

LAND USE

Introduction

Bristol's land use pattern reflects more than three centuries of development shaped by its waterfront setting, maritime history, historic neighborhoods, transportation corridors, institutions, and natural resources. The Town includes a compact and walkable historic downtown, established residential neighborhoods, a working waterfront, commercial and industrial areas, Roger Williams University, agricultural and open lands, and an extensive network of public and protected open space.

Bristol is also a largely developed community. Opportunities for large-scale development of previously undeveloped land are increasingly limited, and future change will occur primarily through redevelopment, adaptive reuse, infill development, and reinvestment in existing properties and developed areas. Bristol's remaining undeveloped lands contain important natural, agricultural, scenic, historic, and cultural resources that contribute significantly to the Town's character and environmental quality.

The Town's land use strategy therefore focuses on directing development and redevelopment to appropriate locations, making efficient use of existing infrastructure, protecting established neighborhoods and employment areas, and conserving important natural and cultural resources. Land use decisions must also respond to changing housing needs, evolving State land use requirements, climate change and coastal hazards, and the need to maintain a strong and diverse local economy.

Land use planning is closely related to each of the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Housing, transportation, economic development, natural resource protection, historic preservation, public infrastructure, recreation, and climate resilience all influence where and how Bristol develops. The goals, policies, and Future Land Use Map contained in this element provide the overall framework for guiding future land use and development in Bristol.

Progress Since the 2016 Comprehensive Plan

Since adoption of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, Bristol has advanced a number of land use and zoning initiatives. Key accomplishments include:

- Established the Metacom Mixed Use District and Route 136 Overlay to guide development and redevelopment along Metacom Avenue and address mixed-use development, site and building design, neighborhood compatibility, transportation, and access.

- ~~Support continued investment, reinvestment, and business growth within established employment areas, including the Bristol Industrial Park, Tupelo Street area, Franklin Street area, and Unity Park, with an emphasis on manufacturing, marine trades, technology, research, and other Blue Economy businesses. Continued development and reinvestment in established employment areas, including the Bristol Industrial Park, Tupelo Street area, and Unity Park, supporting manufacturing, marine trades, technology, research, and other Blue Economy businesses.~~
- Created the Public Institutional (PI) zoning district in 2019 to recognize and protect institutional uses of Town-owned property.
- Adaptively reused former municipal and school properties to meet changing community needs, including conversion of the former Guiteras School to Town Hall and reuse of the former Walley School for senior services.
- Completed the Bristol Maritime Center and other waterfront improvements supporting public access, recreational boating, marine activity, and use of Bristol Harbor.
- Continued use of Educational Institutional zoning and institutional master plan review to coordinate development at Roger Williams University with Town land use, transportation, infrastructure, neighborhood, and environmental considerations.
- Protected natural resources, agricultural land, open space, and significant landscapes through conservation planning, easements, acquisition, and other land protection efforts.
- Continued investment in municipal recreation and open-space properties, including Town Beach, the Sports Complex, Quinta-Gamelin Community Center, and Town Common.
- Completed or advanced drainage, flood mitigation, and water-quality improvements in the Silver Creek and Tanyard Brook watersheds identified through prior planning efforts.
- More fully integrated flooding, sea level rise, stormwater management, coastal hazards, and climate resilience into development review, infrastructure planning, and other municipal decisions.

Public Input

Public input at workshops reflected strong support for managing future growth in a way that preserves Bristol's historic character, established neighborhoods, open spaces, waterfront, and natural resources. Residents generally supported reinvestment in already-developed areas while expressing concern about continued development pressure on remaining open land, environmentally sensitive areas, and locations where existing infrastructure may limit additional development. These themes were echoed throughout discussions of housing, economic development, natural resources, transportation, and historic preservation.

A recurring theme was the need to make better use of land that is already developed. Participants identified vacant and underutilized buildings and properties as

opportunities for redevelopment and adaptive reuse and supported directing investment toward these areas rather than expanding development into remaining open land. Suggestions included revitalizing commercial properties, reusing vacant buildings, encouraging smaller-scale and mixed-use development in appropriate locations, and creating walkable mixed-use centers. Metacom Avenue was frequently identified as an area where redevelopment could improve the appearance and function of the corridor. Survey comments similarly linked redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties with opportunities for housing, economic development, and preservation of open land.

Protection of remaining open land and environmentally sensitive areas was another strong theme. Residents expressed concern about development affecting wetlands, flood-prone areas, watersheds, and other sensitive lands and called for stronger protection of these resources. More than 80 percent of survey respondents rated open space preservation as very important, while climate resilience was also a significant priority, including stormwater and flood management, shoreline protection, and preservation of natural buffers. Workshop participants similarly identified wetland protection, continued open space preservation, development of already-developed or underutilized land, and stronger regulatory protection of environmentally sensitive areas as priorities.

Residents also emphasized maintaining Bristol's small-town and historic character as change occurs. Public comments supported a walkable and active Downtown, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings, protection of established neighborhoods and historic resources, and continued opportunities for local businesses and employment. At the same time, participants raised concerns about infrastructure limitations, development intensity, and the effects of new development on neighborhood character and sensitive lands. These priorities reinforce the importance of coordinating future land use decisions with transportation, infrastructure capacity, environmental conditions, and the character of surrounding areas.

Existing Development Pattern

Map LU1: Existing Land Use illustrates how land is currently developed and used throughout Bristol based on the most recent available Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS) land use data. Unlike the Zoning Map, which identifies how property may be developed under the Zoning Ordinance, the Existing Land Use Map depicts the uses currently present on the ground. The map identifies residential, commercial, industrial, mixed-use, institutional, agricultural, recreation, open space, and other land uses, as well as wetlands, conservation lands, transportation and utility corridors, and undeveloped lands.

Residential uses comprise the largest share of Bristol's developed land. Development ranges from the compact neighborhoods surrounding Downtown to lower-density residential areas in the eastern and southern portions of Town. Most residential neighborhoods are well established, and future residential development is expected to occur primarily through infill, redevelopment, adaptive reuse, accessory dwelling units, and other housing opportunities within existing developed areas rather than through large-scale subdivision of undeveloped land.

Downtown Bristol remains the Town's civic, commercial, cultural, and tourism center. Its traditional street pattern, historic buildings, mix of residential and nonresidential uses, public institutions, waterfront, and pedestrian-oriented development distinguish it from other commercial areas of Town. Maintaining this mixed-use character while accommodating appropriate reinvestment and adaptive reuse is an important land use priority.

Metacom Avenue is Bristol's principal highway-oriented commercial corridor and includes commercial, residential and municipal properties. The corridor provides important goods, services, employment, and transportation connections but also presents opportunities for redevelopment of underutilized properties, improved site design, access management, pedestrian and bicycle improvements, and better transitions between commercial development and adjoining residential neighborhoods.

Industrial and employment uses are concentrated primarily north of Gooding Avenue, in and around the Bristol Industrial Park and Tupelo Street area, and at Unity Park. These areas provide an important land base for manufacturing, marine industries, technology businesses, services, and other employment uses. Maintaining sufficient land for these activities is important to Bristol's economy and tax base, particularly as State housing and adaptive reuse requirements create new opportunities for residential and mixed-use development.

Roger Williams University is one of the Town's largest institutional land uses and a significant employer and economic resource. Continued coordination between the Town and University is important as the campus evolves, particularly with respect to Ferry Road, transportation and infrastructure capacity, shoreline and natural resources, and surrounding residential areas.

Despite Bristol's developed character, significant open space, agricultural lands, wetlands, coastal resources, and other undeveloped lands remain. These lands contribute to water quality, wildlife habitat, flood protection, recreation, scenic character, and the Town's historic landscape. Some large privately and institutionally owned properties may face future development, making early coordination and consideration of conservation and appropriate development strategies important.

Existing Zoning

The Town of Bristol Zoning Ordinance regulates the location, type, intensity, and character of development. As illustrated on **Map LU2: Zoning**, residential districts comprise the majority of Bristol's land area and accommodate a range of development patterns, from compact neighborhoods surrounding the historic downtown to lower-density residential neighborhoods throughout other areas of Town. Commercial and mixed-use districts are concentrated within Downtown and along the Metacom Avenue (RI Route 136) corridor, while manufacturing districts are located primarily north of Gooding Avenue and east of Hope Street. Overlay districts supplement the underlying zoning by addressing the unique characteristics and planning objectives of designated areas. Institutional, waterfront, agricultural, open space, and planned development districts provide for specialized land uses throughout the community. Overlay districts establish additional standards to protect historic resources and natural areas and guide development within specific areas of Town.

Zoning Category	Existing Districts	Zoning General Pattern/Purpose	Land Use
Residential	R-6, R-8, R-10, R-10SW, R-15, R-20, R-20SP, R-40, R-40W, R-80	Range of residential districts accommodating compact to low-density development patterns	
Commercial/Mixed Use	LB, GB, D, MMU	Neighborhood, general commercial, Downtown, and mixed-use development	
Manufacturing	M	Manufacturing, marine-related, technology, and other employment uses	
Institutional	EI, PI	Educational and public institutional uses	
Agricultural/Open Space	AG, OS	Agricultural and protected/open-space uses	
Waterfront	W, WLDP	Waterfront and water-related uses and redevelopment	

Zoning Category	Existing Districts	Zoning General Pattern/Purpose	Land Use
Planned Development	LDP	Flexible development and redevelopment	
Historic Preservation/Conservation	HPC	Protection and compatible use of historic and conservation properties	

Several zoning districts are particularly relevant to the land use strategies addressed in this Plan. The Metacom Mixed Use (MMU) District provides for mixed-use development and redevelopment along Metacom Avenue, while the Downtown (D) District supports the traditional mix of commercial, residential, civic, and cultural uses within the historic downtown. Educational Institutional (EI) zoning and the institutional master plan process provide a framework for development at Roger Williams University, while the Public Institutional (PI) District recognizes Town-owned institutional properties. Agricultural (A), Open Space (OS), and Historic Preservation and Conservation (HPC) zoning provide additional tools for protecting agricultural, open space, historic, and conservation lands.

Overlay Districts

The **Historic District Overlay** protects areas of architectural and historical significance and establishes additional review requirements intended to preserve Bristol's historic character. Established in 1987, the district includes approximately 619 properties representing more than 300 years of architectural development and historic significance.

The **Route 136 Overlay** applies to properties with frontage along Metacom Avenue and establishes additional development and design standards addressing the appearance and function of the corridor, compatibility with adjoining neighborhoods, scenic resources, transportation access, and public safety.

The **Resource Conservation and Creative Development (RC&CD) Overlay** provides for conservation-oriented development that clusters residential development to preserve open space, agricultural land, natural resources, and historic and cultural features.

Redevelopment, Infill, and Adaptive Reuse

Because Bristol is largely developed, redevelopment and reuse of existing properties will play an increasingly important role in accommodating future housing, economic activity, and community needs.

Redevelopment provides opportunities to reinvest in vacant or underutilized properties without extending development into remaining open lands, consistent with community support for directing new investment toward already-developed areas. It can also support new housing opportunities, strengthen commercial and employment areas, improve site design and infrastructure, and address properties developed under standards that no longer reflect current Town objectives.

Not every site is equally appropriate for increased development intensity. Redevelopment should consider surrounding neighborhood character, transportation and infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, historic resources, climate vulnerability, and the continued need for commercial and industrial land.

Recent changes to Rhode Island land use and housing laws have expanded opportunities for adaptive reuse and residential development in circumstances where local regulations previously provided greater discretion over changes in use. Bristol's approach should recognize these requirements while using the authority available to the Town to address site design, neighborhood compatibility, infrastructure, environmental resources, historic character, and other local planning considerations.

Downtown Bristol

Downtown Bristol's compact development pattern, historic buildings, waterfront setting, civic institutions, businesses, restaurants, and residences create a mixed-use environment that is central to the Town's identity and economy. The combination of uses within a walkable setting is one of Downtown's defining characteristics and should remain the basis for future land use decisions.

Context-sensitive infill provide opportunities for continued investment and additional housing while maintaining building scale, historic development patterns, pedestrian orientation, and neighborhood character.

Land use decisions should also reinforce connections between Downtown and the waterfront and support the public spaces, streetscapes, pedestrian environment, and civic uses that contribute to Downtown's vitality.

Metacom Avenue

Metacom Avenue serves as Bristol's principal north-south commercial and transportation corridor. It accommodates a substantial share of the Town's commercial

activity as well as residential, institutional, industrial, and mixed-use properties. Portions of the corridor are characterized by automobile-oriented development, large paved areas, multiple curb cuts, and properties with redevelopment potential.

The Town has undertaken extensive planning for Metacom Avenue and established the Metacom Mixed Use District and Route 136 Overlay to guide development and redevelopment. These tools provide a foundation for improving the corridor over time while recognizing its continued importance for commercial activity and regional transportation.

Future land use planning should support appropriate redevelopment of underutilized properties, improve site and building design, provide appropriate transitions to adjoining residential neighborhoods, and strengthen pedestrian and bicycle connections. Land use changes should be coordinated with access management and transportation improvements so that redevelopment contributes to the long-term function and safety of the corridor.

Employment Areas

Bristol's industrial and employment areas support manufacturing, marine trades, technology, services, and an expanding Blue Economy. Unity Park, the Bristol Industrial Park, [the Franklin Street corridor, the](#) Tupelo Street area, and other established employment locations provide space for businesses that cannot readily be accommodated in Downtown or residential areas.

These lands are an important component of Bristol's economy and tax base. The Town should maintain an adequate supply of viable industrial and commercial land.

Within the Bristol Industrial Park and surrounding employment lands, future planning should address transitions to nearby residential areas and environmental conditions associated with the Silver Creek watershed. Opportunities for ecological restoration, green infrastructure, conservation, and multimodal connections should be considered where environmentally constrained or undeveloped land is not needed for employment development.

Waterfront and Marine Uses

Bristol's waterfront is one of the Town's defining natural and economic resources. It supports commercial fishing, recreational boating, marine businesses and the Blue Economy, tourism, and public recreation. The Maritime Center, Harbor Walk, docks, rights-of-way, and other public facilities support recreational use and public access to Bristol Harbor.

Land use decisions along the waterfront should support water-dependent and marine-related activities while maintaining public access and protecting water

quality, historic resources, scenic character, and surrounding neighborhoods. The increasing exposure of waterfront properties and infrastructure to coastal flooding and sea level rise will also require land use and redevelopment decisions to consider long-term resilience.

Roger Williams University and Major Institutional Properties

Roger Williams University is a major institutional landowner and employer and plays an important role in Bristol's economy and community. The Educational Institutional zoning and institutional master plan process provides a framework for coordinating University development with broader Town objectives.

Future campus planning should address housing, transportation and infrastructure capacity, Ferry Road, surrounding residential areas, shoreline and environmental resources, and connections between the campus and the broader community.

Other large institutional and privately owned properties also warrant long-term attention. Some contain significant open space, scenic landscapes, historic resources, agricultural land, or environmentally sensitive areas and could experience substantial change if sold or redeveloped. Early communication with property owners can help the Town identify potential changes and evaluate conservation easements, acquisition of land or development rights, conservation development, or other strategies appropriate to individual properties.

Natural Resources and Open Space

Land use decisions play an important role in protecting Bristol's wetlands, watersheds, agricultural lands, floodplains, coastal resources, wildlife habitat, and remaining open lands. These resources provide environmental benefits while also contributing to the Town's scenic and historic character.

Particular attention should be given to the Silver Creek and Tanyard Brook watersheds and to development in areas where wetlands, drainage conditions, groundwater, or other environmental constraints limit development capacity. Development intensity should reflect the ability of land and infrastructure to accommodate development without adversely affecting natural resources or increasing flooding and drainage problems.

The Town should evaluate the land use tools available to protect wetlands and other sensitive resources beyond minimum State requirements where local authority allows.

Where State law limits local regulatory authority, Bristol should advocate for State policies that provide appropriate protection of resources important to the Town.

Permanent conservation should remain a priority for lands with significant natural, agricultural, scenic, historic, or recreational value. Depending on the property, appropriate tools may include acquisition, conservation easements, purchase or transfer of development rights, conservation development, partnerships with landowners and conservation organizations, and outside funding.

Climate Resilience and Land Use

Flooding, sea level rise, coastal hazards, and extreme precipitation are important considerations in Bristol's long-term land use planning. The Town incorporates available federal, state, and local hazard information into land use planning, development review, infrastructure planning, and hazard-mitigation efforts.

Hazard and climate data continue to evolve as monitoring records expand and federal and state agencies update precipitation estimates, flood mapping, sea-level-rise projections, and related methodologies. Where currently available datasets do not fully reflect recent conditions or provide sufficient local detail, the Town should support efforts to improve the underlying data and incorporate updated information as it becomes available. Land use decisions should continue to be coordinated with the more detailed vulnerability assessments and adaptation strategies contained in the Natural Hazards and Climate Change Element.

Climate change will increasingly affect land use decisions in Bristol. Coastal flooding, sea level rise, storm surge, erosion, extreme precipitation, and drainage conditions affect both developed and undeveloped areas and may influence whether existing patterns of development remain sustainable over the twenty-year planning horizon.

Land use and development decisions should avoid increasing vulnerability by directing inappropriate development intensity into areas subject to significant hazards or environmental constraints. Zoning, subdivision review, redevelopment planning, and infrastructure investment should incorporate available information regarding current and future risk.

Different locations and conditions will require different responses. Depending on the level and type of risk, appropriate strategies may include resilient site and building design, green infrastructure, protection or restoration of natural systems, infrastructure improvements, reconfiguration of development, acquisition, or other adaptation measures. These land use strategies should be coordinated with the more detailed recommendations of the Natural Resources, Services and Facilities, Transportation, and other applicable elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Commercial Area Redevelopment

Bristol has previously identified selected commercial areas where mixed-use redevelopment can support reinvestment and make more efficient use of already-developed land. This approach is reflected along Metacom Avenue, where the Metacom Mixed Use (MMU) District identifies specific areas for focused mixed-use development and redevelopment, including commercial uses with residential uses above. The zoning grew out of earlier corridor planning that identified particular areas and parcels with redevelopment potential rather than applying a higher-intensity mixed-use approach uniformly along the corridor.

Building on this approach, other established commercial areas may provide opportunities for similar, context-sensitive reinvestment. Some existing commercial sites are characterized by relatively low-intensity development, large areas of surface parking, limited pedestrian connections, and inefficient circulation. As these properties are improved or redeveloped, the Town should consider opportunities to maintain and strengthen commercial activity while allowing housing above or otherwise integrated with commercial uses. Redevelopment can also provide opportunities to reduce the amount or prominence of surface parking, improve site design and internal circulation, and strengthen pedestrian connections within the site and to adjoining streets and neighborhoods.

The Gooding Avenue/Hope Street commercial area is one location where this approach may be appropriate. Future redevelopment could maintain the area's commercial function while providing opportunities for upper-story or appropriately integrated residential uses, more efficient use of existing parking areas, and improved pedestrian access and circulation within and around the site. Similar opportunities may be appropriate in other established commercial areas where existing development patterns, infrastructure, transportation access, and compatibility with surrounding uses support mixed-use redevelopment.

Brownfields and Environmentally Impacted Properties

Bristol's industrial and commercial history has resulted in a number of properties with known or potential environmental contamination. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management maintains inventories of properties investigated or regulated through its Site Remediation and Brownfields programs. These inventories change over time, and inclusion does not necessarily indicate that an ongoing environmental problem exists at a property. Brownfield assessment, remediation, and redevelopment can reduce environmental risks, return underutilized land to productive use, and provide opportunities to accommodate future development within already developed areas.

Environmental conditions should be considered together with surrounding land uses, infrastructure, natural resources, and other planning considerations in determining the appropriate long-term use of these properties. The Future Land Use Map identifies the Town's preferred long-term land-use pattern, including changes in designation where continuation of historic industrial or manufacturing use is no longer appropriate.

Emerging Land Uses and Technologies

Changes in technology, business practices, energy systems, and other industries can create land uses that were not anticipated when existing zoning regulations were adopted. Some emerging uses may have different infrastructure, environmental, operational, or neighborhood impacts than more traditional uses within the same zoning category. The Town should periodically review its land use regulations to ensure that new and evolving uses are clearly defined and appropriately regulated based on their characteristics and potential impacts.

Future Land Use

A significant component of the Comprehensive Plan is the **Future Land Use Map (Map LU3) (in development)**, which identifies the Town's long-range vision for the future distribution and intensity of land uses throughout Bristol. The map is based on existing development patterns, natural resources, transportation networks, public facilities and services, and the community's vision for future growth, redevelopment, conservation, and preservation over the 20-year planning horizon.

The Future Land Use Map supports the goals and policies of this Comprehensive Plan by establishing a framework for future land use decisions. The map identifies generalized land use categories that describe the desired character and primary uses within each area of town rather than specific zoning districts or development proposals.

Zoning and Future Land Use Consistency

As part of the Comprehensive Plan update, the Town evaluated the consistency of existing zoning with the land use designations shown on the Future Land Use Map. The evaluation identified areas where existing zoning does not align with the intended future land use or residential density established by the Plan. These areas are shown on **Map LU3: Zoning and Future Land Use Inconsistencies (not drafted yet)** and summarized below, along with the zoning changes or other measures needed to achieve consistency.

The consistency analysis reflects changes incorporated into the Future Land Use Map through this Plan update, including the designation of permanently protected open

space and conservation lands and areas identified to support future housing opportunities.

Planning Board began review of the Future Land Use Map and zoning consistency analysis July 2026 meeting. Notes from that meeting will be reflected on updated FLUM.

Goals and Policies

Goal LU-1

Promote a sustainable, resilient, and fiscally responsible land use pattern that accommodates Bristol's housing, economic, institutional, and community needs while protecting the Town's distinctive character and environmental resources.

Policies

LU-1.1 Direct growth and redevelopment toward locations with appropriate infrastructure, transportation access, and capacity to accommodate development while minimizing impacts to environmentally sensitive and historically significant areas.

LU-1.2 Encourage compact development, appropriate infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse as alternatives to unnecessary expansion of the developed footprint.

LU-1.3 Coordinate land use decisions with transportation, infrastructure, public services, environmental protection, housing, economic development, and climate resilience planning.

LU-1.4 Maintain an appropriate balance of residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, recreational, agricultural, and open-space land to support a complete and fiscally sustainable community.

LU-1.5 Encourage conservation development, low-impact development, green infrastructure, and other sustainable development practices where appropriate to preserve natural features and reduce environmental impacts.

LU-1.6 Promote the assessment, remediation, and beneficial reuse of brownfields and other environmentally impacted or potentially contaminated properties, with future uses consistent with the Future Land Use Map and based on environmental conditions, surrounding land uses, infrastructure capacity, natural-resource constraints, and neighborhood character.

Goal LU-2

Preserve and strengthen the distinctive development patterns, neighborhoods, landscapes, corridors, and activity centers that collectively define Bristol's community character.

Policies

LU-2.1 Maintain Downtown Bristol as a walkable, mixed-use center characterized by its traditional development pattern, historic buildings, pedestrian-oriented streets, compatible infill, and mix of residential, civic, institutional, and commercial uses.

LU-2.2 Protect the character of established residential neighborhoods by ensuring that infill, redevelopment, and changes in land use are appropriately scaled and designed for their surroundings.

LU-2.3 Protect the low-density, scenic, historic, agricultural, and coastal character of areas ~~such as Poppasquash~~ and ensure that development intensity is compatible with environmental conditions and available infrastructure.

LU-2.4 Protect significant natural, scenic, historic, cultural, and open-space resources in less-developed portions of Bristol while allowing compatible development consistent with environmental and infrastructure capacity.

LU-2.5 Encourage development and redevelopment along Metacom Avenue that improves the corridor's appearance and function, supports appropriate commercial and mixed-use activity, strengthens connections to adjoining neighborhoods, and is coordinated with transportation improvements.

LU-2.6 Encourage reinvestment and mixed-use redevelopment in appropriate existing commercial areas, including opportunities for housing integrated with commercial uses, more efficient parking and site design, and improved pedestrian access and circulation.

LU-2.7 Encourage major institutional landowners to plan future development in a manner compatible with surrounding neighborhoods, natural and cultural resources, transportation capacity, and Town land use objectives.

Goal LU-3

Maintain a diverse land base that supports housing, employment, commerce, marine activity, institutional uses, and a strong municipal tax base while ensuring compatibility among uses and with surrounding neighborhoods.

Policies

LU-3.1 Preserve an adequate supply of appropriately located commercial and industrial land to support employment, services, entrepreneurship, marine-related activity, and economic development.

LU-3.2 Discourage unnecessary conversion of viable commercial and industrial land while recognizing opportunities for mixed-use development, adaptive reuse, housing, and other land use transitions consistent with State law and the Comprehensive Plan.

LU-3.3 Support investment and redevelopment in the Bristol Industrial Park and other employment areas in a manner compatible with surrounding neighborhoods, transportation systems, and environmental resources.

LU-3.4 Encourage redevelopment and productive reuse of vacant and underutilized properties where appropriate before expansion of development into important open-space and environmentally sensitive lands.

LU-3.5 Support waterfront and marine-dependent uses in appropriate locations while maintaining public access, coastal resilience, water quality, and compatibility with surrounding uses.

Goal LU-4

Protect Bristol's natural resources, open spaces, watersheds, coastal areas, scenic landscapes, and environmentally sensitive lands through land use planning and development practices that increase resilience to climate change.

Policies

LU-4.1 Protect wetlands, watercourses, groundwater, floodplains, coastal resources, wildlife habitat, and other environmentally sensitive lands through appropriate land use and development standards.

LU-4.2 Protect the Silver Creek and Tanyard Brook watersheds and consider watershed conditions when evaluating development, redevelopment, infrastructure, and land use changes.

LU-4.3 Preserve significant open lands, agricultural landscapes, scenic resources, and important connections between protected lands.

LU-4.4 Encourage permanent conservation of priority lands through acquisition, conservation easements, purchase or transfer of development rights, conservation development, and partnerships with private landowners and conservation organizations.

LU-4.5 Incorporate sea level rise, flooding, storm surge, erosion, extreme precipitation, and other climate hazards into long-range land use planning and development review.

LU-4.6 Avoid increasing development intensity in locations where environmental constraints, infrastructure limitations, or climate hazards make such development inappropriate or unsustainable.

Goal LU-5

Maintain a clear land use regulatory framework that implements the Comprehensive Plan, responds to changing community needs and State requirements, and provides for effective long-term land use management.

Policies

LU-5.1 Maintain consistency among the Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Map, Zoning Ordinance, Zoning Map, and Subdivision and Development Review Regulations.

LU-5.2 Periodically review zoning and development regulations to respond to changes in State law while preserving Bristol's ability to address community character, environmental protection, infrastructure capacity, and sound planning principles.

LU-5.3 Use the Future Land Use Map as the principal guide for future zoning decisions and evaluate proposed zoning changes for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

LU-5.4 Use development review and design standards to ensure that infill, redevelopment, adaptive reuse, and new construction are compatible with their physical and neighborhood context.

LU-5.5 Maintain current GIS, development, environmental, infrastructure, and land use information to support informed decision-making and monitor implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Planning Areas

To supplement the Town-wide land use goals and policies, this Plan retains the planning area framework established in the previous Comprehensive Plan. The planning areas recognize differences in development pattern, neighborhood character, environmental and historic resources, institutional and employment uses, transportation conditions, infrastructure, and opportunities for preservation and redevelopment.

The policies for each planning area provide place-specific direction and should be considered together with the Future Land Use Map and the Town-wide goals, policies, and actions contained throughout this Comprehensive Plan. Planning area boundaries provide a framework for long-range planning and are not intended to function as zoning district boundaries.

Town-wide policies concerning compatible development, natural-resource protection, stormwater management and green infrastructure, tree canopy, climate resilience, historic-resource protection, Complete Streets, and pedestrian and bicycle connectivity apply throughout Bristol as appropriate. Several major corridors, including Metacom Avenue and Hope Street/Ferry Road, extend through multiple planning areas; applicable Town-wide corridor, transportation, historic-resource, and land-use policies should therefore be considered together with the place-specific policies below.

Northeast

- Maintain and protect the established residential and commercial character of the area.
- Ensure that development and redevelopment along Metacom Avenue are compatible with adjoining residential neighborhoods.
- Maintain appropriate neighborhood connections that improve local circulation and access without encouraging undesirable cut-through traffic.

Kickemuit

- Make preservation of the area's remaining farmland, open fields, wetlands, and open space a primary land use objective.
- Protect significant agricultural lands and open space through conservation development, conservation easements, development-right protection, and other appropriate land-preservation tools.
- Protect the open fields and agricultural lands visible from Metacom Avenue as important components of the area's rural character.
- Support continued agricultural use and compatible activities that contribute to the long-term viability of farming in Bristol.
- Direct appropriately scaled mixed-use development and redevelopment to suitable properties along Metacom Avenue while maintaining appropriate transitions to agricultural and residential lands to the east.
- Protect the Kickemuit River, wetlands, watershed resources, and water quality as development and redevelopment occur.

The Narrows

- Protect the established residential character and scale of the Narrows.
- Improve north-south neighborhood circulation where connections would benefit local residents, emergency access, service delivery, pedestrians, or bicyclists without encouraging regional cut-through traffic.
- Coordinate future changes associated with the Rhode Island Veterans Home with surrounding neighborhoods and environmental resources.
- Address drainage and stormwater conditions that affect the neighborhood.

- Improve appropriate connections between the Narrows and Hopeworth, including pedestrian and bicycle connections where environmental constraints make vehicular connections inappropriate.
- Protect Waypoyset Preserve as an important archaeological, cultural, natural, and passive-recreation resource.
- Manage public access, trails, and interpretation at Waypoyset in a manner that protects sensitive archaeological and culturally significant resources.

Hopeworth

- Protect the established residential character and development pattern of Hopeworth.
- Maintain the former Hopeworth landfill property at the end of Roosevelt Drive consistent with its open-space designation.
- Maintain appropriate connections between Hopeworth and the Narrows.
- Protect wetlands, drainage systems, shoreline resources, and Mount Hope Bay.
- Incorporate coastal flooding and long-term shoreline conditions into land-use and infrastructure decisions in vulnerable portions of the area.
- Develop a long-term land-use strategy for the former landfill/Minturn Farm property that recognizes its renewable-energy use, environmental constraints, and opportunities for compatible conservation, recreation, public access, and long-term management.

Mt. Hope

- Protect the Mt. Hope area as one of Bristol's most significant open-space, natural, archaeological, historic, and cultural landscapes.
- Protect forests, fields, wetlands, shoreline resources, habitat, and other significant natural features.
- Protect culturally and archaeologically significant sites associated with Indigenous history and incorporate appropriate consultation into stewardship and land-use decisions.
- Maintain and strengthen long-term conservation of the Mount Hope Community Forest and surrounding protected lands.
- Coordinate stewardship of the broader Mt. Hope landscape with the Pokanoket Tribe, conservation organizations, Mount Hope Farm, institutions, public agencies, and other landowners.
- Use conservation easements, acquisition, development-right protection, conservation development, and other tools to preserve significant lands that remain unprotected.
- Provide appropriate public access, trails, interpretation, and environmental education while protecting sensitive cultural and natural resources.
- Reflect permanently conserved properties as Open Space on the Future Land Use Map and Zoning Map, where appropriate.

Roger Williams University

- Coordinate future campus development through applicable Educational Institutional zoning and University master-planning processes.
- Ensure that campus development protects surrounding cultural, historic, environmental, shoreline, and neighborhood resources.
- Coordinate campus planning with transportation and infrastructure capacity, including Ferry Road and Metacom Avenue.
- Encourage additional on-campus student housing to reduce competition between students and other households for Bristol's year-round rental housing.
- Maintain appropriate shoreline access and trail connections associated with the campus.
- Protect the scenic and historic character of Ferry Road/Route 114 as campus and transportation improvements occur.
- Incorporate shoreline and infrastructure resilience into long-term University and corridor planning.

North Central

- Maintain the predominantly residential and open-space character of the area and allow only compatible infill development.
- Protect wetlands, wooded open space, and the Silver Creek watershed from degradation.
- Use conservation development and other preservation tools to protect significant natural resources where development occurs.
- Maintain the residential character of the east side of Hope Street.
- Maintain and expand appropriate walking, bicycle, greenway, and open-space connections through the area.
- Protect environmentally sensitive land and ecological connections associated with the Silver Creek watershed.

Industrial Area

- Preserve strategically important industrial land for manufacturing and employment uses and avoid unnecessary conversion of viable industrial properties to incompatible uses.
- Support continued economic development and reinvestment within the Bristol Industrial Park and surrounding employment areas.
- Encourage marine trades, advanced manufacturing, ocean technology, and related industries that build on Bristol's existing economic strengths.
- Allow compatible commercial activity and appropriate transition areas while protecting the core industrial land base.
- Coordinate development and redevelopment along Metacom Avenue, Gooding Avenue, Tupelo Street, and Broadcommon Road with access, circulation, and corridor-management objectives.
- Continue to support shared access and internal circulation between Gooding Avenue and Tupelo Street where feasible.

- Protect the Silver Creek watershed and use environmentally constrained land for appropriate conservation, restoration, stormwater-management, and green-infrastructure purposes.
- Improve compatibility and transitions between industrial and commercial properties and adjoining residential or environmentally sensitive areas.

High School

- Maintain the High School area as a major educational and recreational use while protecting surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- Protect and restore Silver Creek and coordinate site improvements with drainage, stormwater-management, and water-quality objectives.
- Integrate the replacement Mt. Hope High School and associated athletic, parking, circulation, and site improvements into the long-term land-use pattern of the area.
- Minimize traffic, parking, lighting, and other school-related impacts on adjoining residential neighborhoods.
- Improve pedestrian safety and accessibility on Sherry Avenue, Perry Street, Naomi Street, and other streets used by students traveling to and from the High School.
- Support appropriate redevelopment of commercial properties in the Metacom Avenue/Gooding Avenue area consistent with the broader Metacom Avenue corridor strategy.

Downtown Neighborhood

- Maintain the area's traditional mixed residential and neighborhood-commercial character.
- Encourage adaptive reuse of older residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings where compatible with surrounding development.
- Support context-sensitive infill and mixed-use redevelopment that maintains neighborhood scale, pedestrian orientation, and historic development patterns.
- Encourage appropriate redevelopment and reinvestment along Metacom Avenue in the Bayview Avenue, Franklin Street, Minturn Farm Road, Mt. Hope Avenue, and Woodlawn Avenue portions of the planning area.
- Provide appropriate transitions between Metacom Avenue commercial or mixed-use development and adjoining residential neighborhoods.
- Recognize and protect significant historic resources identified through the Historic Resources Re-Survey, including resources within Northern Hope Street and Wood Street/New Goree.
- Coordinate long-term planning for the Police Department property and adjoining Bayview Avenue property with surrounding land uses and neighborhood conditions.

The Estates

- Preserve the distinctive estate landscapes, large lots, historic properties, open space, mature vegetation, shoreline resources, and scenic character of the area.
- Work proactively with owners of large estate and institutional properties to plan for future changes in ownership or use.
- Use conservation easements, development-right protection, acquisition, conservation development, and other preservation tools to protect significant landscapes and open space.
- Protect views and existing public shoreline rights-of-way.
- Consider appropriate adaptive reuse or housing opportunities within existing institutional properties if institutional uses change, where compatible with historic, environmental, infrastructure, and neighborhood objectives.
- Protect the scenic and historic character of Hope Street and Ferry Road/Route 114.
- Incorporate long-term resilience of the Ferry Road shoreline and associated infrastructure into land-use planning for the area.

Downtown Core

- Preserve and enhance the Downtown Core as Bristol's historic, compact, walkable, mixed-use center.
- Protect historic buildings, streetscapes, development scale, and the Bristol Waterfront Historic District while accommodating compatible reinvestment and adaptive reuse.
- Maintain the physical scale and historic character of the waterfront.
- Support active ground-floor commercial uses and housing on upper stories to reinforce year-round Downtown activity.
- Maintain and expand continuous public access to the waterfront and connections among waterfront parks, public docks, Downtown destinations, and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Maintain working-waterfront, boating, ferry, and other appropriate marine and water-dependent uses.
- Maintain the Town Common as an important historic, civic, and open-space resource.
- Manage parking and curb space in a manner that supports Downtown residents, businesses, visitors, and accessibility while maintaining walkability and historic character.
- Incorporate preservation-compatible flood resilience into public and private improvements within the Waterfront Historic District.
- Support appropriate adaptive reuse or redevelopment of surplus municipal and institutional properties as Town functions relocate.
- Support Unity Park as an established adaptive-reuse and employment destination and improve compatible access between Unity Park, Franklin Street, Downtown, and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Continue to improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation within Downtown, including implementation of the Thames Street and Wood Street concepts identified through the Bicycle Network planning process.

Northwest

- Maintain and protect the established residential character of the area.
- Maintain the existing overall development pattern; substantial land-use change is not anticipated.
- Conserve remaining open land and significant natural resources.
- Ensure that infill development is compatible with established neighborhood character.
- Maintain appropriate neighborhood connections.
- Protect the scenic and historic character of Hope Street/Route 114.

Highlands

- Protect the established residential and historic character of the Bristol Highlands.
- Ensure that infill and redevelopment are compatible with established lot patterns, building scale, streetscape, and landscape character.
- Limit incompatible expansion of commercial uses into established residential portions of the area.
- Maintain appropriate neighborhood connections without encouraging undesirable cut-through traffic.
- Protect historic resources and the distinctive settlement pattern of the Highlands.
- Protect the scenic and historic character of Hope Street/Route 114 and its role within the Revolutionary Heritage Byway.

State Park

- Protect Colt State Park, Town recreation lands, and associated open space as the predominant land uses within the planning area.
- Maintain and improve Bristol Town Beach, the Sports Complex, Quinta-Gamelin Community Center, and associated recreation facilities.
- Maintain and strengthen the path and trail system connecting recreation and open-space resources.
- Protect shoreline, coastal habitat, and open space while maintaining appropriate public recreation and shoreline access.
- Incorporate accessibility and long-term coastal resilience into future improvements to parks, beaches, recreation facilities, trails, and shoreline infrastructure.
- Continue coordination between the Town and State regarding Colt State Park, the East Bay Bike Path, and adjoining Town recreation facilities.

Poppasquash

- Maintain the low-density, agricultural, open-space, historic, and scenic character of Poppasquash in recognition of its infrastructure limitations and environmental constraints.
- Discourage development intensity that would adversely affect private wells, groundwater resources, on-site wastewater systems, or the area's rural character.
- Protect agricultural lands, wooded areas, wetlands, shoreline habitat, scenic views, and significant open space.
- Protect the historic character of the Poppasquash Farms area and its distinctive pattern of farms, estates, stone walls, and shoreline views.
- Use conservation development, easements, acquisition, and other preservation tools to retain significant open space and natural resources as development occurs.
- Maintain appropriate pedestrian and bicycle connections between Poppasquash Road, Hope Street, Colt State Park, and the East Bay Bike Path.
- Incorporate recurrent flooding, sea-level rise, emergency access, and long-term transportation resilience into planning for Poppasquash Road and future land-use decisions.