TOWN OF OLD LYME, CONNECTICUT

PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Memorial Town Hall

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INTRODUCTION

In compliance with Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes, the Old Lyme Planning Commission periodically reviews and updates its local Plan of Conservation and Development. The first Plan of Conservation and Development was adopted in 1965. In 1975, revisions to the Plan emphasized the need to protect the town's unique natural resources. Responding to the Connecticut Coastal Management Act, the Planning Commission added a coastal component to the Plan in 1982. The 1990 Plan revision was formulated at the end of almost a decade of substantial construction activity in Connecticut. It was a time of rapid increases in the cost of land and housing, increased pressure to develop natural areas, and concern about the impact of development on the town's small-town character. The 1990 and the 2000 Plans attempted to offer solutions to the challenges posed by rapid growth. Still, over the past ten years, Old Lyme has remained very much the small quiet town envisioned in 2000.

Revisions to the Plan of Conservation and Development for the Year 2010 reaffirm that residents value highly the town's special character and sense of community. The goal and priorities established in the 2000 Plan should continue to set the town's future course. A greater possibility exists that there will be an increase in applications for year-round conversion of the town's shoreline cottages within the next decade, and this plan confirms the town's commitment to require full compliance with health and local housing codes while adhering to its long-term policy of sewer-avoidance.

VISION STATEMENT

Citizens of Old Lyme value the beauty and quiet to be found in their town, despite its equidistant location on Interstate 95 between the major urban areas of Boston and New York City. Decades of effort by volunteer land-use commissioners and dedicated property owners have preserved a great abundance and variety of natural resources and kept Old Lyme as a peaceful, serene haven, with its people strongly in tune with the natural world around them and having a real appreciation for its small-town sense of community. Life in Old Lyme is typically gracious, relaxed, and restful, yet offering many cultural and social activities.

Old Lyme is located at the mouth of the Connecticut River, the only major river in the northeast with natural sandbars and salt marshes at its mouth rather than commercial harbor development.. Numerous tributaries also flow down from the hills and steep ledges in the northern part of town to join the Connecticut River and the Sound. The town's rugged natural resources have been a factor in limiting development that would have otherwise overcome the town's rural character.

Historically, people have come to Old Lyme to enjoy its natural resources, especially during the summer months. Beginning in the early 1900s, seasonal communities began to grow, providing an opportunity for many people to enjoy the beaches and waters of the Sound and Rogers Lake. Artists have come to capture the essence of Old Lyme's

landscape on canvas, and to establish a growing center for the arts along Lyme Street emanating from the Impressionist art colony. The Lyme Art Colony started in the early 1900s as the home of American Impressionists. They gathered at Florence Griswold's boarding house during the summer and began exhibiting their work at the library in 1902. They established the Lyme Art Association (LAA) in 1914 and began planning and building on the current parcel of land that was donated by Miss Florence. On August 6, 1921, the LAA held its first exhibit and Miss Florence operated the galleries. In the 1970s, the Lyme Academy of Fine Art was started by Elizabeth Chandler and is now an accredited college (Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts) with expanded building and facilities. Lyme Street is an arts center for the region with the Florence Griswold Museum, Lyme Art Association, Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts and several art galleries

Although Old Lyme has two exits connecting to Interstate 95, the town's interests are focused on providing basic services and amenities for year-round and summer residents and guests. It has deliberately avoided any pressure to allow turnpike-oriented services such as multiple gas stations, fast food restaurants and motels.

Old Lyme's development pattern is made up of distinct neighborhood areas, which have their own individual character. The subdivisions, homes and open spaces in the cool wooded upland hills are a pleasant contrast to the sunny open beach communities on the flat coastal plain. The town has allowed the land to shape the type of development that has occurred, rather than forcing the land to accept unnatural development patterns.

Lyme Street is the artery through the town's civic center and historic district. It is the location of most government offices, school activity and the historic religious center, originating from a time when religion and government were closely intertwined. Despite continuing population growth, the last decades have seen expansion to the Town Hall and to the Congregational and Catholic churches accommodated without relocation away from Lyme Street. Halls Road serves the town's commercial area, which is characterized by development that maintains the scale and appearance of small-town development in a collection of small shopping centers.

OLD LYME'S NATURAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES -- A BRIEF SUMMARY

Old Lyme's natural resources have been inventoried numerous times as part of previous planning studies, including the original Plan of Development and its subsequent revisions. A full description of the town's coastal resources can be found in the Coastal Municipal Plan, adopted as an amendment to the Plan of Development in 1982. Increasingly, natural resources information is available in an electronic format, enabling more rapid examination and analysis of information than was previously possible. An analysis of census data and population characteristics was included in previous versions of the Plan of Development. When the results of the Federal Year 2010 Census become available, the Planning Commission will review the information to determine if there has been any change in population trends that would require reconsideration of this plan's goals and recommendations.

Natural Resources

Situated on the east side of the Connecticut River where it meets Long Island Sound, Old Lyme's most outstanding natural feature is its estuarine environment. Hundreds of acres of protected tidal marsh fringe the river. Large estuarine islands, protected coves and rocky headlands enhance the riverfront. Along the fourteen miles of Long Island Sound shorefront, beach strands are narrow and interspersed with rocky bluffs, small rivers and streams. Inland from the coastal plain, three linear ridges run north to south, delineating the boundaries of the major drainage basins of the Lieutenant, Black Hall and Four Mile Rivers. Smaller streams are the Duck River, Mile Creek, Armstrong Brook and Swan Brook. An estimated 2,000 acres of inland wetlands are a major component of these drainage systems. To the north, Rogers Lake covers about 300 acres in the Towns of Old Lyme and Lyme.

Approximately one-quarter of the town's land is protected from development by various means, including deeded privately owned open space tracts and conservation easements, state- and town-owned restricted areas and parcels owned by the Old Lyme Conservation Trust and the Nature Conservancy. Another 400 acres of state-owned forest land comprising the Stone's Ranch is used by the Connecticut National Guard but is considered unprotected from possible future development. A number of new open-space tracts were acquired up until 2006, after which time land prices became too high, but opportunities may arise due to the economic downturn of 2008.

Water or wetlands, including rivers, ponds, lakes and their associated wetlands and tidal wetlands associated with Long Island Sound make up one-fifth of the town's area. One-half of the town is forested, predominantly in the northern portion along its boundary with the Town of Lyme.

Development Pattern

The Town of Old Lyme encompasses some 27.1 square miles. In 1990, about 68% of the land area remained undeveloped. Just under 15% of the undeveloped land is held as passive open space by the state, town or private conservation interests. Almost half of the remaining undeveloped land has very severe limitations for future development due to wet soils, very steep slopes and ledge conditions. These conditions make it difficult to install on-site sewage disposal systems, and Old Lyme has no municipal sewers, although one private beach association has connected its homes to a public sewer with eventual treatment in the distant town of New London. In addition, private wells are the principal source of domestic water for all but the beach areas, which are served by the Connecticut Water Company. Thus, the appropriate density of development is defined by individual site constraints

Early development followed the Boston Post Road and the Shore Road, concentrating around three areas -- the village center along Lyme Street, the Rogers Lake-Laysville area, and the seasonal communities along Long Island Sound. In the 1920s, small lots were carved out along Rogers Lake for summer cottages. Today most of these have become year-round homes. Over the past several decades, year-round, single–family, residential-subdivision homes have been built in previously rural areas of town. Decisions by individual landowners to sell their large tracts of land have been the determining factor in the location of new development rather than ease of development, efficient use of infrastructure or allowable zoning densities.

Population

During the first half of the twentieth century, Old Lyme's year-round population grew slowly from 1,180 people in 1900 to 2,141 people by 1950. Following the opening of the Connecticut Turnpike in 1958, towns along the shore experienced increased rates of growth. Like its neighbors, Old Saybrook and East Lyme, Old Lyme more than doubled

its population between 1960 and 1990, from 3,068 people to 6,535 year-round residents, with another increase to 7,406 in 2000 However, subsequent population projections by state agencies during the 1990s actually show a decline in population in Old Lyme over the last decade. This is an extrapolation of the trends established between 1980 and 1990. A very small increase in population of less that 100 persons is projected by state agencies for the decade ending in 2010. Following the regional and state pattern, the percentage of older residents in Old Lyme increased between 1980 and 2009, when the town's median age rose from 35.5 to 46 years. We must await the results from the April 2010 Census to determine whether the demographic trends of the past decade have continued, resulting in little population increase, or whether conversion of seasonal dwellings has actually resulted in a greater population increase.

On Census Day, April 1, 2000, 35.27% of the town's 4,570 dwelling units were vacant. Old Lyme's vacancy rate was a result of the large number of summer cottages that were empty in April and a growing number of weekend retreat homes. Potential conversion of seasonal cottages to year-round use could result in a significant increase in the town's year-round population, but the small lot size and high water table of many seasonal properties is a substantial obstacle to installation of a septic system that can support year-round use.

Town Woods Recreational Facility

CHANGES SINCE ADOPTION OF THE MAY 2000 PLAN

The current Old Lyme Plan of Development was adopted by the Planning Commission on May 11. 2000. Since that time, the national economy has experienced a full cycle of boom and bust. The financial crisis of October 2008 has confirmed a long-lasting recession and continuing national high unemployment in 2010 suggests an uncertain period of recovery for the nation, the state and the region. What had been expected to be a strong period of growth for the biotechnology industry in New London County has been replaced by a general concern over the loss of jobs across all sectors. Home value declines of more than 30% and a significant number of foreclosures continue to threaten the real property tax base. A conservative approach is appropriate due to a fluctuating tax base.

Appreciation for a Unique Resource

The Connecticut River has been recognized nationally and internationally as a special resource. The tidal marshes at the river mouth are acknowledged as "Wetlands of International Significance" under the international Ramsar Treaty. The Nature Conservancy designated the River Estuary as one of their "Last Great Places." The area along the Connecticut River from the Canadian border down to the Connecticut shore at Old Lyme is designated as the Silvio Conte Fish and Wildlife Refuge. The Connecticut River became one of fourteen rivers in the United States when it was designated as an "American Heritage River" by President Clinton.

Historical Significance

The Historic District Commission began a Historic Plaque Program in 2007, resulting in over two dozen pre-1939 properties being identified and marked throughout town. The commission also updated and reprinted its handbook, which identifies many significant structures and also provides guidelines for property owners.

Increase in Tourism

Old Lyme is recognized as a cultural center of the arts. Interest has been heightened by the accreditation of the Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts as a degree-granting institution, as well as the inclusion of the exhibitions and events at the Florence Griswold Museum on "The Impressionist Trail," a special promotion of the arts by the State of Connecticut, and the many functions of the Lyme Art Association. Federal recognition of the Pequot and Mohegan Indian gaming casinos has led to major expansions and construction of hotels and concert venues in Ledyard and Montville. All this, combined with the already well-known and publicized attractions in eastern Connecticut such as the Essex Steam Train and Riverboat rides, the Mystic Aquarium and the Mystic Seaport have drawn increased numbers of tourists to the area. Cottage rentals provide a strong basis for tourism in Old Lyme.

Residential Development Rate Decline

The number of permits issued for new homes has declined during the past decade. However, there is continuing pressure to convert seasonal dwellings to year-round use, although strict requirements for conversion include bringing sewage disposal and water systems up to health code standards..

Interstate 95

The CTDOT issued a final draft report of the "I-95 Southeast CT Feasibility Study" in July 2004, recommending safety improvements, interchange improvements and additional lanes. The highway east of New Haven is characterized by tourist and recreational traffic. Drives experience its highest congestion from Friday through Sunday in the summer months. Dating back to 1958 and 1964, I-95 has been only four lanes wide. The recommendations would be made in order of priority. Major projects recommended within the Old Lyme area include Exits 71 and 72, Four Mile River Road and the Rocky Neck Connector. The improvements would provide auxiliary lanes and braided "scissor" cross-overs to eliminate weaving between the two closely spaced interchanges and widen all two-lane and four-lane portions to six lanes from Exit 54 in Branford to Exit 92 (Route 2) in Stonington. While the widening of I-95 is not likely to occur in the next 10 years, the planning and design process may be initiated, which will warrant input from the town, especially as to the impact on Lyme Street. Improvements to I-95 will help to decrease congestion and accident frequency.

Alternative Transportation -- Rail

Major improvements to the AMTRAK Northeast Corridor rail line to allow more rapid service have been completed between New York and Boston. Some high-speed trains will be stopping at the Old Saybrook station, providing more rapid access to larger urban areas for residents of the region. Ridership has been steadily increasing. Boaters have expressed concern that the Connecticut River railroad drawbridge will not be as accommodating to boat traffic if service levels increase on the railroad. A study is underway to quantify the need for bridge openings for boat traffic on the Connecticut River, as this limits the number of trains that can have scheduled routes on the Northeast Corridor. The state's Shoreline East rail service from Old Saybrook to New Haven continues to provide connections to New Haven and New York during normal commuting hours.

Alternative Transportation -- Bus

Recently, the Estuary Transit System expanded public bus service to Old Lyme, connecting it with the towns of lower Middlesex County and their greater variety of retail stores and services.

Industrial Development at Exit 71

Old Lyme provides for light industrial and office development in the area off Exit 71, which is zoned for light industry and distribution. During the past decade, several large tracts of land on Hatchetts Hill Road have been subdivided for light industrial and office use and several existing developments have expanded operations at their present sites. The area was zoned to allow telecommunications towers to serve cellular phone services. Room for additional growth remains.

Changes in Commercial Activity

Halls Road is the center of commercial activity in Old Lyme, with additional commercial development along Route 1 in the Laysville area and along Route 156 through the beach areas. Laysville Center has been completely renovated and upgraded. Thus far, commercial activity has been in keeping with the scale and character of the town, even though retail shopping is experiencing significant changes nationally. Local retailers find it difficult to compete with

large national discount retailers who provide branded "big box" outlets. This trend has not yet played itself out in Old Lyme, although the A&P grocery store that served the community for over half a century has been replaced by another national chain. Mail order and Internet shopping are also taking a larger share of retail sales. In order to be competitive, local shopkeepers must emphasize personal service and unique products that are unavailable at the larger chains. Accordingly, in-home occupations are seeing a resurgence due to their economies in space and personnel. The Lyme-Old Lyme Chamber of Commerce also works to promote business activity and urges consumers to "Buy Local."

Capital Facilities

Old Lyme has addressed many of the capital needs listed in the 2000 Plan. Regional School District 18 is commencing a high school facilities expansion and renovation. Both the elementary and middle schools have been rebuilt. The town hall has been expanded and parking added. Recreational fields at Town Woods have been completed. The landfill has been closed and converted to a transfer and recycling station, with an adjoining new "bus barn" for parking the school buses that serve the school district.

Open Space

In the decade leading up to 2000, Old Lyme took several steps to formalize its commitment to open space. In 1997, at the urging of the Planning Commission, the town approved the establishment of a land-acquisition fund whereby money would be set aside annually to aid in acquiring open space. The town created an Open Space Committee and drafted an Open Space Plan that forms the basis for the acquisition, preservation and management of town-owned open space. Following the formation of the Open Space Committee, a generous gift of 107 acres of land on Buttonball Road was donated to the town from the Bartholomew family in 1998. In the decade since 200, the town bought or partnered with the state, The Nature Conservancy, the Old Lyme Conservation Trust and the Gateway Commission to buy six major parcels comprising more than 800 acres. The Open Space Committee's volunteers have opened and maintained an extensive trail system on Champlain North and South, the Deborah and Edward Ames Preserve, the Noyes preserve and the Lay property. The Old Lyme Conservation Trust, a private land trust established in 1966, has acquired more than 100 acres in this decade as well and now maintains four preserves open to the public. The Open Space Committee and the Old Lyme Conservation Trust have built a close working relationship, resulting in the possibility of developing a town-wide trail system in the coming years.

The Open Space Committee has created an inventory of all undeveloped land in the town and indexed it both for size and for priority for protection. They have developed an inventory of all existing protected Open Space and Conservation Easements in the town. To date there are approximately 3000 permanently protected acres of land in Old Lyme and another 1000 acres protected by conservation easement. The committee has sought guidance on habitat management and land protection from the State Forester, Connecticut Audubon, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Connecticut DEP's Coastal Conservation Program, UCONN and the CT River Coastal Conservation District. The committee is working to identify and inventory wildlife and habitat characteristics specific to each of our open space parcels as the next step in the proper stewardship of town-owned lands.

The Land-use Review Process

The Zoning Commission completed a nine-year comprehensive rewrite of its regulations. The town is about to undertake a thorough determination process of residential land-use in the R10 zone to establish which properties are to be deemed zoned seasonal and which year-round. This endeavor is a result of the settlement of a federal lawsuit brought by approximately 450 owners of seasonally zoned property claiming rights to occupy those properties year-round. It is expected that activity at the Zoning Board of Appeals may substantially increase as a result of this process.

Bartholomew's Field Conservation Easement

CRITICAL ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

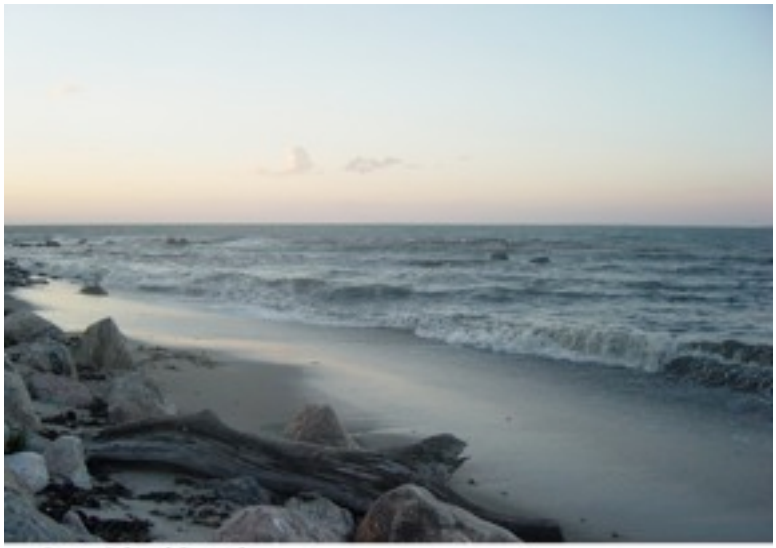
Several issues have been consistently identified in the 2000 Plan and in earlier plans as particularly important in determining the direction to be taken by the town in the future. Certain of these, such as the future of beach areas, preserving town character and appearance and conserving open space, remain critical, while maintaining housing options and economic development have surfaced as additional areas demanding attention.

Sewer Avoidance

Old Lyme has chosen to address the Water Pollution Abatement Order, issued to the town in 1981 by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, through an aggressive program of sewer avoidance. Following a two-year committee study, establishment of a Water Pollution Control Authority was authorized by town ordinance in April of 1995. Under WPCA leadership, the town adopted the "Old Lyme WPCA Ordinance Concerning the Regulation and Management of On-site Sewage Disposal Systems" in June of 1997, and a surface water quality monitoring program was established in the same year. With the septic waste transfer station going on line in 1998, the WPCA is continuing its aggressive approach to proper installation and maintenance of on-site septic systems, including a town ordinance mandated seven-year pump-out schedule. In the future, it is the WPCA's intent to identify areas of special concern and to develop specific solutions to problems in those areas. It is the objective of the Town of Old Lyme to avoid the need for public sewers. Although community systems may be necessary in some areas, most of the town can avoid the need for them with good installation and maintenance of individual septic systems. Depletion of aquifers by the transfer of water out of town in public sewers is a major concern.

Beach Areas

Almost 1000 seasonal dwelling units remain in Old Lyme's overcrowded shore communities, built on very small lots before adoption of planning and zoning regulations. Most of the shore area is in a high flood hazard area and in danger of exceeding the capacity of the land to deal with on-site sewage. This requires vigorous enforcement of regulations, especially in view of the strong pressure to convert many of these properties to year-round occupancy. Commercial strip development has increased along Route 156, and beach access and parking are still vital issues. Identifying a clear vision for the future of shore areas remains an important goal.



Long Island Sound

Maintaining Housing Options

Addressing the need for housing that is affordable to all members of the community throughout their lives remains a difficult task. Because Old Lyme continues to be a desirable place to live, land is expensive and builders have tended to construct large single-family detached houses. These houses are not affordable to or suitable for everyone at all

stages of life. The increase in the number of older residents, who may find the care and cost of large detached single-family houses to be a burden, has not lead to a sufficient increase in housing built for the needs of this population group, and the housing built is generally expensive. Very little housing exists that might be suitable for young people ready to start out on their own. More specifically, the lack of affordable housing for young adults is having a negative impact on recruitment for volunteer services such as the Fire Department and Ambulance Association, threatening the sufficiency of such purely voluntary services.

Community Appearance

While the Historic District Commission has the authority to assure the historic compatibility of new development within the Historic District, similar authority is not available for land outside of the district. Visual details such as adequate buffering and landscaping, appropriate architecture, preservation of natural site features and protection of views and vistas are critical components of town character. Although the Zoning Commission makes an attempt to gain the cooperation of developers to achieve a level of design compatible with the town's character, there are no regulations in place mandating such action except in the Sound View Design District.

Preserving Open Space

Old Lyme's preserved open space includes large areas of state-owned tidal marsh along the Connecticut River, but little of the town's upland areas is permanently protected, although such protection is a high priority for the town's citizens. The Open Space Committee is establishing priorities for land preservation and seeking acquisition or other means of protection for priority parcels.

Economic Development

The town encourages additional development that is consistent with the historical and cultural character of the community and provides goods and services or employment to its residents. Growth of light industry as well as distribution and office facilities are permitted in the vicinity of Exit 71 off I-95. There is room for additional commercial growth along Halls Road and in specific locations along Route 1 in Laysville and Route 156 in the shore area. Building on Old Lyme's history as an art colony for American Impressionists, there is support for promoting the town as an area that nurtures art and artists, present and future. The Historic District Commission was able to get the Town of Old Lyme declared a "Preserve America" Community because of the town's place in American art history. In addition, in recognition of Old Lyme shoreline's tourism and recreation attraction, there is interest in seeking to revitalize the Sound View area in an effort to increase its value as a community asset

GOAL

The goal that has guided Old Lyme for the past thirty-five years remains essentially the same. It is still as valid as it was when it was adopted in the 1975 Plan of Development. It has been the underlying focus of the town's land-use decisions for three-and-one-half decades:

TO MAINTAIN THE SMALL-TOWN CHARACTER OF OLD LYME WHILE PROVIDING FOR LIMITED GROWTH CONSISTENT WITH THE NEED TO PRESERVE EXISTING NATURAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES.

POLICIES

The policies adopted as part of all previous plans have served the town well as guiding principles for the town's future. Old Lyme has been consistent in its adherence to these policies and has maintained the character of the town through cycles of intense pressure for land development and during slow economic times. These policies, summarized below, should continue to serve as the basis for future land-use decision-making.

1. Future development should be consistent with the small-town atmosphere of Old Lyme, including both the physical setting and sense of community. Development should be aesthetically pleasing, compatible in scale and in keeping with the small-town ambiance of Old Lyme. Retention of an attractive and rural community appearance should be one of the most important criteria used in land-use-decision making.

2. Land should be set aside as open space in accordance with the town's Open Space Plan to preserve important natural resources, protect drainage ways and bodies of water, provide for passive recreation and maintain the visual and aesthetic rural character of the town. Where possible, existing open-space parcels should be linked and augmented to form large, unfragmented tracts of field and forest. Existing public trails should be connected to provide an extended system for hiking, bicycling, jogging, birdwatching and nature study. Public access points for non-motorized water-related recreation should be encouraged. Farming and the production of local food sources should be supported. The habitat of those wildlife species that are identified in the State's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy should be given highest priority for acquisition and protection.

3. Single-family homes should continue to be the primary form of residential development, but provision should be made for a quantity and variety of other compatible housing types sufficient to meet the needs of various age groups, income levels and family configurations.

4. Commercial development should be compatible in scale and appearance with town character and be designed primarily to serve the retail and service needs of local residents. Commercial uses and their expansion should be lim-

ited to three commercial areas: Halls Road, Laysville Center, and the Shore Road from Mile Creek eastward to the Sound View area. Additional strip development should not be allowed.

5. Light industry should be encouraged within the designated area to add stability to the tax base and provide employment opportunities within the community. Good industrial site design, an attractive setting and industrial buildings of modest scale are necessary to maintain the character of Old Lyme.

6. All development and especially seasonal-to-year-round conversions should be designed and regulated so as to prevent the creation of health, safety and environmental problems. Any existing health and safety problems should be eliminated. An aggressive sewer avoidance program should be pursued so that municipal sewers will not become a necessity. Alternative approved methods for septic disposal should be permitted when possible. Ground and surface water must be protected from contamination and depletion due to the town's heavy dependence on well water for domestic use.

7. Improvement of town roads is necessary to remove identified hazards, but changes to local roads that would diminish their scenic quality should be discouraged consistent with safety requirements.

8. The development of public facilities should be scheduled to allow the provision of public services in the most cost-effective and efficient manner, avoiding crisis decision-making.

Church of Christ the King

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE -- **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

The 2000 Town Plan of Development established a vision for Old Lyme's future that has been maintained and enhanced by public and private actions over the past decade. Many of the 2000 Plan's recommendations have been followed and much has been accomplished that has improved the quality of life in Old Lyme. The most difficult task in shaping future development is to hold on to the desirable aspects of the past and present, while allowing for and accommodating changes in the future. The year 2010 Plan includes additional recommendations intended to keep Old Lyme on the path that it has chosen and carefully followed.

Consistency with the State Plan of Conservation and Development

As required by Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes, the Planning Commission has reviewed this plan for consistency with the State Plan of Conservation and Development, adopted by the State Legislature in 2005. The Old Lyme Plan is consistent with the State Plan in all respects.

Along with each recommendation is a listing of the primary agency or agencies responsible for implementation of the recommendation. In fact, following through with any recommendation usually requires a cooperative effort from many individuals and boards. Shaping future land-use decisions requires adequate land-use staffing and a willing-

ness to support professional help for volunteer boards and commissions when necessary. This requires a financial investment to support good land-use decisions, including adequate budgeting for staff and consultants as necessary, adequate office space for staff and record keeping and modernization of mapping and data capabilities.

Griswold Point

Natural and Cultural Resources- Recommendations

1. Future development must incorporate protection of natural areas to preserve natural resources, protect drainage ways, provide passive recreation and maintain the scenic character of Old Lyme. Equal attention to protection must be provided for the town's historic and cultural resources, which link the town to its past and enhance its strong sense of community.

2. Protect fragile natural areas, including inland and tidal wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, mature tree stands and unusual geographic features as permanent open space. (Action: Open Space Committee, land-use commissions, selectmen, private conservation organizations)

3. Actively pursue preservation of open space in accordance with an updated Open Space Plan. Seek open space that complements and connects to existing open-space areas, provides for linkage of larger tracts with wildlife corridors, creates greenbelts and a town-wide trail system. (Action: Open Space Committee, Old Lyme Conservation Trust, land-use commissions, selectmen, Board of Finance)

4. Encourage cooperative efforts among public and private nonprofit land conservation organizations to acquire open space which has been identified for protection in the town's Open Space Plan, as habitat in the State's Comprehen-

sive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, or as recognized town vistas and landmarks. (Action: Town boards and commissions, private conservation organizations)

5. Continue to provide funding through the town's annual budget to build a reserve account for town purchase of open-space land. The availability of funds for options, appraisals and surveys can allow the town to act quickly when desirable open space land is available for purchase. (Action: Selectmen, Board of Finance)

6. As part of the development application process, require the use of best management practices to minimize adverse impacts on natural resources. Following plan approval, provide sufficient town oversight during construction to assure that permit requirements and conditions are fully met. (Action: Land-use commissions, selectmen, Board of Finance)

7. Continue to assure that activities in the coastal area are consistent with the policies of the Connecticut Coastal Management Act. Increase public awareness of the uniqueness of the town's coastal and riverine resources by increasing visual access to the water and identifying opportunities for physical access (beach, boating). (Action: Land-use commissions, Parks and Recreation Commission, selectmen, private conservation organizations)

8. Protect water quality for drinking, swimming and fishing, and maintain scenic beauty through a vigorous town sewer avoidance program. Other regulatory and educational efforts should be implemented to reduce non-point pollution from all sources, including the use of fertilizers, pesticides, and hazardous materials, and control of erosion and sedimentation. (Action: WPCA, land-use commissions, Conservation Commission, selectmen)

9. Investigate additional ways to use conservation and public lands for passive recreational use, including activities such as hiking, bird watching, jogging, bicycling, nature study and cross-country skiing. (Action: Parks and Recreation Commission, private conservation organizations)

10. Promote stewardship of resources by minimizing municipal solid waste disposal. Encourage source reduction, increase recycling, and provide for appropriate disposal of household hazardous waste. (Action: Selectmen, Conservation Commission)

11. Identify and articulate design elements that comprise town character, including appropriate design for different parts of town. Emphasize appearance of commercial and industrial development due to the potential impact of larger scale and massing of such development. Consider establishment of a joint committee to review and make recommendations for design standards. Consider possible creation of Village District regulations as authorized by CGS 8-2. (Action: Planning and Zoning Commissions)

12. Develop additional educational materials to increase awareness of the location and importance of historic sites and buildings, including early industrial and transportation sites and sites related to arts history. (Action: Municipal Historian, Historic District Commission, Economic Development Commission, other agencies)

13. Adopt or amend a demolition delay ordinance for historic houses to provide time to consider alternatives to demolition and that would provide notice to the Historic District Commission for potential action. (Action: Planning Commission, selectmen)

14. Encourage location of new residential development to minimize visual impact on the rural landscape by maintaining open views and vistas and protecting ridgetops. (Action: Planning and Zoning Commissions)

15. When reviewing development plans, emphasize preservation of cultural features including stone walls, site trees, pastures, open fields, scenic views, vistas and sites with archeological significance. (Action: Planning and Zoning Commissions, ZBA, Conservation Commission)

16. Assure public access to the waterfront by identifying, marking and maintaining town landings. Where possible, take advantage of opportunities to obtain additional access to both fresh and salt water. (Action: Harbor Management Commission, Planning Commission, Conservation Commission, selectmen)

17. Provide stewardship of town-owned open space, including regular maintenance to remove non-native invasive plants, marking and cleanup of trails and parking areas and appropriate management of wildlife habitat. (Action: Public Works, selectmen, private volunteers.)

18. Identify town-owned parcels that do not warrant open-space protection and sell them to abutting property owners to add additional funds for more essential open-space acquisition. (Action: Open Space Committee, selectmen, Town Meeting.)

19. Digitize all land-use department records, integrate GIS mapping capabilities and link with land records, assessment and tax records. (Action: Board of Finance, Town Meeting, Town Clerk, Assessor, land-use personnel)

20. Establish a town brush-chipping and leaf-composting facility. (Board of Finance, selectmen, Town Meeting)

21. Designate Rogers Lake and its drainage basin as an "Area of Special Concern" and develop a long-range plan for the lake; repair or replace the Roger's Lake Dam and assess the soundness of the Ogle Dam at Lord's Meadow. (Conservation Commission, Wetlands Commission, Town Meeting)

22. Secure development rights or conservation easements on remaining farm land. (DEP, selectmen, Board of Finance, Town Meeting. Private property owners)

Economic Development- Recommendations

Old Lyme's development pattern has been shaped by its water resources. Early development along the river included shipbuilding and activities related to moving people and goods across the mouth of the Connecticut River. Later development located along the town's interior rivers to make use of water power for mills. In this century, people have been drawn to the shores of Long Island Sound for seasonal recreation and relaxation and have sought the high quality of the natural and built environment for year-round living. Additional economic development must be compatible with the need to protect the town's natural and cultural resources.

1. Future economic development should be located in a manner that is consistent with the town's current development pattern and should include only those uses and be of such size, scale and intensity as to be accommodated within the limitations of available infrastructure, including on-site sewer and water systems, fire protection and current road capacities. Current industrial and commercial zoning regulations should be reviewed to assure that the location and character of potential future development will be in keeping with the town's vision. (Action: Planning and Zoning Commissions, WPCA, selectmen)

2. New commercial development should incorporate size characteristics and landscaping that reflects the historic small-town character of Old Lyme. Building and site design should be compatible with the historic image of Old Lyme in building size and architecture, signage, lighting, parking and landscaping. Standards should recognize the distinctive character of individual commercial areas. Land-use agencies should work voluntarily with developers to convey the town's aesthetic architectural preferences. (Action: Planning and Zoning Commissions, Historic District Commission)

3. Halls Road should remain the principal commercial area in Old Lyme, intended to meet basic retail and service needs of residents. Commercial activities in the Halls Road area should be oriented primarily toward area residents, rather than directed toward highway travelers or regional shopping needs. Consideration should be given to establishing a maximum square footage of 50,000 square feet for any one store to prohibit regional "big box" retail stores. Adoption of design standards for the Halls Road area will help provide a common sense of identity for the central business area. (Action: Zoning Commission).

4. Neighborhood and seasonal commercial uses and services should be allowed in strictly limited commercial locations along Route 1 in the Laysville area and along Shore Road (Route 156) in the Sound View area. Consideration should be given to rezoning commercial land along both roads that still remains in residential use in order to avoid additional strip commercial development. (Action: Zoning Commission)

5. Support seasonal commercial development along Hartford Avenue in Sound View, which is compliant with septicsystem and water-service limitations, and compatible in intensity and character with nearby residential uses. Pursue town acquisition of land within Sound View to enhance public access and enjoyment of the shore for the general public. Study and consider means to generally revitalize the commercial area. (Action: Zoning Commission, selectmen)

6. Through regulation and site-plan review, require strengthening of pedestrian and bicycle access linkages in all commercial areas, including sidewalk construction where appropriate. Develop a town-wide plan for bicycle lanes and sidewalk requirements in areas where pedestrian traffic is to be encouraged, including linkages to recreational and public facilities. (Action: Selectmen, Planning and Zoning Commissions)

7. Identify and publicize public access, including pedestrian and bicycle access, to the town's waterfront areas, such as Watch Rock, the Great Island launch area and the new Baldwin Bridge overlook, as an economic-development measure to attract environmentally and artistically related tourism, emphasizing the town's historic connection to the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound. (Action: Planning Commission, Economic Development Commission, Chamber of Commerce, business and real estate associations).

8. Encourage light manufacturing and limited office activity in the existing industrial district near Exit 71 off of I-95, consistent with the existing road and utilities infrastructure. Strengthen design and landscaping and screening requirements for industrial and office sites to maintain an "industrial park" atmosphere in keeping with the rural character of the area. (Action: Zoning Commission).

9. Recognizing that they are increasing and valuable to the town, continue to allow and encourage home occupations in residential districts, consistent with limitations that will assure that home businesses do not detract from the residential character of their neighborhoods. (Action: Zoning Commission).

Residential Development- Recommendations

Old Lyme is primarily a residential community. In 2000, all commercial and industrial uses comprised only 5.7 percent of the tax base. Health standards for on-site sewage disposal and individual wells have led to new residential development consisting almost solely of large single-family houses on lots of two acres and greater.

1. When the results of the Federal Year 2010 Census become available, the Planning Commission should review the information to determine if there has been any change in population trends that would require reconsideration of this plan's goals and recommendations. (Action: Planning Commission)

2. Future residential subdivisions should be designed to maximize and connect open space in greenways, retain buffer strips of open land along roads to retain rural appearance and reduce traffic hazards and to locate dwellings in such as manner as to minimize the need for new roads. (Action: Planning Commission)

3. Provide official support for ongoing private nonprofit affordable housing efforts by creating a town board to promote affordable housing alternatives for various age groups, lifestyles, family sizes and income levels so that Old Lyme can retain a diverse population. While the current real estate market for large single-family houses remains active, market forces alone will not create alternatives without help and incentives. (Action: Selectmen, Zoning)

4. Establish a recurrent fund with local revenues for the acquisition of property for affordable housing if it becomes available through foreclosure or tax sale. (Action: Selectmen, Town Meeting, Old Lyme Affordable Housing Corporation)

5. Avoid creating or aggravating public health problems in high-density areas. Continue to require that seasonal dwellings be upgraded to meet health code requirements prior to conversion to year-round use. (Action: Zoning Commission, WPCA)

6. Assure that zoning regulations make adequate provision for a diversity of housing types, including smaller apartments for young and old residents, students at the LACFA, singles and elderly. Consider expansion of provisions for accessory apartments. Develop regulations to allow life care and independent living facilities for the elderly, or disabled, within residential districts by special permit. (Action: Zoning Commission)

7. Adopt "Low Impact Development" principles for all new development. (Action: Planning Commission, Zoning Commission, Wetlands Commission)

Infrastructure- Recommendations

Some communities view municipal spending for new public roads, public sewers and community water service as a tool for attracting new economic development. An alternative approach, which has been generally followed in Old Lyme, is to require developers to pay for those improvements that are necessary to accommodate their new development.

1. Continue to pursue an aggressive sewer-avoidance program by providing fully staffed and qualified local health and sanitation departments with the necessary clear public policy guidelines for enforcement, including stringent design and construction standards for new on-site systems and repairs, homeowner education, on-site maintenance inspections and a systematic maintenance and pumping program. (Action: Water Pollution Control Authority, Board of Finance, Town Meeting)

2. It should be a priority for all Land-Use Departments to protect the town's water supply. (Action: Land-use commissions, selectmen, Town Meeting)

3. Continue provisions in the Zoning Regulations to prohibit expansion or winterization of seasonal dwellings unless all relevant housing, health and building codes can be met. (Action: Zoning Commission, Building Official, Zoning Official, Health Department)

4. Support completion of a safe and adequate interconnected public water supply system in the beach areas, while relying primarily on individual on-site water systems throughout the remainder of the town. (Action: Planning Commission, Zoning Commission, selectmen, WPCA, Sanitarian)

5. Designate the Rogers Lake watershed as an area of special concern with respect to pollution from lawn chemicals. Discourage the use of lawn chemicals generally. (Action: WPCA)

6. Encourage the use of private roads whenever feasible to minimize the impact on the natural and visual environment. Over-designed roads can encourage speeding and increase stormwater runoff. Focus on improving sight lines, smoothing sharp curves and realigning dangerous intersections while avoiding major realignment and road widening that will change the character of local roads. (Action: Planning Commission, Zoning Commission, selectmen, engineering consultants)

7. Cooperate with state officials and neighboring towns to develop a coordinated approach to Interstate 95 traffic management to reduce the impact of I-95 congestion on local roads. This approach could include the creation of an incident management system for state and local officials, installation of variable message signs, a state-operated highway advisory radio and increased service patrols along I-95. Work with other communities to determine if physical improvements to I-95 in the Old Lyme area would be effective in reducing accidents and congestion. (Action: Selectmen)

8. Old Lyme traffic does not follow a typical commuter pattern. Traffic problems are seasonal and often a result of accidents or construction on I-95. However, where feasible, support public transportation alternatives to I-95 including bus service and commuter rail service connecting Old Lyme to neighboring towns, with emphasis on targeted service for the elderly and handicapped. (Action: Selectmen)

9. Designate and provide signage for safe bicycle routes on roads of sufficient width to allow bike traffic, including routes identified on the State Bicycle Map. (Action: Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, Board of Selectmen)

10. Continue to address Old Lyme's capital improvements needs. While many of the projects identified in the 2000 Plan have been completed, school improvements, town office space, acquisition of open space, upgrading the Sound View area and developing GIS capability for town officials remain as priority needs. (Action: Cooperative effort by all boards and commissions)

11. Dredging projects undertaken within town limits should be reviewed by the Conservation Commission and the Shellfish Commission for their potential environmental impacts. (Action: Town Meeting, Conservation Commission, Shellfish Commission)

12. Rebuild the Bow Bridge at Hall's Road to create a pedestrian connection between Lyme Street through the business district and connecting with the Connecticut River Scenic Overlook. As part of the widening of I-95, provide a wildlife and pedestrian walkway under I-95 so that the open space trails south of the highway can connect with those north of the highway. (Action: State Dept of Transportation, selectmen, Board of Finance)

13. Provide filters for storm drains that flow directly into Rogers Lake, especially those that flow into swimming areas. (Action: Conservation Commission, selectmen)

Black Hall River

FUTURE LAND-USE MAP

The Future Land-Use Map depicts the Planning Commission's recommendation for future use of land and should guide the Zoning Commission in designating future zoning districts. This revised map recognizes minor changes in land-use since 2000, including the addition of new municipal facilities. It also incorporates recommendations from the 1997 Old Lyme Open Space Plan. For the most part, however, much of the revised map is identical to the Future Land-Use Map included in the 1990 Plan of Development, which has proven to be a solid model for the town's future conservation and development.

The Land-Use Map shows a land-use mixture intended to maintain the town's historic settlement pattern by preserving rural areas and distinct neighborhoods. Potential greenways are shown in accordance with the 1997 Open Space Plan.

Proposed densities are based on the natural ability of the land to support development without the need for public water and sewer systems. An aggressive sewer-avoidance program is a key factor in keeping the traditional small-town character of Old Lyme.

The land-use mixture and proposed densities are intended to reduce the need for major improvements to town and state roads that would detract from their scenic quality.

Land-use Categories as Shown on the Future Land-Use Map:

Established Residential Area

This category recognizes areas that have been developed at relatively high densities prior to zoning. Fortunately, these areas include some of the best soils for development. A minimum area of 30,000 square feet of buildable land is required for each new lot to assure that on-site wells and septic systems can be safely located without danger to public health and safety. These areas should be considered for future public-water service, since the existing density may pose a threat to on-site wells.

Medium Residential Area

This includes land developed during the period of growth following the construction of the original Baldwin Bridge and the opening of the Connecticut Turnpike. A minimum lot size of one acre, including three quarters of an acre of buildable land, is needed to maintain the character of the area, with larger lots as necessary depending on individual site conditions.

Rural Residential Area

This category encompasses most of the town's large undeveloped areas, much of which has not been developed in the past due to poor soils, difficult terrain and poor access. Within the Rural Residential Areas, there are pockets of land that are suitable for development, and cluster subdivisions may be appropriate in some locations. As a rule, larger lots will be necessary to provide suitable locations on each lot for on-site sewage disposal and individual wells.

Neighborhood Commercial

Two areas are designated as Neighborhood Commercial centers: one along Route 1 in Laysville and the other along Shore Road and down Hartford Avenue in Sound View. These areas are intended to provide retail and other commercial services primarily for residents. They are limited in size to avoid creation of unattractive and inefficient commercial strip development.

Commercial Center

The commercial "downtown" along Halls Road is intended to provide a broad range of commercial activities to serve the entire Town of Old Lyme, and to a lesser degree, other rural areas to the north. Within the center, structures

should be of appropriate size, scale and design and should be well landscaped in order to maintain the small-town character. Uses and signage intended to attract through-traffic off the highway should be strongly discouraged.

Fine Arts District

The existing historic arts cluster, which includes the Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts, the Lyme Arts Association and the Florence Griswold Museum, provides a basis for a district focused on a range of activities that relate to and support the arts. Schools, museums, studio and exhibit space, galleries, restaurants, overnight lodging and living space for artists and art students could be encouraged in this district, consistent with the rural and historic character of the area.

Historic Village District

The Lyme Street area, the town's civic center, has preserved an historic context that smoothly blends civic, religious and residential uses into a pleasing streetscape. Great care must be taken to maintain the special village character and balance of uses in the area. A special Village Zoning District might be helpful in this effort.

Light Industrial

Light industrial uses are encouraged in the vicinity of Exit 71, where industrial traffic can access I-95 with little impact on local roads. This use requires a minimum lot size of 80,000 square feet to allow for adequate buffering, landscaping, parking, loading and other aspects of good industrial site design.

Marina/Water-Dependent Activities

This category reserves suitable waterfront sites for water-dependent uses in keeping with the town's historic relationship to the waters of Long Island Sound and its rivers. Suitable sites are limited due to the extensive tidal marshes along the shoreline.

Community Facilities

Municipal and other community facilities are included in this category. Many of the town's existing civic facilities are located along Lyme Street. New facilities should continue to be located there to reinforce the town's "civic center."

Protected Open Space

In this category, future development of property is permanently limited through ownership by the state Department of Environmental Protection, private conservation organizations, or by deed restrictions on future use.

Unprotected Land

Several large tracts under institutional use and ownership are held in either an undeveloped condition or used for recreation. There is no long-term legal commitment to their present open-space use.

Areas of Special Conservation Interest

The 1997 Open Space Plan identified greenway areas where efforts should be made to link open-space parcels into a continuous chain of forest, pasture and watercourses to provide natural drainageways, protect animal habitats, and create interconnected hiking and biking trails. Within these areas, land should be acquired or reserved to complete greenway connections. This category includes the most sensitive natural features -- streambelts, wetlands, steep slopes and shoreline areas. Development activity within these areas must be carefully reviewed to avoid destruction or damage to fragile natural systems. Protection of natural resources should receive highest priority, overriding the designation of the area for a particular use. Uses are appropriate only if they would have no significant adverse impact on natural resources.

FURTHER REFERENCES

2000 Town Plan of Development, Old Lyme, Connecticut, May 11, 2000

Town of Old Lyme Open Space Plan, November 1997

Municipal Coastal Program for Old Lyme, Connecticut, December 27, 1982