

TOWN OF OLD LYME, CONNECTICUT

P L A N OF C O N S E R V A T I O N A N D D E V E L O P M E N T

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Photo by Kathleen DeMeo - Marsh Farm

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
--------------	---

VISION STATEMENT	7
------------------	---

OLD LYME'S NATURAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES -- A BRIEF SUMMARY	8
---	---

Natural Resources

Development Pattern

Population

CHANGES SINCE ADOPTION OF THE DECEMBER 2010 PLAN	10
--	----

Appreciation for a Unique Resource

Historical Significance

A Sustainable Community

Increase in Tourism

Residential Development Rate Decline

Interstate 95

Alternative Transportation--Rail

Alternative Transportation--Bus

Industrial Development at Exit 71

Changes in Commercial Activity

Capital Facilities

Open Space

The Land-Use Review Process

CRITICAL ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

17

Sewer Avoidance

Beach Areas

Maintaining Housing Options

Community Appearance

Preserving Open Space

Economic Development

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE -- RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

19

Residential Development - Recommendations

Coastline Protection

Community Appearance

Preserving Open Space

Economic Development Recommendations

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE - GOALS & POLICIES

24

Goal

Policies

Consistency with the State Plan of Conservation & Development

Natural and Cultural Resources - Recommendations

INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

29

Establish Residential Areas

Medium Residential Area

Rural Residential Area

Neighborhood Commercial

Commercial Center

Fine Arts District

Historic Village District

Light Industrial

Marine/Water Dependent Activities

Sound View Village District (SVDD)

Community Facilities

Protected Open Space

Unprotected Land

Areas of Special Conservation Interest

FURTHER REFERENCES

33



St. Ann's Episcopal Parish

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. Throughout its history, Old Lyme has managed to remain very much the small quiet town.

During the period from 2010 to 2020 a number of changes occurred for shoreline communities. Historically Point O'Woods, Old Colony Beach, Miami Beach and Old Lyme Shores are chartered private residential areas. The majority of structures in these areas were originally summer cottages. Over time; and based on the outcome of a lawsuit against Old Lyme, many of the cottages were converted to year-round residences. In these areas, the source of domestic water initially shifted from wells to a seasonal domestic water distribution system. In [2008](#), Point O'Woods reached an agreement with the Town of East Lyme to install sewers within Point O'Woods. The effluent is being pumped to New London. This modification also included the installation of a year-round domestic water supply system. Since then, the communities of Old Colony Beach, Miami Beach and Old Lyme Shores have reached a similar agreement with the Town of East Lyme and New London. The proposed installation of sewers is scheduled to begin in the near future. The installation of sewers left Sound View and Harford Avenue sandwiched between two communities that were planning to install sewers. In 2019, the Old Lyme Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) reached a preliminary agreement with the three private beach communities to join the cost-sharing agreement for the construction, operation and maintenance of sewers for Hartford Avenue. Later that year, town residence and property owners approved a construction bond for Sound View Beach and Miscellaneous Area B (town area north of Route 156 and south of the railroad tracks - stretching from Cottage Lane to Gorton Avenue). As of this writing, a construction schedule has not been finalized.

2020 has been an unprecedented year both socially and economically. The Impact of Covid-19 has yet to be fully known and It will likely take years for towns, cities and states to return to a new level of normalcy. The Connecticut State Statute requires the POCD to be revised at least once every ten years. However, there is nothing against revising the document more frequently should the need arise.

Becausee, we are in the middle of a pandemic and the overall impacts to education, economic development, healthcare, transportation, and social services In the town are still unknown.

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 cultural, recreational 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 in 2013 became an accredited college (Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts) with expanded building and facilities and in 2013 became an. In August 2019, the Lyme Academy of Fine Arts closed its doors to degree-seeking students after the University of New Haven disaffiliated from the school.

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. Following the 2019 study sponsored by the Economic Development Community, some changes may be proposed that will support additional business activity on Halls Road. The Economic Development Commission's plan (EDC) is available on the town's website.

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 location of most government offices, school activity and the historic religious center, originating from a time when religion and government were closely intertwined. 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 and is available on the town's website. 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 2020 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 shoreline, 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 20% of the town's land is protected from development by various means, including deed-ed 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. During the period from 2010 to 2020, approximately 1000 acres of open space have been acquired by Old Lyme. This has also supported the development of additional hiking trails.

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. Approximately 20% of the undeveloped land is held as passive open space by the state, town or private conservation interests. Much 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, except for some shoreline communities, has no municipal sewers. 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 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

Current information indicates that the population of Old Lyme is notably older than New London and Middlesex Counties, or the state as a whole. This is based on US Census, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2013-2017. Old Lyme residents age 65 and older account for 28% of the population as compared to 16% statewide.

Between 2010 and 2017, Old Lyme's population has decreased by approximately 1.25%. If this trend continues to 2020 census, this will be the first time since 1920 that will show Old Lyme losing population. (CT Secretary of State's Office (2016). "Population of CT Towns 1900-01960"). The largest factor in Old

Lyme's population is migration. During the period from 2010 to 2017, 5,565 residents left Old Lyme and 5,461 moved into Town. According to the CT State Data Center at the University of Connecticut, Old Lyme's population will continue to decline for decades to come. Reference Planning Commission Web Site: Old Lyme Existing Conditions and Trends.

Additional Information concerning population changes and changes in demographic are contained in the [Appendix](#) in a memo written by Jon Curtis, dated February 2019.



Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library

CHANGES SINCE ADOPTION OF THE DECEMBER 2010 PLAN

For the period between 2010 and 2020, the national economy had a moderately steady growth. As the global economy became more intertwined, military conflicts abroad caused fluctuations in the domestic market. Shopping centers were challenged by on-line shopping and small, privately owned businesses were also struggling. Early in 2020, as the POCD was being revised, the nation is faced with a Covid -19

pandemic. This is resulting in significant economic changes and the future economic outlook is uncertain. A conservative approach is appropriate due to a potentially fluctuating tax base.

Simply stated, future economic growth for the Town of Old Lyme, will likely reflect what is occurring nationally. Local loss of revenue due to stores being closed will impact the local government and this will also impact grants from the Federal Government to the state and this will therefore reduce financial support from the state to local governments.

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 has updated and reprinted its handbook, which identifies many significant structures and provides guidelines for property owners. The handbook may be purchased from the Historical Society or it may be viewed on the town's website.

A Sustainable Community

In October 2020, the Town of Old Lyme achieved certification by Sustainable CT, a statewide program that recognizes thriving and resilient Connecticut municipalities. Old Lyme showed particular strength in the areas of dynamic and resilient planning, strategic and inclusive public services, vibrant and creative arts culture, and well stewarded land and natural resources. Through a team appointed by the Board of Selectmen, the Town will continue to follow the goals set by Sustainable CT and be recognized as a community of best practices.

Increase in Tourism

Old Lyme is recognized as a cultural center of the arts. This continues to be supported by exhibitions and events at the Lyme Art Association, Florence Griswold Museum on "The Impressionist Trail," a special promotion of the arts by the State of Connecticut. Federal recognition of the Pequot and Mohegan Indian Tribes and their resulting 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, Gillette Castle, the Mystic Aquarium and the Mystic Seaport have drawn increased numbers of tourists to the area. Cottage rentals along the shoreline 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. This is largely due to a lack of attractive and available land for development. The installation and proposed installation of year-round domestic water supply and sewers in the beach communities (Old Colony, Old Lyme Shores, Miami Beach) and the Sound View area have allowed seasonal cottages to be converted into year-round homes. Permits for the remodeling of existing homes is active but permits for the construction of new homes has declined during the last decade and this decline is expected to continue.

Interstate 95

As of this edition of the POCD future upgrades to the I-95 corridor have not been finalized. No improvements to I-95 going through Old Lyme are currently planned.

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 are 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. 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. Some additional weekday commuter trains extend their route to the New London station. The entire rail system has been adversely impacted by the altered economy as a result of the 2020 pandemic.

Amtrak will be replacing the existing Connecticut River RR Bridge with a new bascule bridge to be located 52 feet south of the existing structure, as measured along the centerlines. The new bridge will provide for a wider channel 2 feet wider and located 14.5 feet west toward the center of the river. It will contain a two-track, electrified railroad movable bridge with the approach spans and at grade approaches that tie into the existing rail lines. A new substructure and foundation to bedrock will be constructed. Upon completion the existing bridge will be decommissioned and removed, including foundation to below the mud level. The design has been planned and the process is currently in the pre-submission stage with DEEP.

In 2016, the United States Department of Transportation (DOT), was examining the possibility of changing the route of rail lines through Old Lyme. The original proposal suggested that rail lines would come across the Connecticut River near the Baldwin Bridge and go through a portion of the historic district near Hall's Road. The Old Lyme community was very much against this proposal and with the support of local, state and members of the United States Congress, this proposal was withdrawn from future consideration. Had this proposal gone through it would have had a severe negative impact to the town.

Alternative Transportation -- Bus

In June of 2020, the Lower Connecticut River Valley (LCRV) Council of Governments (RiverCog) published the Lower CT. Valley Transit study which reviewed land use transportation for a 17 -community region in south central Connecticut. There are two transportation districts in this region and Old Lyme is served by Estuary Transit District. The goals of the study included a desire to improve regional transportation, achieve efficiencies in service delivery and implement recommended actions.

The study recommended that the two transportation districts merge as one integrated district to achieve a more efficient and sustainable approach to delivering transit services across the Lower Connecticut River Valley Region. This merger is planned to be supported by the construction of a shared Operations and Maintenance facility in Middletown and a second Operations facility in Westbrook to support shoreline area services. It is postulated that the merger of the two districts will take approximately two years and the construction of the two new facilities will take an additional two years.

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 Hatchett's Hill Road have been subdivided for light industrial and office use and several existing developments have expanded operations at their present sites. The Planning Commission encourages future development in that area.

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. 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. Internet shopping has taken 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

During the period between 2010 and 2020, several capital improvement projects were completed. This included construction of a new boat house at Haines Park, and a new basketball court. The dam on Rogers Lake was also repaired and a fish ladder was installed. A fire dock was installed on Academy Lane, a police boat was purchased, and a Public Works salt shed was installed.

Going forward, capital projects are periodically evaluated and projects being examined and funded include a new emergency generator and gas tank for the Senior Center, the installation of new bathrooms and a playground at Haines Park, the replacement and upgrading of Fire Station equipment, repairs to the Grassy Hill Bridge and the Lower Mill Pond Dam. New playgrounds are now being enjoyed at Town Woods Road and at Cross Lane.

The Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library has been involved in an extensive renovation and the work will be completed in 2020.

Replacement of the Mile Creek Road bridge over the Black Hall River was completed in 2020 and upgrades to the Grassy Hill Road bridge are planned.

Additional capital projects including but not limited to the following: Public Works truck wash down project, installation of a new EM communication tower, and purchase of 2 OLFD tankers.



Photo by Tom Machnik - Mile Creek Bridge

Open Space

In the decade leading up to 2020, 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 Commission 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 Commission, 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 2000, the town bought or partnered with the state, The Nature Conservancy, the Old Lyme Land Trust and the Gateway Commission to buy six major parcels comprising more than 800 acres. The Open Space Commission volunteers have opened and maintained an extensive trail system on Champlain North and South, the Deborah and Edward Ames Preserve, the Noyes preserve, the Lay property and McColloch Farm. The Old Lyme Land Trust (formerly known as the Old Lyme Conservation Trust), a private land trust established in 1966, has acquired more than 70 properties covering over 1,100 acres of land and now maintains several preserves open to the public. The Open Space Commission 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 Commission 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 Commission 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. These organizations are 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.

When finalized, the Open Space study will be accessible on the Old Lyme Town Hall web site. A town Open Space Map is available in the appendix.

The Land-use Review Process

After the 2008 settlement of the Federal Lawsuit brought on by approximately 450 property owners of seasonally zoned properties claiming rights to occupy those properties year-round the town ended its zoning review of seasonal housing. The determination process is now solely dependent on meeting both building code and health requirements. The next phase in changes in the Land Use Review process will be affected by the installation of water and sewers at the majority of beach communities and will depend on WPCA, EPA, DEEP and how their regulations effect for changes, expansions or intensification of use.

Only pre-existing lots with accepted building plans that are already identified can be added to the sewer project. Clean water funds do not allow economic development such as increasing density of use or adding new homes to previously non-buildable lots. Individual beach communities WPCA's will be responsible for enforcing the stipulations of the clean water funding for the sewer and water project.



Photo by Kathleen DeMeo - Lieutenant River

CRITICAL ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Several issues have been consistently identified in the 2010 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. To protect Old Lyme groundwater and maintain our rural character, municipal sewers should only be used for pollution abatement, not for increased usage that could not be serviced by an On-Site Sewage Disposal System (OSSDS). The installation of sewers within the beach communities and along Hartford Avenue is not intended to increase future economic growth. Only pre-existing lots with accepted building plans that are already identified can be added to the sewer project. As previously stated Clean Water funds do not allow economic development such as increasing density of use or adding new homes to previously non-buildable lots.

The Planning Commission is of the opinion that CT DEEP is reluctant to review and approve OSSDS that are approved and used in other states.

Beach Areas

In 2017, the Old Lyme Planning Commission was interested in proposed amendments to the Old Lyme Zoning Regulations with respect to the elevation, above flood stage, in pre-existing properties in the R-10 Zones of Old Lyme.

Old Lyme is the only coastal community in Connecticut with a twenty-four foot height restriction. This should be reviewed by the Zoning Commission with the intent of making our height restriction more consistent with adjacent shoreline communities. A memo regarding this topic is contained in the Appendix.



Photo by -Keith Czarnecki

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 led to a sufficient increase in housing built for the needs of this population group. Planning is needed to provide housing that is available and affordable to young people in Old Lyme. More specifically, the lack of available 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.

In 2018 and 2019, the topic of affordable housing was discussed with more interest and determination. A development with affordable housing was proposed in 2019 to be located on the south side of Exit 71 north bound. This exit is coming off the Baldwin Bridge and the proposed property entrance was to be approximately 100 feet away from the exit on Rt. 156. Rigorous review and several public hearings were held. The end result was that the affordable housing application was withdrawn. Since then, a committee has been formed to look at the short term and long-term approach to additional affordable housing in Old Lyme.

In addition, single-family homes should continue to be a form of residential development, but other options should be considered for a quantity and variety of other compatible housing types sufficient to meet the needs of various age groups, income levels and family configurations. This should include multi-family, mixed use and accessory apartments. This process should be open to regulatory changes that provide incentives to develop affordable housing. This should include changes to the current regulations for accessory apartments, possible overlay of zones and mixed-use development.

The pandemic has resulted in the migration of people from urban centers to more rural communities. This increase in the housing demand has resulted in increasing home prices and has reduced economic incentives to create and develop affordable housing.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE - RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Residential Development- Recommendations

Old Lyme is primarily a residential community. From 2016 to 2018, all commercial and industrial uses comprised only 4.7 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.

1. When the results of the Federal Year 2020 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. Assure that zoning regulations make adequate provision for a diversity of housing types, including smaller apartments for young and old residents, 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. Zoning Regulations for Accessory Housing needs to be less restrictive to encourage and allow for multi-generational living. (Action: Zoning Commission)
3. Adopt "Low Impact Development" principles for all new development. (Action: Planning Commission, Zoning Commission, Wetlands Commission)
4. The Town of Old Lyme should encourage property owners to take at-risk flood prone structures and make them flood compliant without unnecessary administrative hurdles. Currently, a property owner can only elevate a legally non-conforming house by obtaining variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Encouraging structures to be elevated will have a positive impact on health and safety – the new structure will be required to meet current building and flood codes and therefore the new structure will be much more likely to remain intact during large storm events and not cause additional unnecessary damage to

nearby properties. It is recommended that the Zoning Regulations be amended so that non-conforming residential and commercial principal structures, including dwellings, located in special flood hazard areas be allowed to be elevated above the base flood elevation without variances under the strict circumstances to be set forth in the regulation. Only existing structures which are not being expanded should be allowed to be elevated without the need for the variances by Zoning Board of Appeals. The structures shall be allowed to be elevated only the minimum amount necessary that the first floor is the minimum amount required to be above the 100-year base flood elevation or the 500 year base flood elevation, at the discretion of the property owner. The regulations should allow the property owner to install a code-compliant stairway and landing of no more than the minimum area required to elevate the house and the property owner should be allowed to elevate any decks which are legally permitted on the property. (Zoning Commission, Flood & Erosion Control Board)

Coastline Protection

The Town of Old Lyme is a coastal community that values the coastal resources of Long Island Sound, the Connecticut River, the Black Hall River and the Lieutenant River, and all other tributaries and tidally influenced areas. We acknowledge that the responsibility and obligation we have to protect these natural resources as well as insuring that coastal properties are available for continued utilization and for water dependent uses.

Changes in sea level and changes in frequency and severity of storms are expected to create issues in the future for coastal communities like Old Lyme. The Planning Commission has endeavored to establish a Coastal Resilience Planning Committee to work with the Town and its Planning Commission to identify climate related vulnerabilities in Town, to update the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan and to issue a climate change impact report with recommendations for possible mitigation measures.

It is acknowledged that sea level is rising and threatens, or will threaten, low lying properties with anticipated reduction in usefulness and/or anticipated rendering of properties useless. Individual property owners must be given a reasonable opportunity to adapt their property and raise their structures in order to offer increased protection against sea level rise and coastal storms. Adaptation measure include moving the structure landward from the water, elevating the structure vertically as high as FEMA standards require, restoring or creating dunes, and the construction of flood control structures to protect existing inhabited structures. While flood control structures must undergo rigorous analytical review, coastal flood and erosion control structures are to be allowed in accordance with state laws favoring living shorelines and/or hybrid living shorelines incorporating stone, for erosion protection along Long Island Sound and

the waterways listed above, as well as riparian buffers between landscaped developments and sensitive resources such as coastal waters, tidal wetlands or others as appropriate. Planning for sea level rise will help minimize potential loss of life and destruction to property and also minimize the necessity of public expenditures to protect future development from such hazards.

Where applicable, the Town and the implementation of zoning regulations and review of Coastal Management Act, Connecticut General Statutes Section 22a-90 et seq., should balance the private property ownership rights of individuals who live in coastal areas with resource protection, and improvement where possible, for features such as areas with fragile tidal marshes, flood plains, beaches, dunes and other areas that are protected. The Town's shoreline/beach communities and neighborhoods are a major economic driver of the Town of Old Lyme. Those communities are the most at risk of the threats of sea level rise. As the sea levels rise, property owners should be allowed to take reasonable measures as specified above to protect their properties through the adaption measures specified above, including elevating their homes and/or construction of living shorelines and living shorelines incorporating stone. Additionally, the Town should seek any opportunities to be able to increase and fortify beaches, dunes and tidal wetlands which provide an outlet and buffer against sea level rise. (Action: Zoning Commission, Flood & Erosion Control Board).

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 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. (Zoning Commission, Historic District Commission).

Preserving Open Space

Old Lyme's preserved open space includes large areas of state-owned tidal marsh along the Connecticut River. The Open Space Commission has established priorities for land preservation and continues to pursue acquisition or other means of protection for priority parcels. (Planning Commission, Open Space Commission, Board of Selectmen)

Economic Development Recommendations

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

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 waterpower 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.

It is crucial to note that 2020 was ushered in with Coronavirus-19, creating a global pandemic and devastating economies worldwide. This revision of the POCD occurred prior to the resolution of the virus. Municipalities will face additional challenges due to lost tax revenues and diminished economic activity, particularly in the retail sector. Creative solutions for economic development must be considered going forward. Zoning regulations may need to be amended to accommodate and support economic development and generate creative solutions, while always being mindful of maintaining the small-town character of Old Lyme.

The Town of Old Lyme's Economic Development Commission contracted with Advance CT as part of their wider strategic process. The results of these efforts can be viewed in their entirety on the town's website. The following represent opportunities for the town to leverage its existing assets: (Action: Economic Development Commission)

- Highlight Old Lyme's natural amenities
- Support outdoor recreation, festivals or special events

- Build on the arts and culture traditions and local attractions in Old Lyme to create a unique destination
- Encourage support of local businesses as well as small or home-based businesses
- Create experience centered dining, entertainment and retail spaces
- Clarify the regulatory process to facilitate the growth of the type and character desired. Town officials should investigate these issues and improve the process
- Facilitate the growth of supply chain and demographic support business

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, Water Pollution Control Authority, Economic Development Commission, Board of 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, Economic Development Commission.)
3. Halls Road should remain the principal commercial area in Old Lyme, intended to meet basic retail and service needs of residents. . (Action: Zoning Commission, Economic Development Commission).
4. Neighborhood and seasonal commercial uses and services should be allowed in commercial locations along Route 1 in the Laysville area and along Shore Road (Route 156) in the Sound View area. Currently, there is approximately 4.7% of commercially zoned property in Old Lyme which substantially limits economic activity. Zoning regulations should be reviewed with the intent of expanding appropriate commercial development. (Action: Zoning Commission)
5. Through regulation and site-plan review, require strengthening of pedestrian and bicycle access linkages in all commercial areas, including sidewalk construction where appropriate. Encourage bicycle lanes and sidewalk where suitable. (Action: Board of Selectmen, Planning, Zoning Commission, Park and Recreation Commission)

6. Identify and publicize public access, including pedestrian and bicycle access, to the town's waterfront areas which includes but are not limited to Watch Rock, the Great Island launch area and the 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, Open Space Commission, Park and Recreation Commission)
7. Encourage light manufacturing and limited office activity in the existing industrial district near Exit 71 off I-95, consistent with the existing road and utilities infrastructure. (Action: Economic Development Commission).
8. 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. The town should seek avenues to increase support for home-based businesses and employees working from home as a result of COVID-19. (Action: Zoning Commission).

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE -- GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL

The goal that has guided Old Lyme for the past forty-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. Commercial development should be compatible in scale and appearance with town character and be designed primarily to serve the retail and service needs of residents. Commercial uses and their expansion should be limited to three commercial areas: Halls Road, Laysville Center, and the Shore Road from Mile Creek eastward to the Sound View area. Traditional strip development should not be allowed.

4. 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 to maintain the character of Old Lyme. The Board of Selectmen should examine a tax Incentive to encourage business development In the Light Industrial area.

5. 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.

6. 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.



The 2010 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 2010 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 2020 Plan includes additional recommendations intended to keep Old Lyme on the path that it has chosen and carefully followed.

As mentioned previously It is crucial to note that 2020 was ushered in with Coronavirus-19, creating a global pandemic and devastating economies worldwide. Municipalities will face additional challenges due to lost tax revenues and diminished economic activity, particularly in the retail sector. Zoning regulations may need to be amended to accommodate and support economic development and generate creative solutions, while always being mindful of maintaining the small-town character of Old Lyme.

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 willingness 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.

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 Commission, Land-use commissions, Board of Selectmen, private conservation organizations)
3. Actively pursue preservation of open space in accordance with an updated Open Space Plan. The Open Space plan was updated in 2020 and will be located on the Town of Old Lyme web site. 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 Commission, Old Lyme Conservation Trust, Land-use commissions, Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance)
4. Encourage cooperative efforts among public and private nonprofit land conservation organizations to acquire open space that has been identified for protection in the town's Open Space Plan, as habitat in the State's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, or as recognized town vistas and landmarks. (Action: Town boards and commissions, private conservation organizations)



Photo by Phil Parcak - Rogers Lake

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. Evaluate options such as tax Incentives to compensate or reward property owners that are willing to transfer property to open space. (Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Open Space Commission)
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 enough town oversight during construction to assure that permit requirements and conditions are fully met. (Action: Land-use Commissions, Board of 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, Board of 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. Consider possible creation of Village District regulations as authorized by CGS 8-2. (Action: Planning and Zoning Commissions)
11. The Town should review options for using Art Academy buildings for alternate uses. Commercial/ residential, (Economic Development Commission, Zoning Commission, Historic District Commission.)
12. In the Historic District 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)
13. Encourage location of new residential development to minimize visual impact on the rural landscape by maintaining open views and vistas and protecting ridgetops. (Action: Zoning Commission and Gateway Commission)
14. 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)
15. 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)



16. 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, Board of Selectmen, private volunteers, Conservation Commission.)
17. 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 Commission, Board of Selectmen, Town Meetings.)

INFRASTRUCTURE- RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It should be a priority for all Land-Use Departments to protect the town's water supply. (Action: Land-Use Commissions, Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting)
2. 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: Water Pollution Control Authority, Rogers Lake Association)
3. 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 in-

clude 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: Board of Selectmen)

4. 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: Board of Selectmen)

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

6. Provide filters for storm drains that flow directly into Rogers Lake, especially those that flow into swimming areas. (Action: Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, Board of Selectmen)

Old Lyme Land-Use is a mixture intended to maintain the town's historic settlement pattern by preserving rural areas and distinct neighborhoods. 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 areas

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. (Zoning Commission)

Fine Arts District

The existing historic arts cluster, which includes 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. Museums, studio and exhibit space, galleries, restaurants, overnight lodging 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 spe-

cial 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.

Sound View Village District (SVDD)

The Sound View Area of Old Lyme is a compact, sea-side community with a mix of smaller-scaled residential and commercial activities focusing on the recreational uses of the beaches at the southern end of Hartford Avenue and serving as an entertainment and commercial center for the surrounding residential communities.

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 -- stream belts, 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

Appendix A:

1. Old Lyme Population Study
2. A Sustainable Guide to Recycling
3. Grand List 2016-2019
4. Memo from Jon Curtis
5. A position paper authored by Attorney John Bennet
6. A map of the Town of Old Lyme Open Space.

2000 Town Plan of Development, Old Lyme, Connecticut, December 28, 2010

