

Land Use

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, which is interpreted from aerial imagery. Unlike the Zoning Map, which identifies how land may be developed under the Zoning Ordinance, the Existing Land Use Map depicts the actual land uses present on the ground. The map identifies residential, commercial, industrial, mixed-use, institutional, agricultural, recreation, and open space land uses. Residential areas are further categorized by development density, and conservation lands, wetlands, cemeteries, transportation and utility corridors, and undeveloped lands are also shown.

Existing Zoning

The Town of Bristol Zoning Ordinance establishes zoning districts and overlay districts to regulate the location, intensity, and character of development throughout the community. The zoning framework is intended to accommodate future growth while protecting neighborhood character, preserving natural, cultural, and historic resources, supporting economic development, and ensuring that new development is consistent with Bristol's established development patterns.

As illustrated on **Map LU2: Zoning**, residential districts comprise the majority of Bristol's land area and range from compact neighborhoods surrounding the historic downtown to lower-density residential areas on the southern peninsula and along the eastern shoreline. 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. Institutional, waterfront, agricultural, open space, and planned development districts provide for specialized land uses throughout the community. Overlay districts establish additional standards to preserve historic resources, conserve important natural areas, and guide development within key areas of the Town.

Residential Districts

District	Description
R-6 – Residential 6,000 sq. ft.	Residential uses with a minimum lot size of 6,000 square feet per dwelling. Additional dwelling units may be added with a minimum lot size of 4,000 square feet. This is the Town's highest-density residential district and includes single-family, two-family, and multi-family dwellings.

District	Description
R-8 – Residential 8,000 sq. ft.	Residential uses with a minimum lot size of 8,000 square feet per dwelling, representing high-density residential development.
R-10 – Residential 10,000 sq. ft.	Residential uses with a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet per dwelling, representing high-density residential development.
R-10SW – Residential 10,000 sq. ft. with Sewer and Water	Residential district requiring public sewer and water service because of the potential for groundwater contamination associated with nearby pollution sources.
R-15 – Residential 15,000 sq. ft.	Residential uses with a minimum lot size of 15,000 square feet, representing medium-density residential development.
R-20 – Residential 20,000 sq. ft.	Residential uses with a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet representing medium-density residential development.
R-20SP – Residential 20,000 sq. ft. with Special Conditions	Residential district permitting reduction of the minimum lot area to 15,000 square feet where the property owner provides public sewer and water service.
R-40 – Residential 40,000 sq. ft.	Low-density residential district intended for residential and agricultural uses.
R-40W – Residential 40,000 sq. ft. with Water	Low-density residential district requiring public water service because of groundwater protection concerns.
R-80 – Residential 80,000 sq. ft.	Very low-density residential district intended to preserve natural, historic, cultural, and agricultural resources.

The Town of Bristol Zoning Code specifies the eligibility for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) within residential zoned districts. ADUs are residential living units located on the same lot as a single-family or multi-family dwelling. Lots that are primarily residential and at least 20,000 square feet are eligible for one ADU per lot.

Agricultural District

Agricultural (A)

This district encompasses properties protected by conservation easements that restrict land use primarily to farming operations.

Commercial and Mixed-Use Districts

District	Description
Limited Business (LB)	Mixed-use district consisting of neighborhood commercial uses and high-density residential development. Uses include convenience retail, neighborhood services, and office establishments serving surrounding residential areas.
General Business (GB)	Commercial district serving town-wide and regional retail, office, and service needs.
Downtown (D)	Traditional downtown commercial district emphasizing preservation of Bristol's historic downtown while supporting a mix of commercial, residential, civic, and cultural uses.
Metacom Mixed Use (MMU)	Mixed-use redevelopment district along Metacom Avenue (RI Route 136) intended to encourage higher-density mixed-use development with commercial uses on the ground floor and residential uses above, creating a more walkable corridor.

Historic Preservation

Historic Preservation and Conservation (HPC)

This district preserves and protects historic properties while allowing limited compatible additions and adaptive reuse that protect Bristol's cultural, historic, and environmental resources.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing (M)

Provides for manufacturing, assembly, warehousing, and related industrial uses while prohibiting uses that pose significant environmental or public health hazards.

Institutional Districts

- **Educational Institutional (EI)** – Includes Roger Williams University and other educational facilities. Educational institutions are required to prepare Institutional Master Plans that are reviewed by the Town.
- **Public Institutional (PI)** – Identifies and protects municipal facilities and other public institutional uses.

Open Space District

Open Space (OS)

Preserves publicly owned open space while permitting certain compatible uses, including passive recreation and limited public facilities.

Planned Development Districts

- **Planned Unit Development (PUD)** – Allows flexible site planning and mixed land uses through comprehensive development planning.
- **Rehabilitation Planned Unit Development (RPUD)** – Encourages redevelopment and adaptive reuse of deteriorated or underutilized properties to support economic revitalization.

Waterfront Districts

- **Waterfront (W)** – Supports a mix of water-dependent commercial, residential, recreational, marine, and limited industrial uses while emphasizing preservation of Bristol's waterfront character.
- **Waterfront Planned Unit Development (WPUD)** – Allows flexible redevelopment opportunities within designated waterfront areas.

Overlay Districts

The Town of Bristol also has the following overlay districts, which specify rules and regulations for land use in addition to the underlying zoning districts.

Overlay District	Purpose
Historic District Overlay	Preserves and protects areas of historical and architectural significance while maintaining the historic character, scale, and mix of uses within Bristol's downtown. Established in 1987, the overlay currently includes approximately 619 properties representing more than 300 years of architectural styles and historic significance.
Route 136 Overlay	Applies to properties with frontage along Metacom Avenue (RI Route 136). The overlay extends approximately five miles through Bristol and promotes high-quality corridor development while protecting residential neighborhoods, scenic resources, and public safety. Development within the overlay is subject to additional design and development standards and may require Planning Board or Technical

Overlay District**Purpose**

Review Committee review, including consideration of traffic and access management.

**Resource Conservation
and Creative
Development (RC&CD)
Overlay**

Encourages conservation development through clustered residential design that preserves significant open space, agricultural land, natural resources, and historic or cultural features. The overlay is intended to reduce conventional subdivision development while allowing limited neighborhood-serving commercial uses where appropriate.

Future Land Use Map**Future Land Use Map**

A significant component of the Comprehensive Plan is the **Future Land Use Map (Map LU3)**, 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.

Rhode Island law requires the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. As part of this update, the Town will evaluate the consistency of the existing Zoning Map with the Future Land Use Map and identify any areas where amendments may be needed. Following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the Town will update the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map, as necessary, to achieve consistency within the timeframe required by State law.

FOR DISCUSSION: Developing and Updating the Future Land Use Map

Overall Vision

- Does the existing Future Land Use Map continue to reflect Bristol's vision for the next 20 years?
- Are there areas where future land use designations should be changed based on development, redevelopment, or changing conditions since the 2017 Comprehensive Plan?

Map Categories

- Are the Future Land Use categories appropriate, or should categories be added, combined, or revised?

Future Growth and Development

- Are there areas where additional housing opportunities should be encouraged?
- Are there areas where additional commercial, mixed-use, or manufacturing land uses should be encouraged to support Bristol's economic development goals?
- Are there existing commercial or manufacturing areas that should be preserved to ensure adequate land is available for businesses and employment opportunities?

Conservation and Open Space

- Have any properties been permanently protected or acquired for conservation or recreation since the last Comprehensive Plan that should be reflected on the Future Land Use Map?

Consistency with Zoning

- Are there locations where the existing zoning does not reflect the Town's desired future land use?
- Are there known inconsistencies between the Future Land Use Map and the Zoning Map that should be addressed through this Comprehensive Plan update?