hall, and work with the School District to provide education on recycling to children in an attempt to increase the Town’s recycling rates.



Consider renovating making the necessary upgrades to the existing Town Hall to provide additional office space on the second floor.



Continue to support public safety efforts and officials with adequate staffing, equipment, and infrastructure.

10.0 SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Scituate will be a community where cost-effective, high-quality municipal services and well-maintained public facilities meet the changing needs of current and future residents.

In the tradition of rural communities, the Town provides limited public services and does not provide many that are taken for granted in more urban areas. An important component of the “rural character” enjoyed in Scituate comes from small town traditions like supporting volunteer fire districts, appreciating the night sky without the interruption of streetlights, and recognizing members of the community in the grocery store or at the park. The Town faces an increasing burden to maintain the services it does provide in the face of increasing school budgets, funding cuts from the state level, and other factors associated with a challenging economic climate.

Planning for public services and facilities is important because it directly impacts the ability of the residents to live in a safe, adequate, and healthy environment. Sanitation and public safety services, as well as schools and the operation of Town government, are vital components of a successful community. Anticipating and preparing for future needs and safety is essential in providing a high quality of life for residents. In order to grow in a sustainable and appropriate manner, the delivery and quality of public services must be a determining factor on where and how growth occurs. It is important that growth, and levels and quality of service, are linked and complement each other. When they do not, growth can be disruptive and stress the community’s ability to serve new residents or businesses. The Town’s existing public services and facilities are presented on Map SF-1.

In general, major Town functions in Scituate are conducted from three main public buildings – Town Hall, the Public Works Complex, and the Police Station. The Senior Center also provides a variety of services to a specific subset of the population. Various municipal departments are integral in enhancing and protecting the quality of life that is so important to the residents of Scituate. In particular, the Public Works Department is responsible for services and facilities related to wastewater, town road maintenance, repair, and construction; stormwater maintenance; and town building maintenance. The Police Department, Fire Department, and Emergency Management provide a vital public safety role for the community protecting the overall health, safety, and welfare of residents. The School Department maintains four school buildings and an operating budget that on average represents more than 60% of the Town’s total operating budget, providing a high level of educational services.

This element focuses on providing an inventory of existing services and facilities provided by the Town and accomplishes this by way of the following topics:

- A summary of existing public safety facilities and services ([Section 10.1](#)).
- A summary of other Town facilities and services ([Section 10.2](#)).
- An overview of current school facilities and projected enrollment ([Section 10.3](#)).
- A review of survey responses related to public services and facilities ([Section 10.4](#)).

Within each of these sections, where deficiencies exist, they have been identified and possible solutions have been provided both in this element and within the related action items, which can be found within the Chapter 5 *Implementation* of this plan.

The following considerations are of high priority to the Town in providing appropriate and economically responsible services to the community:

- Continue, and enhance, the current level of service provided by the Town ([Policy #2, #3, #4 Action #1, #2, #3, #4, #6, #7, #8](#)).
- Provide the resources needed for a positive and sustainable educational experience for students ([Policy #1, Action #1](#)).
- Support thoughtful and economically responsible measures to provide the community with services and facilities that promote and enhance their quality of life and the natural environment in Scituate ([Policy #2, #3, #4, #5, Action #2, #3, #4, #5, #8, #9, #10, #11](#)).

10.1 Public Safety Facilities and Services

10.1.1 Police

The Scituate Police Department is responsible for protecting the life and property of Scituate residents, and preservation of peace within the community. The police department performs a variety of services including but not limited to the prevention of crime, apprehension of criminals, protection of rights of persons and property, and the enforcement of the statutes of the State of Rhode Island and the Ordinances of the Town of Scituate. The Police Department also assists other Town Departments and Officials in the performance of their duties when necessary.



Figure 10-1. Scituate Police Station (Sugrue & Associates, Inc.)

The Scituate Police Department was made a permanent force on July 9th, 1970, by Town Council Ordinance. The Department was authorized with a Chief, a Deputy Chief, and Lieutenant, three Sergeants and as many Patrolmen as the Town Council should from time to time determine necessary. The position of Captain was added to the force. The department currently employs 18 full-time sworn officers and eight civilians. The present configuration includes a Chief, a Deputy Chief, a Lieutenant, a Detective Sergeant, four Patrol Sergeants, a School Resource Officer, and eight Patrol Officers. Additionally, there are four full-time Dispatchers, one part-time Dispatcher, and Administrator/Executive Assistant and an Administrative Assistant. Over the last several years the department has shifted its emphasis from a traditional law enforcement role to a more proactive, community-oriented policing style to better serve the community.

The Scituate Police Station was historically located in Hope since at least 1925 according to historical records. The Hope location initially consisted of a former school building. In 1979 the former Hope Community House was renovated and added to the existing station. In July of 2020, the Scituate Police Department was moved to a brand-new police station located at 1301 Chopmist Hill Road.

Residents can access police services through two emergency 911 lines and seven non-emergency lines directly into the Police Station. Communication can also be achieved via the Police Department's website and confidential tip line or email. The department does have a Facebook page to inform residents of important information and events.

10.1.2 Rescue and Ambulance Corps

The Fire Departments are the primary emergency medical services provider for the Town of Scituate. The Hope Jackson and North Scituate stations have a paid rescue ambulance, and the Potterville station houses an on-call volunteer rescue ambulance.

10.1.3 Animal Control

The Town supports the operation of a municipal animal shelter in accordance with the RIDEM Standards for Animal Health. The Animal Control Division handles animal control issues in both Scituate and Foster. The Animal Shelter is located on the east side of George Washington Highway in Clayville. The current facility has the capacity to accommodate 10 dogs and 15 cats at one time. Throughout the year, about 100 dogs and even more cats find temporary shelter here. The division includes two full-time Animal Control Officers.

10.1.4 Fire Departments

Scituate is divided into four fire districts each covered by a volunteer fire department: Hope-Jackson, North Scituate, Potterville, and Chopmist Hill. The fire houses within each district are located to provide accessible protection to the areas served. All of fire departments are primarily funded and supported by the Town of Scituate. Each fire department receives an annual budget from the Town and the funds are distributed on a quarterly basis. The annual funds for fiscal year 2021 can be seen in Table 10-1. Various fundraisers are held throughout the year by the individual departments to raise funds to purchase special equipment. Dispatching is handled by the Scituate Police Department and mutual aid programs are in effect with surrounding towns.

Each fire department has several trained EMT's of various classifications. Most of the firefighting vehicles are owned by the Town; several of the fire departments, however, own some of the older vehicles. The facilities at each station are detailed in Table 10-1.

Department	Year Built	Station Location	Building Features	Building Ownership	Equipment	Roster	2021 Town Appropriation
Potterville	1979	Tunk Hill Road (Leased from PWSB)	4 Bays Office Community Room	Town Owned	Engine Tanker Brush Unit Utility Truck Ambulance	23 Active Volunteers	\$56,500
North Scituate	1956	Danielson Pike (Leased from PWSB)	3 Bays Office Meeting Room	Department Owned	Engine Tanker Ladder Truck Brush Unit Utility Truck Small Boat Ambulance	42 Active Volunteers	\$97,815
Hope-Jackson	1916	Main Street (Department Owned)	4 Bays	Department Owned	2 Engines Heavy Rescue Brush Unit Rescue Small Boat Utility Truck	50 Active Volunteers	\$98,934

Table 10-1. Scituate Fire Departments

Department	Year Built	Station Location	Building Features	Building Ownership	Equipment	Roster	2021 Town Appropriation
Chopmist Hill	1979	Chopmist Hill Road (Town Owned)	4 Bays	Town Owned	Engine Tanker Brush Unit Utility Truck	15 Active Volunteers	\$68,000

Source: Scituate EMA Director, obtained August 2021

North Scituate Fire Department

The North Scituate Fire Department station is located on Danielson Pike on small parcel that is leased by PWSB. The building itself is aging and in need of upgrades in order to stay up to date with the needs of the department. A replacement generator is needed at this station and the small footprint of the land on which it is leased restricts the department's ability to expand with future demand. The station itself is owned by the department. The department is looking at the possibility of relocating this station to a more central location and expanding the building to meet the needs of the service area.

Chopmist Hill Fire Department

The Chopmist Hill Fire Department station is located on Chopmist Hill Road and sits on Town owned property. The station has an out of date OWTS, and the system is failing and needs to be replaced. This station does not have a rescue unit or a watercraft.

Potterville Fire Department

The Potterville Fire Department is located on Tunk Hill Road is the station is a Town owned building on land leased from PWSB. The station is in need of kitchen upgrades and the OWTS is in need of repairs or possible replacement.

Hope Jackson Fire Department

The Hope Jackson Fire Department station is located on Main Street and is the oldest station in Town. The station itself is owned by the membership. The station is in need of expansion and upgrades due to the age of the structure and the need for additional space. The OWTS for the station also needs to be replaced. The department is looking into the possibility of moving the location of this station to a more central location (North Road area) to better serve residents. The Hope Jackson station is the most active of the four fire stations and a more central location would improve response times.

Overall, the largest challenge facing the fire departments revolves around the Emergency Medical Services or EMS system. The current EMS system is a per diem system with two paid ambulance trucks (one part time and one full time) that rotate between the Hope Jackson station and the North Scituate station. The Town needs to move to a full time EMS system, and not continue a per diem basis, with two full time ambulance trucks.

10.1.5 Emergency Management

The Town has an Emergency Management Office located at 195 Danielson Pike in North Scituate. A contracted, part-time EMA Director and Deputy Director staff this office. The Emergency Management office is responsible for the Town's Emergency Operations Center and Communications Center. The Office initiates vulnerability assessment, resources allocations and provides the coordination of assets

during natural disasters or large-scale incidents. The EMA Director acts as the liaison with State and Federal agencies to acquire specialized equipment or obtain funding for prevention or mitigation of hazards following disasters. The Director also acts as the Floodplain Coordinator for FEMA and the Infection Control Officer in the event of a pandemic.

The Director also acts as the coordinator for the Town's emergency resources for both the Fire and Police Departments during state of emergency events and provides direct oversight to the Town's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and its Operations Manager.

The Emergency Management Office acts as the Town's liaison between DOH, RIEMA and FEMA and assists in recovery and grant acquisition. The office maintains the Town's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), Hazardous Materials Plan (HMP), and a Medical Point of Distribution Plan (Med POD). The Town recently adopted an updated Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) in March 2024 and a MedPOD plan in May 2024.

A copy of the EOP is on file in the Town Clerk's vault in Town Hall. Applicable sections of the EOP have been distributed to each of the Town's four fire departments, the Police Department, Public Works, and the Superintendent of Schools. The EOP is consistently updated by the Deputy Director as new equipment is added or removed.

Scituate has an agreement with the Red Cross to provide public shelter at the following locations: Scituate Senior Center and the Scituate High School; both have auxiliary power and kitchen facilities. All auxiliary power generating facilities are tested weekly, including radio and phone systems. See Chapter 14 *Natural Hazards and Climate Change* for more information on Scituate's emergency management capabilities.

10.2 Issues and Opportunities

The public safety component of the Town of Scituate is generally stable and appropriately equipped to do their job. This section outlines the strengths and weaknesses within the public safety framework.

10.2.1 Fire

All four of the fire stations in Town are in need of upgrades or additional space to some degree in order to continue to function at an acceptable level of services. Considerations should be given to how best to economically maintain and upgrade existing facilities. The departments should consider investigating the ability to consolidate districts by way of stations. This could be accomplished by relocating a station to a more centralized location and consolidating two districts to be served by an upgraded and more centralized station. It would be beneficial for the fire districts to consider a consolidation study to determine if the relocation and consolidation of stations would be economically feasible and would improve response times and the overall function of the districts.

10.2.2 Police

The current station is only several years old, and several safety related upgrades have been made recently such as a perimeter fence to secure equipment and vehicles. The department has identified several additional needed upgrades which include changing the interface at the dispatch window from a pass-through design to a more secure drawer option that allows the dispatcher to have a safe separation from items as they are accepted into the dispatch area. The current generator is located alongside the building and is currently unsecured and susceptible to tampering.

The department recently upgrades their weapons, and the Town regularly replaces cruisers on a rotating basis. The dispatch console is nearing the end of its useful life and will need to be replaced, along with new portable radios and new mobile units that are part of the integrated dispatch system. The Town will be updating its record management system to a statewide system in the coming months.

The department recently applied for a U.S. Department of Justice grant to fund the hiring of two new officers. The department is currently operating with 17 sworn officers and has done so for approximately the last 10 years. The Town has grown in population and the current call volume and safety standards warrant the hiring of additional officers. After comparisons with other comparable communities and a review of several FBI standards on police staffing, the department determined that 21 officers are an ideal number to accommodate current and future needs.

10.2.3 Rescue

The current EMS framework is based on a per diem system with two paid rescue units rotating between the Hope Jackson and North Scituate fire stations. The Town is in need of a full time EMS system that operates on a regular schedule with two rescues covering a 24-hour per day, seven day a week rotation.

The Town maintains an up-to-date Hazard Mitigation Plan and will be updated in 2021 to reflect minor changes in structure and equipment. The Town is in need of a formalized Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) which establishes policy and guidance to ensure that all critical functions continue, and that personnel and resources are relocated to an alternate facility in case of an emergency. The Town currently has an informal COOP but is working to draft a formal plan for adoption.

10.3 Other Town Facilities and Services

10.3.1 Town Hall

The Town Hall is a well-maintained structure of colonial design located on Danielson Pike in North Scituate Village. It is a historical house that was retrofitted to accommodate the Town offices. There is a separate building in the rear that houses the Building Official and Planning Department offices. Over the years, there have been several small renovations to accommodate a growing staff. The Town staff has expressed a need for additional office and storage space. The second floor of Town Hall is vacant and unused but would require renovations to address accessibility issues and the addition of a fire protection cistern in order for the space to be viable office space. If such renovations were to be complete, the second floor would provide the Town staff with the space required to meet their current needs.

10.3.2 Libraries

The Town is home to two libraries, the North Scituate Public Library and the Hope Library. The North Scituate Library is located in the heart of North Scituate Village. The North Scituate Public Library Association was established on September 6, 1906, and with popular support the library grew quickly. The land where the library is currently located was donated and the building was dedicated in 1925. The building underwent two expansions, 1984 and 2011, to reflect the building that exists currently.

The total circulation recorded by the library in 2019 was 50,066 items, with 60% of that accounting for print books. The library provides a variety of activities and resources beyond print and media.

They employ a calendar of activities for a variety of ages and interests. The North Scituate Library is governed by an 11-member Board of Trustees.



Figure 10-2. North Scituate Public Library

Hope Library is located in the heart of Hope Village, across from the Hope Elementary School. The library was originally housed in the basement of a local church and was able to move to its current location in 1966 through various donations and wide public support. The building was renovated in 1989 to add on additional space, doubling the size of the library, adding a Children's Room in 2003 which occupies a large area in lower level, complete with a play area, computers, bean bag chairs, DVDs, a coloring and craft corner, and freshwater fish tank. In 2023 the library renovated the north end of the building to add a Teen Center with a tech bar, sensory swing, craft and game corner, 4k projector, and collaboration station. Today, Hope Library measures slightly more than 7,000 square feet.

Hope Library has 1,243 card holders and hosted 708 programs in 2023, which were attended by 5,557 patrons, circulated 27,725 items and were visited 19,200 times by library patrons. The Hope Library is governed by a Board of Trustees.

Hope Library recently completed a replacement of the library's HVAC system in 3034 and is applying for funding to replace their failed septic system, and update the lighting system to more energy efficient fixtures, and replace some rotting siding on the building. The building is structurally sound, and the repairs needed are mostly minor in nature. Hope Library serves as a heating and cooling center and is planning to work with the Town through the Emergency Management Office to fund the purchase and installation of generator.

Library facilities are currently meeting the needs of Scituate residents, although both libraries are in need of grant writing assistance to secure additional funding for the necessary upgrades to the facilities and to continue to fund their programs. The Board of Trustees for each of the libraries regularly monitors the facility and services of the library and works to bring in new programming and authorizes routine maintenance to ensure the facilities are operating efficiently and effectively.

10.3.3 Public Works

The Town's Public Works functions are centralized in the Public Works Complex, located on a five-acre site on Trimtown Road near the geographic center of Town. The facilities include offices, garages, a covered and enclosed salt shed, and the 1829 Town House.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for the daily operations and maintenance of the Town's infrastructure services including storm sewer maintenance and improvements, sanitation/waste removal, emergency response for snow and ice removal, and severe weather mitigation. It is also responsible for maintaining the Town's public right of ways and buildings. This maintenance entails, but is not limited to road reconstruction, resurfacing, crack filling, and potholes; curbs, bridges, and culverts; drainage ditches, sedimentation, detention, and retention basins; roadside mowing, brush, vegetative control, and forestry operations; and street sweeping. During the inclement winter weather, the DPW is responsible for snow and ice removal on public roads and parking lots. The department also supports environmental programs which include operations of an oil igloo (used oil depository container), yard waste depository, mattress and box spring drop-off, and e-waste depot.



Figure 10-3. Public Works Complex (Google Earth)

The current facility is adequate for current needs, although an expansion could be accommodated on the site if needed in the future. Additionally, there is about 16.5 acres of vacant land owned by the Town of Scituate between the Public Works Complex and land owned by the Providence Water Supply Board. This parcel is identified as Tax Assessor's Plat Map (AP) 42, Lot 18. Some of the existing Public Works' storage and stockpiles are located on this parcel.

10.3.4 Stormwater

The Town of Scituate has established regulations related to the responsible management of stormwater. Those ordinances are as follows:

- Erosion and Sediment Control (Chapter 12)
- Subdivision of Land (Chapter 14)
- Zoning Ordinance (Appendix A)

The DPW sweeps the Town's 92 miles of streets and cleans 1,060 catch basins and manholes once a year. Their locations are inventoried and mapped. Knight Hill Estates, which consists of Water Valley Road, White Birch Circle, Deer Run and Stony Brook Lane, has previously been subject to stormwater flooding due to undersized stormwater infrastructure. The DPW has moved forward with a phased approach over the past two years to address these flooding issues by installing new adequately sized infrastructure. They have since completed all four planned phases.

An ongoing project is the stormwater tree filter program in which trees are planted in stormwater drains to filter stormwater runoff as it flows.

In addition, the Town is working towards fulfilling its requirements related to the Rhode Island Pollution Discharge Elimination System (RIPDES) program general permit for Stormwater discharges from a small municipal separate storm sewer system, by filing a Phase II Stormwater Annual Report each year. The Town has been working towards full compliance with the RIPDES Phase II Stormwater requirements, but significant work remains for the DPW.

In August of 2023 the Town Council repealed the existing soil and erosion and sediment control (SESC) ordinance and adopted a modernized new ordinance that would better address stormwater and sediment control issues. The Town is in the process of developing new Ordinances relative to Illicit Discharge Connection and Elimination and Post-Construction Stormwater Management Control. The Town Engineer and the DPW are working towards mapping and inspecting all stormwater outfalls and catch basin structures.

The Town Engineer's Office is also working with the Town to develop a staff training program and MS4 task schedule for ease of implementation and RIDEM compliance in the future. It is anticipated that through these already accomplished and ongoing efforts the management of stormwater on a site by site and townwide basis will improve going forward. The Town plans to purchase a GPS unit to locate all the catch basins in the Town to make tracking and management easier.

The DPW continues to upgrade the stormwater infrastructure throughout the Town by replacing aging pipe, improving the quality of concrete blocks, installing 1,800 feet of new pipe, added 25 new catch basins, and overall improve the quality of the Town's stormwater drainage system. The DPW intends to continue to improve the stormwater system each year, replacing aging infrastructure and working with the Planning Department and Building and Zoning Department to improve the standards stormwater infrastructure for new development.

10.3.5 Solid Waste

The Town contracts with private operators who provide a curb-side trash and recycling pickup service. The private operators collect solid waste and recycling and transport to the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation's landfill in Johnston. The Town does not have a transfer station and due to the sensitive environmental nature of much of the land in Scituate as it relates to the Scituate Reservoir, removal of solid waste to facilities outside of the Town remains the most environmentally sensitive and logical option. Solid waste removal is funded by local taxes and provided as a service by the Town.

The Town accepts mattresses, electronics, waste oil, propane tanks, scrap metal and yard waste at the DPW facility during specified days and times. The DPW also assists in coordinating various recycling events and services, such as electronic waste recycling events. In addition to household trash and recycling, the private hauler contracted by the Town accepts appliances, bulky waste, carpeting and rugs, and furniture during regularly scheduled pick up times. The Town is constantly working towards increasing its recycling and diversion rates. The DPW maintains a section of Town's webpage that provides recycling information to residents. Table 10-2 provides more detailed information regarding solid waste and recycling in Scituate.

Table 10-2. Scituate Solid Waste and Recycling

Number of Households Served	Tons of Trash Landfilled per Household ^a	MRF Recycling Rate ^b	Mandatory Recycling Rate ^c	Overall Diversion Rate ^d	Pounds of Rejected Recycling per Household
3,756	1.04	26.1%	28.7%	29.5%	3

Notes:

- a. Total tons of trash landfilled/reported number of households served
- b. Material Recycling Facility (MRF) Recycling Rate is the total tons of MRF mixed recyclables divided by the trash landfilled per household plus trash tons.
- c. Total tons of mixed recyclables plus composted, clothing, scrap metal divided by the MRF recycling rate plus trash tons
- d. Total tons of all materials kept out of the landfill divided by the mandatory recycling rate plus trash tons.

Source: Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation, <http://www.riirc.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/2020%20How%20Is%20My%20City%20Or%20Town%20Doing%2020210413.pdf>

10.3.6 Senior Services

In addition to the 24 units of elderly housing at Rockland Oaks, which is operated by the Scituate Housing Authority, there are public and semi-public services available to senior residents. The Town purchased the Chopmist Hill Inn in 2002 to house Scituate Senior Services and to serve other municipal needs. The program, known as Scituate Senior Center at Chopmist Hill is popular among senior residents and offers a variety of services.

The Town owns and operates a van that provides senior citizen transportation services five days a week. They provide doctor appointments, health & wellness classes, wellness checkups, blood pressure every Wednesday, trips, music & entertainment events and much more. The center also provides a program where you can order a free lunch Monday through Friday. They also act as a liaison to outside agencies to help access food, heating, electricity, and other resources that they might need.

The Senior Center at Chopmist Hill is meeting the current needs of the community and has adequate capacity to meet the future projected demand. The facility is in good condition and contains a kitchen facility and other necessary equipment to adequately serve the needs of the senior population of the Town. The Department of Public Works maintains the building and grounds at the Senior Center.

Water Supply

The only public water services in Scituate are provided to a portion of Hope Village by the Kent County Water Authority (KCWA). Present consumption is in the range of 120,000 gallons per day (gpd). It is important to note that the potential new high service water main extension on North Road as well as current projects in place to re-service the Eagle Glen development and Hope Furnace Road area with the high service pressure gradient will have a positive impact on future growth in the area through an increase in serviceability. These areas are currently served by a low-pressure 334-foot pressure gradient and will be served with the high service 500-foot pressure gradient, which would allow the KCWA system to serve locations at higher elevations in the area. Technically, the KCWA provides service to Hope outside of its jurisdiction, which is Kent County. Scituate, located in Providence County, is within the service boundaries of the Providence Water. Any expansion of the KCWA supply within Scituate would require concurrence of the Providence Water Supply Board.

In addition to Hope, six homes in the Peck Hill area are serviced through the Town of Johnston Water Department, which buys their water from Providence Water. These water lines were installed with EPA funding, which was granted in response to well contamination.

The remainder of town is served by private wells, where lot sizes are generally large and water quality is typically good. The more concentrated areas of North Scituate and Hope Village have experienced well-contamination problems due to poorly functioning onsite wastewater treatment systems. Bottled water is used for drinking water in Town Hall due to these issues. Additionally, there are two groundwater-dependent community public water systems in Town: Oak Crest Manor and the Scituate Housing for the Elderly.

10.3.7 Wastewater Disposal

The only sewer system in Scituate is in Hope and is operated by the Hope Sanitary District (see Map SF-1). This system is a large, community, onsite wastewater treatment system (OWTS). The system serves homes on Mill Street and has a random collection beyond Mill Street with a total of 35 homes in the district. The system was reconstructed in 1992.

As noted above under the discussion of water supply, the major problem areas related to wastewater disposal are in North Scituate Village and Hope Village. The issue in Hope would be more severe if not for the availability of public water supply on many relatively small lots.

The major concern with respect to both the installation and operation of OWTS in Scituate are the generally high-water tables. Due to the sensitive nature of the Scituate Reservoir watershed, RIDEM's *Rules Establishing Minimum Standards Relating to Location, Design, Construction and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS) 250-RICR-150-10-6* classifies the watershed as a critical resource area. This designation triggers additional siting and design standards for OWTS, some of which relate to proximity to groundwater. With generally high-water tables in many areas, this makes the siting of OWTS in some areas problematic.

West Warwick Wastewater Treatment Plant provides treatment for flows from a small area of the Village of Hope. Scituate is one of several communities that participates in an agreement with West Warwick to provide this service. Scituate has reserved capacity for added future flows of 78,000 gpd.

The Town could consider implementing a wastewater management district that would encompass these problematic areas of Town. The initial first step would be to conduct an analysis of the extent of the contamination issues, as well as a determination of the contributing factors. A wastewater management district could assist in remedying failing OWTS systems that may be one of the factors contributing to drinking water quality issues.

10.3.8 Energy

The Town works to be energy conscious in its consumption of electricity, use of heating and cooling equipment, fuel, and transportation choices. The Town is currently in the process of updating its lighting fixtures to LED efficient bulbs with the assistance of the Scituate School Department's guidance, as they completed the same in all the school facilities recently. Please see Chapter 15 *Energy* for more information on the Town's energy usage and practices.

In addition to the energy efficient policies employed by the Town for their own energy consumption, the Town is in the process of adopting regulations that govern and allow for the installation of alternative

energy, such as solar. The Town is considering allowing residential solar facilities by right and commercial solar facilities under certain parameters.

10.4 School Facilities

The Town, along with the Scituate School Department, is committed to providing and maintaining a high-quality education to the children and families of Scituate. The Town allocated approximately 64% of the total operating budget to education for FY19-20. The general administration of the Scituate School Department is directed by a five-member committee who are elected for a four-year term.

The school facilities operated by the Scituate School Department include one Pre-K through grade 5 Elementary school, two kindergarten through grade 5 Elementary schools, and one school that houses grades 6 through 8 at the middle school level, and grades 9 through 12 at the high school level. Table 10-3 provides more information related to these facilities.

Table 10-3. Scituate School Facilities

School	Year Built	Location	Grades	Enrollment (2019-20)	Current Operating Capacity	Site
Clayville Elementary School	1932 Additions: 1972, 2000	Field Hill Road	Pre-K - 5	145	158	15.2 acres
Hope Elementary School	1929 Additions: 1972, 1990	Route 116	K – 5	171	238	4.3 acres
North Scituate Elementary School	1965 Additions: 1990	Institute Lane	K – 5	216	261	3.4 acres
Scituate High School & Middle School ^a	1956 Additions: 1962, 1984, 1995, 2010	Trimtown Road	6-8 and 9-12	694	460 (Middle School) 606 (High School)	30 acres
Administrative Offices	1932 Additions: 1972, 2000	Clayville Elementary School	All	5 Members	-	15.2 acres

Notes:

a. The High School and Middle School share a building but are operationally independent.

Source: Adapted from New England School Development Council, Scituate, RI School District PK-12 School Facilities Study, May 2018

Over an eight-year period (2013-2021) school enrollment in Scituate was on an overall decline of approximately 22%. Table 10-4 provides enrollment counts for 2013 - 2021 on a grade-by-grade basis.

Table 10-4. Scituate School Enrollment by Grade 2013 - 2021

School Year	Grades													
	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
2013-14	14	65	103	83	109	114	110	122	126	133	112	121	117	119
2014-15	10	68	76	106	89	122	116	113	117	138	128	101	122	116
2015-16	11	73	78	78	112	89	122	119	109	113	117	114	99	133
2016-17	11	84	75	83	73	111	90	121	124	108	102	105	112	109

Table 10-4. Scituate School Enrollment by Grade 2013 - 2021

School Year	Grades													
	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
2017-18	9	78	89	83	83	79	109	90	119	117	102	95	103	113
2018-19	15	73	84	97	86	86	84	109	96	119	86	108	94	100
2019-20	16	90	79	85	93	82	84	89	106	98	107	93	103	98
2020-21	7	85	88	73	85	88	84	93	92	111	100	100	93	103

Source: Adapted from New England School Development Council, Scituate, RI School District PK-12 2020-2021 Enrollment Projection Report, December 2020

Table 10-5 provides a historical look at school enrollment during 2013 - 2018, showing a relatively steady decrease in enrolment numbers.

Table 10-5. Historical School Enrollment Percent Change 2013-2018

School Year	K-12 Total Enrollment	Difference	% Change
2013-14	1434	-62	-4.1%
2014-15	1412	-22	-1.5%
2015-16	1356	-56	-4.0%
2016-17	1297	-59	-4.4%
2017-18	1264	-33	-2.5%
2018-2019	1222	-42	-3.3%
2019-2020	1207	-15	-1.2%
2020-2021	1195	-12	-1.0%
Change		-301	--22%

Source: Adapted from New England School Development Council, Scituate, RI School District PK-12 2020-2021 Enrollment Projection Report, December 2020

The Scituate School District procured a Pre-kindergarten-12 *School Enrollment Projection Report*, which was completed in 2020 by the New England School Development Council (NESDC). This report closely examines each school facility, their capacity, their enrollment trends, and provides a projected school enrollment through 2031. Figure 10-4 provides an overview of the results of that projected enrollment report.

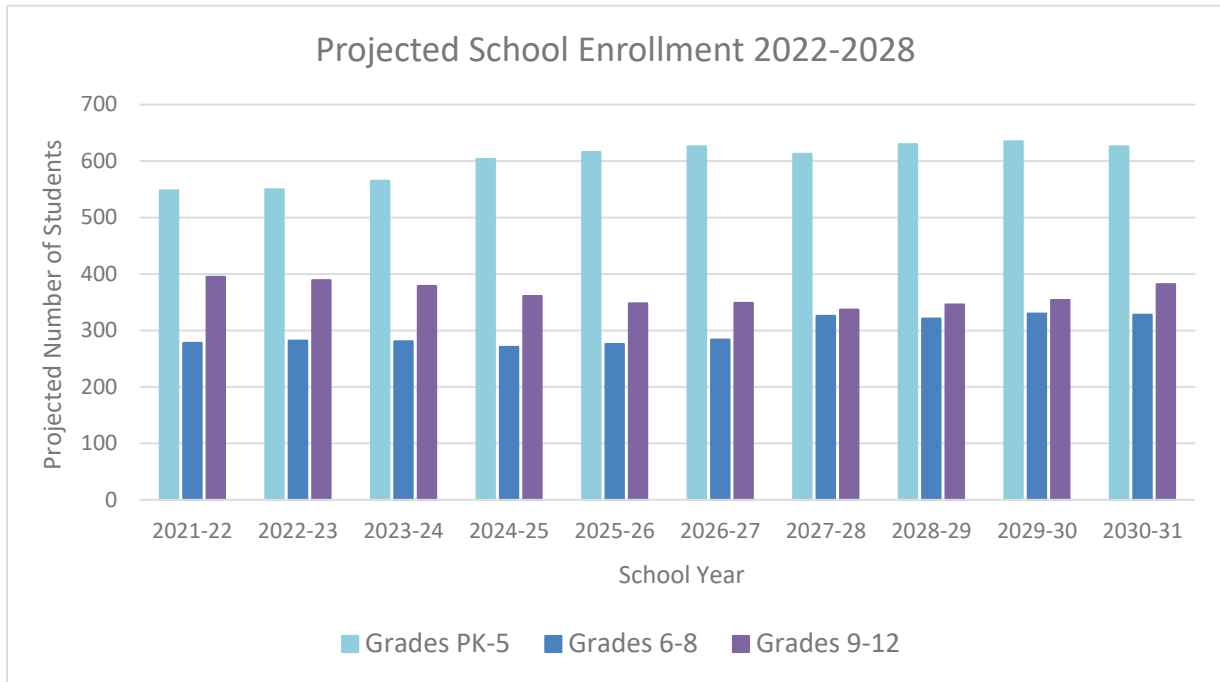


Figure 10-4. Projected School Enrollment

Source: Adapted from New England School Development Council, Scituate, RI School District PK-12 2020-2021 Enrollment Projection Report, December 2020

As can be seen in Figure 10-5, both middle school and high school enrollment is projected to rise slightly while enrollment in PK through grade 5 dips slightly and then begins to slowly rise approaching 2031. Table 10-6 provides more detailed statistics related to the projected future enrollment through 2031.

School Year	K-12 Total Projected Enrollment	Difference	% Change
2021-22	1205	10	0.8%
2022-23	1204	-1	-0.1%
2023-24	1207	3	0.2%
2024-25	1217	10	0.8%
2025-26	1220	3	0.2%
2026-27	1238	18	1.5%
2027-28	1254	16	1.3%
2028-29	1274	20	1.6%
2029-30	1295	21	1.6%
2030-31	1311	16	1.2%
Change		116	9.1%

Table 10-6. Projected School Enrollment Percent Change 2021-2031

School Year	K-12 Total Projected Enrollment	Difference	% Change
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Source: Adapted from New England School Development Council, Scituate, RI School District PK-12 2020-2021 Enrollment Projection Report, December 2020

According to the NESDC enrollment projections, total enrollment in the district is projected to rise 9.1% by the end of the 2031 school year. Although enrollment numbers are projected to rise, the projected numbers are within the capacity of the existing school facilities. The challenge for the school district moving forward will be to continue to maintain ageing facilities and infrastructure. This is a challenge that is also shared by the Town for their facilities and services. Recently, the School Department worked closely with the Town to assist them in upgrading their light fixtures to more energy efficient LED fixtures. The Town and School Department should continue to discuss and investigate ways in which they can combine efforts or services to reduce overall costs and levels of effort.

10.5 Issues and Opportunities

The services provided by the Town are generally well equipped to provide an adequate level of services to the community. This section outlines the strengths and weaknesses within the Town services framework.

10.5.1 Town Services

This category includes Town Hall, library, DPW, and senior services. In general, the services provided by the Town meet the needs of the community and are adequately staffed and have the resources necessary to do so. As identified, the Town Hall is in need of additional office and storage space, which could be accommodated through upgrades and renovations to the existing building. Both libraries in Town provide a variety of services for the community by way of their media collections and programs. Senior services are actively utilized by elderly residents and attendance for programs and events continues to remain consistent. DPW is currently able to adequately maintain Town roads and infrastructure but will continuously be in need of equipment upgrades as wear and tear on existing machinery requires that they be replaced. As the Town grows in population, they will need to continually assess their ability to maintain and improve their level of service to the community, making the necessary adjustments to equipment, office spaces, and staffing levels.

10.5.2 Infrastructure Services

This category includes water supply, wastewater, stormwater, energy, and solid waste. Town residents almost exclusively rely on private systems (wells and OWTS) for their water and wastewater service. This mostly privatized structure relieves the Town of maintenance and repair responsibility but also limits development potential in some ways.

The Town maintains stormwater infrastructure which includes road sweeping and catch basin cleaning. They are also responsible for meeting state and federal standards with regards to stormwater management. The Town employs a part time consulting town engineer which assist the DPW with these requirements.

Solid waste is contracted through the Town as a provided service to all residential properties. Because of the sensitive nature of the Scituate Reservoir watershed, the Town is not inclined to change their

current method of disposal, as private haulers removing the waste to out-of-Town facilities is the most environmentally appropriate method.

The Town has made efforts to upgrade energy efficiency at several facilities, most recently school buildings. The Town is in the process of looking at upgrading Town facilities as well. There are ample opportunities for the Town to improve its current energy efficiency by way of vehicles, equipment, lighting, and heating and cooling. The Town should consider pursuing grant and low interest funding sources to continue to implement energy efficiency practices.

10.5.3 School Department

The School Department constitutes approximately 64% of the Town's annual budget (FY 19-20). The Scituate School District was ranked number 18 in the state by Niche in 2020.¹ Current enrollment projections suggest that school attendance levels will vary little in the coming years. This provides an opportunity for the school department to focus on upgrading and improving upon current facilities and programs, as they will likely not need to accommodate much in the way of additional attendance growth.

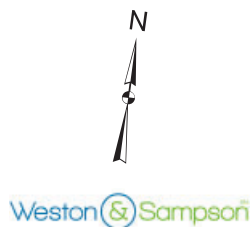
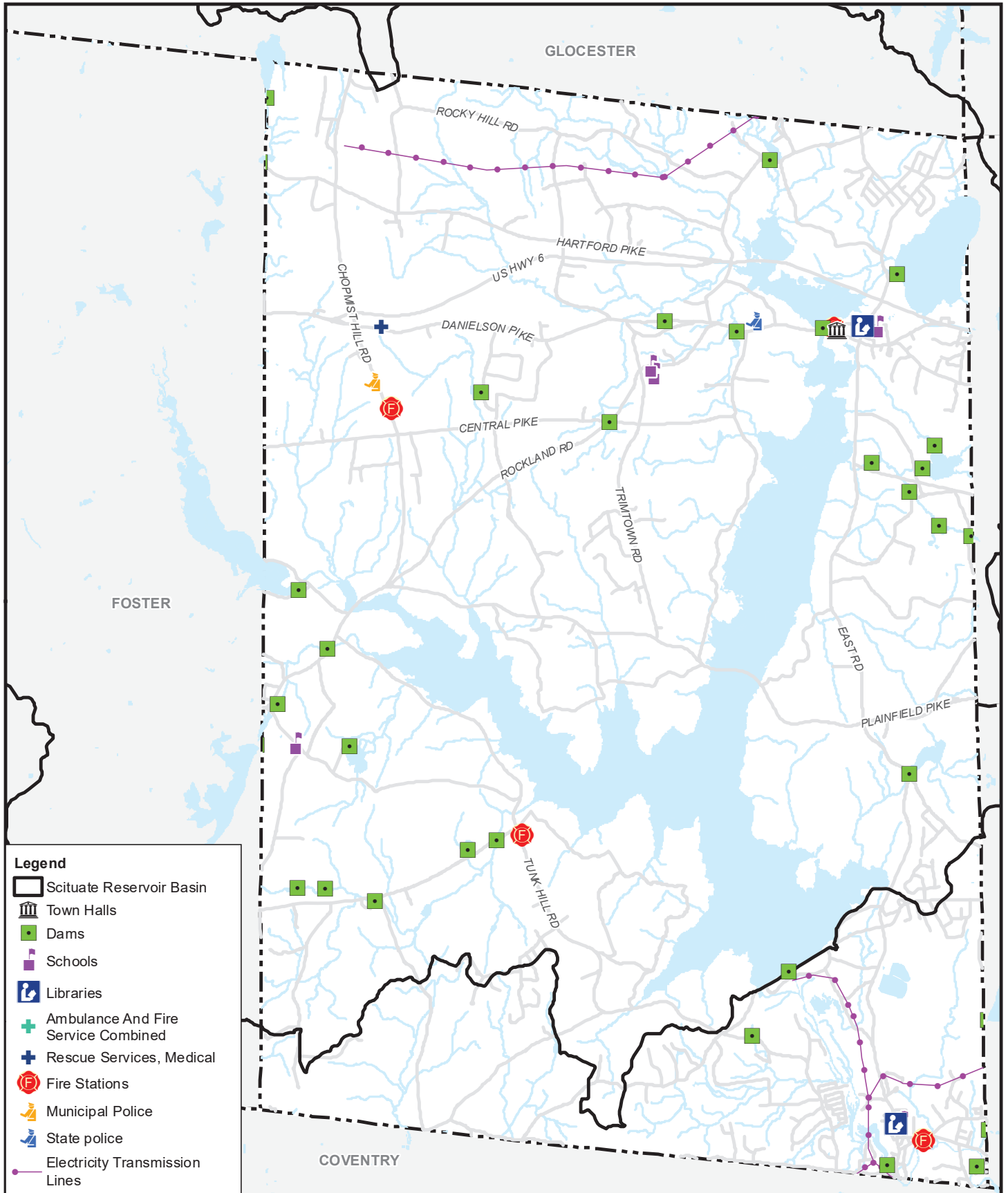
10.6 Opinion Survey: Services and Facilities

In May of 2021, the Town posted an online survey for residents as part of the comprehensive planning process. The survey asked several questions related to the services and facilities provided by the Town and school district. A full summary of the survey results can be found in Appendix A. In summary, the survey reported the following principal findings related to public services and facilities:

- Survey respondents overwhelmingly ranked fire, police, and DPW services as either very important or important to their quality of life in Scituate.
- Approximately 79% of survey respondents ranked the Scituate school systems as either very important or important to their quality of life in Scituate.
- Over 65% of survey respondents reported that they felt the Town had the accurate amount of police, fire, and DPW services provided to residents.
- Almost 63% of respondents reported that the overall services (police, fire, DPW, library, school) were provided at an adequate level.

These survey results indicate that overall, residents are satisfied with the level of services provided by the Town and the school district. Although there is always room for improvement, these results indicate that the Town is keeping its level of service to the community in line with the growth that is occurring. The Town will continue to face challenges related to funding services and upgrading and maintaining facilities as the community continues to grow and infrastructure continues to age.

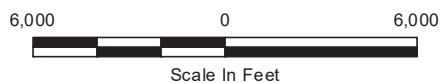
¹ <https://www.niche.com/k12/search/best-school-districts/s/rhode-island/>



**MAP SF-1: PUBLIC FACILITIES
AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI

2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



Flood Hazard, waterbodies, landuse, conservation, and municipal boundaries were obtained from RIGIS. Town base mapping data provided by Town of Scituate. Other derived data products made by Weston & Sampson from these sources.

This graphic is intended for general reference and is not a legally authoritative source as to the location of natural or manmade features or areas.

Public infrastructure data from RIGIS.

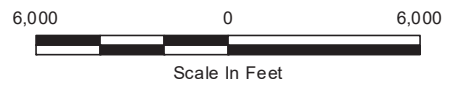
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**MAP SF-2: SEWER AND WATER
SERVICE AREAS**

TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI

2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



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Sewer and urban services data from RIGIS.

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CHAPTER 11

Transportation



Town of Scituate, Rhode Island

Community Comprehensive Plan Update

Transportation

Background

Scituate's future transportation needs are not expected to increase or change dramatically from where they currently stand. Due to Scituate's rural nature and limited ability to develop because of environmental constraints, significant changes to the existing transportation network are not anticipated. Scituate has experienced a relatively flat growth rate for approximately the last two decades. Under these circumstances, the Town's biggest challenge for its transportation network will be keeping up with aging infrastructure. As roadways and drainage systems age, they will require more frequent and more costly repairs, and eventual replacement in some instances.

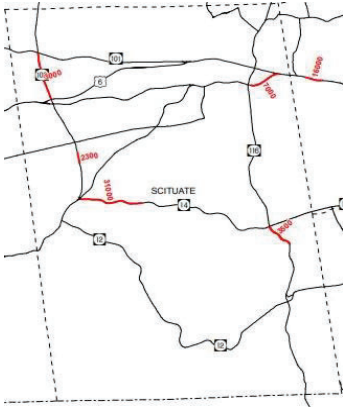


Figure 1. RIDOT Permanent
Statewide Highway Systems
Traffic Flow Map for Scituate

Policies

1. Implement road design and maintenance standards and procedures that protect, promote, and encourage existing development patterns and neighborhood character.
2. Maintain a formal program for road maintenance, new road construction, and accompanying drainage infrastructure that is economically responsible and implementable.
3. Promote cooperative state/local efforts in transportation planning, ensuring that the Town's rural qualities are maintained throughout any transportation planning and construction projects.
4. Encourage alternative modes of transportation and increase opportunities in Town for access to biking, walking, and carpooling.

Goals



Maintain and enhance a cost-effective, efficient, safe, and accessible multi-modal transportation system that is sensitive to and respectful of the Town's small-town rural character.



Support efforts to enhance and increase alternative modes of transportation such as ride shares, bicycling, and public transportation with an eye towards reductions in greenhouse gases and air pollution.

Actions



Review and update the Town's road design and parking standards to ensure aesthetics and environmental quality are appropriately and adequately addressed, while allowing flexibility in the application of the standards depending upon the location and use proposed.



Participate in the State's Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to ensure that state roads in Town are adequately maintained and improved, including maintaining a local priority list for inclusion on the TIP.



Maintain and strengthen the relationship with the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority to continually assess and update the level of bus service in Town.



Work with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation to implement upgrades to major thoroughfares in Town.



Work to improve access to safe and convenient alternative modes of transportation such as biking, walking, and carpooling.



Continue to provide and increase funding for locally maintained transportation infrastructure (roadways and drainage) to ensure a high level of services to the community.



Continue to support the Department of Public Works by providing and maintaining the necessary equipment and personnel to maintain roadways, sweep streets, remove snow, and maintain drainage infrastructure.



Consider establishing a scenic roadway inventory and ordinance to protect the visual quality of scenic roadways throughout Town.

11.0 TRANSPORTATION

Scituate will provide a safe, efficient, and well-maintained multi-modal transportation network that enhances mobility for all residents, minimizes impacts on the environment and rural character of the community, and supports appropriate growth and development.

The term transportation refers to the movement of people and goods from place to place. To accomplish this movement, the State, its municipalities, and private enterprise have developed and maintained a network of facilities and infrastructure that accommodates multiple modes of travel, including streets and roadways, sidewalks, bike paths and travel lanes, bus stops and routes, ferry lines and rail service, all at a scale appropriate to each community. Maintaining safe and efficient access to this transportation network is essential to the economic vitality and quality of life in Scituate.

Scituate's circulation system has evolved over many years to serve a rural community along with several nodes of industry. Most of the industry has gone and the rural and agricultural community has gradually given way to a more suburbanized environment. The construction of the Scituate Reservoir has limited roadway connections through the center of the community, with Route 14 being the only road crossing the reservoir, although Route 6 crosses Regulating Reservoir, which is just to the north of the Scituate Reservoir and is connected to it by culvert.

The Transportation Element, along with the associated goals, policies, and actions in the Implementation Element, addresses the existing transportation system and attempts to identify how to improve and add to the present transportation system and to serve the needs of local residents and businesses and the overall circulation system of Rhode Island. Land development ordinances and regulations can be used to manage and establish standards for roads, sidewalks, and transit facilities in a manner that will preserve the rural character and sense of place in Scituate.

This element focuses on providing an inventory of existing transportation services and infrastructure provided and accomplishes this by way of the following topics:

- A review of the existing transportation network within the Town ([Section 12.1](#)).
- An overview of public transportation services available to residents ([Section 12.2](#)).
- A discussion of the State's Transportation Improvement Program ([Section 12.3](#)).
- A summary of expected future transportation needs ([Section 12.4](#)).

Within each of these sections, where deficiencies exist, they have been identified and possible solutions have been provided both in this element and within the related action items, which can be found within the Implementation Element of this plan.

The following considerations are of high priority to the Town in providing a comprehensive and user-friendly transportation network throughout the community:

- Maintain a cost-effective, efficient, safe, and accessible multi-modal transportation system ([Policy #1, #2, Action #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7](#)).
- Continue to enhance the existing transportation network by responding to shifts in demand and updating technology when possible ([Policy #1, #2, Action #1, #2, #4, #5, #6, #7](#)).

- Support efforts to increase and incentivize alternative modes of transportation ([Policy #1, #4, Action #3, #5, #7](#)).
- Ensure that new roadways and roadway upgrades are context sensitive and promote and preserve the rural quality of Scituate roadways ([Policy #1, #3, Action #1, #8](#)).

11.1 Existing Transportation Network

Scituate's proximity to the Providence Metropolitan Area dictates that major traffic flows will be in an east-west direction. U.S. Route 6, Hartford Pike (Route 101), Danielson Pike (Route 6), and Plainfield Pike (Route 14) are the major east-west connectors through Town. Chopmist Hill Road (Route 102) and East Road (Route 116) are the major north-south routes through Town. Of the two, East Road is more heavily traveled.

Transportation Users

An important component of understanding and planning for a community's transportation network is having a baseline of information on the network's users. Those that use the network are going to drive the demand for certain types of transportation in certain areas. Table 12-1 provides information related to how Scituate residents get to work

Table 11-1. Means of Transportation to Work, Scituate	
	Total Number of Commuters
Car, truck, or van (drove alone)	5,531
Car, truck, or van (carpooled)	285
Public transportation	35
Walked	156
Other means	51
Worked at home	181
Total commuters	5,854

Source: American Community Survey, 2015 B08301

The commuting population of Scituate overwhelmingly travels alone by car, truck, or van (94%). Only about 5% of the commuting population carpools. Interestingly, because of the lack of accessible public transportation more commuters (3%) walked to work than those who reported using public transportation (0.6%). These statistics show that Scituate is dominated by single occupancy vehicles when commuters are traveling to and from work. Another factor to consider is commute time. Scituate is well placed between Providence and Boston and relatively close to highway access on I-295 on the eastern side of Town. Table 12-2 provides detailed information related to commute times for Scituate residents.

Table 11-2. Travel Time to Work, Scituate	
	Total Number of Commuters
Less than 5 minutes	28
5 to 9 minutes	320
10 to 14 minutes	402
15 to 19 minutes	438
20 to 24 minutes	1,408

Table 11-2. Travel Time to Work, Scituate

	Total Number of Commuters
25 to 29 minutes	643
30 to 34 minutes	928
35 to 39 minutes	258
40 to 44 minutes	388
45 to 59 minutes	342
60 to 89 minutes	295
90 minutes or more	223
Total	5,673

Source: American Community Survey, 2015 B08303

According to the commuting data in Table 12-2, the most frequently reported travel time to work by Scituate residents was 20 to 24 minutes (24%). A majority of commuters report a travel time anywhere between 20 minutes to 35 minutes (53%). When we understand that more than half of commuter travel between 20 to 35 minutes to get to work, and 94% of commuters are traveling by single occupancy vehicles, the Town can begin to plan for future transportation demands based on these assessments. Scituate will likely continue to be dominated by single occupancy vehicles traveling to and from work within a manageable commuting distance. This data indicates, when combined with information on growth rates, that it is unlikely that the transportation demands and needs of the community will shift significantly in any direction away from the present circumstances.

Roadway Network Characteristics

Many roadways in Scituate are rural, narrow, and winding roads that are not heavily traveled. With the exception of those listed above as the major thoroughfares throughout the Town, many roads in Scituate are considered country roads. Of the major thoroughfares through Town, only two portions of Route 6, one at each end of Town, are a four-lane roadway. The eastern section extends from the Johnston town line to the Danielson Pike merge, with the western section running from the point where Danielson Pike rejoins Route 6 to the Foster town line.

Several roadways have very wide shoulders. They include Scituate Road (Route 12) from Route 116 to the Cranston town line, Plainfield Pike (Route 14) from Route 116 to the Johnston town line, Danielson Pike in sections between Route 116 and Route 6, Danielson Pike in sections west of the Reservoir to Route 6, and Hartford Pike.

The Town has a total of nine traffic lights throughout Town. These lights are generally located at the intersection of major roadways along Route 6, Route 112, and Route 116.

Highway Functional Classification System

The Highway Functional Classification System defines the role a roadway plays in the overall road network. Each roadway is classified in two ways. First by whether it is 'urban' or 'rural' as defined in Rhode Island's Transportation Urban Rural Boundary area, and second by its function within the network. There are two basic functions of a roadway – access to property and travel mobility. Mobility refers to the ability of the road to move vehicles while accessibility refers to the ease of entering or exiting a roadway to or from adjacent properties. Figure 12-1 represents the level of access and mobility for each type of roadway under the Highway Functional Classification System. Arterial roadways are generally considered to be roadways with higher mobility and a lower degree of access. Local roadways have lower mobility with a higher degree of access and collectors are in the middle with somewhat balanced amount of access and mobility.

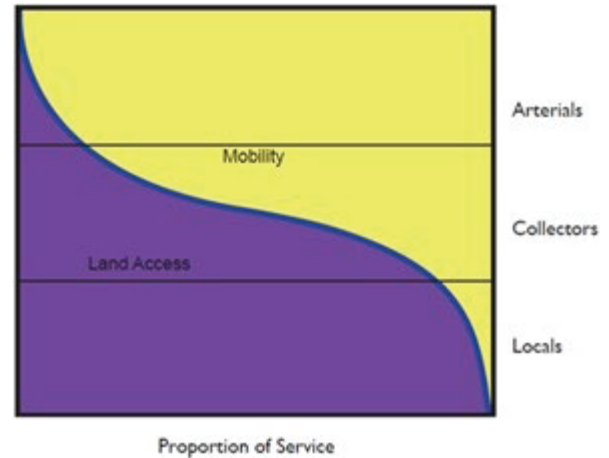


Figure 11-1. Accessibility and Mobility by Highway Functional Classification. From "Our Nation's Highways:2010" by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Table 12-3 provides a summary of the classification of roadways in Scituate along with additional information about each roadway. Roadways not listed in Table 12-3 are considered local roadways that are maintained by the Town. Map TR-1 at the end of this chapter shows the classification of each roadway by color.

Road Name	Functional Classification	Federal Aid	Miles
Chopmist Hill Road	Principle Arterial – Other	Yes	4.57
Danielson Pike	Principle Arterial – Other	Yes	0.60
East Road	Principle Arterial – Other	Yes	4.74
Hartford Pike	Principle Arterial – Other	Yes	2.23
Knotty Oak Road	Principle Arterial – Other	Yes	0.00
North Road	Principle Arterial – Other	Yes	2.23
Plainfield Pike	Principle Arterial – Other	Yes	2.52
US HWY 6	Principle Arterial – Other	Yes	3.43
West Greenville Road	Principle Arterial – Other	Yes	2.60
Danielson Pike	Minor Arterial	Yes	0.88
Hartford Pike	Minor Arterial	Yes	4.10
Jackson Flat Road	Minor Arterial	Yes	0.52
Main Street	Minor Arterial	Yes	0.28
Plainfield Pike	Minor Arterial	Yes	4.52
Rockland Road	Minor Arterial	Yes	0.06
Scituate Avenue	Minor Arterial	Yes	2.66
Central Avenue	Major Collector	Yes	1.04

Table 11-3. Highway Functional Classification System, Scituate Roadways 2019			
Road Name	Functional Classification	Federal Aid	Miles
Colvin Street	Major Collector	Yes	0.38
Danielson Pike	Major Collector	Yes	4.60
Elmdale Road	Major Collector	Yes	1.92
Harmony Road	Major Collector	Yes	0.02
Hope Avenue	Major Collector	Yes	0.53
Hope Furnace Road	Major Collector	Yes	0.71
Howard Avenue	Major Collector	Yes	1.79
Main Street	Major Collector	Yes	0.01
Pole Bridge Road	Major Collector	Yes	0.73
Rockland Road	Major Collector	Yes	3.85
Saw Mill Road	Major Collector	Yes	0.32
Seven Mile Road	Major Collector	Yes	0.31
Tunk Hill Road	Major Collector	Yes	5.49
Winsor Avenue	Major Collector	Yes	0.04
Winsor Avenue	Major Collector	Yes	0.34
Batley Meeting House Road	Minor Collector	No	0.75
Bungy Road	Minor Collector	No	0.96
Central Pike	Minor Collector	No	4.04
Dexter Road	Minor Collector	No	0.12
Gleaner Chapel Road	Minor Collector	No	1.93
Old Plainfield Pike	Minor Collector	No	2.36
Rocky Hill Road	Minor Collector	No	3.14
Trimtown Road	Minor Collector	No	2.73
Wescott Road	Minor Collector	No	1.79

Source: Statewide Planning, Retrieved May 2024

Traffic Volumes

Traffic volume data was collected from the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) and is represented in Figure 12-1. This data is collected by RIDOT through permanent counting stations and represents the 2015 annual 24-hour average daily traffic flows. Figure 12-2 shows that of the areas monitored Plainfield Pike (Route 14) has the highest volume of traffic (31,000), with Danielson Pike from

the Johnston town line to the intersection with Hartford Pike (7,000) having the second highest volume count.

RIDOT also uses temporary traffic volume counting devices that are moved from location to location. According to the information collected by these devices for an annual 48-hour average daily traffic volume in 2015, Hartford Pike from Greenville Road to Elmdale Road experiences the highest count of those surveyed with a count of 12,200 vehicle

Traffic Generators

There are no significant traffic generators located in Scituate other than the Scituate Village Shopping Center on Route 6 near the Johnston town line. Route 6 is a major regional link between Rhode Island and Connecticut. It serves as a major connection for those in Scituate, Foster, and adjoining towns who commute to jobs into Providence and other areas accessible from I-295. Routes 12 and 14 also serve this function to a lesser extent.

Problem Areas

According to the Chief of Police and the Public Works Director, the following areas of Town are problematic:

- Route 6 at the light to the Scituate Village Shopping Center, resulting in two to three accidents per week.
- Route 6 at Route 116 has a dip in the road to the west of Route 116 which limits vertical sight distance for east-bound traffic.
- Route 6 intersection with Elmdale Road.
- Route 6 at Hartford Pike where a signal controls a “V” merge of high-speed traffic coming down a long hill.
- Route 6 at Chopmist Hill (Route 102).
- Hartford Pike at Chopmist Hill Road.
- Intersection of Plainfield Pike, Chopmist Hill Road, and Rockland Road has a poorly defined intersection of several major roadways.
- Route 116 and Route 14 intersection which is controlled by a flashing red signal, where topography limits sight distance at the northeast corner.
- Route 12- and Seven-Mile Road intersection which is controlled by a flashing yellow signal.
- Intersection of Tunk Hill Road (Route 12) with Burnt Hill Road and Howard Avenue.
- Right angle turn where Central Pike meets Battey Meeting House Road.

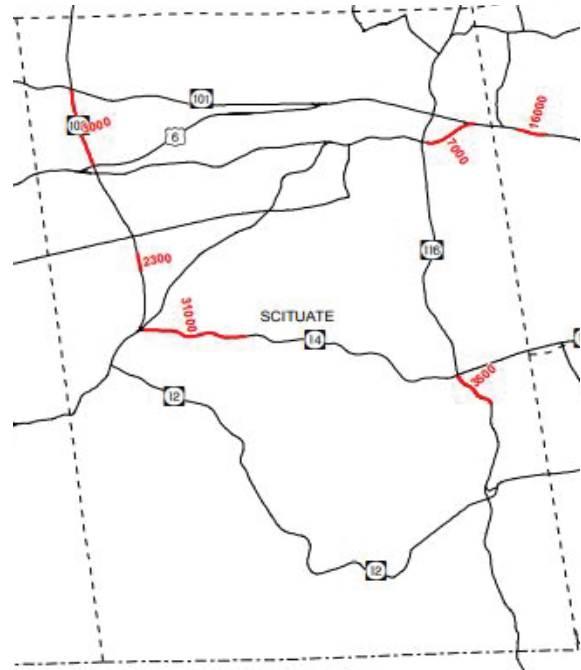


Figure 11-2. RIDOT Permanent Statewide Highway Systems Traffic Flow Map for Scituate

- Village Gas at the intersection of Danielson Pike and Route 116. Access to the site causes backups onto the roadway.
- Intersection of Hartford Pike and the approach to Elmdale Avenue.
- Triangular intersection of Carpenter Road and Matteson Road (partially in Coventry).
- Hartford Avenue between Danielson Pike to Route 116 during heavy traffic volume.

11.2 Public Transportation

According to the 2019 American Community Survey, about 0.6% of the Town's residents live in a household without a private vehicle. Approximately 1.2% of the work force in Scituate use public transit for commuting and 0.4% bike or walk for commuting purposes. Public transportation in Scituate is provided by the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA). RIPTA's only bus route in Town is the 10X

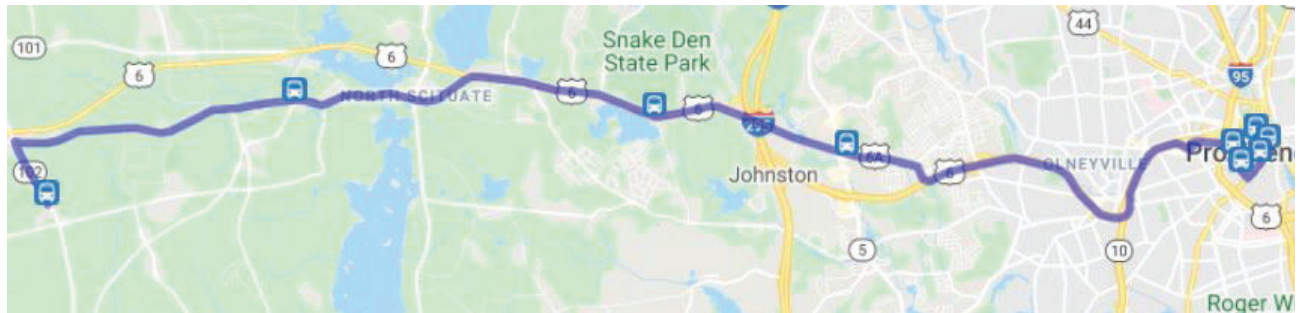


Figure 11-3. RIPTA Route 10X (<https://www.ripta.com/routes/10/>)

route, which is considered an Express route with long distance service, limited hours, and limited stops. The Route 10X originates at the Chopmist Hill Park-n-Ride in North Scituate and travels east onto Route 6, eventually terminating at Exchange Terrace in Providence. Route 10X provides one inbound (to Providence) run per day and one outbound (leaving from The Rhode Island Convention Center) run per day. Figure 12-2 shows RIPTA's Route 10X that extends from Scituate into Providence.

There are no pedestrian or bicycle trails available for uses other than recreation. The Town has approximately seven miles of sidewalk, all of which is within the villages of North Scituate and Hope. The sidewalks are along state roads but the Town is responsible for maintaining them.

Transportation is available to elderly and disabled residents through the Statewide RIde Program. This program offers door to door service for qualified individuals within a $\frac{3}{4}$ miles corridor on either side of a fixed route and operates during the same hours that the fixed route bus runs. This shared paratransit service consists primarily of van service but may be fulfilled by taxis under certain circumstances.

11.3 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) FY 2018-2027

The STIP is a list of transportation projects that the State of Rhode Island intends to implement using United States Department of Transportation funds. Federal regulations require inclusion on the STIP in order to utilize federal funds. Additionally, the State Planning Council must act as the single statewide Metropolitan Planning Organization in adopting a new STIP every four years.

A project's inclusion in the STIP is a critical step, but it does not represent an allocation of funds, obligation to fund, or grant of funds. The following is a list of bridges that are slated for preservation work, intended to extend the useful service life of the structure.

- Ashland Bridge, RI 14 Plainfield Pike at Scituate Reservoir
- Clayville Arch, RI 14 Plainfield Pike at Clayville Brook
- Gleaner Chapel Road Bridge at Rush Brook
- Harrisdale Pond Bridge, Elmdale Road at Peeptoad Brook
- Jackson Flat Road Bridge at Clark Brook
- Peeptoad Brook Bridge at RI 101 Hartford Pike
- Saundersville Culvert, RI 116 East Road at Saudersville Brook
- Colvin Street Bridge at Pawtuxet River North Branch
- Hope Hill Trench Bridge, RI 116 North Road at Kent Brook
- Hope Bridge, RI 116 Main Street at Pawtuxet River

The following is a list of bridges that are slated for major rehabilitation work and/or total bridge replacement.

- Cork Brook Bridge at Rockland Road
- Elmdale Road Bridge at Rush Brook
- Hartford Pike Bridge, RI 101 Hartford Pike at Rush Brook
- Knights Brook Bridge at RI 12 Tunk Hill Road
- Ponagansett Road Bridge at Ponagansett River
- Rockland Bridge, RI 102 Victory Highway at Clayville Brook
- Ruch Brook Bridge at Danielson Pike
- Wilbur Brook Bridge at Old Plainfield Pike

Other projects listed on the 2018-2027 STIP for Scituate include:

- Drainage improvements to Flat River Reservoir to improve water quality
- Roadway reclamation from Central Pike to Danielson Pike, Trimtown Road to Battery Meetinghouse Road, and Battery Meetinghouse Road from Central Pike to Danielson Pike
- Roadway resurfacing from Route 102 to Danielson Pike, Route 102 to West Greenville Road, Danielson Pike to I-295, Connecticut state line to Route 102
- Roadway reconstruction, new sidewalks, and handicap ramp installation Route 116 to Jackson Flat Road
- Roadway mill and overlay with limited wheelchair ramp improvements Route 116 and North Road (Scituate Avenue to Clarke Road)

- Intersection safety improvements along the Route 6 corridor in Scituate and Johnston

11.4 Future Transportation Needs

Scituate's future transportation needs are not expected to increase or change dramatically. Due to Scituate's rural nature and limited ability to develop because of environmental constraints, significant changes to the existing transportation network are not anticipated.

As discussed in Chapter 3.0 *Demographic Profile* Scituate has experienced a relatively little growth for approximately the last two decades, only experiencing 3% increase since 2000. With population projections indicating a population increase of 3% by 2035, when the population is then anticipated to then decline slightly by 2040 (-0.2%). Under these projected growth circumstances, the Town's biggest challenge for its transportation network will be keeping up with aging infrastructure. As roadways and drainage systems age, they will require most frequent and more costly repairs, and eventual replacement in some instances.

11.5 Issues and Opportunities

Scituate's transportation network serves the needs of the community and has been designed to handle the expected growth of the community for the foreseeable future. Due to the nature of residential development in the Town, new streets designed and constructed as part of residential subdivisions are often disconnected cul-de-sacs that don't contribute to a connected street network. When parcels of land are subdivided off of main roadways, they are typically accessed by short dead-end roads that are not connected to the larger street network, except for their origination point at the main roadway. This creates a fragmented street system that impedes an even distribution of traffic flow.

Scituate is an automobile-oriented community. Residential development is typically spread out and unwalkable. There are limited services within the Town, and although several villages like North Scituate and Hope are internally walkable, they are not connected to a larger pedestrian network. Many of the streets within Scituate lack sidewalks. One way to address this is to implement a Complete Street policy—streets that accommodate walking, biking, and public transportation as well as cars. Some components that constitute a Complete Street include sidewalks, bike lanes, special bike lanes, comfortable and accessible transit stops, frequent crossing opportunities, pedestrian signals, good lighting, curb extensions, and more.

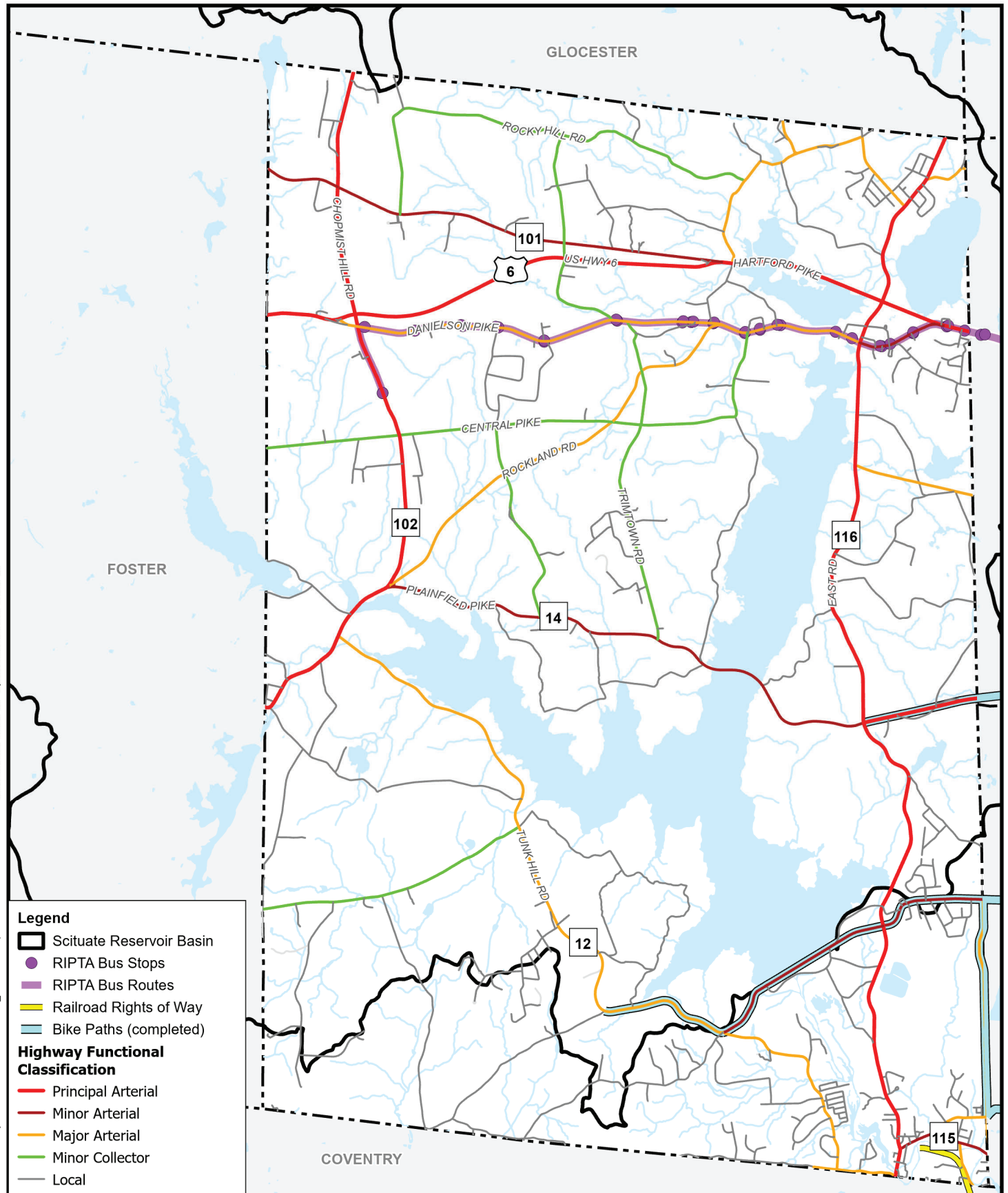
Additional bike lanes throughout the Town would promote the use of active transportation by Scituate residents and offer multi-modal transportation options for those lacking vehicles and adequate public transportation options. Scituate currently lacks extensive bike lanes and could benefit from creating new connections to the Washington Secondary Bike Path located in Cranston or Johnston's Woonasquatucket River Bikeway. The most accessible routes would be Route 12 and 14, although they may have heavy traffic that could create dangerous conditions for cyclists if separate bike lanes are not constructed.

11.6 Opinion Survey: Transportation

In May of 2021, the Town posted an online survey for residents as part of the comprehensive planning process. The survey asked several questions related to the services and facilities provided by the Town and school district. A full summary of the survey results can be found in Appendix A. In summary, the survey reported the following principal findings related to transportation:

- Survey respondents were asked to rank the importance of a variety of services. When asked about transportation options, 8.1% of respondents ranked that as very important, with 21.3% indicating it was important. Approximately 37.5% of respondents ranked transportation options as somewhat important, with 33.1% indicating it was not important.

Survey respondents were somewhat divided on the importance of transportation options with slightly less than one third of respondents indicating that it was an important factor for them. The majority of respondents (70%) indicating that transportation options were less important, or not important at all to their quality of life in Scituate.



MAP TR-1: ROADWAY NETWORK AND MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION ROUTES

TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



12

CHAPTER 5
**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**



Town of Scituate, Rhode Island

Community Comprehensive Plan Update

Economic Development

Background

The focus for future economic development in Scituate must be centered around striking a balance between maintaining its position as one of the stewards of the State's most vital water supply, while exploring and implementing ways to diversify the tax base and reduce the financial burden on residential properties in Town. Fostering appropriate economic opportunities will lead to growth of the Town's tax base and labor force and will improve the overall quality of life in Town. There is a delicate balance to be achieved in doing so, as Scituate is home to a wealth of highly important natural resources for the Town and the State as a whole.



Figure 1. Town of
Scituate (Rhode
Island Monthly,
2017)

Policies

1. Reduce the financial tax burden on residential development by expanding the Town's tax base through encouraging an appropriate scale of business.
2. Encourage small scale and home-based businesses in appropriate areas with reasonable safeguards designed to protect neighboring properties and sensitive natural features.
3. Support local tourism efforts that highlight the rural character and abundant natural resources of the Town through cultural events and agriculturally based tourism.
4. Promote and encourage agriculture as a way to preserve existing farms and support the development of new farms supporting and introducing efforts to capitalize on agricultural tourism opportunities, working with the Scituate Business Association and other local business and agricultural organizations.
5. Support and encourage partnerships with local organizations (such as the Scituate Business Association) and existing businesses to enhance and promote the attractiveness of commercial districts for employers, workforce, and visitors.
6. Coordinate with local educational institutions and other entities that provide career growth counseling, technical education and training opportunities, and management of apprenticeship/internship programs.

Goals



Encourage and support economic development that is keeping with the Town's rural character while expanding and diversifying the Town's tax base.



Work towards creating a business environment that holds existing commercial and industrial development to a high standard while providing for a streamlined regulatory process to establish and expand appropriate economic opportunities in the community.

Scituate will maintain its intellectually rich workforce by offering continuing education and training opportunities to all ages and levels of experience

Scituate will foster an inclusive economy that provides opportunities for job growth for underserved populations of all ages and experience levels.

Actions



Update the Land Development and Subdivision Regulations to clarify and streamline development plan review application procedures and ensure the regulations are consistent with state law and provide clear and easy to follow application instructions and process. The Town should consider implementing a development plan review process for new smaller scale commercial projects and expansions of existing businesses.



Update the Town's Zoning Ordinance to reflect current land uses and encourage home based businesses and suitable business development within appropriate locations, taking into consideration potential impacts on natural resources.



Support local landowners under State's Farm, Forest, and Open Space Program.



Evaluate current Town ordinances for their impact on the Town's economic development competitive advantage and propose amendments accordingly.



Amend the zoning ordinance to encourage home based businesses and streamline the permitting process to reduce barriers.



Work with the Scituate Business Association to support existing local businesses and provide incentives for new businesses to locate within the Town.



Update the Village Overlay District as needed to include requirements to promote appropriate development at a scale and quality that compliments the existing fabric of the villages.



Inventory, maintain, and actively publicize a list of all state and local workforce education and training programs.



Pursue the establishment of public/private partnerships to support adult education and training as well as apprenticeship/internship programs to improve the Scituate workforce.

12.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Scituate will strive to achieve an equitable framework of local policies and regulations that promote sustainable economic development and balance the tax base with the Town's unique natural environment and community character.

Early in Scituate's history, economic activity was tied to the land. Early development was based on subsistence farming, eventually evolving to an export market due to its proximity to Providence. With the establishment of a transportation network to move goods to the capital city, ancillary economic activities were established to support those moving goods east from Scituate. Taverns, small stores, and service providers established themselves along the route to provide supplies and support to those moving goods.

This land use based economic engine of the Town shifted gears in the nineteenth century with the industrial revolution. This era signified a shift from a primarily agricultural economy to one of a manufacturing economy, which was mainly located in more developed urban areas. With this shift came a need for skilled workers. Some farm operations were abandoned as settlers moved out of Scituate to places where economic opportunities were more widely available. During this time Scituate became the focus of several industrial villages, centered around water-operated mills.

The focus for future economic development in Scituate should strike a balance between maintaining its position as one of the stewards of the State's most vital water supply and diversification of the tax base to manage the financial burden on residential properties in Town. This must be done in a way that respects the rural character of the Town, as well as recognizes the importance of being home to an incredibly valuable drinking water resource for the state. Fostering small scale economic opportunities in Town will provide an opportunity for Scituate residents to create live/workspaces as well as utilize local services and products from within their own community. There is a delicate balance to be struck in doing so, as Scituate is home to a wealth of highly important natural resources for the Town and the State as a whole.

This element focuses on maintaining and enhancing economic opportunities in Scituate while maintaining the Town's rural character and the Scituate Reservoir's water quality that so many in the state rely upon.

This element is divided into the follow topics:

- An overview of existing economic conditions in Town ([Section 12.1](#))
- The role water production plays in the Town's economic profile ([Section 12.2](#))
- A discussion of the role agriculture and home occupations play in Scituate's economy ([Section 12.3](#))
- An overview of the Scituate Business Association and the role they play ([Section 12.4](#))
- A summary of economic development survey related results ([Section 12.5](#))

The following considerations are of a high priority to the Town when contemplating how to balance the Town's economic health while maintaining the rural quality of the Town:

- Encourage and support economic development to diversify the tax base, that is in keeping with the Town's character ([Policy #1, #2, #3, #4, Action #1, #2 #3, #4](#))

- Foster a collaborative business environment that is sensitive the Town's history and culture (Policy #1, #3, #4, #5, Action #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #7)
- Provide a predictable and reliable regulatory framework that streamlines the review and application process for new and expanding businesses (Policy, #1, #2, Action #1, #2, #3, #5, #6)

12.1 Existing Conditions

Chapter 6 *Land Use* contains the Town's current land use map (Map LU-1). This map provides a general representation of the types and locations of economic activity in the Town. Just .7% of the Town's land area is dedicated to commercial and industrial uses. The majority of the Town is limited to residential development, at relatively low densities.

12.1.1 Labor Force

The total population for the Town of Scituate was 10,329 at the time of the 2010 Census and was estimated to be approximately 10,634 in 2019 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The 2022 ACS estimates Scituate's population at 10,404. The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (RIDLT) estimated an annual average labor force population of approximately 6,467 individuals in 2023 (RIDLT, 2024). Table 12-1 illustrates a slight decline in Scituate's total labor force since 2010, with a rebound in 2023. This is representative of a national trend where the labor force has been decreasing, being further impacted by COVID-19. Table 12-1 shows a rise and fall in the unemployment rate in Scituate. Unemployment in 2010 was unusually high due to a national drop in the creation of new jobs. This trend began to turn around in 2014 – 2015, which is represented in below. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the unemployment rate in 2020. Employment statistics for 2023 are included as the most recent full year of statistics currently available.

Table 12-1 Scituate Employment Statistics for 2010 - 2020

	2010	2015	2020	2023
Total Employment	5,516	5,809	5,547	6,299
Total Unemployment	731	357	540	168
Unemployment Rate	11.7%	5.8%	8.9%	2.6%
Total Labor Force	6,247	6,166	6,087	6,467

Source: Scituate Labor Force Statistics, Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, 1990 - Present

Educational attainment in Scituate is a community strength, with close to 65% of the population attaining at least some level of college education by 2022. Scituate residents obtaining either a bachelor's degree or a graduate or professional degree has increased approximately 21% and 33% respectively since 2010. The Town overall, is becoming more educated which is a trend that mirrors that of the country and the region. Table 12-2 provides more information on educational attainment in Scituate.

Table 12-2 Educational Attainment, Scituate Residents					
	2010	2013	2016	2019	2022
Educational Attainment	% of Population 25 Years and Older				
Less than 9 th Grade	3.4%	2.6%	1.6%	0.9%	4.7%
9 th to 12 th Grade, no H.S. Diploma	5.9%	5.1%	4.3%	3.2%	5.7%
H.S. Diploma or GED Equivalency	28.2%	30.1%	29.8%	26.2%	26.1%
Completed Some College	21.6%	17.3%	16.1%	25.0%	19.1%
Associate's degree	12.6%	12.4%	11.5%	8.1%	8.8%
Bachelor's Degree	17.8%	20.4%	22.1%	24.3%	21.6%
Graduate/Professional Degree	10.5%	12.0%	14.7%	12.4%	14.0%

Source: U.S. Census 2010, 2013-2022 ACS

To accompany the high educational attainment many Scituate residents have achieved, the Town also ranks amongst the top of Rhode Island municipalities in a commonly referenced economic indicator statistics, median household income (Table 12-3). The Town consistently has the median income significantly higher than the state median income. Unemployment rates in Scituate track closely with the state's rate, coming in slightly lower than the State over the last several years. Statistically speaking, Scituate's workforce is a successful group that is thriving despite somewhat stagnant commercial and industrial economic growth within the Town.

Table 12-3 Historical Median Household Income and Unemployment Rate				
	Year	Scituate	State of RI	Difference
Median Household Income	2010	\$74,000	\$54,902	\$19,098
	2013	\$78,980	\$55,902	\$23,078
	2016	\$81,975	\$58,387	\$23,588
	2019	\$96,179	\$71,169	\$25,010
	2022	\$110,429	\$81,854	\$28,575
Unemployment Rate ^a	2010	11.7%	11.6%	0.1%
	2013	9.3%	9.5%	0.2%
	2016	4.9%	5.2%	0.3%
	2019	3.1%	3.6%	0.5%
	2022	2.9%	3.2%	0.3%

Source: U.S. Census 2010, 2013-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2022 ACS.

Note:

a. R.I. Dept. of Labor and Training <https://dlt.ri.gov/lmi/datacenter/laus.php>

Scituate is a desirable community to live in for those looking for rural small-town character, and the housing market reflects this position. According to the HousingWorks RI 2023 Housing Fact Book, the median price of a single-family home in Scituate ranks as the 19th highest in Rhode Island's 39 municipalities, requiring an annual household income of \$135,152 to meet the 30% income affordability cost burden. This housing cost burden is a major deterrent to entry level employees and

first-time homebuyers looking to purchase a home in Scituate and is evidenced by the Town's low number of residents in the 20 – 34-year-old demographic (Table 12-4).

Table 12-4 Scituate Population in 2022 by Age		
Age	Population	% of Population
Under 9 years	891	8.6%
10 to 19 years	890	8.6%
20 to 29 years	1,236	11.9%
30 to 39 years	1,321	12.7%
40 to 49 years	1,125	10.8%
50 to 59 years	1,525	14.7%
60 to 69 years	1,902	18.3%
70 to 79 years	1,173	11.3%
80 years & older	341	3.3%

Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates

12.1.2 Local Employment

According to the RIDLT 2022 Rhode Island Employment & Wage Report, there are 326 private business establishments in Scituate. Private businesses accounted for an average of 1,152 employees with total wages amounting to \$51,508,128¹. Local employment in Scituate is relatively low when compared to some other communities in the State due to the lack of significant commercial or industrial development within the Town. A majority of the Town's employment comes in the form of small businesses. Most of the Town's workforce is employed outside the community (73%) with only 1,644 people working jobs within the community (RIDLT, 2020c). Due to the environmentally sensitive nature of much of the land area in Scituate, larger commercial and industrial land uses are not appropriate, both because of environmental constraints and due to context. The Town is currently comprised of small-scale business, along with a predominantly residential land use pattern that is dotted with several small historic villages. Large scale commercial or industrial development could pose a threat to both the watershed and the current rural character that the Town desires to protect.

The Town made approximately \$200,000 available for matching grants for small businesses and organizations to apply for. This money was made available through the use of COVID-19 funds that were received by the Town. A variety of different types of businesses and organizations applied for the funding for a variety of different types of uses to help support them as a result of injury suffered to their business and/or organization as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Town will continue to look for ways to support the small businesses that operate.

12.1.3 Tax Base

The major source of tax revenue in Scituate is derived from assessments on residential real estate, representing approximately 67% of the Town's tax base. Scituate derives only about three percent of their tax revenue from commercial real estate taxes. The second major source of tax revenue for the Town is from tax payments from the PWSB. These tax payments to the Town include both real estate as well as tangible taxes. This highlights the importance of the continued cooperative

¹https://dlt.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur571/files/2023-05/2022summary_0.pdf

relationship with PWSB to the Town's tax base. In fiscal year 2019-2020, watershed properties generated tax revenue of \$6,646,164.18 for the Town, representing approximately 22% of the Town's total operating budget. Table 12-5 provides a summary of tax revenue from PWSB from 2015 to 2020.

Table 12-5. Providence Water Supply Board Tax Payments FY 2015-2023 (rounded to the nearest dollar)				
Fiscal Year	Total Real Estate Tax Payments	Total Tangible Tax Payments	Total Tax Payments	Tax Roll Year
2014-2015	\$5,781,286	\$129,785	\$5,911,071	2014
2015-2016	\$5,834,474	\$130,979	\$5,965,453	2015
2016-2017	\$5,967,500	\$133,965	\$6,101,465	2016
2017-2018	\$6,206,200	\$139,324	\$6,345,524	2017
2018-2019	\$6,392,386	\$142,503	\$6,535,890	2018
2019-2020	\$6,646,164	\$149,201	\$6,795,365	2019
2020-2021	\$6,822,620	\$153,162	\$6,975,782	2020
2021-2022	\$7,092,113	\$159,212	\$7,251,325	2021
2022-2023	\$7,375,798	\$165,580	\$7,541,378	2022

Source: Scituate Treasurer's Office, Retrieved April 2024

Scituate's tax rate is not much different than those of surrounding communities. The Town falls just about in the middle when compared with adjacent municipal tax rates. Table 12-6 provides a comparison of tax rates in Scituate and nearby municipalities for fiscal year 2024. (Scituate is highlighted in aqua in the table.)

Table 12-6. FY 2024 Municipal Tax Rates			
Municipality	Real Estate	Commercial	Personal Property
Scituate	16.67	24.57	35.69
Glocester	14.25	17.08	28.50
Foster	22.67	22.67	31.12
Smithfield	13.72	19.20	59.74
Johnston	15.30	27.43	64.65
Cranston	18.90	28.35	28.35

12.2 Water Production

The production of water is a vitally important activity in Scituate that supplies the Town with approximately 23.3% of its operating budget in fiscal year 2022-2023. In support of its major industry, Scituate endorses the implementation of *State Guide Plan Element 721: Rhode Island Water 2030* (Water 2030), in which the Scituate Reservoir is a major focus area. Scituate has played a relatively passive role in Reservoir activities or policies. The primary discussion point between the Town and the PWSB has revolved around tax revenues paid to the Town for the large amount of land owned by PWSB. The ownership of 15,044 acres of land by PWSB has placed limitations on the Town's ability to develop an economic tax base to the extent that would otherwise be feasible. The implementation of Water 2030 limits Scituate's development opportunities and restricts its land use policies as an effective tool to preserve water quality for the 600,000 Rhode Island residents served by the water supply. Due to this circumstance, a relationship with PWSB is necessary to continue to assure that the Town can balance its tax base appropriately.

16 of 39 communities receive potable water from the Scituate Reservoir:

- Bristol
- Barrington
- Cranston
- Coventry
- East Greenwich
- East Providence
- Johnston
- Lincoln
- North Providence
- Providence
- Part of Scituate
- Smithfield
- Warren
- Warwick
- Part of West Greenwich
- West Warwick

Sixteen of the state's 39 municipalities depend on the Scituate Reservoir for potable water in one way or another, representing the second largest water supply reservoir system in New England (Water 2030, 2012). The PWSB provides water in one of two ways: either directly through their retail service area or through a wholesale service to various water suppliers that in turn supply water to various communities. Nine of the state's major suppliers of water rely, at least in part, on the Scituate Reservoir for the water they distribute. See Chapter 7 *Natural Resources* for more information on the Scituate Reservoir and the important role it plays in the state's water supply network.

Nine of the State's 28 major suppliers depend upon the Scituate Reservoir:

- Warwick Water Department (3,200 MGY)
- Kent County Water Authority (2,800 MGY)
- East Providence Water Utility Division (1,700 MGY)
- Bristol County Water Authority (987 MGY)
- Lincoln Water Commission (895 MGY)
- Greenville Water District (408 MGY)
- Smithfield Water Supply Board (346 MGY)
- Johnston Water Department (278 MGY)
- East Smithfield Water District (250 MGY)

MGY = Million Gallons per Year

12.3 Agriculture and Forestry

Scituate is home to a large number of working farms and agriculturally related businesses. Farmers in Scituate raise food crops (including meat, vegetables, fruits, and dairy), grow flowers, and grow and harvest wood. These products are either sold on premises, in local farmers markets, or shopped to markets throughout the region. According to the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training an estimated 35 people were employed in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting in Scituate in

2023 providing approximately \$1,063,409 in annual total wages². Table 12-7 provides a list of farms in Scituate, their location, and their primary agricultural products.

Farm	Products	Location	Distribution
<i>Blanchard Farm</i>	Fruits, Vegetables, Meat, Fish	255 Greenville Road	Farm Stand
<i>Cedar Knoll Farm</i>	Meat	7 Old Harmony Road, North Scituate	Meat
<i>Barden Orchard</i>	Fruits, Vegetables, Apple Cider, Baked Goods	56 Elmdale Road, North Scituate	Farm Stand, You Pick
<i>Golden Rods Farm</i>	Meat	627 Central Pike	
<i>Hopkins Southdowns</i>	Meat, Grains and Feed, Fiber, Breeding Stock	1125 Danielson Pike, North Scituate	Market Mobile, Farmers Markets, Farm Stand, Wholesale
<i>Knowlton Farm</i>	Meat, Grains and Feeds	377 Central Pike, North Scituate	Wholesale
<i>Martinelli's Farm and Charcuterie, LLC</i>	Fruit, Vegetables, Herbs, Dairy and Eggs, Meat, Nursery and Flowers, Spreads, Specialty, Breeding Stock	56 Peepoad Road	Market Mobile, Delivery, Pickup, Whole Foods, Dave's Markets, Farmers Markets, Farm Stand, Wholesale
<i>Red Dog's Roost</i>	Fruit, Vegetables, Herbs, Dairy and Eggs, Meat, Wood, Nursery and Flowers, Spreads, Baked Goods, Fiber, Breeding Stock	Hartford's Pike, North Scituate	Pickup, Farm Stand, Restaurants
<i>Sunset Orchard</i>	Apples, Apple Cider, Peaches	244 Gleaner Chapel Road, North Scituate	Farm Stand, You Pick
<i>Tall Pine Farm</i>	Meat, Grains and Feeds	49 George Washington Highway	Wholesale
<i>Timberdoodle Farm</i>	Vegetables, Herbs, Dairy and Eggs, Meat, Nursery and Flowers, Specialty, Breeding Stock, Family Fun	337 Central Pike	Pickup, Farmers Markets, Farm Stand, PYO, Restaurants, Wholesale

Source: Farm Fresh RI, <http://www.farmfreshri.org/>, 2023.

Source: Farm Fresh RI <https://guide.farmfreshri.org/> (Retrieved May 2023)

The Town has approximately 362 farms, 11,688 acres of forest, and 1,479 acres of open space enrolled in the Farm, Forest, and Open Space (FFOS) program administered by RIDEM (see Chapter 7 *Natural Resources* for more information). This program helps conserve land that is considered

² Rhode Island Department of Labor & Training Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages City and Town Report – Annual 2023

farmland, forestland, wetlands, and open space through tax abatement. This program is an important component of maintain local farms in Scituate and should be supported and promoted by the Town as a mechanism to help retain productive agricultural and forest land.

12.3.1 *Agricultural Tourism*

Agricultural tourism, or agritourism, is defined as a commercial enterprise on a working farm conducted for the enjoyment, education, and/or active involvement of the visitor.³ The farm experience is often enhanced by on-site and nearby historical, cultural, or natural attractions. Farm products and locally sourced good, available for purchase by visitors can enhance the overall farm income, assisting in keeping the farm viable and in operation. Scituate is well positioned to encourage and promote agricultural tourism. The Town is easily accessible from most areas of the state and has operating farms that currently offer a variety of pick your own amenities, as well as locally made and sourced products.

The Town's regulations are accommodating towards maintaining the viability of agricultural as a viable business in Scituate by permitting a variety of agricultural activities in residentially zoned property. The raising of crops, forest products, the sale of produce raised on the premises, commercial nurseries, and the keeping of animals are permitted by right or by special use permit in all the Town's residential zoning districts, which comprises a vast majority of the Town. The Town could work with the Scituate Business Association and other locally based business and agriculturally related organizations to develop marketing tools and other resources to promote and increase opportunities for agricultural tourism within the Town.

12.3.2 *Forestry*

According to RIDEM, forests cover just over 50% of Rhode Island's land area, with about 74% of that area being held in private ownership. About 31% of these private forest landowners have had commercial harvesting activity on their land (RIDEM, 2015). The harvesting operations produce a range of products from veneer logs to wood chips being burned for fuel. Although forestry does not represent a significant economy in Scituate, Table 12-7 above includes several farms in Scituate that identify wood as one of the agricultural products that they produce. Forestry in Scituate also takes the form of selective cutting on PWSB land in order to properly maintain their buffers and forested land. With over 15,000 acres of land under ownership of PWSB, a significant forested area in Scituate is managed.

12.4 Home Occupations

Home occupations play an important role in a small-town economy such as Scituate's. These businesses provide an opportunity to grow the business base in the Town, permitting residents to use space within their homes to operate. Home occupation opportunities have expanded in recent years, and the COVID-19 pandemic has increased people's desire the transfer their typical office spaces to spaces within their own homes. Home occupations provide an opportunity for a community like Scituate to expand upon their economic tax base without creating a significant impact to traffic and the environment. Due to the existence of the Scituate Reservoir, a significant portion of the Town is limited in the type and intensity of development that can be established due to the sensitive nature of watershed lands. This important role as land steward to the watershed

³ <https://projects.sare.org/project-reports/lne04-208/>

presents a unique opportunity for the Town to incentivize small home-based occupations as a mechanism to increase economic development while maintaining environmental sensitivity.

The ability to do this is predicated on appropriate standards established in the zoning ordinance to protect the integrity of residential areas from undesirable business-related impacts such as traffic, noise, and pollution. Scituate's regulations regarding home occupations are relatively minimal, requiring only that the applicant uses no more than 600 square feet of the area of one floor or the home, provided that the activity related to the business is not visible from the edge of the lot of the property and there is no exterior advertising. With these provisions, home occupations are allowed by right in almost all zoning districts in Town, with an allowance by special use permit in the RS-120 and RSW-60/80 districts. The Town should consider updating their current home occupation regulations to increase the flexibility of the type and configuration of businesses that are allowed. Additionally, in order to effectively promote the establishment of home occupations, the Town should consider how these businesses will impact the residential neighborhoods in which they are located and establish practical standards and requirements to provide clear guidance to any applicant, while providing some protection for neighbors and the neighborhood. Additionally, the Town should consider implementing a business license requirement for businesses operating in Scituate. This can help ensure that regulatory requirements are being met by the businesses and allow the Town to keep track of those operating a business in the Town.

12.5 Scituate Business Association

The Scituate Business Association (SBA) is a privately organized non-profit membership group of local businesses in Scituate. The SBA was created with the goal of having a membership-based organization that could support Scituate businesses and organizations that enhance the spirit of the community. The SBA is governed by a Board of Directors with seven members and one Town Council designated liaison.



The purpose of the organization is to promote and encourage the creation and expansion of businesses in Scituate, assist the Town in establishing a favorable business climate, provide resources to new and expanding businesses to help them succeed, and to provide information to the residents of Scituate and surrounding areas on what local businesses have to offer. The SBA accomplishes these goals in many ways. They hold several events each year to promote local businesses, they work with the schools to educate students on how to run a small business, they provide promotional materials to assist in marketing businesses in the area, and they partner with the Town and other local organizations to provide support for Scituate's small business economy.

According to the SBA, they have 90 current members in their organization, including a number of home occupation business, as well as farm stands, realtors, investors, contractors, insurance agents, animal groomers, photographers, and other small business operations. The Association identified three issues or actions the Town should address in order to improve the business climate in Scituate, those are:

- Draft and adopt an economic development plan
- Address the parking shortage in North Scituate Village
- Develop a mentoring program to teach youth about business startup and ownership

The SBA and the Town will work together to review and discuss local economic and regulatory related issues to improve the economic climate in the Town, as well as the issues identified above.

12.6 Issues and Opportunities

Scituate is environmentally constrained due to the existence of the Scituate Reservoir. This constraint is not a negative characteristic. The presence of the Scituate Reservoir allows the Town to enjoy a variety of desirable attributes: a reasonable tax rate for its residents, a relatively low density of development, natural and scenic qualities not found elsewhere in the state, and the prestige of being home to one of the most valuable natural resources in Rhode Island. Although this environmental limitation does hinder the Town's ability to develop, the current development pattern and rural character of the Town make Scituate unique and a desirable place to live. The Scituate Reservoir provides the impetus to restrict development in ways that protect the resource for the entire state.

As discussed in Section 6.6 of the *Land Use* Chapter, the Town of Scituate Zoning Ordinance is in need of a full update to reflect new and upcoming land uses, changes to state enabling legislations, and improve upon requirements for development. The zoning ordinance use tables have many uses that are no longer relevant and are lacking uses that have evolved and come to be over the last several decades since it was originally drafted. The Town should review the zoning ordinance in its entirety and assess where changes and updates are needed that will improve development processes as well as those designed for the protection of natural, cultural, and historic resources.

The Scituate *Land Use and Subdivision Regulations* are also in need of review and update. Similar to the zoning ordinance, the type of development has changed since they were first drafted. This has caused the subdivision regulations to be antiquated as well as inconsistent with state law in some respects, as changes were made to the enabling legislation over time. The Town currently employs a review process referred to a Commercial Site Plan Review, codified in Article IV, Section 13 of the zoning ordinance. This section requires that all commercial development over 500 square feet, requires written site plan approval by the Plan Commission. Although this section of the zoning ordinance provides guidance on an application procedure and process, it is not well defined, and it is contained solely within the zoning ordinance, and this results in little to no flexibility for the Plan Commission to review applications and make decisions. The Town should look into ways to build in flexibility and clarify the process and application requirements in order to streamline the process for applicants and the Town.

The Town employs a Village Overlay District, which is located in two areas of Town, Hope and North Scituate Villages. This overlay district is enabled in Article IV Section 14 and establishes a Village Review Committee. In practice, the Town has created two review committees, one for each area of Town. These review committees review developments in the village overlay districts and have the ability to grant waivers, advise the Town Council, Plan Commission, and Zoning Board, and approve or deny applications within the districts. The Town should take a closer look at the application and review process presented in the zoning ordinance within these village districts to ensure that they are consistent with state law and that they embody the goals and policies of the comprehensive plan.

Scituate is perfectly situated to take advantage of a growing trend of individuals that are working from home and establishing home-based businesses. Due to the impact of COVID-19, more people are working from home or establishing businesses based out of their home. Scituate is a prime location in which to do that. The Town is relatively centrally located and has easy highway access.

Additionally, the Town's zoning ordinance does allow for home-based occupations (see Section 12.4 for more information). Home based occupations in Scituate could allow the Town to expand their business base without creating negative environmental impacts that could affect the quality of the Scituate Reservoir.

In order to expand home occupations, the Town needs to consider how to properly regulate these. Currently the Town's regulations are minimal in this regard and although that makes it relatively easy to establish a home occupation, an increase could result in conflicts with neighboring properties causing issues related to noise, parking, traffic, and other potential nuisances. These can be easily mitigated through regulatory requirements. The Town will need to assess their current regulations to ensure that an expansion of home occupations will not have a negative impact on the immediate neighborhood or the community.

12.7 Opinion Survey of Scituate- Economic Development

In May of 2021, the Town posted an online survey for residents as part of the comprehensive planning process. The survey asked several questions related to economic development. A full summary of the survey can be found in Appendix A. In summary, the survey reported the following principal findings related to economic development:

- Survey respondents reported that shopping convenience was only either somewhat important (40.8%) or not important (32.5%) to their quality of life in Scituate.
- When respondents were asked about the importance of the Town taking measures to improve a variety of services and amenities only 8.8% of respondents felt that improvements to economic development were very important, with 34.5% responding that improvements were important to them. Improvements to economic development were somewhat important to 38.4% of respondents and not important to 18.2% of respondents.
- When asked what types of development respondents felt the Town needed more, less, or the same amount of survey respondents reported overwhelmingly that the Town needs the same amount of retail services (61.9%) with only 18.8% reporting the Town needs more. Respondents also indicated that more than half (53.8%) felt that the Town needed more agriculture, with 42.5% responding that the Town has a sufficient amount of agriculture.
- Respondents were asked to show their support (or lack of support) for example activities that the Town could engage in. Only 8.9% of survey respondents indicated that they would be very supportive of efforts to promote economic development, with 27.8% responding they would be supportive and 41.4% reporting they would be somewhat supportive. Conversely, 22.2% of respondents indicated that would not be supportive of promoting economic development.
- In the same question respondents indicated that they would be very supportive of promoting and supporting agricultural activities (54.2%) with 29.4% stating they would be supportive of such activities.
- Respondents were asked to rank their general feelings with statements related to a variety of topics. When asked about commercial development respondents reported that 21.9% strongly agree, and 42.5% agree that the Town has an adequate amount of commercial development. In a similar question 3.9% strongly agree, 27.9% agree, and 41.6% somewhat agree, that commercial development is appropriately located.

These survey results seem to indicate that there is a strong preference and level of support for agriculturally centric land use. This is most likely to come in the form of small pick your own farms, which contribute significantly to the rural character of the Town. Respondents are somewhat mixed when asked about the importance of promoting economic development in general within the Town. Responses clearly indicate that an overwhelming majority of respondents feel that the Town has an adequate amount of retail services available. These survey results should help the Town guide and direct their economic development efforts to those areas that were deemed appropriate and supportable by survey respondents.

13

CHAPTER 13
HOUSING



Town of Scituate, Rhode Island

Community Comprehensive Plan Update

Housing

Background

High quality, diverse housing is a building block of a thriving community. Housing within a community is inextricably linked to issues of economic development, transportation, land use, social equity, and environmental sustainability. With 99.3% of total land area in Scituate zoned for residential use, residential development is and will be the highest consumer of land in Scituate, and as such, will significantly influence land use planning now, and in the future. Important factors that impact housing within a community include physical and social characteristics. The social attributes of those who make up Scituate households, such as population, age, and

income are just as important as the physical attributes such as housing affordability, patterns of development, housing stock, and land use regulations. The goal of this element is to balance these interconnected dynamics and guide future development in a way that will achieve Scituate's housing vision.



Goals



Provide a diversity of safe and affordable housing opportunities for current and future residents of Scituate.



Ensure that future residential development is compatible with the character of Scituate in general as well as that of individual neighborhoods and villages.



Provide affordable housing in a manner that does not conflict with the environmental constraints, community character, and general development patterns of the Town.

Policies

1. Attempt to strike a balance between the need to provide diverse housing options with the significant environmental constraints to development prevalent throughout much of the Town.
2. Ensure that housing that is developed is sensitive to environmental constraints, aesthetic quality, and rural development patterns in Scituate.
3. Support increased housing density commensurate with that of existing village areas that are served by public water and/or sewer.
4. Collaborate with local non-profit housing advocacy groups to assist with financing of affordable housing and homebuyer education programs for residents.
5. Actively participate in state level discussion regarding affordable housing and work with other communities and organizations to provide affordable housing in a manner that is appropriate on a community-by-community basis, recognizing individual strengths and weaknesses in an attempt to approach housing issues on a more holistic level, straddling political boundaries.

Actions



Adopt inclusionary zoning requirements into the zoning ordinance to ensure that future housing developments include affordable units at an appropriate density and rate.



Consider areas of Town where infrastructure could be expanded to support additional housing density.



Develop new relationships with nonprofit affordable housing developers to pursue LMI housing development in projects with majority LMI units



Consider reinstituting participation in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program through assistance with a local non-profit to provide for funding for affordable housing construction and rehabilitation.



Build community support for affordable housing by educating residents on who affordable housing is designed for and how it can be appropriately integrated into the existing community.



Work with the Scituate Housing Authority and other social service providers on the creation of LMI units for the elderly and special needs population.



Review and update, as deemed necessary, portions of the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations related to housing development including but not limited to residential compounds, village districts, and in-law or accessory apartments to ensure that appropriate density and development standards are in place to meet the housing needs of the community.



Work with the state and other municipalities to actively participate in ongoing discussions related to RIGL 45-53 to improve the law to be more equitably imposed on communities and ensure that the law relates directly to a community's ability to develop affordable housing while also providing the resources needed for residents of that housing.



Work with the Scituate Housing Authority and other social service providers on the creation of LMI units for the elderly and special needs population.



Revise the zoning ordinance to permit multi-family housing in additional zoning districts as appropriate.



Revise the zoning ordinance to include a section that addresses comprehensive permit applications and include requirements for application and review that are consistent with RIGL 45-53.

13.0 HOUSING

High quality, diverse housing is a building block of a thriving community. Housing within a community is inextricably linked to issues of economic development, transportation, land use, social equity, and environmental sustainability. With approximately 41% of the land area in Scituate zoned for residential use, residential development is and will be the highest consumer of land in Scituate, and as such, will significantly influence land use planning now, and in the future. Important factors that impact housing within a community include physical and social characteristics. The social attributes of those who make up Scituate households, such as population, age, and income are just as important as the physical attributes such as housing affordability, patterns of development, housing stock, and land use regulations. The goal of this element is to balance these interconnected dynamics and guide future development in a way that will achieve Scituate's housing vision.

This Comprehensive Plan presents the Town's vision for housing, as well as historical and current housing data, as a basis for its future policies and actions. This element of the plan addresses the State's mandate to produce affordable housing units (under RIGL §45-53), as well as attempt to balance the need for market rate homes in a variety of sizes and styles to meet a diverse population with varied housing needs. Each community's comprehensive plan must be consistent with the State's goals and policies for housing, while at the same time balancing local needs. RIGL §45-22.2-3(a)(6) states "Comprehensive planning is needed to provide a basis for municipal and State initiatives to ensure all citizens have access to a range of housing choices, including the availability of affordable housing for all income levels and age groups." Within the framework of this plan, it is necessary to differentiate between "affordable" and "low and moderate income" housing. This plan addresses both types, as both are needed for a balanced housing stock. Specifically, "low and moderate income" (LMI) housing refers to dwelling units that have received a subsidy and are deed-restricted for eligible low-moderate income households for a minimum period of 30 years. By law, the state requires that each municipality ensure that at least 10% of all housing units are affordable to low- and moderate-income residents. In contrast, "affordable" housing simply refers to housing and related costs that are affordable to those within certain income brackets. Affordable housing is often mentioned throughout the plan in the broader context of community housing goals and implementation strategies but should not be thought of as the more restrictive "low and moderate income" housing described above.

This element is categorized into the follow topics:

- Housing demographics section which provides an overview the existing housing landscape ([Section 13.1](#)).
- A review of housing affordability in Scituate ([Section 13.1.2](#)).
- A housing needs analysis ([Section 13.2](#)).
- The unmet housing needs in Town and the barriers to developing them ([Sections 13.2.2 -13.2.3](#)).
- The strategies outlined to address low- and moderate-income housing needs in the Town ([Section 13.2.4](#)).

The following considerations are of a high priority to the Town when considering how housing impacts the community:

- Preserve and protect the valuable natural resources of the Town (Policy #1, #5, #6, #7, Action #5, #7 #8)
- Reduce and manage the impacts of development on the Town's natural resources (Policy #1, #5, Action #1, #2, #3, #7, #8, #9)
- Protect the Town's surface and groundwater resources for current and future populations (Policy, #3, #5, Action #6, #9)

13.1 Housing Demographics

This section takes a close look at the general characteristics of housing in Scituate, while also providing important associated demographic information. This provides a snapshot of the existing conditions of housing in the Town, while also presenting the demographics of the people who live in it.

13.1.1 Population and Households

According to the Census, Scituate has a total of 4,517 housing units¹ an increase of 373 units² since 2010. Of this total number of units, 4,042, or 89.5% are occupied, while 221, or 4.9% are vacant³. A vast majority of housing units in Town, 99.0% or 4,432⁴, are year-round units. Only 45 units, or 1.0%⁵ are seasonal.

13.1.2 Income

Scituate is a middle-class community with a median household income higher than the state average of \$81,854⁶. According to the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) Scituate's estimated median household income is \$104,388, which is 40% higher than the state's median household income. Of the total number of households in Town, 874 of them are considered cost burdened⁷. Figure 13-1 provides additional information on cost burdened households in Scituate.

When compared with other communities in Providence County, Scituate has fairly low proportion of low-income households at 3.9% of households having an income of less than

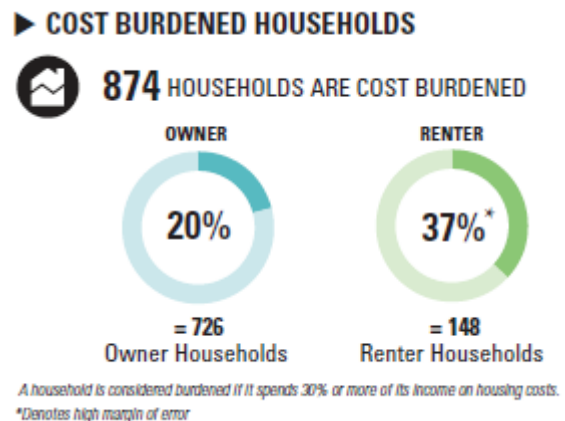


Figure 13-1. Cost Burdened Households in Scituate
Source: HousingWorks RI, 2023 Housing Community Fact Book

¹ 2021 ACS DP05

² 2020 Census Population and Housing Units

³ 2020 Census DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171)

⁴ 2010 Census DP-1 and 2016 ACS DP04; percent of seasonal housing units from 2010 Census (1.0%) applied to 2016 ACS total housing unit figure.

⁵ 2010 Census DP-1 and 2016 ACS DP04; percent of seasonal housing units from 2010 Census (1.0%) applied to 2016 ACS total housing unit figure.

⁶ 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

⁷ HousingWorks RI, 2023 Housing Fact Book

\$25,000, with just 1.8% below \$15,000⁸. For the entirety of Providence County, these are much higher, at 18.5% and 17.4% respectively. Figure 13-2 provides more information related to the income of Scituate residents.

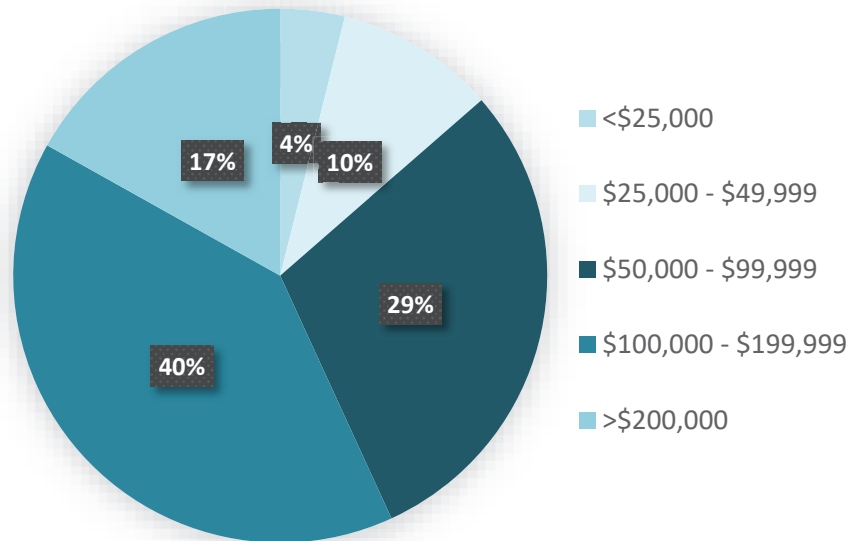


Figure 13-2. Income of Scituate Residents

Source: 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The predominance of middle-class homeownership in Scituate masks a starkly different income profile among Scituate's renters. Figure 13-3 presents owner-occupied and renter-occupied household incomes for Scituate showing that approximately 69% of renters earned between \$20,000 and \$74,999, while 77% of homeowners earned \$75,000 or more.

⁸ 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

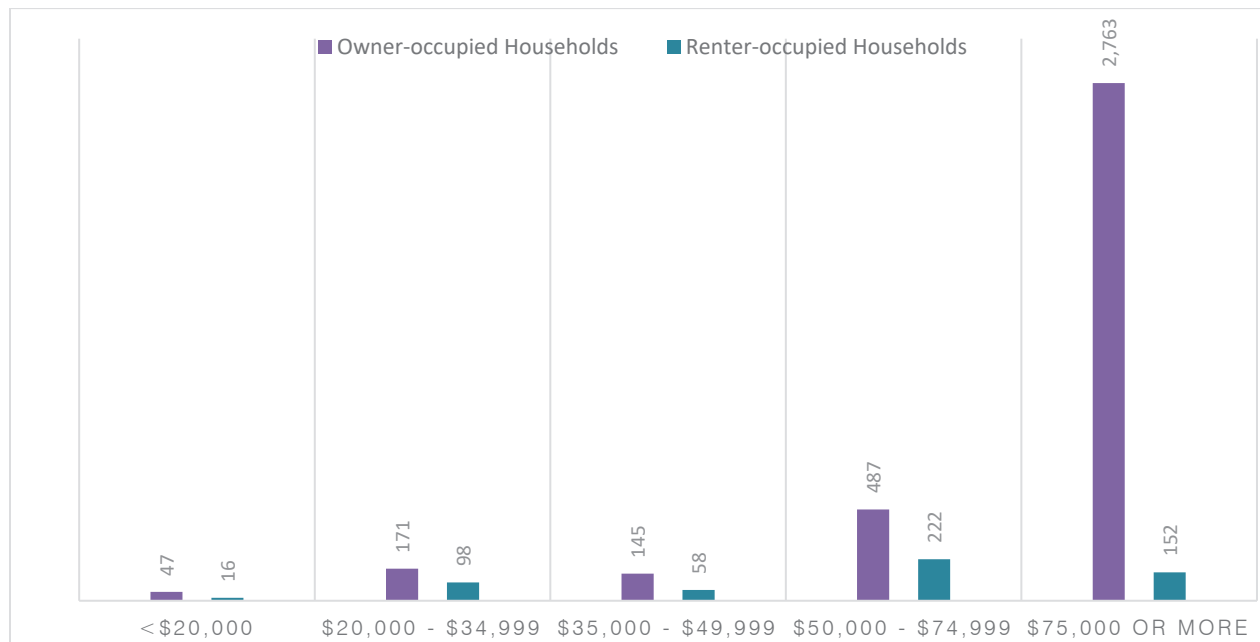


Figure 13-3. Housing Tenure of Scituate Residents

Source: 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates B25106

13.1.3 Housing Stock

A majority of housing stock in Scituate is single-family homes. Of the total number of units, 90.9%, or 4,085, are single-family, 9.1% (409 units) are multi-family⁹. The median age of housing in Scituate is 49 years, with a median year of construction of 1964¹⁰.

Owner occupied units account for 87.0% (3,638 units) of housing stock, while 13.0% (546 units) are rental units¹¹.

The information provided above paints a picture of housing in Scituate. A majority of the Town's housing stock is aging owner-occupied, single-family homes. Table 13-1 provides building permit data for the last 10 years, which includes all single-family and multi-family new home construction.

Table 13-1. Annual New Construction Permits, 2010-2020	
Year	Permits Issued
2010	8
2011	16
2012	8
2013	10
2014	14

⁹ 2022 ACS B25024.

¹⁰ 2022 ACS DP04

¹¹ 2021 ACS DP04

Table 13-1. Annual New Construction Permits, 2010-2020

Year	Permits Issued
2015	12
2016	9
2017	13
2018	12
2019	19
2020	12
Total	133

Source: Scituate Building and Zoning Department, 2021

Table 13-1 indicates that the average number of building permits issued per year, over the last 10 years, is 13. This is a relatively low number of permits for new home construction. Scituate's housing growth has mirrored its population growth, remaining relatively flat over the last 10 years.

The condition and pattern of housing development is important to help understand the status of housing in Scituate. A housing pattern refers to the location, form, and density of housing as it occurs throughout the community. Housing condition includes the quality, safety, and general state of housing units within the Town. Housing location and condition play an important role in understanding housing needs, as well as providing clear indicators on the health and safety of housing within a community.

As previously discussed, Scituate is overwhelmingly comprised of single-family homes on large lots. This is due to several factors, including the lack of widely available public water and sewer, as well as the fact that a significant portion of the Town (84%) is within the Scituate Reservoir watershed, effectively limiting development opportunities. There are portions of Town that are more densely developed. The most notable are North Scituate Village and Hope Village which are a result of historic development patterns that are not likely to be environmentally supportable today without public water and sewer to service them.

Overall, the general condition of the Town's housing stock is safe and of relatively high quality. There are some areas where the housing stock is significantly older than average and some homes are in various stages of disrepair. Deteriorating housing conditions is not an uncommon occurrence in Rhode Island, especially considering the age of some structures. This issue does not pose a serious threat to the overall health of housing stock in the Town.

13.1.4 Sales and Affordability

The median sales price of homes in Scituate steadily increased, after a low in 2012. Table 13-2 provides detailed information on median sales prices in Scituate from 2010 through 2020.

Table 13-2. Median Home Sale Price, 2010-2020

	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020	2023
Median Sale Price	\$240,000	\$217,500	\$252,500	\$285,000	\$329,000	\$360,000	\$430,000

Source: HousingWorks RI, Housing Fact Books, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2023

Another important housing statistic is median rental price of housing units in the community. Table 13-3 provides information on the median rental prices in Scituate for one, two and three-bedroom units.

Table 13-3. Median Rental Prices 2005-2022			
Year	1-Bedroom Unit	2-Bedroom Unit	3-Bedroom Unit
2005	\$989	\$1,107	-
2006	\$916	\$1,172	-
2007	-	\$1,142	-
2008	-	\$1,232	-
2009	-	\$1,170	-
2010	-	\$1,165	-
2011	-	\$1,150	-
2012	\$912	\$1,176	-
2013	-	\$1,308	\$1,373
2014	-	\$1,240	-
2015	-	\$1,379	-
2016	-	\$1,506	-
2017	-	\$1,533	-
2018	\$1,238	\$1,507	\$1,557
2019	\$1,241	\$1,510	\$1,651
2020	\$1,248	\$1,527	\$1,658
2021	\$1,324	\$1,638	\$1,829
2022	\$1,441	\$1,799	\$1,856

Source: 2-bedroom rent statistics from HousingWorks RI; all others from Rhode Island Housing rent survey

Note: *- indicates insufficient local data

Like market increases in home sales prices, rental prices have seen a steady increase with each year. When coupled with a statewide housing shortage, rental units are in high demand and short supply throughout the state.

13.2 Housing Needs Analysis

The residential buildout analysis performed in support of this Comprehensive Plan (see Chapter 6 *Land Use*) estimates an additional 6,863 dwelling units could possibly be developed by right based on the estimated buildable land area and current zoning and subdivision and land development regulations for the Town. While the residential buildout analysis concludes that there are potentially 6,863 dwelling units that could be developed, population projections and historical building permit data suggest the full buildout at these rates would take a substantial number of years to occur and almost certainly not within the planning horizon (20 years) of this Comprehensive Plan.

The 2019 American Community Survey estimated the average household size in Scituate to be 2.7 persons per household. Using a population projection from Rhode Island Statewide Planning and incorporating the average persons per household, it is estimated in the year 2040, an additional 131

dwelling units will be needed (see Table 13-4); a number that represents 1.9% of the potentially buildable dwelling units identified in the buildout analysis.

Table 13-4. Population and Dwelling-Unit Need Projections for Scituate						
	Population	Population Projections				
	2010	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Scituate	10,329	10,383	10,535	10,648	10,702	10,685
Change from 2010		54	206	319	373	356
Increased Need for Housing in Dwelling Units		20	76	118	138	131

Scituate's population has experienced very little growth since the early 2000s; however, population projections anticipate about a 2.9% increase overall by 2040.

Scituate's aging population (Table 13-5) is likely to be a more significant issue, with over one-third (41.6%) 55 years and older. Planning for housing for older residents needs to consider not only design, such as smaller units or those that are more accessible for those with disabilities, but also affordability given many older individuals are on fixed incomes.

Table 13-5. Scituate Population by Age		
Age	Population	% of Population
Under 5 years	353	3.3%
5 to 9 years	333	3.2%
10 to 14 years	389	3.7%
15 to 19 years	630	6.0%
20 to 24 years	713	6.8%
25 to 29 years	536	5.1%
30 to 34 years	813	7.8%
35 to 39 years	517	5.0%
40 to 44 years	487	4.7%
45 to 49 years	610	5.9%
50 to 54 years	703	6.7%
55 to 59 years	827	7.9%
60 to 64 years	1,033	9.9%
65 to 69 years	852	8.2%
70 to 79 years	1,160	11.1%
80 years and over	467	4.5%
TOTAL	10,423	

Source: U.S. Census, 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) S0101

When we compare the 55 and older resident population with those between the ages of 25 and 45, we can see that the percentage of the population in that younger age group represents approximate 29.4% of the total population. This age bracket is often thought of as those in need of family housing with three-to-four-bedroom single-family homes being the prominent choice in Scituate. There is a lack of affordable units in this category available to first time homebuyers in Scituate.

13.3 Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Strategy

In 2004, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed legislation in response to affordable housing needs. Subsequent amendments to this law, known as the Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Act (RIGL 45-53) implement a statewide plan to provide safe and affordable housing to low- and moderate-income families, the elderly and low wage workers. The Act requires all municipalities to outline strategies to meet a 10% goal of affordable local housing as defined in the Act. "Affordable" units are required to have a subsidy (State/local), with restrictions to assure they will remain affordable for a minimum of 30 years. Communities that already maintain 10% of their total housing stock as low-moderate income are exempt from the Act. The Act mandates that communities that do not meet their 10% goal must find ways to encourage low-moderate income (LMI) housing development. In 2005, as directed by the Act, each Rhode Island municipality assessed its affordable housing needs and outlined strategies to meet its 10% goal. At the time Scituate's 10% goal was estimated using housing units at the end of the 20-year planning horizon.

As of 2023, the official percentage for Scituate is 0.8%, representing a total of 33 units. This leaves a current deficit of 418 units. The 10% target is a constantly moving one, as new market rate housing stock is added, the required number of low to moderate income units increases as well. As LMI units are constructed and occupied, the number to reach 10% decreases; therefore, it is a goal that is constantly in flux. Since the Town has not met the 10% threshold, it remains subject to housing development through Comprehensive Permits. Such developments may be allowed to override local zoning if they provide a minimum of 25% of the proposed units as LMI housing. Achieving and maintaining the 10% threshold affords the Town more control over local land use decisions in the future.

13.3.1 Housing Affordability

The term affordable housing is used to describe housing for which a household pays no more than 30% of their income on housing. In this plan, the term low- and moderate-income housing is used to describe housing that has also been subsidized and deed restricted for a term of not less than 30 years. According to the HousingWorks RI 2022 Housing Factbook, an individual or family needs an income of approximately \$102,599 to afford to purchase a single-family home. This means that approximately 56.5% of the population of Scituate can afford to purchase a home by today's standards, leaving 43.5% of the population unable to purchase a home in Scituate.

A key feature in determining housing need is to assess the difference between housing and the workforce. Because Scituate has such a small land area dedicated to commercial, manufacturing, or industrial zoning, job opportunities within the Town are limited. Some of the jobs in Scituate are held by those who cannot afford to purchase or rent a home in Town, and salaries and wages for the jobs that are here are relatively low, requiring those who can afford to live in Scituate to commute out of Town for higher paying jobs elsewhere. An essential economic development strategy (outlined in Section 13) is to increase economic viability by making Scituate a desirable place to live and work. The provision of more affordable housing for the Town's workforce is essential to the success of that strategy.

13.3.2 Unmet Need

As discussed above, approximately 21% (874) of the total households in Scituate are considered cost burdened, where more than 30% of gross income is allocated towards housing (see Table 13-6). Whether people are forced by life circumstances or elect to spend more of their income on housing, it equates to less disposable income to put towards necessities such as food, transportation, and healthcare. These limitations impact quality of life but also the local and regional economy.

Table 13-6. Cost Burdened Households in Scituate 2022

	Total in Town	Percent of Total
Households	4,160	100%
Cost Burdened Households	874	21%

Source: Housing Works RI 2022 Housing Fact Book

The 2022 HUD statistic for the Scituate vicinity define “area median income” for a four-person household at \$97,600 per year. The definition from the State law for a moderate-income household is one that earns between 80% and 120% of the area median income. To meet the definition of a moderate-income household, a four-person household in Scituate must earn between \$78,080 and \$117,120. Using the general rule of spending no more than 30% of their income on housing, a four-person family can spend between \$23,424 and \$35,136 per year for housing. A home considered to be affordable by a moderate income four-person household in Scituate should cost between \$222,360 and \$341,028¹². According to the Housing Works RI 2023 Housing Factbook, the median single family home price in Scituate is \$430,000, which is almost \$70,000 higher than a purchase price attainable by a family of four at 120% of area median income.

The Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) developed by HUD is recognized as one of the best sources of data on local housing needs and issues. The data presented in Table 13-7 is the most currently available for the Town of Scituate and provides a realistic snapshot of housing needs in Town.

Table 13-7. Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy Data for Scituate, 2016 - 20

Percentage of HUD Median Area Family Income ^a	Households with at Least 1 Housing Problem	Total Households	Percent of Households
Renters			
≤ 30%	60	80	75.0%
> 30% - ≤ 50%	45	45	100.0%
> 50% - ≤ 80%	0	30	0.0%
> 80% - ≤ 100%	100	180	55.6%
> 100%	0	150	0.0%
Total	205	485	42.3%
Owners			

¹² Rhode Island Housing Purchase Price Calculator <https://www.rihousing.com/purchase-price-calculator/>

Table 13-7. Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy Data for Scituate, 2016 - 20

Percentage of HUD Median Area Family Income ^a	Households with at Least 1 Housing Problem	Total Households	Percent of Households
≤ 30%	80	90	88.9%
> 30% - ≤ 50%	110	180	61.1%
> 50% - ≤ 80%	225	510	44.1%
> 80% - ≤ 100%	120	330	36.4%
> 100%	70	2500	2.8%
Total	605	3615	16.7%

Notes

- a. HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI) is the median family income calculated by HUD for each jurisdiction, in order to determine Fair Market Rents (FMRs) and income limits for HUD programs. HAMFI will not necessarily be the same as other calculations of median incomes (such as a simple Census number), due to a series of adjustments that are made.

Source: 2016 – 2020 HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy data.

https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp/CHAS/data_querytool_chas.html

The CHAS data tracks four individual housing problems, including incomplete kitchen facilities, incomplete plumbing facilities, more than one person per room, and cost burden greater than 30% of household income. Table 13-7 illustrates households with at least one such problem for renter- and owner-households, and by household income. HAMFI stands for HUD Area Median Family Income, which is calculated by HUD for each jurisdiction. The “Percent” column represents the percentage of households in each category with at least one housing problem; for example, the first row of statistics, “60” represents 75.0% of all renter households (80) earning less than 30% HAMFI.

The data shows that approximately 100% of renters earning more than 30% but less than 50% of HAMFI statistically experience one or more housing problems. Of note is the fact that over a third (36.4%) of all homeowners making between 80 and 100% of HAMFI, as well as 2.8% of homeowners making more than that, experience one or more housing problems. This situation may exist due to age and/or conditions of the housing stock, or simply owners choosing to spend more on housing because they value the quality of life in Scituate over other household expenses.

13.3.3 Barriers to Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Development

There are several barriers to low- and moderate-income housing development in Scituate. It is important to understand these issues in order to strategize around them and reach the goal of providing affordable housing within the community. These barriers to development present a significant challenge in meeting the 10% threshold mandated by the state; therefore, the strategies presented in this element rely heavily on rehabilitation of the Town’s existing housing stock, the reuse of existing commercial, industrial, and municipal buildings, and allowing for controlled density increases in appropriate areas of Town to accomplish housing goals. The constraints to development presented here prevent the Town of Scituate from relying too heavily on new construction to meet LMI requirements.

Limited Infrastructure

Almost all of Scituate lacks public water and sewer. This constrains development significantly. High densities of development are very difficult to achieve when both public sewer and water are not available on a site. Having to rely almost exclusively on private wells and onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS) can restrict development densities in the range of one dwelling unit per one acre to over 2 acres, depending on site characteristics. This restriction makes the development of LMI units difficult as land costs drive up the price of development. When units cannot be clustered at higher densities, keeping the cost of the unit down in an affordable range becomes increasingly difficult, if not impossible.

Access to Public Transportation

Scituate has very limited access to public transportation (for a full description see Section 12.2). The Town is served by only one bus route, the 10X route, which is considered an Express route with long distance service, limited hours, and limited stops. This route originates in North Scituate and travels east on Route 6, eventually terminating at Exchange Terrace in Providence. Public transportation access enables residents to commute to work and provides access to services such as shopping. The lack of a more extensive network to provide this transportation access limits appropriate locations for low- and moderate-income housing within the Town.

Scituate Reservoir Watershed

Development patterns in Scituate have historically been directed by the physical constraints of the Scituate Reservoir and its watershed, which supplies water to approximately 60% of the state's population. The PWSB owns approximately 15,004 acres, and another 14,515 acres under private ownership is part of the watershed. Consequently, 43% of the Town is devoted exclusively to the production of water, with another 41% residing within the watershed. This results in approximately 84% of the Town's land area being severely constrained to development. Excluding land owned by PWSB, developed land, and land with development constraints, the vacant land available for residential development totals close to 9,700 acres. Of the remaining "buildable" acreage, approximately 7,600 lies within the watershed and 2,100 acres are outside of the watershed. When we consider that approximately 30% of the available land will be required for infrastructure and supporting development, there is approximately 5,320 acres within the watershed and 1,470 acres outside of the watershed that could be developed as residential housing.

The buildout analysis presented in Chapter 6 *Land Use* indicates that there is development capacity for an additional 2,546 residential units in Town under the current zoning. When we consider that approximately 78% of the developable land area in Town lies within the watershed, we can assume that a similar percentage of the development would occur in this area. That means that approximately 2,000 of the 2,546 units estimated at buildout would occur within the watershed and be subject to the applicable RR 120 and RS120 zoning districts. The assigned zoning density within the watershed is directly related to the environmentally sensitive nature of the watershed and the resource. Increasing density in these areas would place undue pressure on a critical drinking water resource that serves more than half of the state.

As such, Scituate's strategy to meet its 10% LMI threshold must involve creative and focused effort to create LMI housing outside the watershed.

Zoning

Scituate Zoning Ordinance establishes six residential zoning districts (see Section 6.1.2 for a full description of zoning districts). These districts range in minimum lot size from 60,000 square feet to 120,000 square feet, depending on their location within the Town. All the property within the Scituate Reservoir watershed is zoned for a minimum lot size of 120,000 square feet, or 2.75 acres. Large lot size development keeps density low, which often keeps home prices higher. Increasing the existing densities allowed by zoning is problematic because of the lack of public infrastructure for sewer and water and the fact that such a significant portion of the Town lies within the Scituate Reservoir watershed. The density of development required to fulfill the 10% mandate is counterproductive to the regulatory framework that has been established. This framework was established not purely on a desire to keep the Town rural, but more importantly on the basis of protecting the water quality of the Scituate Reservoir.

Environmental Factors

Constraints to development often come in the form of environmental factors. These can range from high water tables, shallow bedrock (ledge), steep slopes, wetlands, waterbodies, and wildlife habitat. With these constraints come higher development costs and less available land overall for development. Scituate has a considerable amount of constrained land and when coupled with the Scituate Reservoir watershed, the availability of unconstrained land for development diminishes significantly. These circumstances can drive up the price of available land for development.

Projected Growth Rate

As demonstrated in this element Scituate's projected growth rate is relatively flat, averaging 12 building permits per year for new residential home construction. When we consider that the build out analysis conducted indicates 2,546 units are available for construction and we consider that an average of 12 of these units will be built each year, it will take 212 years to reach build out under current market conditions (see Chapter 6 *Land Use* for the full buildout analysis).

When we compare this with the current number of LMI units needed to reach the 10% state mandate (419 units) and we consider the number of new units at buildout (6,928) we can assume that a new total number of units to reach the 10% mandate will be 1,105 units (see Table 13-10). Approximately 43% of all new construction units would need to be LMI units to reach the mandate.

At the current average building production rate of 12 units per year, it would take almost 35 years to develop the required LMI units if 100% of residential construction were in the form of LMI units. This is also unrealistic to expect, given the financial infeasibility of LMI housing at scale in single family zoning districts. Even if we conservatively figured that if 25% of all residential construction was for LMI units, it would take approximately 848 years to achieve the 10% goal under the current average yearly building rate and zoning regime. These calculations do not factor in the impact of potential density bonuses associated with comprehensive permit applications. These timelines and the related feasibility of creating LMI units under existing zoning, demonstrate the need to pursue creative strategies to meet LMI housing needs in Scituate, including through the use of comprehensive permit applications and other strategies.

13.3.4 Strategies to Address Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Needs

As previously discussed, at present Scituate needs 419 units of low- and moderate-income housing to meet the 10% threshold. Because Scituate is the home of 60% of the state's water supply, Scituate must

pursue its LMI housing goals in ways that do not put the the health of the watershed and the area's designation as a Critical Resource Area at risk(see Section 13.3.3 above).

Existing Count

Scituate's existing count of LMI units presently stands at 33 units. Table 13-8 provides more information related to the location and type of those units.

Table 13-8. Low- and Moderate-Income Homes in Scituate				
Population	Development Name	Tenure	Address	Number of Units
Elderly	Rockland Oaks	Rental	104 Rockland Street	24
Family	Wineberry Condominiums	Homeownership	Land Way	3
Special Needs	Group Home Beds	N/A	N/A	6

Source: Rhode Island Housing 2021 Statewide LMIH Summary

Pending Units

As of the drafting of this plan there were a total of 85 LMI units proposed before the Town at some stage of review. Table 13-9 provides additional information related to those proposed units.

Table 13-9. Pending Developments with LMI Units Proposed					
Population	Development Name	Tenure	Location	Number of LMI Units Proposed	Application Status
Family	Coldbrook Terrace	Condominium	864 Danielson Pike	3	Master Plan Approved
Family	Hope Mill	Rental	Hope Village	70	Preliminary Plan Approved
Family	Chopmist Hill	Condominium	Chopmist Hill Road	8	Final Plan Approved
Family	Hope River Village	Condominium	Old Hope Kent Road	4	Master Plan Approved

Source: Scituate Planning Department, February 2023

In order to properly plan for the development of LMI units in Scituate it is first important to have a clear understanding of where the Town is and where it must get to in order to achieve the 10% mandate. Table 13-10 provides the necessary information needed to plan for and assess the progress of meeting the 10% threshold.

Table 13-10. LMI Build Out Production	
Data	Calculation
Existing LMI Count	33 units or 0.8%
Existing LMI Count by Population Served	Family units – 3 or 9.0% of total LMI units Elderly units – 24 or 72.7% of total LMI units Other units – 6 or 18.1% of total LMI units
Number of Units Needed to Reach 10% Threshold	$4,517 \times 10\% = 452$ units
Existing LMI unit deficit	$451 - 33 = 418$ units
Forecasted Number of Units at Buildout to Reach 10% Threshold	$4,517 + 6,863 = 11,380$ units $11,380 \times 10\% = 1,138$ units 1,138 projected units – 33 existing units = 1,105
Forecasted deficit at build-out	1,105 units

Proposed Strategies

The construction of 1,105 LMI units over the course of the 212-year anticipated build out of the Town is unrealistic considering the barriers to development outlined in Section 13.3.3 above. Due to the extremely long time period for build out, well beyond the horizon of this plan, the Town has proposed strategies to achieve The Town presents the following strategies to achieve this required milestone.

Strategy 1: New Housing Construction

There are several projects in Town that are approved or in the process of being approved, which include over 80 affordable units. These units will not appear in the Town's inventory until they have been issued a certificate of occupancy. It is anticipated that developers and property owners will continue to apply for comprehensive permits and the result will be a minimum of 25% of the units constructed will be LMI. In some cases, comprehensive permits may be used for higher percentages of LMI units, up to 100% through partnerships with nonprofit organizations or through the use of subsidy, as shown in the proposed project at Hope Village.

Strategy 2: Provide More Land for Multi-family Housing

Scituate's current housing development pattern is overwhelmingly dominated by single-family units. This is a somewhat inefficient use of land and more LMI units could be realized by encouraging multifamily development in appropriate areas. This includes the conversion and/or rehabilitation of existing units and structures.

Implementation Action: Permit Multifamily Housing in Additional Zoning Districts

Multifamily housing is currently only allowed by special use permit in the Business District (B). The Town will amend the zoning ordinance to allow multifamily units in areas outside of the watershed to increase site density for LMI units. This will also increase the financial feasibility of creating LMI units.

Strategy 3: Create Incentives for the Construction of Affordable Housing

Currently, the only method for creating affordable housing in Town is by way of a comprehensive permit. This type of application is regulated by RIGL 45-53. The Town will investigate other approaches for the creation of affordable units as outlined below.

Implementation Action: Establish an Affordable Housing Committee

The Town will create and appoint individuals to an Affordable Housing Committee that will act as a catalyst for the development of low- and moderate-income housing in the Town. The Committee can work with local non-profit organizations, property owners, and developers to investigate approaches and initiatives to construct LMI units and make recommendations to the Town Council on related policy issues.

Implementation Action: Revise the Zoning Ordinance to Provide Specific Requirements for the Application and Review of Comprehensive Permit Applications

The Town will adopt a zoning amendment which establishes application and procedural requirements for those seeking approval for the development of LMI units through the comprehensive permit process. This section will conform to the requirements set forth in RIGL 45-53.

Implementation Action: Revise the accessory family dwelling unit ordinance to provide incentives for ADU's that are affordable and count towards the Town's 10% mandate.

The Town currently allows accessory family dwelling units (ADUs) by special use permit in all residential districts. These units are limited to 600 square feet and are required to have a common foundation and roof. RIGL 45-24-37 was recently expanded to allow ADUs without a special use permit for not only the disabled but those 62 and older. According to HousingWorks RI's Projecting Future Housing Needs Report, new housing demand will outpace population growth because of shrinking household size. Rhode Island residents 65 and older are expected to grow by about 40% regardless of the economic growth rate of the state. Housing cost burdened elderly are expected to grow at a faster rate than other types of households and 94% of new households will be at 120% AMI or lower, with the two largest groups being the elderly and millennials¹³. Both population groups are well suited for accessory family dwelling units. The Town will assess the current ordinance and amend it to include incentives for ADUs that will count towards the Town's 10% mandate for affordable units.

Strategy 4: Allow Higher Density Development Outside of the Scituate Reservoir Watershed

Scituate's residential zoning framework is predicated on land within the watershed and land outside of the watershed (for a full description of zoning districts see Section 6.1.4.). The Town has four residential districts: RR-120, RS-120, RRW-60/80, and RRS 60/80. The major differences between these districts are the uses that are allowed in the districts. RR-120 provides for more agricultural types uses than the RS-120 district, although the dimensional requirements are the same.

Implementation Action: Analyze current zoning for areas of higher density housing outside of the watershed.

The Town will analyze the current zoning framework and determine areas outside of the watershed that may be appropriate for higher density development of affordable housing.

Strategy 5: Leverage Existing Relationships with Social Service Providers to Increase the Number of LMI Units

¹³ Projecting Future Housing Needs Report, HousingWorks RI, 2016 (page 20)

Scituate has existing relationships with social service and housing agencies that can assist in the development of additional LMI units in Town. Scituate should strengthen these existing relationships and attempt to develop additional relationships to enhance the Town's ability to meet the 10% threshold.

Implementation Action: Work with the Scituate Housing Authority to discuss and analyze the creation of additional units in Town for elderly and special needs populations.

Scituate currently has 33 Low- And Moderate-Income units. Of these, 24 are elderly housing units at Rockland Oaks, which is managed by the Scituate Housing Authority, a private non-profit housing provider. The housing authority owns an adjacent parcel that could be developed as additional units in the future. The Town has 6 group home beds in various undisclosed locations. These units should be preserved, and special needs providers are encouraged to locate additional housing in the Town.

Presently, Scituate needs to build 419 LMI units to meet the current 10% requirement. With projected growth it is anticipated that the Town will need a total of 131 additional housing units by 2040. To house the current LMI need and the projected need under the growth projection, Scituate will need 432 units of LMI housing in the next 40 years. Table 13-3 provides the anticipated number of LMI units that could be produced under each strategy described above to meet this projected future need.

Implementation Action: Develop new relationships with nonprofit affordable housing developers to pursue LMI housing development in projects with majority LMI units.

There are multiple experienced nonprofit affordable housing developers in Greater Providence who the Town can grow its relationship with to explore new LMI projects. Entities like Habitat for Humanity of Greater Providence could help with the development of affordable homeownership units, while regional community development corporations and regional affordable housing developers could help explore larger multifamily rental development. Because of their nonprofit mission, these developers are often interested in pursuing units with higher percentages of affordable units than the floor allowed under comprehensive permits. Pursuing majority affordable projects would allow the town to reach its LMI unit goals, more quickly than under the status quo.

Table 13-11. Strategies for Meeting the 10% LMI Threshold by 2040	
Strategy	Anticipated Number of Units
Comprehensive permits	160
Permit multifamily housing in other districts	50
Establish an Affordable Housing Advisory Board	40
Revise the zoning ordinance with specific requirements for a comprehensive permit	15
Revise the accessory dwelling unit ordinance	30
Increase allowable density outside of watershed	100
Leverage relationships with social service providers	37
Total	432

14

CHAPTER 14

Natural Hazards and Climate Change



Town of Scituate, Rhode Island

Community Comprehensive Plan Update

Natural Hazards & Climate Change

Background

A natural hazard is an event or series of events caused by the forces of nature that results in a negative impact on infrastructure, people, or the environment. Natural hazards cannot be prevented and must be planned for in order to increase a community's resilience to the impacts experienced. Natural hazards, and the severity of natural hazard events, is expected to increase with climate change. How we currently respond to natural hazards will have to be adapted as events become more frequent and severe. Natural hazards and climate change impacts have the potential to affect a wide variety of community aspects, as well as the build environment, posing a threat to public health, safety, and welfare. Outlining these potential impacts and developing a road map to mitigate and adapt is an effective way to protect the community, its assets, and the residents.

Strategic infrastructure and thoughtful land use planning are essential components to creating a community that is resilient to natural hazards. There are two components to planning for natural hazards and climate change: planning for adaptation and planning for mitigation. Adaptation planning seeks to reduce the vulnerability of a community to the effects of natural hazards and climate change impacts while mitigation planning entails implementing actions that seek to limit the magnitude of impacts. Current hazard mitigation efforts geared towards protecting the Town's resources, property, infrastructure, and general wellbeing of the residents will need to account for climate change impacts in the future.

Goals



Reduce the risks associated with natural hazard events on residents, infrastructure, and the environment.



Increase the Town's resilience to the impacts of climate change and adapt the Town's mitigation strategies for a changing environment.

Policies

1. Protect and maintain the ongoing operations and functionality of critical facilities.
2. Consider climate change in local decision making as appropriate.

Scituate Natural Hazard Risks

Hazard Type	Probability (low, medium, high)	Potential Impacts
Flooding (riverine)	High	Flooded roadways, loss of services, infrastructure damage, public safety access impediment
Flooding (dam breach)	Hope Mill Dam – Low Gainer Dam – Low Ponagansett Dam – Low	Flooded roadways, loss of services, infrastructure damage, public safety access impediment
Hurricanes and Tropical Storms	High	Infrastructure, population, impassible roads, downed trees and wires
Snow and Ice	High	Vulnerable population shelter in place or evacuating, dangerous road conditions, wires down, public safety access impediments
Severe Storms (hail, lightning, wind)	High	Infrastructure damage, wind damage to trees and wires
Extreme Heat	Medium	Public health, high energy costs
Earthquakes	Low	Minimum to catastrophic dependent upon location and magnitude
Wildfire	Low	Minimum to serious dependent upon location and containment
Drought	Low	Agricultural crops, drinking water supply

Actions



Create an inventory and map of all critical facilities and infrastructure in Town.



Conduct an assessment of back-up power capabilities for critical public buildings to power necessary facilities during hazard events.



Maintain and update the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan at least every five years.



Pursue available funding opportunities to implement actions of this plan and the Hazard Mitigation Plan.



Work with property owners and RIDEM to compile and update emergency action plans for high and significant hazard dams.



Continue to enforce, and update as needed, the Town's floodplain district regulations outlined in the Zoning Ordinance.



Maintain updated communication systems between Emergency Management staff, police, fire, town administration, and residents.

14.0 NATURAL HAZARDS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Scituate will be a community that has prepared its vulnerable assets, areas, and populations to minimize the effects of natural hazards in a changing environment.

A natural hazard is an event or series of events caused by the forces of nature that results in a negative impact on infrastructure, people, or the environment. Natural hazards cannot be prevented and must be planned for in order to increase a community's resilience to the impacts experienced. Natural hazards, and the severity of natural hazard events, is expected to increase with climate change. In Scituate, long-term climate change is likely to cause heavier and more frequent precipitation events, leading to more riverine and flash flooding; longer periods of drought, which can lead to more frequent fires and water availability concerns; increased air and water temperatures; and more frequent extreme heat days and heat waves.¹ Natural hazards and climate change impacts have the potential to affect a wide variety of communities aspects, as well as the build environment, posing a threat to public health, safety, and welfare. Outlining these potential impacts and developing a road map to mitigate and adapt is an effective way to protect the community, its assets, and the residents.

Strategic infrastructure and thoughtful land use planning are essential components of creating a community that is resilient to natural hazards. There are two components to planning for natural hazards and climate change: (a) planning for adaptation; and (b) planning for mitigation. Adaptation planning seeks to reduce the vulnerability of a community to the effects of natural hazards and climate change impacts while mitigation planning entails implementing actions that seek to limit the magnitude of impacts. Current hazard mitigation efforts geared towards protecting the Town's resources, property, infrastructure, and general wellbeing of the residents will need to account for climate change impacts in the future. This section addresses Scituate's management of natural hazards and climate change under the following categories:

- A summary of existing conditions including the most significant threats from natural hazards (Section 14.1).
- A vulnerability analysis that considers priority hazards and how those hazards may impact the community (Section 14.2).
- A discussion of ongoing resilience and mitigation measure currently practiced by the Town (Section 14.3).

The following considerations of a high priority to the Town when thinking through how natural hazards and climate change influence Town policy and decision making:

- Protection of the ongoing operations and functions of critical facilities while reducing risk (Policy #1, Action #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #7).
- Increasing resilience to, and enhancing adaptation efforts for, climate change impacts aimed at protecting the Town's resources and infrastructure (Policy #2, Action #6).

¹ A series of unusually hot days is referred to as an extreme heat event or heat wave (https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-heat-waves#:~:text=A%20series%20of%20unusually%20hot,Heat%2DRelated%20Illnesses%20indicators.)).

14.1 Existing Conditions

The Town of Scituate maintains a Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), which evaluates the impacts of natural hazards and outlines the strategies for mitigating future impacts and damage caused by such hazards. The HMP was last updated in 2016. The HMP is required to be updated every five years by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA). Strategies contained within the HMP include, but are not limited to:

- Prevention
- Property Protection Measures
- Structural Protection Measures
- Public Education and Awareness
- Natural Resource Protection
- Emergency Services Measures

The Town is in the process of updating the current HMP and anticipates concluding this exercise in 2024.

14.1.1 Priority Hazards

The HMP provides a ranked identification of hazards likely to be experienced in Scituate. The Scituate Hazard Mitigation Committee (SHMC) reviewed the list of possible natural hazards and ranked them in relation to probability and impacts. This discussion put the likelihood of these events into historical perspective and recognized that although the probability of an event like riverine flooding is higher, the intensity and potential impacts from less likely events, such as a dam break, could be much further reaching and devastating. Based on those considerations the SHMC determined that the following are considered priority hazards for Scituate:

- Flooding (Riverine)
- Flooding (Dam Breach)
- Hurricane and Tropical Storm
- Snow and Ice
- Severe Storm (hail, lightening, wind)
- Extreme Heat
- Earthquake
- Wildfire
- Drought

The section below details the type of natural hazard, assigns a value to each based on the probability of future occurrence (as identified in the HMP) and the associated impacts with such hazards. The values were determined based upon historic frequency and current conditions as follows:

Low = <25% chance of occurring in a given year

Medium = 25% - 75% chance of occurring in a given year

High = 75% - 100% chance of occurring in a given year

Table 14-1 provides an overall summary of the hazards that were assessed, their probability, and the potential impacts associated with them.

Table 14-1. Natural Hazard Risks

Hazard Type	Probability (low, medium, high)	Potential Impacts
Flooding (riverine)	High	Flooded roadways, loss of services, infrastructure damage, public safety access impediment
Flooding (dam breach)	Hope Mill Dam – Low Gainer Dam – Low Ponagansett Dam – Low	Flooded roadways, loss of services, infrastructure damage, public safety access impediment
Hurricanes and Tropical Storms	High	Infrastructure, population, impassible roads, downed trees and wires
Snow and Ice	High	Vulnerable population shelter in place or evacuating, dangerous road conditions, wires down, public safety access impediments
Severe Storms (hail, lightning, wind)	High	Infrastructure damage, wind damage to trees and wires
Extreme Heat	Medium	Public health, high energy costs
Earthquakes	Low	Minimum to catastrophic dependent upon location and magnitude
Wildfire	Low	Minimum to serious dependent upon location and containment
Drought	Low	Agricultural crops, drinking water supply

Source: Adapted from the Town of Scituate Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2016

14.1.2 Climate Change and Priority Hazards

This section discusses how each identified hazard may be impacted by the effects of climate change. Some categories of hazards have been combined from how they are presented in the HMP.

Flooding

There are two types of flood related hazards in Scituate. Dam-related flooding is when a dam overtops, or components of the dam fail and release impounded water. Riverine flooding is when rivers, streams, and stormwater infrastructure are overcome by an excess of water flow. Stormwater related flooding is when there is a rapid accumulation of runoff from impervious surfaces to the point that the flow exceeds the capacity of the conveyance or storage components of the stormwater system.

With projected climate change impacts producing more frequent and more severe storm events, it is anticipated that both types of flooding events will increase in the future.

Snow and Ice

Snow and ice are a regular occurrence during the winter months in Scituate. The Town experiences higher than average snowfall amounts when compared with Statewide averages. This is due to the

Town's inland location, which makes them less susceptible to warming from rising ocean temperatures. The Town is equipped to handle moderate amounts of snow but when totals reach 18 inches or higher the Town has difficulty keeping the roads clear (Scituate, 2016).

With climate change impacts, it is expected that snow events may become less frequent due to increasing temperatures but when they do occur, they are expected to be more severe in nature. Ice is expected to become a more common occurrence as winter temperatures become warm enough to create favorable icing conditions during winter months.

Severe Storms

For the purposes of this plan, severe storms refer to weather events that contain high winds, lightening, hail, and extreme rain. These weather conditions can happen independently, but more commonly occur simultaneously, during a single event.

It is projected that climate change will produce more intense and more frequent storm events resulting in more damage to the environment and infrastructure in Scituate.

Extreme Heat and Drought

Scituate (and the region) sometimes experience what are considered extreme heat events, which are characterized by a potentially dangerous combination of very high temperatures and exceptionally humid conditions. When this pattern persists over an extended period of time (typically two or more days)² it is classified as a heat wave. Excessive heat can have negative effects on people and infrastructure. Vulnerable populations, such as elderly and those in poor health, can be especially impacted by excessive heat conditions. Those in good health are also vulnerable if they partake in strenuous activity during excessive heat conditions.

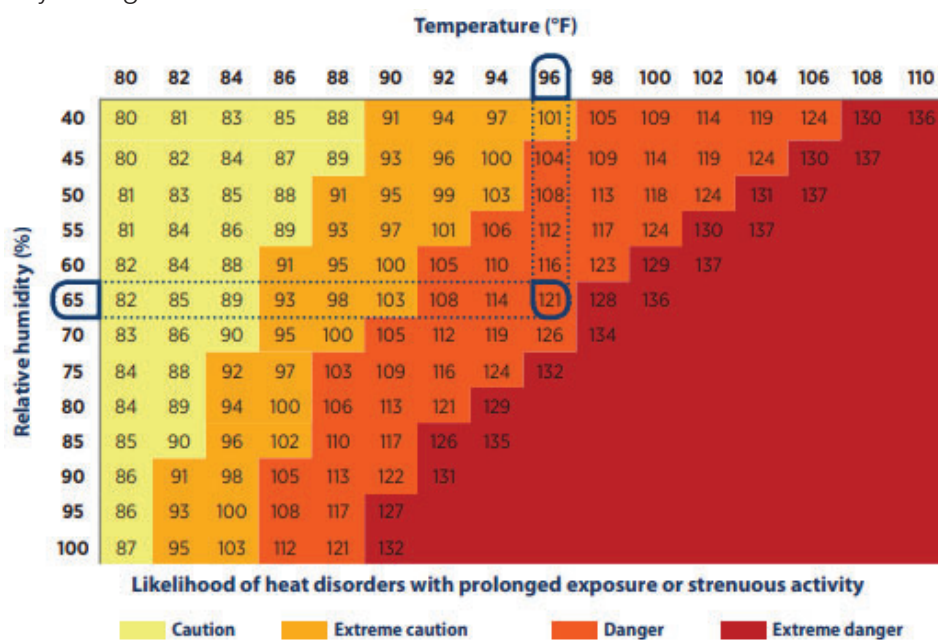


Figure 14-1. NOAA's National Weather Service Heat Index

Source: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-10/documents/extreme-heat-guidebook.pdf>

² <https://scijinks.gov/heat/#:~:text=The%20Short%20Answer%3A,averages%20for%20a%20given%20area.>

Extreme heat can buckle roads, melt power cables, and cause excessive wear and tear on equipment and infrastructure. Figure 14-1 provides more information on how extreme heat is measured and the severity of its impacts.

A drought is a prolonged period of abnormally low rainfall, leading to a shortage of ground and surface water. A drought can last for months, years or may even be declared in as few as 15 days. Droughts affect a wide variety of circumstances including agriculture, drinking water supply, stream flow, habitat, and can have wide reaching economic impacts.

With increasing temperatures due to climate change, it is expected that we will face more extreme heat events and more frequent drought periods.

Earthquakes

Earthquakes are not common occurrences in New England, but they do occur and can be strong enough to cause damage. The most vulnerable structures to earthquakes are those built prior to current seismic building standard and masonry structures. Scituate has many older structures that were built prior to current building code standards.

It is not clear what impacts, if any, climate change will have on earthquakes.

Brushfires and Urban Fires

Rhode Island does not typically experience wildfires. Brushfires, which are the burning of vegetation that is predominantly shrubs, brush, and scrub growth³, are a more common occurrence. Naturally caused fires are most commonly triggered by lightning strikes, while human caused fires can be attributed to smoking, campfires, equipment use, and arson. Three major factors contribute to a fire's burn duration and area, they are: fuel, topography, and weather. Scituate does not experience a significant number of brushfires, but the potential exists given the large areas of forested land in the Town.

Climate change will impact fire occurrences due to increases in temperature and drought conditions. Areas are more susceptible to burning when there have been excessively dry and hot conditions.

14.2 Natural Hazard and Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment

In order to fully understand how to plan for natural hazards and climate change it is necessary to determine the highest priority natural hazards and climate change trends and consider those against the components of the community that may be impacted. In this assessment, priority hazards were identified and compared against certain aspects of the community for potential impacts. Table 14-2 identifies (by placement of an X in the box) which priority hazards are anticipated to affect which aspects of the community. This assessment will assist Scituate in determining where mitigation and planning efforts should be focused related to natural hazards and climate change impacts. The priority hazards in Table 14-2 are those previously identified in the 2016 HMP.

³ <https://www.fs.fed.us/nwacfire/home/terminology.html>

Table 14-2. Natural Hazard Vulnerability Assessment

Community Aspects	Flooding	Hurricanes and Tropical Storms	Snow and Ice	Severe Storms	Extreme Heat	Earthquakes	Wildfires	Drought
Buildings and Infrastructure								
Residential homes and neighborhoods	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Commercial , industrial areas, and businesses	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Historic and cultural sites	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Public facilities and infrastructure	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Public safety infrastructure	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Municipal buildings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
School and libraries	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Major roads and evacuation routes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Public transportation routes	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Water supply infrastructure		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Stormwater drainage systems	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Electricity infrastructure	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Energy production infrastructure	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Dams	X	X	X	X		X		X
Natural Resources								
Parks and recreation	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Water bodies		X		X	X	X		X
Reservoirs		X		X	X	X		X
Wetlands		X		X	X	X		X
Wildlife		X		X	X	X		X
Forests		X		X	X	X	X	X
Conservation lands		X		X	X	X		X
Special Populations								

Table 14-2. Natural Hazard Vulnerability Assessment

Community Aspects	Flooding	Hurricanes and Tropical Storms	Snow and Ice	Severe Storms	Extreme Heat	Earthquakes	Wildfires	Drought
Senior citizens	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Young children	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Low-income persons and households	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Individuals with disabilities	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

14.3 Ongoing Resilience and Mitigation Measures

Below is a summary of some of the principal efforts practiced in Scituate to mitigate the adverse effects of natural hazards and increase resilience.

14.3.1 Building Codes

Municipalities within the State of Rhode Island share a single building code (RIGL 23-27.3-100 et. al). Last amended in 2015, the code, which incorporates the International Building Code, takes into account scientific and engineering knowledge and allows for the utilization of modern materials and methods of construction to provide comprehensive construction requirements designed to mitigate the impacts from natural hazards such as high wind events and snow loading. The Code is enforced by the Scituate Building Department.

14.3.2 Zoning Ordinance

Enabled by state legislation and intended to provide consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, Scituate's Zoning Ordinance is designed to address a variety of purposes, first and foremost the promotion of public health, safety, and general welfare. Purpose's specific to natural hazards and climate change include:

- Providing for the control, protection and/or abatement of air, water, groundwater, and noise pollution, soil erosion, and sedimentation.
- Providing for the protection of the natural, historic, cultural, and scenic character of the town or areas therein.
- Providing for the protection of public investment in transportation, water, stormwater management systems, sewage treatment and disposal, solid waste treatment and disposal, schools, recreation, public facilities, open space, and other public requirements.
- Promoting safety from fire, flood, and other natural or manmade disasters.

Scituate's zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations also help to mitigate the impacts of natural hazards on new and redevelopment projects. The subdivision regulations contain standards to prevent erosion and stormwater flooding and site designs are required to avoid impacting groundwater and aquifer recharge areas. Measures are required to reduce impervious cover and cut and fill on a site which can alter the natural hydrology of the site and ultimately the watershed.

14.3.3 National Flood Insurance Program

Scituate participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which qualifies property owners to purchase insurance against flood losses and requires state and community floodplain management regulations to be adopted and followed to reduce flood-related damages in the Town. This helps mitigate the effects of flooding on new and improved structures. Overall, the program reduces the economic and societal impacts of natural hazards and climate change by promoting the purchase and retention of general risk insurance, but also of flood insurance specifically. The Town has adopted the most recent (September 4, 2013) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) and Flood Insurance Study (FIS). The Building Official has been designated as the NFIP Coordinator to manage the program.

14.3.4 Development Plan Review

In a coordinated effort to help improve community resiliency and reduce costs and damages from natural hazards, the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Review, Planning Department, Town Engineer, Department of Public Works, and the Fire Department, all play a functional role in reviewing and approving new development and redevelopment applications within the Town. The plans are reviewed and commented on in capacities specific to each participant to ensure that septic, water, and storm water regulations are followed during the design, final approval, and construction of the development.

14.3.5 Public Works

In addition to participating in the review of new development and redevelopment projects, Scituate's Public Works Department (DPW) participates in some proactive mitigation measures related to natural hazards. The DPW engages in regular tree trimming and maintenance in order to reduce the likelihood of electrical line damage during storm events. Similarly, they regularly maintain and manage town roads and drainage systems to avoid street flooding during high rain events.

14.3.6 Emergency Operations Plan

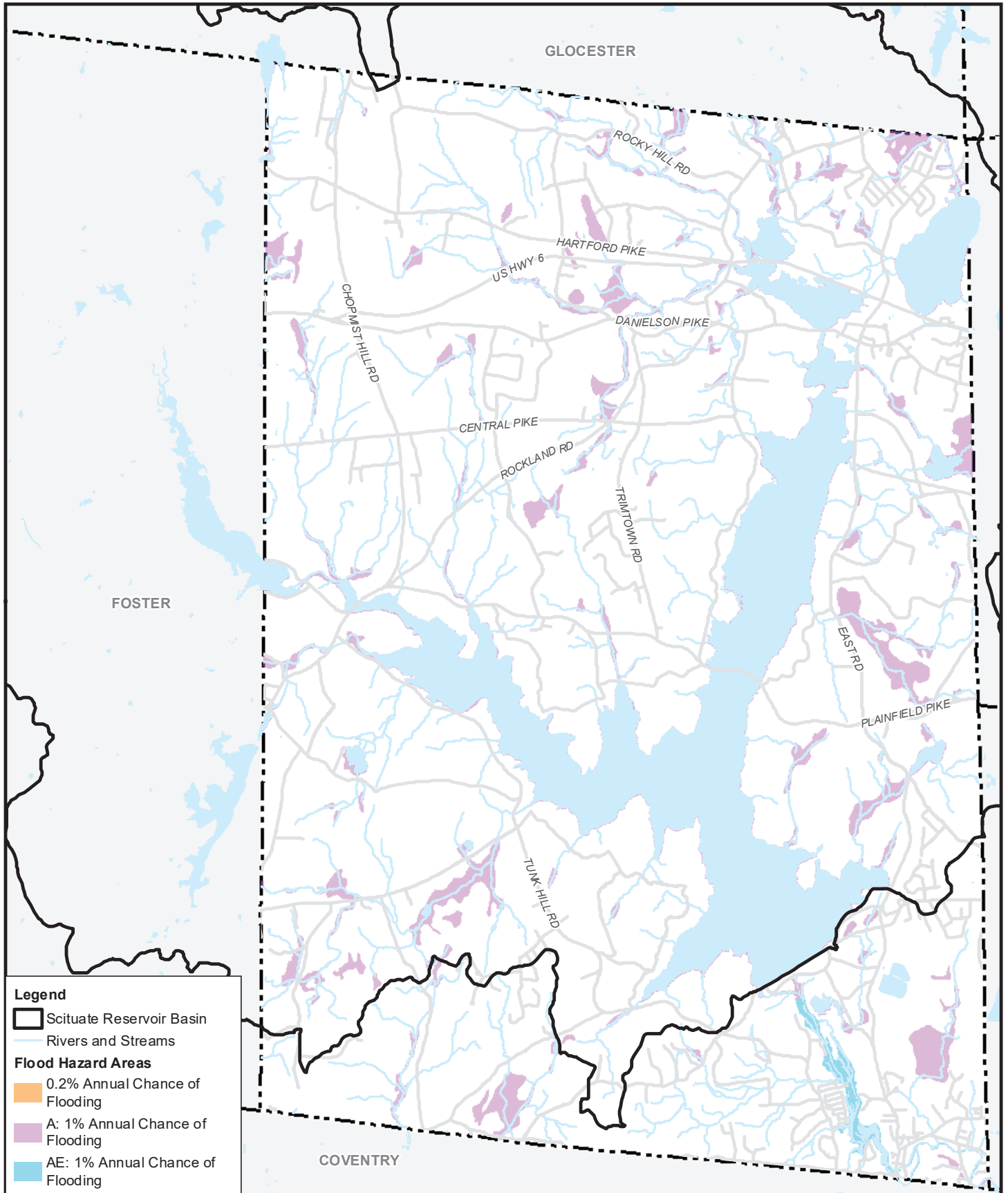
An emergency operations plan (EOP) is a written plan that describes how the government and supporting services will respond to and recover from disasters. It establishes overall authority, roles, and functions of different agencies and departments involved in emergency management. An EOP is a key component of an emergency management program that helps to coordinate and guide response actions during incidents, including natural hazard events.

Scituate adopted an EOP on March 14, 2023. The EOP adopted by the Town outlines Scituate's approach to emergency operation and provide general guidance for emergency management activities, assigning responsibilities for various emergency task for members and leader of Town government.

14.3.7 Gainer Dam Emergency Action Plan

Gainer Memorial Dam is classified by RIDEM as a Significant Hazard dam meaning that failure or misoperation will result in no probable loss of human life but could cause major economic loss, disruption of lifeline facilities, or impact other concerns detrimental to the public's health safety or welfare. Providence Water is the owner and operator of Gainer Dam. The Town is currently working with RIDEM, RIEMA, and Providence Water to update the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) for Gainer Dam. Although Providence Water owns and operates the dam, the Town plays an important role as the EAP Coordinator. The EAP Coordinator is responsible for document revision and distribution, training schedules, coordination of EAP exercises, and reviews, updates, and distribution of the EAP as necessary. The Town departments of Public Works, Police, and the Fire Departments also play important

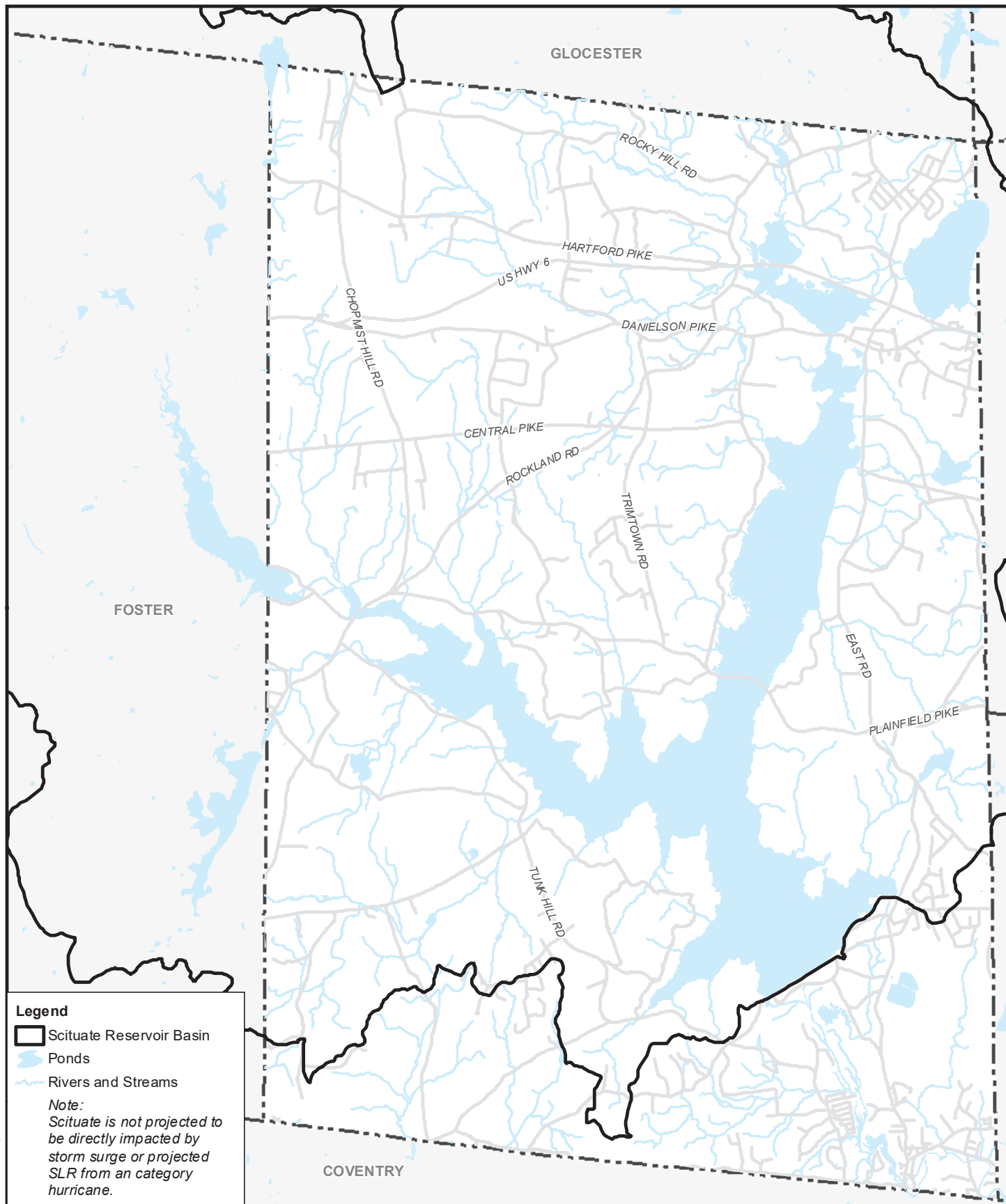
roles in the associated safety protocols that are put in place to protect Scituate residents' life and property.



MAP NC-1: STORM FLOOD INUNDATION AREAS

TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE





**MAP NC-2: CATEGORY 1 THROUGH CATEGORY 4
HURRICANE INUNDATION AREAS**

**TOWN OF SCITUATE, RI
2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**



15

CHAPTER 15
Energy



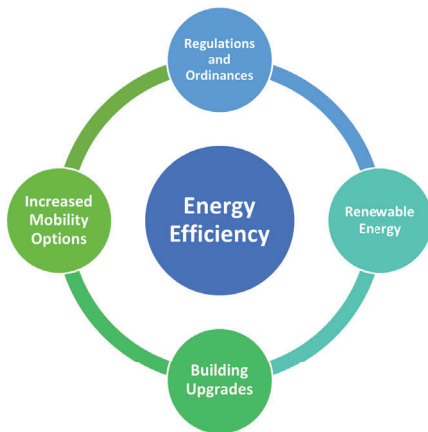
Town of Scituate, Rhode Island

Community Comprehensive Plan Update

Energy

Background

The Town of Scituate is concerned with making sound energy consumption and production decisions related to electricity, heating and cooling, and transportation uses. Reducing energy consumption through community involvement and strategic municipal planning can make a significant impact on the State's energy demands. This element recognizes the connection between energy consumption and land use-related issues. Requirements for energy-efficient building design and siting can improve energy efficiency, as can improvements to circulation patterns and increased density of development in certain areas. The Town's primary role related to energy is to ensure prudent energy usage decisions are being made on behalf of the Town and its residents.



Policies

1. Increase energy efficiency of municipal and school department facilities and vehicles.
2. Ensure that municipal and school department outsourcing, and procurement procedures contain performance-based evaluation measures related to energy efficiency.
3. Through public education and awareness, encourage residents and businesses to reduce their energy consumption and implement energy-efficiency measures.
4. Support renewable energy development that is sustainable, environmentally sensitive, appropriately scaled, and sited, and in accordance with the Town's Future Land Use Map.

Goals



Ensure safe, cost effective, and plentiful energy for all residents and efficient energy usage at Town facilities.



Continually evaluate and consider diverse and innovative sources of energy for appropriate applications within Town.



Provide resources and set policies to achieve the Town's energy efficiency goals.

Actions



Study energy usage by municipal buildings, equipment, and vehicles to determine where improvements in energy conservation and efficiency can be most effectively accommodated.



Coordinate with the Scituate School Department to investigate and implement ways to improve energy efficiency in school buildings and vehicles.



Amend the zoning ordinance and adopt performance standards and siting guidelines for the development of renewable energy production.



Work with Federal, State, regional, and utility partners to capitalize on grants and other incentives to help fund public and private energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.



Consider development and implementation of a town-wide energy efficiency program where residents, businesses, and other entities can be rewarded with certification and recognition based on a set of established energy efficiency criteria.



Implement a renewable energy and energy resilience education program through the Town and School Department to increase public awareness of the importance of energy conservation and resiliency practices.

15.0 ENERGY

Scituate will be a community that is energy efficient in all its municipal functions and support the development of appropriately located and scaled public and private renewable energy.

How energy is produced and consumed has become an increasingly critical topic of discussion because it has become a defining resource throughout Rhode Island. Rhode Island's Energy Plan, *Energy 2035 (Report 120¹)*, sets a goal of creating affordable and sustainable energy infrastructure that can meet the State's energy demands and stimulate economic growth.

The Town of Scituate is concerned with making sound energy consumption and production decisions related to electricity, heating and cooling, and transportation uses. Reducing energy consumption through community involvement and strategic municipal planning can make a significant impact on the Town and State's energy demands. This chapter recognizes the connection between energy consumption and land use-related issues. Requirements for energy-efficient building design and siting can improve energy efficiency, as can improvements to circulation patterns and increased density of development in certain areas.

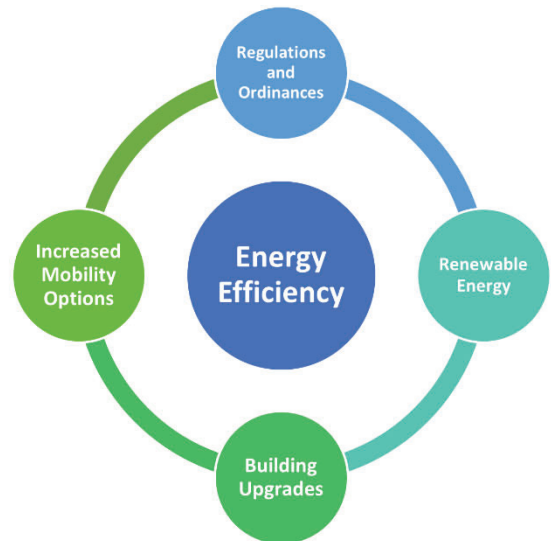


Figure 15-1: Local Energy Efficiency Measures

The Town's primary role related to energy is to ensure prudent energy usage decisions are being made on behalf of the Town and its residents. This includes:

- Ensuring that there is adequate energy for municipal consumption for both existing and proposed development, and that decisions are being made in the context of future demand. **(Policy #1 , Action #1, 2, and 5)**
- Improving public awareness of energy efficiency practices and energy resilience measures that are available at the municipal and individual homeowner level. **(Policy #3, Action #5 and 6)**
- Ensuring that the energy that is provided is safe, efficient, and cost-effective and that the municipality and the residents have access to knowledge and resources related to energy efficiency. **(Policy #1, 2, and 3, Action #1, 2, 4, 5, and 6)**
- Ensuring that through appropriate land use controls, renewable energy facility siting is appropriate and consistent with the needs and desire of the community. **(Policy #4, Action #3)**

¹ <http://www.energy.ri.gov/policies-programs/ri-energy-laws/state-energy-plan.php>

This element of the plan provides important context for understanding the role energy plays for the Town of Scituate and with its residents. Energy is becoming a defining feature in how municipalities develop and make land use decisions. This element addresses the following issues related to energy:

- The importance of energy efficiency at the municipal and community level ([Section 15.1](#)).
- The various sources of renewable energy available to the Town and its residents ([Section 15.2](#)).
- Energy and how it relates to land development decisions and regulations ([Section 15.3](#)).
- Issues and opportunities for the Town and School District related to energy ([Section 15.4](#)).
- An overview of energy related findings from the opinion survey ([Section 15.5](#)).

15.1 Energy Efficiency

Energy efficiency can be described as a reduction in the amount of power that has to be generated to meet energy needs. *Energy 2035* identified increased efficiency as the most valuable tool available to effectively meet the state's energy needs. Energy efficiency can be accomplished by individual actions, both small and large. The Town can take steps to reduce their energy consumption as well. Energy efficiency measures come in a wide range of cost and effort, but simple measures, such as replacing conventional light bulbs with LED fixtures and turning off lights when they are not in use, are easy, low effort measures every resident can take to effect change.

The Town intends to pursue energy efficiency measures related to:

- Municipal buildings
- Vehicle fleet
- Regulatory framework
- Public education

The proper way to determine the energy efficiency measures the Town should pursue, is to conduct an updated energy audit of municipal buildings, vehicles, and practices. This will ensure that the Town invests its energy efficiency efforts in actions that are appropriate, efficient, and financially feasible. The Town will also work with the school district to assess measures that can be implemented as part of a joint effort between the Town and school district. For those energy efficiency measures where there is overlap between school and Town efforts, an attempt will be made to work together and benefit from the financial efficiency of implementing measures in a coordinated manner.

The Town will consider opportunities to improve overall energy efficiency, adopt regulations that will allow for properly sited renewable energy projects, improve energy conservation efforts, and educate the community on ways they can contribute to energy efficiency in their homes. The goals, policies, and action items related to this element are intended to support the Town of Scituate's overall vision of increased energy efficiency. The goals, policies, and actions are detailed in Chapter 5 *Implementation Program* of this plan.

15.2 Renewable Energy

According to *Energy 2035*, renewable energy is energy that comes from resources that are naturally replenished on a human timescale, such as sunlight, rain, wind, tides, waves, and geothermal heat. Renewable energy provides an alternative or supplement to traditional energy that relies on fossil fuels. There are many types of renewable energy but two of the most common are wind and solar. For these sources, the technology has advanced to the point that small or moderate scale installations can be viable investments for property owners, homeowners, businesses, and government. This element focuses on those as being the most readily available renewable resource, as they are the most scalable and economically viable for the Town and its residents.

Renewable energy, when properly sited and permitted, can provide a cleaner and less environmentally harmful source of power. It can also provide for a decrease in long term energy costs, an increase in

COMMON RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES

Solar - Solar energy is collected from sunlight and converted to electricity through solar panels. Solar energy systems can be installed on the roofs of existing and new structures or on the ground. When properly sited, solar energy systems can generate enough electricity to meet the needs of a building or home and produce excess energy to be sold back to the electric grid.

Wind - Wind power is generated with the use of wind energy conversion systems, most commonly in the form of wind turbines. Conversion systems convert the kinetic energy of the wind into electricity for consumption.

Geothermal – Geothermal energy utilizes the heat contained in rocks and fluids beneath the earth's crust by digging wells to access steam and hot water, then used to drive turbines connected to electricity generators.

Hydroelectric – Hydropower is generated by converting the force of moving water into electricity by spinning a generator's turbine blades.

Biomass – Biomass is organic material that comes from plants and animals, including crops, waste wood, and trees. When biomass is burned, the chemical energy is released as heat and can generate electricity with a steam turbine.

the Town's energy independence, and a reduction in pollutants. It is important that the Town consider and adopt a regulatory framework that allows for renewable energy development that is sensitive to Scituate's unique environment. When developing renewable energy policy, the Town must consider the desire of the residents, the local and statewide need for renewable energy, as well as independent landowners' rights to develop renewable energy projects. This delicate balancing of interests will require the Town to consider all perspectives, as well as the need to preserve and protect the Scituate Reservoir and watershed.

15.2.1 Solar Energy

The Town adopted a solar ordinance in December of 2022. The ordinance addresses residentially scaled, roof-mount systems up to large-scale, commercial installations. The solar ordinance permits roof mounted solar in all zoning districts and provides a clear and concise regulatory framework for local

permitting of ground mounted solar installations. The ordinance attempts to provide for a balanced approach whereby Scituate contributes positively to renewable energy production for the state, while maintaining the rural character and quality that define it. During the drafting process, residents voiced concern with allowing for an overabundance of solar installations within the community. In response, the ordinance was drafted to allow for residential small scale solar facilities by right and commercial solar facilities by right or special use permit in most zones in Town. These installations are subject to a review process and performance standards outlined in the zoning ordinance.

15.2.2 Wind Energy

The Town also adopted a wind ordinance in December of 2022. The ordinance prohibits utility-scale wind facilities, which are defined as a wind facility where the primary use is intended to be electrical generation that will be sold wholesale utility markets. Small scale wind energy systems and wind turbines are permitted by special use permit in all zoning districts. A wind turbine is a single structure, while a small wind energy facility is located at a commercial, industrial, agricultural, residential, institutional, or public facility that is designed and intended to generate electrical output primarily for the use or benefit of structures on the same lot or on contiguous commonly owned lots. Small wind facilities are only those that do not exceed the nameplate capacity of 80 kilowatts or less with a total height not to exceed 38 feet.

15.3 Energy and Land Development

Energy usage and efficiency can be directly linked to land development in two distinct ways. One, by way of energy facility siting. Or in other words, land use controls can affect where renewable energy production can be developed. The second relates to more traditional development (i.e., infrastructure, housing) and how it is designed and located, which has financial and environmental implications regarding energy consumption.

Energy facility siting has become a somewhat contentious topic in Rhode Island. Solar and wind energy technologies do not come without siting issues and concerns, typically at the local level. Wind technology involves tall turbines that pose issues related to shadow flicker, mechanical noise, and fall zones. Solar installations introduce a different set of issues and can be viewed as a competitor for land that would otherwise be available for open space or housing development. These competing interests have sometimes created a contentious dynamic when local boards and commissions are faced with decisions regarding the siting and design of renewable energy production.

Another connection between energy and land development is related to traditional patterns of development. Site and building design can dramatically affect the energy efficiency of a development. When buildings and sites are designed with energy efficiency in mind, the overall amount of consumption on the site, and within the building, can be reduced. This can be accomplished by implementing measures such as orienting buildings to increase solar capture, using recycled and local building materials in construction, and many others. Layout of the built environment and roadway design can also impact vehicle efficiency and gasoline consumption. Energy use by vehicles can be reduced by designing roadways to reduce vehicle stopping, locating housing near services, and increasing the density of development.

The most effective way to ensure that development-driven energy efficiency and appropriate energy facility siting are achieved is to build requirements into a community's land development ordinances and regulations. This means drafting a zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations that identify energy efficiency and appropriate site location and design as goals and lay out the requirements for developments to achieve those goals. The Town will assess their current regulatory framework with an eye towards making amendments that will produce more energy efficient development in the community. The first step in doing this will be to evaluate and assess the current regulatory framework and identify areas for improvement.

15.4 Issues and Opportunities

15.4.1 Solar Development

The installation of solar panels is a relatively easy and cost-effective measure that can be taken by homeowners and businessowners to become more energy efficient. Individuals have a variety of solar installation companies to choose from when considering implementing such measures on the roof of their home or business. Roof mounted solar panels are low profile and unobtrusive in most circumstances, although their installation on historic buildings can be a concern as they can compromise the historic nature of the structure. As previously discussed, the Town recently adopted a solar ordinance that regulates both ground mounted and roof mounted solar installations. The Town should encourage homeowners and businesses to install roof mounted panels in appropriate locations.

Ground mounted installations can pose more of an issue as they do have the ability to impact neighbors and scenic quality. The Town did take into consideration how these installations could impact natural resources and rural character as they developed their solar ordinance and included mitigation measures in an attempt to retain rural character and buffer neighborhood impacts. Since the adoption of the solar ordinance the Town has not received any applications for solar installations. The Town is prepared to revisit the ordinance, if after they have put it into practice, they realize there are adjustments that need to be made in order to better protect natural or cultural resources or better mitigate neighborhood impacts.

15.4.2 Energy Efficiency Upgrades

The School Department has taken measures to improve their energy efficiency. Over the past two years all of the lighting in the four school buildings have been upgraded to LED fixtures. This was accomplished with support and funding from National Grid. A component of the School Department's capital plan is to place all the Building Management System controls on a central server. This would connect all of the building equipment, like boilers, fans, and HVAC, together to gain control of the operations and to automate the processes for each piece of equipment. Doing so will save money by not running equipment unnecessarily. This would include the connection of refrigeration units to confirm operational temperatures to avoid over or under cooling, reducing product loss and ensuring continued optimal operation. The central service would be able to be accessed remotely and would trigger an alarm if an equipment was not operating properly. This is scheduled to take place over the next five years. The department has a power purchase agreement that allows the district to purchase energy generated by wind power.

The Town is in the process of working on energy efficiency upgrades with the School Department's assistance. The Town is considering measures such as updating mechanical equipment and replacing existing lighting fixtures with more energy efficient LED fixtures.

15.5 Opinion Survey of Scituate: Energy

In May of 2021, the Town posted an online survey for residents as part of the comprehensive planning process. The survey asked several questions related to energy usage and regulations by the Town and school district. A full summary of the survey results can be found in Appendix A. In summary, the survey reported the following principal findings related to energy:

- Survey respondents were asked what factors contribute to their quality of life in Scituate. Renewable energy was one option, for which 31.9% reported it was important, 16.9% reported it was very important, 28.1% reported it was somewhat important, and 23.1% reported that it was not important to their quality of life.
- When respondents were presented with categories that a comprehensive plan can address, they were asked to rank the importance of each category. When asked to rank the importance of sustainability and energy efficiency as a topic to be addressed in the comprehensive plan 24.8% of respondents indicated that it was very important to address, 26.1% indicated it was important, while 31.1% indicated it was somewhat important and 18% reporting it was not important to address.
- The survey asked respondents to indicate what types of development Scituate needs more, less, or the same amount of. When asked about commercial scale renewable energy, 31.1% of respondents indicated that more was needed, 31.9% indicated less was needed, while 36.9% indicated the Town had achieved the correct amount. When asked about residential scale solar development, 44.1% of respondents indicated more was needed, 19.9% indicated less was needed, and 36% of respondents indicated that the same amount that currently exists was appropriate.
- Survey respondents were asked to rank their support for particular activities that the Town could undertake. When asked about sustainability and energy efficiency efforts, 30.4% of survey respondents indicated that they were very supportive, 26.1% indicated they were supportive, 29.8% indicated they were somewhat supportive, while 13.7% indicated they were not supportive.

These survey results indicate that the Town is somewhat evenly divided on renewable energy development on how it contributes to quality of life in Scituate. The same holds true for residential scale solar development with only about an 8% difference between those who believe more is needed (44.1%) and those who believe the right amount has already been achieved (36%). The clear message that was a result of questions related to renewable energy is that a majority of residents feel that the Town either needs less commercial scale renewable energy (31.9%) or that the Town had already achieved an appropriate amount (36.9%). Overall, survey respondents were supportive to some degree of sustainability and energy efficiency efforts, with 86.3% indicating some level of support.