

**2016**

**Approved by New Shoreham  
Planning Board  
October 12, 2016**

**Adopted by New Shoreham  
Town Council  
November 16, 2016**

An aerial photograph of New Shoreham, Rhode Island, with a green overlay indicating the area covered by the Comprehensive Plan. The green area covers most of the town's landmass, including the central residential and commercial areas, and extends to the northern and southern parts of the town. The map is framed by a black outline.

**[NEW SHOREHAM  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN]**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# I. INTRODUCTION

New Shoreham 2016 Comprehensive Plan

## OVERALL VISION

**Through proactive planning and responsible stewardship, the residents and the Town of New Shoreham will ensure that growth and change on Block Island sustains the community we treasure and protects the resources on which it depends.**

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# INTRODUCTION

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## COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

A comprehensive plan is a policy document which sets forth a vision for what a community aspires to be in 20 or more years and lays out a framework to achieve that vision. Comprehensive plans provide direction to private development and encourage sustainable community growth. They act as a guide for local planners, public officials and other decision-makers to assist them in achieving the desired goals of the community.

Municipalities in Rhode Island are charged with preparing local comprehensive plans that meet the requirements of the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (RIGL 45-22) including consistency with the goals of the State.

*Comprehensive planning by municipal government is necessary to form a rational basis for the long-term physical development of a municipality and to avoid conflicting requirements and reactive land use regulations and decisions. (RIGL 45-22)*

The topics required to be addressed within a Comprehensive Plan include:

- NATURAL RESOURCES
- RECREATION
- HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES
- HOUSING
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- AGRICULTURE
- SERVICES AND FACILITIES
- ENERGY
- WATER SUPPLY
- TRANSPORTATION
- NATURAL HAZARDS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
- LAND USE

## 2016 NEW SHOREHAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

The Comprehensive Plan that follows represents the work of the New Shoreham Planning Board, with review and input by all town departments, various boards and commissions, civic and environmental organizations, and the community at large.

During meetings beginning in 2013, the Planning Board reviewed and developed the plan components as a rewrite of the plan adopted on March 2, 2009. The work done builds on that of the earlier version of the Comprehensive Plan, supplemented by analyses of current data, consideration of recent growth and its impacts, and an assessment of existing and new issues facing the community. This major plan update and

process was completed in accordance with the requirements of the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act, as amended in 2011.

The New Shoreham Planning Board held a public hearing on October 5, 2016 and October 12, 2016 and approved the plan on October 12, 2016. This was followed by a public hearing held by the Town Council on November 16, 2016. The New Shoreham Town Council adopted the New Shoreham Comprehensive Plan on November 16, 2016.

## AN OVERVIEW OF BLOCK ISLAND

By definition, Block Island is less than ten square miles of land surrounded by water, with the nearest mainland twelve miles away. The island's year-round population of just over 1,000 residents swells to over 20,000 during the island's busy summer tourist season. Pristine beaches, breathtaking bluffs, open space vistas lined with stonewalls, habitats of rare species, historic lighthouses and an 19<sup>th</sup> century village all combine to make Block Island the special place that it is.

**The uniqueness of this special and beloved place mandates that we serve as responsible stewards and proactively plan for and protect its future.**

Block Island's exceptionally beautiful natural and cultural landscapes are still remarkably intact after generations of use. The Nature Conservancy has recognized Block Island's uniqueness by naming it to its initial listing of the **"LAST GREAT PLACES"** referring to it as "New England's Island of Hope". This title reminds us that it is with a sense of urgency that we must plan and protect the island.

Those who call Block Island home understand that it is not only its exceptional natural environment, but also the remarkable social community that has evolved here, that makes it such a special place. The twelve miles of water that separates Block Island from the mainland give it its unique natural and social environment, and necessitate a high level of self-reliance by the community and cohesion among its residents.

What is also special about Block Island is what is not found here, such as franchise restaurants, chain stores and high rise hotels, and even a traffic light. Because cars cannot go very far or very fast, the roadway system is rural in nature, with many local access roads private and unpaved.

All these special qualities make Block Island an enormously popular destination for day trippers, boaters and vacationers, and as a result, a key resource in the State's tourism industry. The very reasons people love Block Island are the same reasons that make Block Island so different. Differences between Block Island and any other community in Rhode Island are not marginal, they are fundamental. Block Island must be considered one of the 39 cities and towns but its uniqueness must also be understood and respected by the State and its government.

## POLICIES FOR BLOCK ISLAND'S FUTURE

To ensure the vision for Block Island's future, a number of overarching policies have been identified and described below. These policies guide those that are contained in the various chapters of this Comprehensive Plan.

### **A. EXERCISE RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP FOR THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES WHICH GIVE THE ISLAND ITS SPECIAL CHARACTER AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Coastal features, fresh water resources, vistas and open spaces, archeological and historic elements, and critical habitat combine to make Block Island the distinctive place that it is. Block Island's unique natural and cultural assets create an exceptional stewardship responsibility for the community on behalf of all those, now and in the future, residents and visitors alike, for whom these resources are of immense importance.

### **B. ENSURE THAT FUTURE RESIDENTIAL GROWTH IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE ISLAND'S TRADITIONAL LANDSCAPE**

Residential development, although inevitable, must nonetheless be done at an appropriate density and in a manner sensitive to the island's environment and history. This requires that Block Island continue in its efforts to protect valuable open space and habitat, while ensuring that the development that does occur is compatible in style and scale with the island's traditionally built environment.

### **C. ESTABLISH LAND USE REGULATIONS AND MANAGE PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS SO THAT FUTURE DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTES TO CREATING A MORE COMPACT, MIXED-USE, PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED COMMUNITY**

Protecting the island's rural landscape goes hand in hand with encouraging growth and compactness in the village, which is the center for commercial and transportation activities. Maintaining and strengthening this landscape of a busy and compact village connecting two harbors and surrounded by low density development with large parcels of open space, requires that zoning and other regulations reflect desired uses and densities, and that future development be directed towards areas that are already served by public water and sewer.

### **D. MAINTAIN A VIBRANT YEAR-ROUND ISLAND COMMUNITY THAT MEETS RESIDENTS' ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL NEEDS AND MAKES PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY A TOP PRIORITY**

Balancing the protection of natural and cultural resources with the accommodation of growth and economic opportunity must take place in the context of a desired year-round island community. In order to sustain a healthy year-round community, the following needs and services must be met:

- A STRONG PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM THAT FULFILLS THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN
- HIGH QUALITY COMMUNITY SERVICES, PARTICULARLY RELATING TO HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY
- A DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY THAT PROVIDES YEAR-ROUND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
- ATTAINABLE YEAR-ROUND HOUSING DESIGNED FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES WITH MODERATE INCOMES

### **E. STRENGTHEN THE COMMUNITY'S ABILITY TO MANAGE LOCAL AFFAIRS**

Access to and from Block Island, the public utilities serving it, and other aspects of island life that are shaped and regulated elsewhere are of vital importance to island residents and officials, as they affect both daily life

and the island's future. Whether it involves moped licensing, ferry rates and schedules, moorings in the Great Salt Pond, affordable housing or off-shore wind energy production, having a strong local voice in their management is of prime importance. The New Shoreham Town Administration and Town Council, now and in the future, must maintain close lines of communication with state legislators and officials.

**F. INCREASE RESILIENCY OF THE ISLAND TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA LEVEL RISE IMPACTS BY IMPLEMENTING APPROPRIATE ADAPTATION MEASURES**

Sea level rise has the potential to cause dramatic impacts to Block Island's natural resources and infrastructure and as a result commerce and quality of life. With the likely potential of over six and a half feet of sea level rise by the end of this century, as predicted by NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), several roads on the island may be inundated twice daily and access to Sandy Point could be compromised. Block Island must continue to plan for and implement adaptation measures to lessen the impacts of climate change and sea level rise.

**G. MOTIVATE AND ENABLE UPCOMING GENERATIONS TO BE A PART OF BLOCK ISLAND'S FUTURE, INCLUDING ITS TOWN GOVERNANCE, THROUGH EDUCATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING EFFORTS, AND BY ENCOURAGING EARLY INVOLVEMENT IN MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS AND THE WORK OF LOCAL BOARDS AND COMMITTEES**

Block Island's history and sense of community is strengthened by providing a future on-island to the children who have grown up, summered, or who have family roots here. Educational initiatives, expanding employment opportunities beyond the tourism industry, and attainable housing are necessary to provide a future for the island's next generation. But this future also begins with town leaders facilitating an interest and active participation in town government by the island's youth.

**H. FOSTER BLOCK ISLAND'S STRONG COMMUNITY COHESION**

Few places have as strong and inclusive a sense of community as Block Island. This clearly has much to do with a shared appreciation of and love for the island. It is critical that the other goals of the Comprehensive Plan and the policies supported and actions taken to achieve them be consistent with upholding this community cohesion.



## 2. HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

New Shoreham 2016 Comprehensive Plan

### VISION

**Block Island's collection of historic buildings, archeological sites, and magnificent landscapes will remain unspoiled for this and future generations. The Town will support efforts to preserve the island's rich history and to offer cultural enrichment opportunities for its residents and visitors.**

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# HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

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## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

TOWN OF NEW SHOREHAM HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION GUIDELINES  
[HTTP://NEW-SHOREHAM.COM/DOCS/HDC%20GUIDELINES%20REVISED%20VERSION%2011-15-2010.PDF](http://new-shoreham.com/docs/HDC%20GUIDELINES%20REVISED%20VERSION%2011-15-2010.PDF)

HISTORIC LANDSCAPES OF RHODE ISLAND. RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION, 2001.

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION, HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES OF BLOCK ISLAND, RHODE ISLAND, 1991.

TRUEMAN, REBECCA. LANDSCAPE PATTERN AND CHANGE THROUGH INTEGRATION OF REMOTE SENSING AND STONEWALL FEATURE IDENTIFICATION. MS THESIS. UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND. KINGSTON, RI. 2015.

## OVERVIEW

With its historic lighthouses, vintage hotels, Victorian homes and farmhouses set on rolling lands lined with stone walls, Block Island has a stunning array of cultural features and historic sites. Together these sites define the island, provide the basis for its quality of life, serve as the source of pride for residents and provide recreation and leisure activities for island visitors. The following chapter identifies Block Island's historic and cultural resources, describes why they are significant, and looks to provide policies and actions to ensure the protection, preservation and enhancement of those resources.

*Together with its natural resources, the island's cultural and historic resources are the underpinnings of the local tourism economy and as such they must be preserved and enhanced in order for the island to remain economically healthy.*

Historic and cultural resources offer residents and visitors the opportunity to learn about their heritage and the history of Block Island and the nation. These cultural and historic resources also serve as major tourist attractions. Their preservation and enhancement is critical in maintaining the island's appeal to visitors and to the local economy. For all these reasons, it is a priority of the town to protect these historic sites and scenic landscapes and to sustain the quality of life and special character of the island.

## THE FOUNDING OF BLOCK ISLAND

In 1524, Giovanni da Verrazzano was the first European to report the existence of the island. The name Block Island comes from Adrian Block, one of the first European explorers to discover Block Island in 1614. Sixteen families from the colony of Massachusetts settled on Block Island in 1661 and in 1664, the island became part of the colony of Rhode Island. In 1672, the Town of New Shoreham was incorporated, named for Shoreham in Sussex County, England.

*Prior to European settlement the island was referred to as Manissess (translated to the Little God's Island) by the Narragansett Indians.*

## Historic & Cultural Inventories

The following section inventories and describes the significant historic and cultural sites of Block Island. See Map HCI Historic & Cultural Resources for locations of historic sites on Block Island.

### National Register of Historic Places

Authorized by the *National Historic Preservation Act* of 1966 and administered through the National Park Service, the National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of historic sites worthy of preservation. It is a tool for preserving historic properties as listed properties are given special consideration when the federal government is planning or giving aid to projects. Listing on the National Register also gives private citizens and public officials credibility when attempting to protect these resources. Listing does not however prevent the owner from altering, managing or disposing of the property.

*Current sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places for Block Island represent the island's long and diverse history as a Native American, farming, maritime, and resort community. Archeological and historic districts, two lighthouses, a government building, a farmhouse, and a hotel combine to tell the story of a unique place.*

### **THERE ARE TWO NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICTS ON BLOCK ISLAND.**

#### **1. GREAT SALT POND ARCHEOLOGIC DISTRICT**

The shores of the Great Salt Pond have a long history of human use, as it once was a primary area of residence by Native Americans both before and after contact with Europeans. Due to its significance, the area was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1990 and is referred to as the Great Salt Pond Archeological District.

#### **2. OLD HARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Lacking a natural harbor, it wasn't until the breakwater was built in 1873 that Block Island became a resort destination. Old Harbor's significance lies in its transformation from a landing site for an early

agrarian and fishing community to one of the most popular resorts in America. Today this dense walkable 19<sup>th</sup> century village remains defined against its surrounding rural countryside of farm cottages and vacation homes.

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER, THE OLD HARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT INCLUDES ALL PROPERTY WITH A 2,000 FOOT RADIUS FROM THE VILLAGE SQUARE SET AT THE INTERSECTION OF WATER STREET, HIGH STREET, AND SPRING STREET.

**IN ADDITION TO THE TWO NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICTS ON BLOCK ISLAND, THERE ARE FIVE NATIONAL REGISTER SITES.**

**1. U.S. WEATHER BUREAU STATION**

**SETTING:** Beach Avenue overlooking Old Harbor to the southeast and New Harbor to the northwest

**SIGNIFICANCE:** Built by the Department of Agriculture in 1903, the Neoclassical block house served as the meteorological observatory and observer's residence for 46 years. The former U.S. Weather Bureau Station was strategically positioned so that displayed signal flags could be visible from both Old and New Harbors. A new station was created at the recently-completed Block Island Airport in 1950 and the former U.S. Weather Bureau Station is today a private seasonal residence with its logs and records in the possession of the Block Island Historical Society.

**2. HYGIEIA HOUSE**

**SETTING:** On a narrow neck between Trim's Pond and Harbor Pond, Hygeia House is located on a small knoll on Beach Avenue and faces south overlooking Harbor Pond

Constructed in 1885 as the Seaside House, the structure was moved 150 yards south in 1907 to its current site associated with the name Hygeia Hotel Annex and underwent significant renovations. It is a large, clapboarded, wood-frame hotel building with a high mansard roof and wrap-around porch. Hygeia House is a good example of the small hotels that were an important part of the development and culture of Block Island. Constructed during the heyday of Block Island's resort development, the history of Hygeia House reflects some important patterns of the island's history as a vacation destination.

**3. PELEG CHAMPLIN HOUSE**

**SETTING:** Western side of the island on Rodman Pond Lane

**SIGNIFICANCE:** The Peleg Champlin House is a fine example of Block Island's vernacular architecture and one of the best-preserved houses from the Federal era on the island. The boundary of this national register site is approximately 3 acres and includes the private residence, barn and a portion of the original farmland. It is a simple, shingled, story-and-a-half, gabled-roofed, center-chimney house built circa 1820. The property with its 19<sup>th</sup> century barn overlooks Block Island Sound and is surrounded by rolling open fields defined by stone walls. Little is known of Peleg Champlin but by all estimations he

had a long and prosperous career as a farmer and he and his family were described as well-to-do and highly esteemed citizens.

The final two national register sites on Block Island are lighthouses.

## LIGHTHOUSES

*Located in the center of historic shipping lanes for vessels traveling north or west from New York City to New England, Block Island was recognized as an extremely dangerous location for mariners running aground on its shoals. It was not until 1829, however, that the effort was made to safeguard mariners with Congressional appropriation of funds and subsequent construction of a light at the northern tip of Block Island.*

*The need for a navigational aid on the south coast of Block Island remained and grew considerably during the 19th century due to an increase in maritime traffic and the development of the steamship and recreational passenger transport. In 1856 monies appropriated to build a lighthouse at the southeast coast of Block Island were instead used to relocate and reconstruct the North Light.*

*Disasters including the 1858 sinking of the steamship Palmetto motivated Block Island resident Nicholas Ball to mount an extensive campaign to alleviate the maritime hazards through improved navigation around the island. Ball's efforts ultimately led to the construction of the Southeast Lighthouse atop Mohegan Bluffs and also to Block Island's emergence as a steamship resort. The attractiveness of the lighthouse made it immediately popular and spurred a visit from the then President Ulysses S. Grant.*

*Today the island's two lighthouses are major points of interests drawing many visitors. Appearing regularly in photography and publications, they have become symbols of Block Island and the larger region.*

### **4. NORTH LIGHT**

**SETTING:** Sandy Point, the northern extremity of Block Island, approximately five miles from Old Harbor

#### **SIGNIFICANCE:**

North light is a granite lighthouse with iron tower and is the older of the two lighthouses on Block Island. The current lighthouse is built on the site of three former lighthouses which had been rendered useless following storms or shifting sands.

STATION ESTABLISHED: 1829

PRESENT LIGHTHOUSE BUILT: 1867

AUTOMATED: 1956

LIGHT DEACTIVATED: 1973

LIGHT REACTIVATED WITH ACRYLIC LENS: 1989

RELIGHTED WITH FRESNEL LENS AS A PRIVATE AID TO NAVIGATION IN OCTOBER 2010.

In 1973, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquired Block Island North Light and 28 surrounding acres. While the property remained an important refuge for wildlife, including home to many species of birds, little attention was paid to the lighthouse. As a result, the North Light deteriorated from a lack of maintenance and was subject to vandalism. In 1984, the Fish and Wildlife Service sold the lighthouse and two acres of land to the Town of New Shoreham for \$1 in exchange for an easement over the entire 28 acres to ensure it remain a wildlife refuge. The Town and the North Light Commission spearheaded the restoration of the lighthouse, using a combination of federal, state, local and private dollars. Major upgrades including restoration of the iron tower and roof have been completed. The original Fresnel lens was returned to the North Light during the restoration. A ceremony to relight the North Light as a private aid to navigation took place in October of 2010. The North Light Commission has the responsibility of maintaining the lighthouse and much of this work is done by the volunteer members themselves. The first floor of the North Light includes a museum and exhibit and is open to the public for self-guided tours during the summer five days a week. The exhibits include lifesaving apparatus, an array of Fresnel lenses, lanterns and buoys. The North Light Commission would like to pursue National Landmark District designation of the North Light along with its surrounding lands of former lighthouses, in order to advance preservation efforts.

### **5. SOUTHEAST LIGHTHOUSE**

**SETTING:** Mohegan Bluffs, Southeastern section of Block Island

**SIGNIFICANCE:** The Southeast Lighthouse is listed as a National Historic Landmark (1997), as well as being listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Southeast Light was one of only two lighthouses in the nation of similar style and design built by the Light House Board and the only one which remains today (The Cleveland Light Station in Ohio was demolished in the early 20th century). Built during a high point of architectural sophistication for the Light House Board, it is a superb example of Victorian Gothic architecture. The Southeast Light is one of only 12 lighthouses in the United States with a functioning first-order Fresnel lens.

STATION ESTABLISHED: 1875

PRESENT LIGHTHOUSE BUILT: 1873-4

DEACTIVATED: 1990

RELIGHTED: 1994

CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL: BRICK

HEIGHT OF TOWER: 52 FEET

HEIGHT OF FOCAL PLANE: 261 FEET

The lighthouse, once over 300 feet from the edge of the bluff was in the 1990's only 55 feet from the edge due to erosion. The National Trust for Historic Preservation listed it as one of America's 11 most endangered structures of historic significance. A group of volunteers, the Block Island Southeast Lighthouse Foundation, raised approximately \$2 million in federal and private dollars to fund the relocation of the lighthouse. In August 1993, historic structure was moved to its present location about

300 feet from the bluff. Funds are being raised to complete restoration of the tower and keepers' quarters.

### *Additional Historic Structures Inventories*

A report published in 1991 by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Block Island, Rhode Island*, lists nearly 150 buildings of historic significance on Block Island.

With the assistance of grant funding, significant efforts were made in 2008 to inventory all historically significant structures on Block Island outside the boundaries of the Historic District Overlay. The work was conducted by Pamela Gasner of the Block Island Historical Society. Additional funding and work is needed to assist in completing the inventory and to expand the effort to include scenic roads and landscapes.

### *Additional Town-Owned Historic Properties*

#### COAST GUARD STATION

Located just inside the entrance to New Harbor, the Coast Guard building and the adjacent boathouse were built in 1935. In 1988, the Coast Guard ended year-round operations at the Block Island Coast Guard Station and limited them to the summer months only. In 1996, the station's buildings were given to the Town of New Shoreham with the stipulation that quarters be kept for Coast Guard members on duty during the summer. The buildings currently are in need of significant repair and restoration. The Town is currently exploring reuse options for the buildings.

#### THE BLOCK ISLAND SCHOOL

The Block Island School, constructed in 1933, replaced five one-room schoolhouses on the island.

#### THE TOWN OF NEW SHOREHAM HISTORIC MARKERS

Markers which represent and describe significant historical events and the history of Block Island include the Trustrum Dodge & Harbor Pond markers near The Beahead restaurant, the marker in front of the Surf Hotel, Settler's Rock at Sandy Point, and the Indian Cemetery on Center Road. In 1896, the Women's Christian Temperance Union erected the statue of Rebecca, which stands in the center of town.

#### SEARLES MANSION WALLS AND PIERS

The Edward and Mary Frances Hopkins Searles' 'Dream House', also named 'White Hall', was constructed between 1880-1890, and designed in the English Mannerist-style by English-born Architect Henry Vaughn. Only the foundations of this once magnificent house and retaining walls of the garden terrace remain along with the entrance gate 'tower' and several stone and brick piers along the drive, including a lone brick pier at the Southeast property corner.

Other noteworthy privately-owned historic properties on Block Island include the Spring House Hotel, The Surf Hotel, Beacon Hill Tower, and the World War II observation towers of which three remain. The Spring House Hotel, built in 1854, is the oldest hotel on the Island and is still open to the public.

## LANDSCAPES

The visual landscape on Block Island is a resource worthy of its own recognition and protection. As stated on page 17 of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission's publication *Historic and Architectural Resources of Block Island*,

ON BLOCK ISLAND, MORE THAN IN MOST PLACES, THE ENTIRE ASSEMBLAGE OF HISTORIC AND NATURAL FEATURES HAS GREAT BEAUTY AND SIGNIFICANCE. ISOLATED BUILDINGS AND NATURAL FEATURES CAN BE SINGLED OUT, IDENTIFIED AND TREATED AS REMARKABLE, BUT THIS APPROACH WILL MISS THE MOST EXCEPTIONAL ASPECT OF BLOCK ISLAND – THAT THE ENTIRE ENVIRONMENT IS A VIVID HISTORIC LANDSCAPE OF GREAT APPEAL.

Another publication of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, *Historic Landscapes of Rhode Island*, highlights the following historic landscape on Block Island.

### **WEST SIDE ROAD**

#### **LEWIS-DICKENS FARM**

A rare and intact 200-acre farm. The house and outbuildings are typical mid-nineteenth-century structures, but the expansive agricultural landscape of the high plateau of gently rolling grasslands divided by low stone walls is extraordinary. In 1982, The Nature Conservancy with partners purchased 141 acres of the farm to preserve it in perpetuity as open space.

Other notable historic landscapes include: the Win Dodge foundations, Rodman's Hollow, Turnip Farm, Hodge Property, and the island's historic cemeteries.

### **Stonewalls**

A recent study utilizing GIS and aerial imagery estimates that there are over 160 miles of stonewalls on Block Island (Trueman, Rebecca, MS Thesis URI 2015). The study identified and compared stonewalls existing in 1900 and 2011. Matching stonewalls between the two years totaled 122 miles. Stonewalls removed between 1900 and 2011 totaled 95 miles of wall. Stonewalls built between 1900 and 2011 totaled 41 miles of which 43% were built parallel and within 10 meters of roads on the island. The 2011 stonewall dataset produced by this study is included on Map HC 1.

Additional regulations may be necessary to ensure protection of the remaining historic stonewalls on Block Island. Regulations should focus on protecting those historic stonewalls which are located within public view, along roads, and serve as boundary walls. Provisions could require that any alteration, relocation, or removal of historic stonewalls must first obtain approval of the Town and that new stonewalls be constructed using the methods and material of historic stonewalls found on Block Island. Several Rhode Island communities have stonewall ordinances which could serve as a model.

### CURRENT AND POTENTIAL FUTURE THREATS TO HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

*Current and potential future threats to the island's historic and cultural resources include:*

#### ***Lack of Formal Recognition or Protection***

Some of the island's most important historic resources have no form of recognition or protection.

#### ***Demolition by Neglect***

Demolition by neglect is a term used to describe a situation in which a property owner intentionally allows a historic property to suffer severe deterioration, potentially beyond the point of repair. Property owners may use this kind of long-term neglect to circumvent historic preservation regulations. It may sometimes also happen when a property owner abandons a historic property.

#### ***Development and Redevelopment***

Development not in keeping with the scale and character of the vernacular of Block Island could have negative impacts on the setting of historic sites or scenic landscapes. The traditional setting and surrounding landscape of a historic site is often as culturally significant and substantially enhances the enjoyment of that resource. As a popular tourism and second home destination, residential development pressures exist. Without proper regulatory measures in place inappropriate development could threaten the island's historic and scenic landscapes. Open space conservation efforts also will go a long way in mitigating negative impacts of development on the island's scenic landscapes.

#### ***Natural Hazards & Sea-Level Rise***

Some of the island's most significant historic structures are located within areas susceptible to inundation due to sea-level rise and storm surge including the North Light.

#### ***Fire Risks***

Historic structures are also at a higher risk for fire damage due to older electrical systems and threat of arson.

#### ***Invasive Species and Vegetation Growth***

Invasive species along with the normal growth of trees and shrubs can have a significant impact on historic landscapes, rural character and coastal views. Efforts should be made to identify the locations in which vegetation management should be pursued in order to protect scenic landscapes. Property owners, easement holders and the Town should work together to identify practical solutions including

regular mowing, restricting the planting of invasive species, and prohibiting the release of non-native flora and fauna.

## EXISTING LOCAL PROGRAMS RELATED TO THE MANAGEMENT OF HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

*The Town has already adopted many regulatory measures to protect historic and cultural resources including:*

### Historic District Zoning and Guidelines

Block Island enacted historic district zoning in 1982. The Historic Overlay zoning district covers the village and the two harbors, including all or most of the commercial and mixed use zones, as well as Residential C (See Map LU2 Zoning). Within the overlay zone, all building alterations and construction, as well as sign applications, must be reviewed and approved by the Historic District Commission (HDC). The Commission relies on the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties in their review. The HDC also relies on local guidelines in evaluating applications for new construction, restoration, rehabilitation within the boundaries of the historic district. The current boundary of the historic district overlay should be reevaluated as there are properties within the district which are not historic and other properties along the peripheries of the district which are historic.

### Voluntary Inclusion in Historic District Zoning

The town also has an ordinance to allow property owners to voluntarily place their property within the historic district overlay zone and subject to the rules and regulations administered by the Historic District Commission. This process involves a zoning petition, public hearing and zoning amendment. At this time, two properties have pursued this voluntary inclusion and subsequent protection.

### Demolition Delay Ordinance

The Town has in place a Demolition Delay Ordinance which requires review and delay of the proposed demolition of buildings on the island, with the intent to protect historic buildings and encourage their adaptive reuse.

### Maintenance Standards / Avoiding Demolition through Owner Neglect Ordinance

The Town also has in place regulations to avoid a situation where a property owner defers maintenance beyond repair on a historic structure resulting in a request for demolition. The current "Avoiding demolition through owner neglect" section of the zoning ordinance provides the town with the authority to make the repairs directly and to charge back the owner by placing a lien on the property. However, the town may need to evaluate whether it is effective and efficient enough to address the issue or if increased monitoring or enforcement is needed.

## Massing and Size Restrictions for New Construction

Local regulations controlling massing, scale and size of structures were recently enacted to protect scenic landscapes and traditional architectural values of the island. The zoning regulations establish specific maximums for wall plane, building plane, building footprint and building volume. The town will continue efforts to discourage tear-downs of original homes and construction of homes out of character with the traditional vernacular of the island.

### **Private Resources for Historic Preservation**

#### **Preservation Easement Program**

A historic preservation easement is a legal agreement that ensures the historic and architectural qualities of a property will not be destroyed. Several regional non-profit organizations including Preserve RI offer historic easement programs as a means to protect historic properties and landscapes in perpetuity, ensuring that subsequent owners follow its terms. This is an important tool to encourage on Block Island because many structures of historic interest are located throughout Block Island and not just within the boundaries of the Historic District.

## Goals, Policies & Implementation Actions

**GOAL HCI: Safeguard the heritage of the town by preserving districts and other structures of historic or architectural value which reflect elements of Block Island’s cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history.**

POLICY	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIMEFRAME
HCI.A. Support efforts to identify and recognize historic and cultural resources	HCI.A.1. Seek National Register and National Historic Landmark designation of significant properties and explore designation of the island as a whole	Historic District Commission; Historic Society	Ongoing
	HCI.A.2. Seek National Register Landmark <u>District</u> designation for the North Light	North Light Commission	Short-term
	HCI.A.3. Complete survey of historic structures and sites beyond the boundaries of the Historic District	Historic Society	Long-term
	HCI.A.4. Conduct an island-wide inventory of scenic roads and landscapes	Historic Society	Long-term
HCI.B. Proactively ensure the safeguarding of historically significant structures and sites from natural hazards and the impacts of climate change including sea-level rise	HC.I.B.1. Document and photograph high tides and storm flooding impacts, bluff erosion, etc. in the vicinity of historically significant structures	Planning Board: Building, Zoning, Land Use and Planning; Town Manager	Ongoing
HCI.C. Protect and enhance the island’s Historic District	HCI.C.1. Encourage property owners to voluntarily add their property to the Historic District	Historic District Commission; Town Council	Ongoing
	HCI.C.2. Evaluate the current boundaries of the Historic District	Historic District Commission; Town Council	Short-term
	HCI.C.3. Increase monitoring and enforcement efforts of neglected historic properties	Building, Zoning, Land Use and Planning	Ongoing

**GOAL HC2: PRESERVE HISTORIC AND SCENIC LANDSCAPES**

<u>POLICY</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>	<u>TIMEFRAME</u>
HC2.A. Protect the rural character and coastal views of the island’s scenic landscapes	HC2.A.1. Work with partners to identify and implement solutions to control vegetation growth and invasive species	Building, Zoning, Land Use and Planning; Land Trust; Town Council	Medium-term; Ongoing
HC2.B. Ensure that new development is sensitive to the look and feel of the island and is not disruptive to the special character of the place	HC2.B.1. Review local regulations to ensure that the scenic and rural character of roads are protected and that development is concealed to the extent possible from public travelways and vantage points	Building, Zoning, Land Use and Planning; Planning Board	Short-term
HC2.C. Protect the island’s historic hand-built stonewalls	HC2.C.1 Adopt a stonewall ordinance that ensures protection of stonewalls at public vantage points	Planning Board; Town Council	Long-term

**GOAL HC3: SHARE THE ISLAND’S HISTORY AND SUPPORT CULTURAL ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

<u>POLICY</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>	<u>TIMEFRAME</u>
HC3.A. Promote the use of historic sites for the education and pleasure of the community and its visitors		Town Council; Town Manager Tourism Council; Historic Society	Ongoing
HC3.B. Promote and enhance Block Island’s identity as a destination of cultural and historic assets		Town Council; Town Manager; Tourism Council; Historic Society	Ongoing

**Timeframes:** Short-term (1-3 years); Medium-term (4-6 years); Long-term (7-10 years)



## 3. NATURAL RESOURCES

New Shoreham 2016 Comprehensive Plan

### VISION

**Preservation, protection and restoration of the natural habitats and populations on Block Island will continue to be a priority of the Town of New Shoreham and its citizens. Land conservation efforts, local government practices, and education of residents and visitors will ensure that the island remains ecologically healthy and attracts those who value its natural scenic beauty.**

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# NATURAL RESOURCES

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## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Rhode Island Wildlife Action Plan, 2015, Prepared by Terwillinger Consulting Inc. for The Rhode Island Chapter of the Nature Conservancy for The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management.

The Rhode Island Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model (SLAMM) Project, Summary Report, March 2015.

## INTRODUCTION

The Nature Conservancy has identified Block Island as *“the most ecologically significant place in Rhode Island and one of the most ecologically important places in North America.”*

With its dramatic bluffs, sandy beaches, and coastal ponds, Block Island’s natural resources are the reason it is a major tourism destination. These significant natural resources are part of what makes Block Island a special place and serve as the foundation for the quality of life of residents. The island’s natural resources provide scenic beauty, leisure and recreational opportunities, and also serve as the major driver of the local economy.

## Habitat Areas

Block Island is one of the most ecologically significant places in Southern New England. It has a variety of high quality terrestrial and wetland habitats which include farmlands, open fields and grasslands, freshwater wetlands, coastal shrublands, beach and dune complexes, coastal ponds, rocky shorelines, freshwater ponds, vernal ponds, and salt marsh. These habitats support a rich variety of plant and animal species, including about 40 rare and endangered species. Unique natural features include dramatic coastal bluffs and Rodman’s Hollow a meltwater channel.

### **Freshwater and Wetland System**

There exists a unique abundance of freshwater ponds on Block Island. Ponds, swamps and freshwater marshes provide high quality habitat areas for a variety of fish and wildlife, as well as recreational areas for birdwatchers and other outdoor enthusiasts. Vernal ponds are arguably the most important freshwater habitat on Block Island with their immense biodiversity. The diving beetle, fairy shrimp, red-spotted newt (salamander), and countless insects including dragonfly and damselfly inhabit vernal ponds on Block Island. The island’s freshwater resources also create scenic landscapes such as the view of Spring House Pond, Sachem Pond, Franklin Swamp, Champlin Farm Pond, and Seneca Swamp. Sands Pond and Fresh Pond contribute to the island’s EPA designated sole source aquifer upon which both public and private water

supplies depend. *Map NRI Surface Water and Aquifers* provides a visual of the freshwater resources of Block Island including wellhead protection areas.

Maintaining strict regulatory standards for wetland setbacks from dwellings and septic systems are critical to safeguarding both surface water resources and groundwater, as well as water quality of the Great Salt Pond. Recent State legislation provides for a unified wetlands setback statewide. New Shoreham is one of six Rhode Island communities that are at risk of having reduced setbacks and buffers due to this legislation. Although specific regulations are still in development by RIDEM, New Shoreham is concerned that this legislation and resulting standards may not adequately protect the significant and fragile ecosystems on Block Island. The new regulations will include a procedure for municipalities to petition to increase the jurisdictional areas for environmentally sensitive areas, something that the Town should consider.

#### **Coastal Shrublands**

Block Island has some of the best and most extensive shrublands along the Atlantic coast. The key species of native shrubs include arrowwood, shadbush, chokeberry, bayberry, winterberry, and others. Shad is an important shrub for nesting and for its rich food source. The majority of species of migratory songbirds and breeding birds on Block Island rely heavily on this coastal shrub habitat. While shrub habitats are found in many places around the Island, the large tracts on the north end are most important to fall migratory birds. Clayhead Preserve is a popular birdwatching location on the island for migratory songbirds including the Magnolia Warbler and Canada Warbler. Beyond being an important habitat, the coastal shrubland on Block Island contributes to the scenic quality of Block Island's landscapes by softening the aesthetic impacts of development.

#### **Coastal Ponds and Salt Marshes**

Salt marshes around the Great Salt Pond provide a habitat for a diversity of species including birds, fiddler crabs, horseshoe crabs, ribbed mussels, grass shrimp, soft shelled clams, quahogs, periwinkles and seaweed. Two of the most well-known and visited salt marshes on Block Island are Andy's Way and Mosquito Beach.

#### **Beaches and Dunes**

Dunes serve as critical natural features because they provide protection from flooding and erosion by wind and waves. Coastal dunes are also sensitive habitat areas for species such as the dusty miller, meadow voles, sea rocket and beach plum. The dunes of Block Island serve as important nesting area for birds and are a feeding area for barn owls. Dune preservation efforts by the Town and its partners should be continual. In an effort to stabilize the dunes, a private-public partnership regularly transplants American beach grass to exposed dune faces on Block Island. Additional strategies should be identified and implemented to ensure that people do not encroach on this important and sensitive habitat.

#### **Forest Lands**

Block Island was heavily forested prior to settlement in the mid 1600's according to several accounts by early navigators. Once the settlers arrived, the forest was cut for lumber for homes, farm structures, boats, fences, fuel and other uses. The majority of Block Island's landscape was open agricultural fields from then on for several centuries until farming declined considerably in the mid-1900's. Inactive fields became covered with

native shrub species mentioned above. Block Island now has some small patches of forest dominated by black cherry, and some forest-like areas dominated by large shad. There are a few isolated forest patches of large native black gum or tupelo trees in the middle of the island near swamps north and south of the airport, and one small patch of American beech in the same area. Another native tree species, the red maple, is found in most parts of the island but usually isolated to one or two individual trees in any location.

Currently, no properties on Block Island are classified as forest under the State Farm, Forest and Open Space law that allows such land meeting certain standards to be taxed based on use rather than potential market value.

See *Map NR2 Habitats* which displays lands classified as forested and wetlands under the Ecological Communities Classification data from RIGIS.

### **Farmlands**

A small number of working farms remain on the island, as well as lands separate from farms which are used for agriculture. There are also conserved lands with agricultural potential which are currently benefiting the scenic quality of the island and contributing valuable habitat for many species. See Economic Development Chapter for additional discussion on agriculture and maps of existing agricultural operations and agricultural soils on Block Island.

## Endangered Species

### BLOCK ISLAND IS HOME TO MANY FRAGILE SPECIES INCLUDING OVER 40 SPECIES WHICH ARE ON THE FEDERAL OR STATE ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST.

More than 50 species of birds nest on Block Island including the American oystercatcher, black-crowned night heron, and grasshopper sparrow. Some of these species of birds are on the state-endangered species list.

The American Burying Beetle, Block Island's rarest animal, is found in only 5 places in the world. Threats to the American Burying Beetle include outdoor lighting, pesticides, loss of open field habitat, and a number of other factors. The population is currently stable on Block Island due primarily to the protection of large tracts of open land in the southwestern portion of the Island. The burying beetle was recently named Rhode Island's official state insect.

Many of the other rare and endangered species found on Block Island require open field habitats, including the barn owl, Block Island meadow vole, northern blazing star, and savannah sparrow. Protection of the declining monarch butterfly will require management of open fields for monarchs to ensure there are both breeding habitat and nectar sources.

## An Assessment of Issues Facing Significant Natural Resources

### **Stormwater Pollution**

Pollution remains a major threat to the island's natural resources. Increased impervious surfaces associated with development along with failing septic and wastewater systems contribute to a degradation of water quality on the island. The Town is currently exploring strategies to control stormwater impacts on the Great Salt Pond and its watershed. For additional information see the Great Salt Pond Chapter and Services and Facilities Chapter.

Natural riparian buffers around fresh and saltwater resources can play an integral role in both protecting these resources and providing habitat for wildlife. The use of local land use authority to preserve or restore natural riparian buffers is critical to the overall health of watershed systems and to public health and should be explored on Block Island.

The use of synthetic pesticides is prohibited on town property and should be strictly enforced. Establishing strict standards on the use of nitrogen fertilizers and pesticides on private property, and limiting other sources of nitrogen inputs in the watershed of the Great Salt Pond, should also be considered. The spawning and nursery functions of Great Salt Pond are well documented; nitrogen, pesticide and herbicide runoff should be prevented from entering this important and vital system via waterfront properties and the watershed.

### **Natural Hazards and Sea Level Rise**

Climate change is a potential major threat to marine and wildlife population and habitats on Block Island. It is anticipated that sea level rise will have a substantial impact on the coastal features, marshes, wetlands and coastline habitat on Block Island. CRMC reports that based on the Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model (SLAMM), Block Island is projected to lose 3.6, 49.6 and 61.4 acres with 1, 3, and 5 feet of sea-level rise, respectively. Considering that the island has a total of about 72 existing coastal wetlands as of 2010, these projected losses are very significant and would result in substantial habitat loss. SLAMM Project report and maps for all Rhode Island can be found on the CRMC website at: [www.crmc.ri.gov/maps/maps\\_slamm.html](http://www.crmc.ri.gov/maps/maps_slamm.html). More frequent and severe storm events will also contribute to an acceleration of bluff erosion and dune destabilization. See the Great Salt Pond and Natural Hazards & Climate Change sections for additional discussion and Map NHC4 SLAMM.

### **Bluff Erosion**

One of Block Island's greatest natural resources is its remarkably scenic coastal bluffs. Bluffs are subject to continuing erosion by the natural forces of gravity, water, and wind. However, human activity such as the development of roads and walking paths can increase the possibility of erosion and bluff instability. Added weight on the bluff face by objects and structures, removal of vegetation, and stormwater runoff can also contribute to increased destabilization and erosion rates. Proper land management practices including generous development setbacks from bluffs can help to ensure that erosion rates are not dramatically increased by human activity and development.

### **Invasive Species**

The key threat to grasslands, open fields, ponds, and shrubland habitats is habitat succession and colonization by invasive species like black swallowwort, multiflora rose and autumn olive. Other species of concern which can dominate habitats when not controlled are mile-a-minute vine, bittersweet, Japanese Knotweed, Black Swallowwort, bamboo and many species of invasive ornamental grasses. Overgrowth of these species will shade out and eventually kill native shrubs. Efforts should be made to protect and maintain large stands of native shrubs and even smaller patches if of high quality. The Town should also consider regulations regarding land clearing, invasive species control and pesticide use. Grasslands and open fields require continuous or periodic maintenance by mowing or grazing to keep from growing into shrublands and eventually forests. The planting of ornamental bamboo and ornamental grasses is becoming a matter of concern and should be regulated.

### **Deer Population**

Block Island did not historically have a large deer population. The last valid record of deer existing on Block Island was around the time white settlers arrived in 1661. At the request of local hunters, the State reintroduced deer to Block Island in 1967 bringing over four does and a buck on the ferry. With mild winters, acres of low-lying brush in which to hide, and no natural predators on Block Island other than man, the deer thrived. There is concern that an overpopulation of deer results in negative impacts on the local ecosystem. To address this concern, Block Island provides permits to local hunters in order to control the deer population. The hunting season has been lengthened and once-stringent permitting procedures have been loosened. The Town's recent policy of payment of bounty on deer has been successfully implemented. Some argue for eradication of deer on Block Island, however, the proximity of houses and large tracts of land where hunters are not allowed provide deer a safe haven. Others argue total eradication is not necessary in order to protect the environment.

Compounding the issue is the high incidence of Lyme disease on the island. This is a major public health issue and a factor in decision-making related to controlling the deer population on Block Island. The Town currently has in place a Deer Task Force whose work is dedicated to addressing the deer population and control measures on Block Island. This is a controversial issue and additional discussion and consensus building may be necessary.

### **Human Intrusion**

On Block Island, human intrusion and disturbance especially along beaches and dunes pose a threat to habitat quality and natural populations. The island's many visitors must be educated on the importance of remaining off dunes, not disturbing wildlife and not polluting or littering. The use of snow fencing to keep people off the dunes and to direct pedestrians over the dunes to the beach should be a priority for the Town.

There is a concern that incremental approval of individual beach access structures, particularly stair structures, may lead to a cumulative degradation of the island's scenic resources. Local regulations should be crafted and adopted to protect the aesthetic qualities of Block Island's natural coastline and applications for beach access structures should be evaluated on the basis of multiple considerations including visual impacts.

The coastline should be inventoried and areas where beach access structures may not be appropriate due to safety concerns, sensitive ecological conditions, or visual impacts on significant scenic resources should be identified for further protection within the local regulations. In crafting regulations, consideration and preference should be given to public beach access structures that serve greater numbers of people.

#### TECHNIQUES IN PLACE FOR MINIMIZING NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT ON SIGNIFICANT NATURAL RESOURCES

Land conservation is arguably the single greatest strategy in achieving natural resource protection goals. The island's robust program of land conservation began in 1972 with the establishment of the Block Island Conservancy. As of 2015, 2,210 of the island's 6,076 acres (which excludes coastal ponds – the Great Salt Pond, Cormorant Cove, Trims Pond and Harbor Pond) are protected as open space through public or non-profit ownership or conservation easement. Another estimated 600 acres consist of wetlands or waterbodies and cannot be developed. Current records and calculations indicate that 44.8% of the island's land area is conserved, 36.4% through deeded protection and 9.8% through regulation.

MAP NR3 *Conserved Land* identifies the protected lands by ownership category on Block Island. This includes land owned by the federal government, the State of Rhode Island, and the Town of New Shoreham; a number of conservation organizations including The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society of Rhode Island, Block Island Conservancy, Block Island Land Trust and the Ocean View Foundation; and privately held lots with conservation easements or development restrictions. See Recreation and Conserved Areas Chapter for additional discussion on protected open spaces and priorities for land preservation.

In addition to land conservation, many town codes and regulations have been adopted for the purposes of natural resource protection. Chapter II Natural Resources of the Town Code establishes the Conservation Commission and wildlife refuge areas, protective measures for groundwater and surface water including wetlands, and soil erosion and sediment control measures.

Within the Town's Zoning regulations is a Coastal Overlay which provides a high level of protection for critical coastal features by greatly restricting development a minimum of 100 feet from delineated coastal features. Additionally, a Waterfront Overlay Zone provides protection to the island's harbors and ponds by restricting uses in designated zones.

Within the Town's Subdivision regulations is the option for Flexible Design Residential Development which provides an alternative to conventional style subdivisions in that a significant portion of the land is set aside as permanently protected open space. This option provides for the same number of house lots at reduced sizes to allow greater design flexibility in order to increase protection of natural resources.

## Goals, Policies & Implementation Actions

### GOAL NRI: Mitigate adverse impacts on the island's natural resources due to human development and activities

<u>Policy</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible Party</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
NRI.A. Direct new development to areas and locations that minimize the potential for negative environmental impacts	NRI.A.1. Review new State wetlands setback regulations and determine if additional protection measures are required to protect the quality and habitat of the wetlands systems on Block Island	Building, Land Use, & Planning; Planning Board; Conservation Commission; Town Manager; Town Council	Short-term
	NRI.A.2. Develop zoning overlay district with special use permit for high hazard areas that include storm surge inundation, sea level rise and SLAMM projected potential salt marsh areas	Building, Land Use, & Planning; Planning Board; Town Council	Medium-term
NRI.B. Focus land protection efforts on critical natural resources	NRI.B.1. Identify undeveloped land containing habitats of endangered species and/or having a high potential for coastal wetland migration	Land Trust; Town Council	Medium-term
	NRI.B.2. Explore issues related to reforestation and identify potential lands where reforestation may be a good option	Land Trust; Conservation Commission; Planning Board; Town Council	Long-term
NRI.C. Ensure open fields and shrublands remain high quality habitats	NRI.C.1. Develop informational guides for property owners on how to manage open fields for wildlife and the best cutting practices to achieve various desired results	Land Trust; Planning Board; Conservation Commission	Long-term
NRI.D. Control invasive species by reducing their density and abundance to a level which does not compromise the integrity of the ecosystem and allows native species to thrive	NRI.D.1. Develop an invasive species management plan for Town-owned open space properties	Conservation Commission; Planning Board; Recreation	Long-term
	NRI.D.2. Investigate ordinances relating to the control of invasive flora and fauna	Conservation Commission; Planning Board	Medium-term

NR1.E. Promote Environmental Stewardship	NR1.E.1. Develop an education program aimed at visitors and renters to promote good environmental behavior and responsible stewardship	Tourism Council; Conservation Commission; Recreation	Medium-term
	NR1.E.2. Institute programs at the Block Island School with partners that encourage outdoor learning, natural resources preservation and stewardship among the next generation	School Department	Ongoing

**GOAL NR2: Protect the water quality and habitat of coastal ponds and marshes and the freshwater resources of Block Island**

<u>Policy</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible Party</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
NR2.A. Manage stormwater volumes and reduce pollutants	NR2.A.1. Investigate strategies to reduce and limit impervious surface on the island and establish a policy identifying an upper limit on the total percentage of impervious cover on the island to be incorporated in the next update of the Comprehensive Plan	Building, Land Use, & Planning; Planning Board; Town Council	Long-term
	NR2.A.2. Enact guidelines and institute an education campaign on the appropriate use of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides; Town should serve as a model of best practices	Conservation Commission; Recreation; Building, Land Use, & Planning; Planning Board; Town Manager; Town Council	Medium-term
	NR2.A.3. Review and strengthen current regulations regarding LID (low impact development)	Building, Land Use, & Planning; Planning Board; Town Council	Medium-term

	NR2.A.4. Review and strengthen landscaping requirements to ensure low maintenance native vegetation that minimizes the need for watering and use of lawns, fertilizers, and pesticides are used for all new development projects	Building, Land Use, & Planning; Planning Board	Medium-term
NR2.B. Preserve and restore naturally buffered areas along coastal ponds and freshwater resources	NR2.B.1. Draft and adopt regulations to require the preservation or restoration of naturally buffered areas along the Great Salt Pond and significant freshwater ponds	Building, Land Use, & Planning; Planning Board; Town Council	Short-term
	NR2.B.2. Determine appropriate minimum buffer width and establish incentives for property owners who maintain a vegetated buffer in excess of the minimum	Building, Land Use, & Planning; Planning Board	Short-term
	NR2.B.3. With partners, conduct an inventory of vernal ponds; enforce buffers and control use of fertilizers in these area	Land Trust, Conservation Commission; Building, Land Use, & Planning; Planning Board	Long-term

**GOAL NR3: Protect Block Island's natural scenic coastline and features**

<u>Policy</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible Party</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
NR3.A. Control the proliferation and adverse impacts of individual beach access structures	NR3.A.1. Enact a twelve-month moratorium on individual beach access stair structures	Town Council	Short-term
	NR3.A.2. Craft and enact regulations to ensure private beach access structures are located and designed in a manner that minimizes any adverse impacts	Building, Land Use, & Planning; Planning Board; Town Council	Short-term
NR3.B. Preserve the natural flood protection function and high quality habitat of the dunes system	NR3.B.1. Install beach access signage to encourage pedestrians to remain off dunes	Recreation, Town Manager	Short-term
	NR3.B.2. Implement an effective public education campaign which explains the importance of people remaining off dunes	Recreation; Town Manager; Town Council	Short-term; Ongoing
	NR3.B.3. Install public walkover structures at the Town Beach to discourage traversing the fragile dunes (NHCI.B.2.)	Facilities Director; Building Official; Town Manager	Short-term

**Timeframes:** Short-term (1-3 years); Medium-term (4-6 years); Long-term (7-10 years)



# 4. RECREATION & CONSERVATION AREAS

New Shoreham 2016 Comprehensive Plan

## VISION

**Block Island will offer a variety of recreational activities that encourage healthy lifestyles and provide attractive and accessible places for the recreational pursuits of its residents and many visitors. The island's unparalleled network of conservation areas will continue to promote a strong sense of community and inspire responsible stewardship.**

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# RECREATION & CONSERVATION AREAS

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## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

OCEAN STATE OUTDOORS, STATE GUIDE PLAN ELEMENT 152. RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION, DIVISION OF PLANNING AND RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT. ADOPTED 2003, AMENDED IN 2009.

THE TOWN OF NEW SHOREHAM HARBOR MANAGEMENT PLAN, REVISED JANUARY 18, 2012.

THE TOWN OF NEW SHOREHAM SHORELINE ACCESS WORKING GROUP REPORT. DECEMBER, 2015.

## INTRODUCTION

With an extensive network of conserved lands and trails, 17 miles of beaches and two harbors, Block Island serves the recreational needs not only of its residents but also the tens of thousands of vacationers who visit the island annually to access them.

The following chapter provides an inventory of Block Island's recreational assets along with an assessment of current and future recreational needs. These recreational resources are critically important to the local economy and the quality of life of residents. Providing recreational opportunities is an important means of promoting public health and wellness for a community. On Block Island in particular, the availability of year-round recreational offerings is essential for residents to maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

The New Shoreham Recreation Department has the primary responsibility for providing recreational offerings on the island. Since the Department was instituted in 1996, the Town has seen a demand for additional and varied recreational opportunities on the part of both residents and visitors.

For all these reasons and more, planning for the development and maintenance of recreational facilities and the acquisition and stewardship of conserved lands is of prime importance to the island. *Coming to a consensus as a community as to what additional recreational facilities or offerings can or should be provided is a great challenge that may require additional planning and analysis.*

## Inventory of Recreation Facilities and Lands

Shown on Map RC1 *Recreational Assets* and described below are existing recreational facilities on Block Island. The first two municipal facilities, Heinz Field and Ball O'Brien Park, are administered by the New Shoreham Recreation Department.

### *Heinz Field*

Located within a beautifully landscaped area, Heinz Field is a multipurpose facility that includes a soccer field, baseball diamond, softball diamond, walking path, and parking. In the summer, it is heavily used by various town leagues. The ballfields are also utilized by the School Department, residents, and tourists.

### *Ball O'Brien Park*

Ball O'Brien Park contains a playground, a skate park, a basketball court, two tennis courts, a walking path, a picnic shelter and public restrooms. It is used heavily used by residents year-round and for leagues in the summer. The property is located adjacent to the Great Salt Pond and there is a path which provides shorelines access. The quarter mile, four foot wide walking path encircling the recreational facilities at the park was added in 2016. It was designed to facilitate stroller and wheelchair access. Exercise stations are a planned future addition.

### *Block Island School*

Block Island School is the primary indoor facility utilized by the Recreation Department. The gymnasium is used for some after-school and evening activities including youth programs and a town basketball league. It is also regularly used during the summer to host a variety of programming including a children's camp and basketball and volleyball leagues.

### *Recreation Center*

The Recreation Center, a municipal program for middle and high school students, is located in the basement of the Harbor Baptist Church. The facility is open for this program weekend evenings between late fall and early spring. It serves principally as an activity and social center. The Recreation Center also serves an important role of a foreign student center for seasonal workers during the summer.

### *Fred Benson Town Beach*

The Town Beach facility consists of a seasonally operated pavilion, parking accommodations for vehicles and bicycles and 400 feet of life guarded beach. The building includes restrooms and changing rooms, a concession stand and pay showers. An upgrade to the building is expected in 2016 to increase the number of showers and restroom capacity, and to allow access to these facilities when the building is closed (at the end of the day during the summer season, and during the shoulder season). The parking area was also recently expanded in response to beach parking alongside Corn Neck Road, which often leads to congestion and unsafe conditions. Further parking lot improvements are currently planned for including additional capacity. The Recreation Department has managed the Town Beach facility since 2010.

### *Other Parks*

There are a number of other parks and properties which are publicly-owned or available for public use, as listed below and identified on MAP RCI *Recreational Assets*. Some of these are planned for, or could be subject to, further physical improvements or enhancement.

- MARY D. PARK (WATER STREET)  
A STAIRCASE TO PROVIDE ACCESS FROM WATER STREET TO THE HARBOR AND BREAKWATER IS PLANNED.
- ESTA'S PARK (WATER STREET)

RECENT IMPROVEMENTS INCLUDING LANDSCAPING, BENCHES, AND PATHS COMPLETED AND LED BY THE OLD HARBOR TASK FORCE. IT IS NOW AN INVITING SPACE DOWNTOWN, CONVENIENTLY LOCATED FOR THOSE ARRIVING AND DEPARTING BY FERRY.

- NEGUS PARK (OCEAN AVENUE)  
PROPERTY IS UTILIZED WEEKLY FOR FARMER'S MARKET
- SOLVIKEN PROPERTY (CORN NECK ROAD)  
CONSERVED LAND CONVENIENTLY LOCATED BETWEEN THE TOWN BEACH AND DOWNTOWN. THE PROPERTY IS OWNED BY THE BLOCK ISLAND CONSERVANCY AND THE BLOCK ISLAND LAND TRUST AND IS PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE. AMENITIES INCLUDE A FEW PICNIC BENCHES. FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS ARE CURRENTLY BEING DEVELOPED.
- TRIANGLE AT ISAAC'S CORNER
- NICHOLAS BALL PARK

### *Conservation Lands*

As of 2015, 2,210 of the island's 6,076 acres (which excludes coastal ponds – the Great Salt Pond, Cormorant Cove, Trims Pond and Harbor Pond) are protected as open space through public or non-profit ownership. Another 597 acres consist of wetlands or waterbodies and cannot be developed. On that basis, 46.2% of the island's land area is conserved, 36.4% through deeded protection and 9.8% through regulation.

The island's robust program of land conservation began in 1972 with the establishment of the Block Island Conservancy. Leaders in the conservation movement originally established a goal of protecting 50% of the island, and previous and ongoing efforts have been extremely successful at nearing the achievement of that goal. The Town should continue to support the identification and conservation of remaining significant open space properties and encourage proper stewardship and management of the existing network of conserved lands. These ongoing efforts are essential for Block Island's economy and quality of life for present and future generations.

### *Trail System*

The island's 28 mile trail system is maintained principally through the combined efforts of the Block Island Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy. The trail system offers users passive recreational opportunities to enjoy the scenic natural beauty of the island including ocean views, coastal features, forests and meadows and provide important pedestrian connections and access to many locations throughout the island. The best trails for individuals with mobility issues are Hodge and Dickens Farm. The island's extensive trail system is shown on Map RCI *Recreational Assets* and is detailed in Table R1: *Block Island Trails* below. Further expansion of the trail system by The Nature Conservancy is not planned at this time, with maintenance capabilities being a limiting factor.

<b>Table RC1: Block Island Trails</b>		
<b>Trail</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Level</b>
CLAY HEAD TRAIL AND THE MAZE	12 miles	Moderate
HODGE FAMILY WILDLIFE PRESERVE	1 mile	Easy
MEADOW HILL GREENWAY	.5 miles	Moderate
THE GREENWAY - GREAT SALT POND TO BEACON HILL ROAD	1 mile	Moderate
THE GREENWAY - SOUTH BEACON HILL AND NATHAN MOTT PARK TRAILS	1.3 miles	Hard
THE GREENWAY - TURNIP FARM AND ELAINE LOFFREDO PRESERVE TRAILS	1.7 miles	Moderate
THE GREENWAY - OLD MILL ROAD TO RODMAN'S HOLLOW AND BLACK ROCK TRAILS	2.6 miles	Moderate
FRESH POND TRAIL	.8 miles	Hard
FRESH SWAMP AND PAYNE FARM TRAIL	.9 miles	Moderate
WIN DODGE AND DICKENS FARM TRAILS	2.4 miles	Win Dodge: Hard; Dickens Farm: Easy

*Source: On This Island, Keith H. Lang and Scott B. Comings, Published by The Nature Conservancy, 2006.*

## Water-Based Recreational Opportunities

### Shoreline Access

Block Island's 17 miles of beaches provide endless water-based recreational opportunities and attract visitors from around the globe. In addition to the Town Beach, swimming is popular and accessible, at-your-own risk, at various locations around the island.

It is estimated that the town has over 27 public access to the shore locations including seven CRMC designated right-of-ways to the shore. The Town Council established an informal working group, the Shoreline Access Working Group (SAWG), to inventory public right-of-ways and shoreline access points around the island. The group was tasked with assessing the condition and accessibility of each right-of-way and shoreline access point and to provide recommendations. Recommendations from their final report should be considered and incorporated into future projects including the production of a waterfront access guide for the public. The project should also be built upon in the future to include an inventory of public access points to the island's fresh waterbodies. For a recent description of identified public right-of-ways to the shore see the New Shoreham Harbor Management Plan, adopted in 2012 and the Shoreline Access Working Group Report, adopted in 2015 (Appendix A).

### Recreational Boating

The majority of recreational boating activity takes place at New Harbor (Great Salt Pond), with services and boat slips provided by commercial marinas. The Town has 90 rental moorings in the Great Salt Pond. In addition to the town-owned moorings, and commercial slips there are 289 private, permit moorings. There is also a large anchorage area in the eastern portion of the pond. Please refer the Great Salt Pond Chapter for additional discussion.

Old Harbor provides a small anchorage area to the west of the ferry docking area, a town-operated marina with two docks providing 80 slips, and one private marina. Some of the slips at the town-owned Old Harbor Dock are leased to commercial fishing and charter boat operators, but most are available for public use by transient boaters.

Block Island has a number of private companies offering water-related recreational services. These include sailing and fishing charters, as well as parasailing, kayaking and canoeing tours and rentals, and surf and paddle board lessons and rentals.

For additional discussion on the island's harbors refer to the Town's Harbor Management Plan.

## Recreational Programs Offered by the Town

The Recreation Department organizes, manages, and supports a number of programs throughout the year. There are numerous programs for all ages in the off-season, including many activities for children and teens, a basketball league, and trips to the mainland for cultural events. Little League and tennis are offered in the spring. Soccer, lacrosse, baseball, basketball and volleyball are offered in the summer along with nature and arts camps. The island also hosts popular athletic events including a 10K race in the spring, a triathlon in the summer, and a 15K run in the fall.

### RECREATIONAL NEEDS SURVEY

In 2015, the Recreation Department undertook a survey of residents and visitors to gauge satisfaction with existing facilities and to determine the need for additional outdoor and indoor recreational facilities. Given that the distribution of the survey was not controlled, the results cannot be considered statistically significant and should not be solely relied upon. However, the information can assist decision-makers in identifying additional recreational facilities and programs that should be explored.

Of the 369 responses, 43% self-identified as year-round residents and the rest were evenly split between seasonal residents or visitors. There were generally high satisfaction rates with the various recreational facilities, with a couple exceptions. Development of additional outdoor recreational facilities was supported by just 36% of the respondents who identified themselves as year-round residents, but by 50% of all respondents who answered the question. Development of an indoor recreation space was supported by 80% of year-round residents, and by 67% of all respondents. For the indoor facility, the overwhelming demand was for a fitness and wellness center and a swimming pool, or more generally, a multi-use facility that serves all ages.

The Recreation Department should continue to monitor demand for facilities and programs in order to effectively provide for the recreational needs of the community.

## RECREATIONAL NEEDS IDENTIFIED

In providing for recreation, the town's first priority must be to ensure safe and clean facilities through proper management and maintenance. The Town must also encourage stewardship of the lands already set aside for conservation. In addition, the Town should plan for the expansion of its recreational inventory in response to the needs of the community. However, consideration must be made for the costs to the community associated with the development and ongoing maintenance of any additional parks and ballfields. A Recreation Master Plan including financial analyses can assist the island in establishing a realistic long-range plan for the development and maintenance of recreational assets and can be used to guide implementation efforts. The following section describes the limitations of existing recreation facilities and future needs for additional recreational offerings.

### *Fred Benson Town Beach*

As a top attraction and recreational asset of the island, support and demand will always exist for additional improvements and amenities at the Town Beach. However, given the vulnerability of the building's location to high winds and storm surges, and the damages it incurred during Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the Town must balance the expense of improvements with the risk of future damage from severe storms.

### *Athletic Fields*

Expansion of athletic fields has been identified as necessary to respond to the demands of multiple user groups, particularly in the summer. Heinz Field is not large enough to accommodate the programming needs of both the Recreation Department and the School Department.

### *Gymnasium*

Availability of programs offered to the general public at the Block Island School is limited by facility access and the school calendar. Opportunities to provide increased access for adult recreation programs at the Block Island School, particularly the gymnasium, when it is not being utilized by school programming should be explored.

### *Recreation Center*

The Recreation Center in the Harbor Baptist Church is not accessible to individuals with physical disabilities. The facility is limited in its use by the Harbor Baptist Church to its operating hours and length of season. For these two reasons, an alternative, more permanent location within a town-owned or controlled property should be explored.

### *Indoor Recreational Facility & Swimming Pool*

The community acknowledges the recreation and health benefits an indoor recreation and community center could provide year-round residents. This type of facility could also enhance the island's tourism industry's shoulder season. Along with exercise class space and an exercise equipment room, the facility could also serve as a youth center, senior center, and house the Recreation Department offices. It could also be a location for educational pursuits and a space for community events, enhancing the quality of life of residents and fostering community cohesion. The Town will further explore potential locations along with the financial

costs and capabilities of the town to develop, operate and maintain such a facility. The feasibility of an indoor swimming pool at this recreational facility or another location should also be explored.

*Physical space for additional recreational programs discussed above could be provided by rehabilitating one or more existing and underutilized town-owned buildings.*

*The Large Capital Asset Subcommittee (LCAS) is working on surveying existing town properties where recreational activities could be offered.*

### ***Recreational Programs for Seniors***

In 2015, the Town added a full-time recreation assistant to the Recreation Department to specifically assist with recreational programming. This will allow additional programs to be offered in response to need, both seasonally and year-round. In particular, there is an identified lack of recreational programs for older adults. Given the growing aging population, it is anticipated that the demand for recreational programs for seniors will increase in the future.

### ***Geographically Dispersed Provision of Neighborhood Scaled Recreational Amenities***

Redevelopment in the village and harbor areas, the construction of new housing, particularly affordable, and any major subdivision of land, provide opportunities for the provision of open space and recreation amenities at no cost to the town throughout the community. These neighborhood scaled recreational assets could include pocket parks, playgrounds, community gardens, pedestrian paths, and public access to the shore. The town currently has a conservation subdivision option, known as flexible design, which encourages the set aside of land for open space in subdivisions of three or more lots. The town should consider making conservation-style subdivisions mandatory for all major subdivisions on the island and encourage varied and site appropriate recreational amenities be provided as part of any major development or redevelopment projects.

### ***Expansion of the Island's Conserved Lands Inventory***

Efforts to protect all critically important lands should continue. According to a 2011 poll conducted by The Nature Conservancy on Block Island, public priorities for the acquisition of conservation lands were identified in the following order.

Properties that:

- PROTECT FRESHWATER RESOURCES / QUALITY OF DRINKING WATER
- PROTECT IMPORTANT HABITAT, PARTICULARLY OF ENDANGERED SPECIES
- PROTECT SCENIC VIEWSHEDS AND LANDSCAPES
- PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PASSIVE RECREATION
- ARE MOST VULNERABLE TO DEVELOPMENT
- PROVIDE PUBLIC PARK SPACE AND CAN BE UTILIZED FOR BALLFIELDS
- CAN ACCOMMODATE COMMUNITY GARDENS

Other important priorities of the town when identifying properties to be protected include those lands which:

- ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO HISTORIC OR ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES
- ABUT EXISTING CONSERVED LANDS / PROMOTE LARGE GREENWAYS OF CONNECTED CONSERVATION AREAS
- PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXTEND EXISTING TRAIL NETWORK
- PROVIDE PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE SHORE
- ARE SUBJECT TO INUNDATION DUE TO SEA LEVEL RISE
- CAN MITIGATE THE IMPACTS OF SEA LEVEL RISE

## Goals, Policies & Implementation Actions

### **GOAL RCI: PROVIDE AN EXPANSIVE AND WELL-MAINTAINED NETWORK OF OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL AREAS INCLUDING CONSERVATION LANDS, BEACHES, TRAILS, PARKS, AND BALLFIELDS**

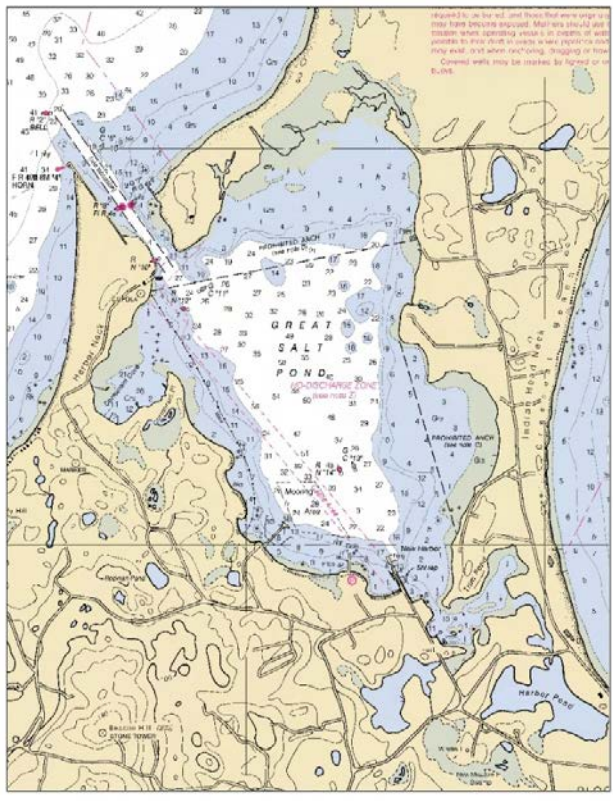
<u>POLICY</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>	<u>TIMEFRAME</u>
RCI.A. Increase the inventory of conserved lands in order to protect natural resources including habitat and water quality and to preserve the island's scenic landscapes	RCI.A.1. Partner with non-profits to identify and prioritize open space lands that should be conserved	Land Trust; Conservation Commission; GIS Department; Town Manager; Town Council	Ongoing
	RCI.A.2. Collaborate with non-profits when acquiring, developing, and maintaining recreation and conservation areas	Land Trust; Conservation Commission; Town Manager; Town Council	Ongoing
	RCI.A.3. Prioritize the conservation of lands abutting conserved lands to create large protected greenways, habitat areas and opportunities for trail extensions	Land Trust; Town Council	Ongoing
RCI.B. Encourage the use of conservation-style (flexible) subdivisions over traditional subdivisions of land	RCI.B.4. Determine if conservation-style subdivisions should be mandatory for all major subdivisions	Planning Board	Short-term
RCI.C. Promote public access to the island's recreation and conservation areas	RCI.C.1. Maintain pedestrian trails including the greenway and right-of-ways to the shore so that they remain passable and have appropriate signage	Conservation Commission; Land Trust; Town Manager	Ongoing
	RCI.C.2. Inventory, document and map all public access points to the shoreline and freshwater bodies; publish and distribute a public waterfront access guide	SAWG; GIS Department; Harbors Department; Recreation Department	Short-term
	RCI.C.3. Create and disseminate a blueways map and guide to promote paddling (GSP2.B.1.)	GIS; Harbors Department; Tourism Council; Recreation Department	Short-term

RCI.D. Enhance the enjoyment and recreational potential of town-owned parks and other recreational assets through suitable upgrades, maintenance and management measures	RCI.D.1. Develop a maintenance plan for town recreational facilities that establishes roles and responsibilities of the various town departments and groups	Recreation Department; School Department; Land Trust; Town Manager	Short-term
	RCI.D.2. Add amenities and make upgrades to existing town-owned parks when possible	Town Manager; Recreation Department; Town Council	Ongoing
	RCI.D.3. Construct a staircase to provide access from Water Street to the Harbor and breakwater	Town Manager; Facilities Director; Building Official; Old Harbor Task Force	Short-term

**GOAL RC2: MEET THE RECREATIONAL FACILITY AND PROGRAM NEEDS OF RESIDENTS, BOTH YEAR-ROUND AND SEASONAL, OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES, AS WELL AS VISITORS**

POLICY	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIMEFRAME
RC2.A. Plan for increased demand and investments in recreational facilities and programs	RC2.A.1. Develop and implement a fiscally feasible Recreation Master Plan that serves the long-term needs of residents	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; LCAS; Recreation Department; Town Manager; Town Council	Medium-term
	RC2.A.2. Explore location options and financial ability of town to develop and operate an indoor recreational facility	LCAS; Town Manager; Town Council	Short-term
	RC2.A.3. Identify potential locations for the future development of playing fields to relieve issues related to over-use and scheduling conflicts	LCAS; Town Manager	Medium-term
	RC2.A.4. Add additional year-round recreational program opportunities targeted to older adults and seniors	Recreation Department	Short-term
RC2.B. Consider vulnerability to natural hazards when locating or upgrading recreational facilities			
RC2.C. Increase accessibility to town recreational facilities	RC2.C.1. Incorporate safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access to town recreational facilities	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Planning Board; Town Manager	Ongoing
	RC2.C.2. Retrofit existing facilities when possible to provide increased access to recreational facilities by disabled and seniors	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Planning Board; Town Manager	Ongoing
	RC2.C.3. Explore opportunities for increased access to the Block Island School gymnasium for adult recreation programs	Recreation Department; School Department	Short-term
RC2.D. Foster variety in the types and geographic locations of recreational amenities	RC2.D.1. Require that significant land development projects, including major subdivisions, incorporate open space and recreational amenities	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Planning Board	Short-term

**Timeframes:** Short-term (1-3 years); Medium-term (4-6 years); Long-term (7-10 years)



## VISION

The Great Salt Pond will continue to serve a central role in Block Island life for generations to come as one of Block Island's most significant natural features, recreational resources and economic assets. The community will place vital importance on the protection of its water quality, fragile ecosystem and scenic character. This beloved recreational resource will continue to be known as a first-class yacht harbor and welcoming to a variety of water-based recreational activities. Through sound management, the Great Salt Pond will remain in strong ecological health and will contribute immeasurably to the local economy and the quality of life of residents.

# 5. THE GREAT SALT POND

New Shoreham 2016 Comprehensive Plan

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# THE GREAT SALT POND

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## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

BLOCK ISLAND HARBORS SEA LEVEL RISE ADAPTATION STUDY. TOWN OF NEW SHOREHAM, RI. AUGUST 1, 2013.

SEASONAL DYNAMICS OF JUVENILE FISH IN GREAT SALT POND, BLOCK ISLAND, 2014. THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, BLOCK ISLAND FIELD OFFICE. DECEMBER 14, 2014.

THE GREAT SALT POND MANAGEMENT PLAN. TOWN OF NEW SHOREHAM, RI. 1998.

TOWN OF NEW SHOREHAM HARBOR MANAGEMENT PLAN. REVISED JANUARY 18, 2012.

## OVERVIEW

One of Block Island's greatest assets is its beautiful sheltered harbor, known as the Great Salt Pond. Historically an enclosed pond, this now 673 acre tidal harbor, known as New Harbor, opens to Block Island Sound providing vessels with shelter from heavy seas. Since Block Island had no natural harbors, breakwaters were constructed to form Old Harbor in 1870. New Harbor, was created in 1895, when a channel was dug to connect the Great Salt Pond to Block Island Sound through the northwestern side of the island.

*The federal channel accessing the Great Salt Pond was authorized through the U.S. Rivers and Harbors Act of June 3, 1896 (modified in 1902 and 1945) which allows for the construction, repair, and preservation of certain public works on rivers and harbors and specifically cites the Great Salt Pond on Block Island.*

Today, the Great Salt Pond is a popular multiple use recreational and economic asset. Providing for those uses while also protecting ecological communities, water quality, and sensitive archeological sites is a great challenge. This magically scenic natural feature demands our protection. A balance of appropriate uses must be achieved in order to provide an optimal habitat, superior water quality and a recreation zone for water based activities in keeping with this special place.

### *Cultural Asset*

The Great Salt Pond has provided a home, habitat, and recreation for thousands of years. The shores of the pond have a long history of human use, as it once was a primary area of residence by Native Americans both before and after contact with Europeans. Due to its significance, the area was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1990 and is referred to as the Great Salt Pond Archeological District (See *Map HCI Historic & Cultural Resources*).

### *Ecological Asset*

Covering about one square mile in area, the Great Salt Pond is surrounded by a scenic watershed and is home to a wide variety of plants and animals. Its waters, shoreline and coastal wetlands provide important habitat for birds, seals, lobsters, crabs, shellfish and fish.

### *Recreational Asset*

The Great Salt Pond is one of the most popular yacht harbors in the northeast with approximately 1,000 visiting boats moored in New Harbor on a typical summer weekend and as many as 2,000 on special occasions such as holidays or Race Week. It is navigable by vessels with up to 12 feet of draft and offers a large anchoring area and rental moorings. The pond is also popular for paddling and fishing.

### *Economic Asset*

Together with the nearby beaches, the Great Salt Pond/New Harbor is the island's prime attraction for tourists. On summer weekends, visiting boaters are estimated to represent a waterborne community of 3,000 to 6,000 people making New Harbor a major economic asset not only for the Town but also for the State. The local businesses established to support this waterborne community provide jobs for residents and contribute significantly to the local tax base. Permits and fees associated with the recreational uses on the pond also represent a significant revenue source for the town.

## Appropriate Uses

*The intention of the Town has been and continues to be that New Harbor be dedicated to recreational boating use, commercial fishing, shellfishing, and aquaculture but not to other commercial activities such as freight, ferries, major transportation and other uses that might conflict with those intended uses or the scenic and natural qualities of the Great Salt Pond. A clear distinction must remain between uses appropriate for Old Harbor and New Harbor.*

Concern over potential overdevelopment or inappropriate uses that could forever negatively impact this important natural and economic asset drives a significant amount of civic attention and volunteerism and, as such, appropriate public policies and protective measures should follow. Public policies affecting the Great Salt Pond and its watershed should be based on a long-term view, a clear understanding of the pond's ecosystem and the utilization of tools to forecast and evaluate environmental impacts. It is important that the Great Salt Pond be protected and managed in a way to prevent future harm while allowing for the current uses to continue.

## Tour the Great Salt Pond - A Shared-Use Harbor

The Great Salt Pond serves as a shared-use harbor. Roughly one-half, the northern sector, is reserved for recreational use. This is a "no anchoring" area **(1)**, kept open for sailing, swimming, fishing, kayaking,

canoeing, kite boarding, rowing and wakeboarding. The Great Salt Pond is readymade for paddling, with flat water surrounded by scenic salt marsh and estuaries perfect for bird and wildlife sightings.

The central and southern deep-water areas of the Great Salt Pond are set aside as anchorage **(2)** and mooring areas **(3)**. The mooring field contains both private and rental moorings. The town owns and manages 90 rental moorings. The 289 private moorings in the Great Salt Pond are controlled by permits issued by the Town. The mooring area is at or near capacity and there is a long list of island residents and nonresidents on the waitlist for mooring permits. Commercial launch services operate throughout the Great Salt Pond, serving both the anchorage and mooring areas.

Three large private marinas **(4)** provide over 400 slips for private yachts, dockage for the high speed ferry from Montauk, New York, and on occasion, host small cruise ships. Surrounding the three large marinas are shoreside restaurants and inns within walking distance. Two of the marinas have bars and eating establishments on the piers.

The southwest corner of Great Salt Pond is Cormorant Cove **(5)**, a 32 acre cove bordered by private residences, some with piers. Part of Cormorant Cove is deep enough for anchorage, but it is separated from the main body of the harbor by a shoal, and there is only a narrow entry with water deep enough for boats with four to five feet of draft.

Northwest of Cormorant Cove, on the edge of the channel joining Block Island Sound, is a former U.S. Coast Guard station **(6)**. Its building and dock are now owned by the Town and future uses are being explored.

The northern recreational area by Beane Point is bordered to the west and the north by dunes, tidal flats and salt marshes. This is an undeveloped conservation area **(7)** and wildlife preserve. It is owned in part by local entities and in part by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Along the eastern shore of the recreational area is a public beach, Andy's Way **(8)** with a small parking area off of Corn Neck Road. Dozens of small craft are pulled up on the beach here during the season.

While there are homes along this shore, most buildings are set back from the water's edge, leaving the shoreline untouched. One exception is the Block Island Club **(9)**, a community nonprofit that focuses on sail training for juniors. The club has a building near the water, a small swimming beach and a pier (the only pier permitted in the recreational area). The club has a fleet of more than 40 sailboats, kayaks, canoes and rowboats.

To the south of the club is a public dinghy beach, known as Mosquito Beach **(10)**, which provides visiting boaters with access to the ocean beaches and town facilities on the eastern side of the island, across Corn Neck Road.



Figure GSP I: Great Salt Pond Tour

In the southeast corner of the Great Salt Pond there are linked salt-water ponds, Trim's Pond **(11)** and Harbor Pond **(12)**. Part of this area is used for commercial aquaculture. This is mostly shallow water, navigable by kayaks or canoes, but with deeper water along an entrance channel where there is a public launch ramp for small craft, the only one in the Great Salt Pond. Also located along the channel is a docking station for pumpout boats to transfer waste from boats in the harbor to the town's sewage treatment system. Commercial facilities in this area include kayak and paddleboard rental stations, a boat launch, repair and winter storage facility, with rental slips for small craft, and a bait and tackle shop with rental cabins and a dock for small fishing boats. One other organization located on the water here is the BI Maritime Institute **(13)**, a nonprofit which has slips for a dozen boats.

See below for CRMC Water Type Classification Map. A majority of waterfront on the Great Salt Pond is designated Type I, Conservation Areas, which does not permit the construction of new docks.

## Public Facilities for a Waterborne Community

In the summer, boaters in New Harbor represent a large seasonal community on the island resulting in the need for a significant amount of public services and facilities including but not limited to emergency response, utilities, and refuse collection. Currently, there are few on-shore public facilities to meet the basic needs for these visiting boaters. For example, there is no public dinghy dock for the moored and anchored boats, and no publicly owned shower or toilet facility readily accessible to boaters in the harbor. A subcommittee of the Harbors Commission was established in 2015 to identify any necessary public facilities for the boating population on the Great Salt Pond. The greatest challenge will be identifying appropriate locations for new facilities conveniently sited for intended users.

### Considerations:

- THE HARBORMASTER’S OFFICE IS LOCATED IN A “SHACK” ON AN OLD BARGE AT THE BOAT BASIN AND MUST BE RELOCATED SOON.
- CURRENTLY, THE TOWN HAS AGREEMENT WITH PRIVATE MARINA BUSINESS TO ALLOW USE OF SHOWERS FOR VISITING BOATERS IN EXCHANGE FOR NO COST REFUSE REMOVAL.
- AN UPGRADED TOWN BEACH PAVILION, ACCESSED FROM NEW HARBOR BY CROSSING CORN NECK ROAD, WILL PROVIDE EXTENDED TIME FOR VISITING BOATERS TO UTILIZE TOKEN OPERATED PUBLIC RESTROOM AND SHOWER FACILITIES. THE PROJECT IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED AND AVAILABLE FOR USE IN 2016.
- LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF SEA-LEVEL RISE MAY REQUIRE THE RELOCATION OF THE TOWN’S BOAT RAMP AT NEW HARBOR.

## Roles and Responsibilities in the Management of the Great Salt Pond (New Harbor)

The Harbormaster oversees all marine activity in the Great Salt Pond (as well as Old Harbor described elsewhere in this plan). The Harbormaster is responsible for safe navigation within the harbor, for rental of moorings and the location of boats in the anchorage, and for the operation of sewage pumpout boats.

While the Harbormaster is in day-to-day control of the Great Salt Pond, jurisdiction is shared with other agencies and groups. By the ruling of the Rhode Island Supreme Court, the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) has primary jurisdiction of the shoreline of the pond and the 200-foot contiguous landward area, including tidal water. CRMC’s authority extends to docks, piers, launching ramps, buildings, aquaculture, the size and configuration of marinas and any other proposed alterations in tidal waters, the shoreline or the 200-foot contiguous area.

Numerous federal as well as state laws and regulations apply, notably in the areas of navigation and environmental protection. The channel into Block Island Sound, cut in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, turned the

Great Salt Pond from an isolated pond into navigable waters and a harbor of refuge. Thus it is subject to oversight by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

In fulfilling its mission to maintain navigation, the Army Corps of Engineers occasionally conducts maintenance dredging projects at the channel to the Great Salt Pond. Natural shoaling processes reduce available depths in the entrance channel making navigation to and from the pond hazardous. At times, shallow depths have led to the grounding of some vessels and the need for additional navigational buoy.

State law delegates the power to regulate fishing in the Great Salt Pond to the Town of New Shoreham (RIGL 20-3-7). Block Island's Shellfish Commission and its Shellfish Wardens are responsible for management of the shellfish and finfish populations in the Great Salt Pond, encompassing the regulation of commercial and private shellfish licenses, quantities, methods and timing of shellfishing, the opening and closing of shellfish beds and enforcement.

Also involved in the future of the Great Salt Pond are non-governmental organizations. One island nonprofit, the Committee for the Great Salt Pond (CGSP), was created specifically to help deal with environmental and developmental issues in the Great Salt Pond and its watershed. Other organizations are closely concerned with the Great Salt Pond because of their broader interest in conservation and environmental protection on Block Island. They include The Nature Conservancy, the Ocean View Foundation, the Block Island Residents Association, the Block Island Land Trust, and the Block Island Conservancy. These organizations intersect in many ways, and collaborate informally, but no one institution coordinates their activities or oversees their efforts.

### ***The Committee for the Great Salt Pond***

The mission of the Committee for the Great Salt Pond (CGSP) is to protect and enhance the environmental quality of the Great Salt Pond and its watershed. The Committee for the Great Salt Pond, one of Block Island's most active environmental organizations, was founded in response to a 1986 proposal to build a large ferry terminal inside the pond. About a decade following, a second controversial project proposed the expansion of docks at Champlin's Marina into the Great Salt Pond to add an additional 140 boat slips. The CGSP, leading the opposition, filed an appeal with the Rhode Island Supreme Court to reverse the lower court's decision to allow the expansion without seeking CRMC review. The Town, Land Trust, and Block Island Conservancy are also opposed to the dock expansion.

The CGSP has one of the longest running water quality sampling databases in the country. Recent initiatives of the Committee for the Great Salt Pond include conducting expanded water quality testing and research and management of non-point source pollution impacts on the Great Salt Pond.

## Environmental Significance and Considerations

### *Habitat*

The Great Salt Pond is a tidal harbor supporting a diverse habitat. Of the more than 300 species of birds seen on Block Island, about 50 species nest here, including many waterfowl. More than 30 species of finfish and shellfish are found in the Great Salt Pond, along with clam and oyster beds.

In 2014, The Nature Conservancy and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management launched a scientific investigation to determine the pond's importance as nursery habitat for fish. In total, 25 species of fish from 24 families were recorded during the 2014 survey. Forage fish accounted for 94% of fish captured, including: Atlantic silverside, striped killifish, and rainwater killifish. The most abundant species was Atlantic silversides. Winter flounder was the fourth most abundant species. For most fish species in the Great Salt Pond, including winter flounder, abundance peaked in September and declined with temperature decrease in October. The report for the first year of the study recommends that, in future years, researchers also collect water quality data such as temperature, salinity and dissolved oxygen at each station during the time of the fish survey.

The ecological significance of the network of coastal wetlands of the Great Salt Pond must be understood and protected. Many of these wetlands are threatened by sea level rise and accommodations should be planned for wetland migration. See the *Natural Hazards & Climate Change Chapter for SLAMM Maps (Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model) for Block Island*. SLAMM maps are also available at [http://www.crmc.ri.gov/maps/maps\\_slamm.html](http://www.crmc.ri.gov/maps/maps_slamm.html).

### *Water Quality*

It is hard to overstate the importance of water quality protection to the Great Salt Pond. If this harbor were not kept clean and attractive, its value to the island would be diminished or destroyed.

Block Island has taken extensive steps to deal with point sources of pollution. It was the first community in the State to enact a "No Discharge" law of sewage from boats in 1993. The challenge of today and the future will be the management and reduction of non-point sources of pollution and their impacts on the Great Salt Pond and its watershed. Non-point source pollution is an everyday threat and more challenging to manage. If non-point sources of pollution are not controlled, there could be substantive, enduring changes in the biological balance of the harbor's waters or in the configuration of the pond itself.

Water quality testing is done on a regularly scheduled basis and at many locations throughout the pond by the CGSP and the Town. A tremendous amount of data has been collected over the years allowing the ability to track changes in water quality over time. Water quality test results show that bacterial counts, which were high before the "No Discharge" law went into effect, have since been kept within the permissible range. However, there are exceptions and troublesome "hot spots." The "hot spots" repeatedly register high bacteria counts with the likely source of pollution being land-based. **One location, in the Trim's Pond-Harbor Pond area, is designated "impaired waters" by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, so labeled for failure to meet the standards of the federal Clean Water Act.**

Recent water quality testing by the CGSP indicates that the water quality of the Great Salt Pond has been negatively impacted by non-point pollution. The island must be vigilant in preventing eutrophication of the waters of the pond. Such a condition results when compounds of nitrogen and phosphorus, from urban and agricultural land uses in the watershed, concentrate in the water. This accelerates plant growth and

encourages algae blooms. The dissolved oxygen in the water decreases to the point where fish and wildlife can no longer survive.

TESTS IN THE GREAT SALT POND SHOW THAT NITROGEN AND PHOSPHORUS LEVELS ARE NOT AT DANGEROUS LEVELS BUT ARE INCREASING SLOWLY. CONTINUED MONITORING IS NEEDED, ALONG WITH EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY THE SOURCES OF NUTRIENT POLLUTANTS, AND TO REDUCE WATERSHED RUNOFF WHERE POSSIBLE.

Water quality testing should be continued and expanded, to include an evaluation of the harbor's bottom soil. Almost no biochemical testing of this kind has been done, and little is known about possible contaminants.

Land acquisition or conservation within the watershed is one significant way to reduce the risk of nonpoint source pollution to the Great Salt Pond. It is estimated, utilizing the town's Geographic Information System, that currently 25% of the land within the watershed of the Great Salt Pond is conserved (See *Map GSP / The Great Salt Pond Watershed & Conserved Lands*).

*While there may be work to be done to remedy current pollution sources and prevent future ones, it should be recognized that this is a remarkably clean harbor by comparison with others. Data on bacterial counts, water clarity, dissolved oxygen levels and suspended solids indicate that the water quality of the Great Salt Pond is far better than most harbors in New England.*

## Local and Regional Economic Impact

The Great Salt Pond is vitally important to the island economy. It is responsible for the existence of many full and part-time jobs. Some are directly related to the Great Salt Pond as a center of recreational boating, such as the employees of the marinas, while others are indirectly related such as taxi drivers, restaurant employees and retail sales clerks.

Visiting boats add significantly to the island's summer population. The Harbormaster reported that during the 2014 season, about 15,000 boats came to the Great Salt Pond and stayed overnight or longer. The number of people staying overnight on boats is typically equivalent to the number of guests in the island's hotels and inns, if not greater.

While the total economic impact can only be estimated, certain figures can provide an indication as to the substantial amount of dollars generated from the uses within and surrounding the Great Salt Pond. Mooring rental fees added about \$400,000 to the Town's general fund in 2014. Fees for private moorings contributed about \$120,000 while shellfish licenses added \$50,000. However, fees are only a portion of the harbor's

economic impact. The largest single economic driver is the slip rental business done by private marinas with revenues estimated in the millions of dollars annually.

Secondary economic impacts are also significant. The people who come ashore from boats expand the tourist economy in the same way as other visitors do in that they go to beaches and restaurants, patronize retail shops and hire taxis.

## Natural Hazards

The prospect of a natural disaster including hurricanes and Nor-easters impacting the Great Salt Pond and accelerating natural shoreline erosion must be factored into the Town's planning process. A major storm that results in a breach from the sea into the pond could cause catastrophic environmental and economic impacts. The most likely sites for such an event are the locations where the sea and harbor are separated by a narrow neck of land composed of sand, gravel and loose soil, easily moved by wave action. One such area is north of the channel and Beane Point where the land rises just a few yards above mean sea level. Hurricane Sandy did result in a breach of the Great Salt Pond.

Recent NOAA scenarios project 2 meters (6.6 feet) of sea level rise by 2100. In 2013, the Town conducted a sea level rise adaptation study which identified potential strategies the town can implement to prepare for and mitigate potential impacts of sea level rise. Inundation mapping conducted as part of the study shows land, docks, and roadways surrounding the Great Salt Pond as being either inundated by sea level rise or more susceptible to flooding during extreme storm conditions as a result of sea level rise. Specific strategies to mitigate the impacts of sea level rise on the Great Salt Pond and its uses include the raising of roadbeds, flood-proofing of pump stations, and the eventual relocation of the town's boat ramp.

For additional discussion on natural hazards and related maps, see the Chapter 10. Natural Hazards & Climate Change and the *New Shoreham Hazard Mitigation Plan* (Appendix B).

## Goals, Policies & Implementation Actions

### GOAL GSPI: PROTECT AND REHABILITATE THE WATER QUALITY AND ECOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE GREAT SALT POND

<u>POLICY</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>	<u>TIMEFRAME</u>
GSPI.A. Maintain the highest possible water quality standards	GSPI.A.1. Working with partners, such as the CGSP, continue to monitor water quality through coordinated and expanded water sampling efforts at various locations throughout the pond	Harbors Department; Harbors Commission; Shellfish Commission	Ongoing
	GSPI.A.2. With partners, conduct complete physical and chemical analyses of the pond's bottom soil	Harbors Commission; Shellfish Commission	Short-term
	GSPI.A.3. Identify point sources of pollution and initiate immediate action to cease the activity	Harbors Department	Ongoing
GSPI.B. Mitigate potential impacts of non-point source pollution on the ecological health of the Great Salt Pond	GSPI.B.1. Work with partners to conduct a study to identify potential non-point sources of pollution upstream of the Great Salt Pond	Town Manager; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning;	Short-term
	GSPI.B.2. Encourage local land conservation groups such as the Block Island Land Trust, the Nature Conservancy, and the Block Island Conservancy to prioritize land conservation investments which will have a positive impact on water quality of the GSP	Town Manager; Town Council; Conservation Commission	Ongoing
	GSPI.B.3. Educate property owners on best management practices such as minimizing use of herbicides and pesticides	Harbors Department; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Conservation Commission	Ongoing

GSPI.C. Plan for potential impacts to the Great Salt Pond from natural hazards	GSPI.C.1. Seek grant funding to implement strategies identified in the Block Island Sea Level Rise Adaptation Study	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Grant Writer	Short-term; Medium-term; Long-term
	GSPI.C.2. Identify lands that will provide marsh migration areas for coastal wetlands of the Great Salt Pond in response to sea level rise	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Land Trust; Conservation Commission	Medium-term; Ongoing
	GSPI.C.3. With the help of partners, pursue dune restoration projects to mitigate erosion and provide habitat along the Great Salt Pond	Town Manager; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Grant Writer	Long-term
	GSPI.C.4. Consider sea level rise and storm flooding when designing upgrades to or locating public facilities including roads, bridges, structures, utilities, and pump stations	Planning Board; Sewer Commission; Water Commission; Town Manager	Ongoing

**GOAL GSP2: AFFIRM THE GREAT SALT POND'S REPUTATION AS A FIRST CLASS BOATING DESTINATION**

<u>POLICY</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>	<u>TIMEFRAME</u>
GSP2.A. Improve public facilities at the Great Salt Pond to enhance the experience of boaters	GSP2.A.1 Survey visiting boaters' experience at New Harbor and their opinions of the island while also collecting valuable data in regards to economic contributions to the local economy during their stay	Harbors Department	Ongoing
	GSP2.A.2. Consider offering public restroom and shower facilities, dingy dockage, and storage lockers for New Harbor	Town Manager; Town Council; Harbors Commission; Planning Board	Short-term; medium-term; long-term
	GSP2.A.3. Determine new location for Harbormaster's Office in the vicinity of New Harbor	Town Manager; Town Council	Short-term
	GSP2.A.4. Establish and maintain a reserve fund dedicated to public improvements for New Harbor	Town Council; Finance Department	Short-term; Ongoing

	GSP2.A.5. Seek grant opportunities to help fund potential upgrade and expansion of public harbor facilities	Harbors Department; Grant Writer; Town Manager	Short-term; Medium-term; Long-term
	GSP2.A.6. Install kiosk that provides information to boaters including the annual Harbor’s Guide and a map of the attractions and services surrounding the Great Salt Pond	Harbors Department; GIS Department; Town Manager	Medium-term
GSP2.B. Encourage the use of low impact small watercrafts such as kayaks and canoes	GSP2.B.1. Create and disseminate a blueways map and guide to promote paddling (RC1.C.3.)	GIS; Harbors Department; Tourism Council; Recreation Department	Short-term
GSP2.C. Assure management of the Great Salt Pond and its uses is implemented in a sustainable, balanced, clear and fair manner	GSP2.C.1. Take actions to meet the goals and objectives identified in the locally adopted Harbor Management Plan	Town Manager; Harbors Department; Harbors Commission	Short-term; Medium-term; Long-term; Ongoing
	GSP2.C.2. Develop a plan with the US Coast Guard and US Army Corp of Engineers which clearly delineates areas for rental moorings, private moorings, anchorages, channels, fairways and turning basins	Town Manager; Harbors Department; Town Council	Medium-term
	GSP2.C.3. Determine scientifically-based maximum number of moorings to prevent negative impacts	Harbors Department	Short-term

**GOAL GSP3: SUPPORT AN APPROPRIATE MIX OF WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES AND SHORELINE LAND USES WITHOUT COMPROMISING THE SCENIC AND NATURAL QUALITIES OF THE GREAT SALT POND**

POLICY	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIMEFRAME
GSP3.A. Institute proper land management practices that support the ecological health of the Great Salt Pond	GSP3.A.1. Review current local regulations (subdivision, zoning etc.) to ensure they provide the necessary protections for the Great Salt Pond	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Conservation Commission	Short-term
GSP3.B. Recognize the clear distinction in appropriate uses between Old Harbor and New Harbor	GSP3.B.1. Update the Great Salt Pond Management Plan	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Harbors Department	Medium-term
	GSP3.B.2. Seek CRMC approval of locally adopted Harbor Management Plan; keep Harbor Management Plan current through future updates	Harbors Department; Town Manager; Town Council	Short-term; Ongoing
GSP3.C. Recognize and protect public right-of-ways to the shoreline of the Great Salt Pond	GSP3.C.1. Maintain an inventory of public right-of-ways to the shore and disseminate a map to residents and visitors	Town Clerk; GIS Department	Ongoing
GSP3.D. Retain opportunities for public uses of land fronting on the Great Salt Pond	GSP3.D.1. Explore options for the repurposing of the former Coast Guard Station	Town Manager; Town Council; Planning Board	Short-term
GSP3.E. Encourage sustainable fishing, shellfishing and aquaculture practices	GSP3.E.1. Support the Shellfish Commission and other organizations in their efforts to develop aquaculture projects and expand shellfish and finfish resources	Town Council; Harbors Commission; Shellfish Commission	Ongoing

**Timeframes:** Short-term (1-3 years); Medium-term (4-6 years); Long-term (7-10 years)



## 6. HOUSING

New Shoreham 2016 Comprehensive Plan

### VISION

Residential development on Block Island will be planned and designed in a way that complements and preserves the island's scenic and natural resources. A balance of housing opportunities will be available including attainable and adequate housing for the workforce and others who wish to call Block Island home.

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# HOUSING

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## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

*HOUSING WORKS RI 2015 HOUSING FACT BOOK*

*LOW AND MODERATE INCOME HOUSING ACT (RIGL 45-53)*

### Overview

In many ways, housing on Block Island is the community's most important and pressing issue. The availability and affordability of housing is critical to maintaining a year-round island community and strong local economy. High demand for vacation homes and rentals on Block Island has resulted in unattainable housing costs for many year-round residents and a limited supply of seasonal workforce housing. No other Rhode Island municipality has anywhere near the level of dominance by second and vacation homes.

In order to address the shortage of available and affordable housing for citizens of low and moderate incomes, the Town has taken many steps including the creation of a housing trust fund and instituting a tax on seasonal rental housing. Zoning regulations, including density bonuses, accessory apartments and planned development with a focus on affordable housing, have all been adopted and refined to encourage greater use of their provisions, and to assure that the units created serve important housing needs. Both town and privately donated land has been provided for housing development. The needs for seasonal employee housing have also been explored. The organizational, financial and regulatory infrastructure for housing accomplishment is largely in place but the work is not complete and housing needs remain unmet. The Town must continue its activist role and work with partners including the business and environmental communities in order to leverage efforts and achieve mutual goals.

The following housing element assesses the island's current housing stock particularly in terms of affordability, evaluates current and future housing needs, and identifies strategies to increase the supply of affordable housing. This housing element also serves as New Shoreham's Affordable Housing Plan, as required by the Rhode Island Low and Moderate Income Housing Act, RIGL 45-53.

### Block Island Housing Data

Current estimates indicate that there are 1,801 housing units on the island. Block Island has an unusually low housing occupancy rate, in that the majority of housing units are considered vacant because they are not occupied year-round. As counted by the 2010 Census, the number of seasonal housing units is 1,253 out of 1,808 total housing units, nearly 70%. This is the single most defining characteristic of Block Island's housing inventory. This occupancy rate is the lowest in Rhode Island. The next lowest rate is in Charlestown, which

has an occupancy rate of 63.1% (with 32% of the town's total housing units considered vacant specifically due to seasonal use). Under the 2010 Census the statewide occupancy rate is 88.3% (a vacancy rate of 10.7%), but only 3.7% of the state's total housing units are considered vacant due to seasonal use.

Of the 202 units added in the decade between the last two Census counts, only 42 (21%) are considered year-round units. If this trend continues, the number of housing units temporarily occupied as a percentage of the total number of housing units will continue to increase.

Total # Housing Units	2000	Estimated Increase from 2000 to 2013
1,801	1,606	195
<i>2013 American Community Survey</i>		<i>2000 Census</i>

Total # Occupied Housing Units	Occupied Housing Units, as % of Total Housing Units	Total # Vacant Housing Units	Vacant Housing Units, as % of Total Housing Units
391	21.7%	1410	78.3%
<i>2013 American Community Survey</i>			

Total Housing Units	# Seasonal Housing Units	Seasonal Housing Units, as % of Total Housing Units
1,808	1253	69.3%
<i>2010 Census</i>		

Total # Housing Units	Total # Seasonal Housing Units	Total # Year-round Housing Units
1801	1248	553
<i>2013 American Community Survey</i>		

# Single Family units	# SF-units, as % of Total Housing Units	# Multi-Family units	# MF-units, as % of Total Housing Units	# Other Housing Units (Mobile Home, Boat, RV, Van, etc...)	# Other Housing Units, as % of Total Housing Units
1618	89.8%	183	10.2%	0	0.0%
<i>2013 American Community Survey</i>					

# Owner Occupied Units	% Owner Occupied Units	# Renter Occupied Units	% Renter Occupied Units
300	76.7%	91	23.3%
<i>2013 American Community Survey</i>			

### **Age of Housing Stock**

Although there is a large component of historical structures that remain, Block Island's housing is relatively young. The median year built of the housing units on Block Island, according to the American Community Survey (2013), is 1975.

Year	Estimate	Margin of Error	%	% Margin of Error
1939 or earlier	503	+/- 76	27.9%	+/- 4.2
1940 to 1949	70	+/- 32	3.9%	+/- 1.8
1950 to 1959	67	+/- 31	3.7%	+/- 1.7
1960 to 1969	155	+/- 50	8.6%	+/- 2.7
1970 to 1979	204	+/- 44	11.3%	+/- 2.4
1980 to 1989	391	+/- 74	21.7%	+/- 4.0
1990 to 1999	258	+/- 59	14.3%	+/- 3.3
2000 to 2009	153	+/- 50	8.5%	+/- 2.8
2010 or later	0	+/- 13	0.0%	+/- 2.1
Total Housing Units	1,801	+/- 48	-	-
<i>2013 American Community Survey</i>				

## Housing Conditions

There are no particular areas on Block Island where a concentration of units with physically poor housing conditions exists. Because of its low population, no published data is available for Block Island, but discussions with the local Building Official indicate that the overall condition of the existing housing stock is remarkably good. However, some housing units on Block Island, particularly seasonal housing and seasonal workforce housing, suffer from deteriorating conditions and residents in some cases live in substandard housing conditions. The Town has utilized resources in the past such as weatherization grants to assist in improving housing conditions.

### Recent Housing Development Trend

Over the last two decades, while the rate of home construction and rehabilitation has fluctuated along with the national economy, the trend on the island has been consistent in that most new units are being built as vacation homes, including those built as replacements to modest dwellings which have been torn down. The exception is those units that have been restricted for affordability through public and non-profit efforts. In addition, there have been conversions of existing residences to larger, year-round houses, many occupied by the increasing number of former summer residents retiring and living on Block Island year-round.

Based upon building permit data through the end of 2014, it was estimated that since the 2010 Census there have been about 62 new housing units added on the island. However 11 of these were replacements (single family dwellings constructed in place of “tear-downs”), meaning a net gain of about 51 units. Among these were 17 accessory apartments. Therefore, a fairly accurate estimate of housing units on the island, as of 2015, is 1,850 units, predominately single family (85%). It is important to note that the percentage of apartments increased from 3% to 6% of the total housing units from the 2000 Census to the end of 2013.

As demonstrated by the table below, Block Island has had 9 single family dwellings constructed each year over the past decade.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b># of New Single Family Dwellings</b>	<b># of Replacement Dwellings*</b>	<b>Accessory Apartments</b>
2014	9	3	3
2013	9	2	5
2012	4	2	0
2011	5	2	3
2010	7	2	6
2009	2	4	1
2008	4	4	4
2007	40	6	4
2006	9	6	3
2005	7	N/A	5
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>34</b>

Source: New Shoreham Building Department

\* A completely new dwelling following the demolition of existing dwelling on same site

## Housing Cost

High housing costs are mainly driven by the demand for seasonal housing and subsequent high land values on the island. Except when involving public initiatives or funding or both, houses are rarely priced below a million dollars, and condominium sales prices, while lower, are still beyond the reach of most households. Seasonal rental prices make most rental units unaffordable for a twelve-month rental by year-round residents.

As contained in the HousingWorks RI 2015 Housing Fact Book, the median home price on the island is \$1,175,000. The annual report by HousingWorks assumes a down payment of 3.5% and a 30-year mortgage to determine an estimated required monthly payment of \$7,566. The annual income needed to afford this monthly payment is over \$300,000. The median home price and required annual income are by far the highest in the state. For some perspective, the state's estimated average monthly cost of a median price home is \$1,689.

Block Island's home prices are not driven by those who simply meet the minimum income requirements to afford a median priced home, but those with much greater financial resources given much of these homes serve as second homes for the owners.

High housing costs are also exacerbated by the increased costs in construction materials and labor due to the additional transportation costs of ferry and/or air.

## THE CURRENT MEDIAN SINGLE FAMILY HOME SALES PRICE

**\$1,200,000** (2015, 22 SALES)

### General Trend in Home Sales Price

In comparing the average sales price of homes on Block Island to household income, the issue of attainable housing for the workforce is apparent. The median household income of \$90,491 is less than a third of the necessary income in order to be able to afford an average cost home on Block Island. The disparity between wages and home prices makes it incredibly difficult for workers to afford to live on Block Island and unlike other communities in Rhode Island, daily commuting from a nearby town is typically not a realistic option.

Single Family		Multi-Family		Condo		
Year	Median Sales Price	# of Sales	Median Sales Price	# of Sales	Median Sales Price	# of Sales
2014	\$ 1,175,000	31	N/A	0	\$ 560,000	5
2013	\$ 1,100,000	23	N/A	0	\$ 375,000	3
2012	\$ 1,448,000	15	\$ 690,000	2	\$ 652,500	4
2011	\$ 970,000	7	\$ 1,425,000	3	\$ 530,000	3
2010	\$ 1,275,000	3	N/A	0	N/A	2
2009	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A	0
2008	\$ 620,000	1	No Data Available		\$ 2,000	1
2007	\$ 1,250,000	2			\$ 392,000	1
2006	N/A	0			N/A	0
2005	N/A	0			N/A	0
2004	N/A	0			No Data Available	

Source: RILiving.com Home Sales Statistics, RI Association of Realtors

There is limited available data on cost of rentals on Block Island. Below are some figures which represent estimated rents for two-bedroom units averaging between \$1,100 and \$1,200 per month. This data does not represent the cost of rental housing during the summer months. Many rental units are not available for year-round residencies as the owners either occupy the property in the summer or generate income from weekly or monthly vacation rentals during peak summer months.

Year	2-bedroom Units
2014	N/A
2013	\$1,154
2012	N/A
2011	\$1,150
2010	\$1,165
2009	\$1,170
2008	\$1,232
2007	\$1,142
2006	\$1,172
2005	N/A
RI Rent Survey, HousingWorks	

## Affordable Housing

Under the RI Low and Moderate Income Housing Act, housing units which meet the definition of low or moderate income (LMI) units and which are included in the inventory of such units as a percentage of the year-round housing units in a municipality, must have been produced with the assistance of some form of public subsidy, whether municipal, state, or federal, and their continuing affordability must be assured for 99 years through a deed restriction and/or land lease.

These units are priced to be affordable to low or moderate income households, with housing costs restricted to 30% of gross annual income, as follows:

Up to 120% of area median income, adjusted for family size, for ownership units

Up to 80% of area median income, adjusted for family size, for rental units

Area median incomes, income limits for low and moderate income households, and housing prices to meet those income limits are established annually by Rhode Island Housing, who also maintains the official count of the LMI units in each municipality. Under State law, the total number of a low or moderated income housing units in a (non-urban) municipality should be in excess of 10% of the total number of year-round housing units, or the town is subject to the provisions of a comprehensive permit application. A comprehensive permit is a single application to a local review board for a housing development which may exceed local zoning and other land use requirements provided that the proposed development include at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the housing as low or moderate income.

The following table summarizes Block Island's inventory of low and moderate income housing units, as of October 2016.

<b>Table H-11 New Shoreham Low and Moderate Income Housing Units</b>			
<b>Development Name</b>	<b>Units &amp; Type</b>	<b>Zoning District / Zoning Ordinance/ Density Increase</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>
Searles Ball Apartments	16 rental	Service Commercial/ Section 405. Affordable Housing Greater than 100%: 16 units on 2.3 acres	BI Economic Development
West Side Development	20 ownership	Service Commercial/ Section 405. Affordable Housing/ 10K SF lots / 20K required	BI Economic Development
Old Harbor Meadows	8 ownership 1 rental	PD (Planned Development)/ Section 319. Planned Development/ Greater than 100%	BI Economic Development
Beacon Hill Development	7 ownership	Residential A / Section 405. Affordable Housing Greater than 100%: 7 houses on a total of 12 acres	BI Economic Development
Pilot Hill Road	4 ownership	Residential B/ Section 405. Affordable Housing/ 4 houses on a total of 3 acres	Town
Seawinds	1 ownership	Residential B Zone/ Section 405. Affordable Housing	Private Developer; Comprehensive Permit
Champlin Road	2 ownership	Residential A/ Section 405. Affordable Housing/ Greater than 100%, lots less than 1 acre	Housing Board
Totals	42 ownership 17 rentals	N/A	N/A

All units above qualify as low and moderate income housing under the RI Low and Moderate Income Housing Act (as verified by Rhode Island Housing), and are counted towards the required percentage of the island's year-round housing according to the 2010 Census (555 units).

In total, there are 42 ownership and 17 rental units on Block Island which qualify as low or moderate income housing. These units total 10.63% of the total 555 year-round housing units on Block Island. **BLOCK ISLAND IS THE FIRST RHODE ISLAND TOWN TO MEET AND MAINTAIN OVER 10% OF ITS YEAR-ROUND HOUSING UNITS AS LOW OR MODERATE INCOME.** As construction of year-round housing increases, additional low-and-moderate income housing units will need to be created in order to maintain the state's minimum 10%. While New Shoreham does

strive to maintain its 10% minimum of state defined LMI housing, the town's goals and efforts related to affordable housing are more importantly directed towards addressing the real and ongoing housing needs specific to Block Island.

Locally, New Shoreham has expanded eligibility for affordable housing up to 140% gross median annual for both ownership and rental units. These units must also be deed restricted in perpetuity. The reason that a higher income range still qualifies for an affordable unit on Block Island is due to the large gap between market prices for homes on the island, and the prices that qualify as "affordable" under most public subsidy rules (annually costing less than about 30% of the income of a household) as described below.

The following table summarizes Block Island's additional inventory of units with affordability restrictions. These units do not qualify as low-and-moderate income housing units because of the higher income limit, or because they were not created with a government subsidy. The accessory apartments are scattered throughout the island and require verification by the Building Official following inspection every three years.

<b>Development</b>	<b>Units &amp; Type</b>	<b>Density Increase</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>
Salt Pond Settlement PD Zone	9 ownership out of 32 total units	Greater than 100%	Private
Accessory Apartments	37 rental	Double	Private
Totals	9 ownership 37 rental		

## HOUSING NEEDS

### *Year-Round Housing*

The Housing Board has found that there is a strong demand among residents for single family ownership units. Over the years, the Block Island Housing Board has worked to quantify the actual demand for year-round housing on the island. The Housing Board developed and distributed an affordable housing questionnaire which asks respondents what their needs and preferences are for affordable year-round housing – ownership vs rental, type of unit (single family, single family attached, condo, apartment, townhouse) and number of bedrooms – as well as the income they have available for monthly housing expenses. Of the 55 who responded to the question of ownership vs rental, 36 (65%) preferred ownership, 10 (18%) preferred rental and 9 (17%) had no preference.

**AS OF 2015 THE HOUSING BOARD HAS A LIST OF 59 RESIDENTS, REPRESENTING BOTH INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES, WITH A NEED FOR STABLE YEAR-ROUND AFFORDABLE HOUSING.**

With an inventory of 59 low-and-moderate income housing units, Block Island has only met half its known demand for affordable year-round housing for its residents. A significant portion of these households have

already been deemed income eligible to purchase or rent affordable units. These residents represent over 10% of Block Island's year-round community and their housing is critical to sustaining the island as a healthy and viable year-round community. Provision of these units, subsidized by reduced-price or donated land and built at cost, must continue to be a priority effort of the Town and the Housing Board.

Year-round affordable housing units, both ownership and rental, must be created in response to actual housing needs on the island, whether they qualify under the RI Low and Moderate Income Housing Act or not, and even if the Town continues to meet or exceed the goal of greater than 10% low and moderate income year round housing units as required under the state law. Year-round affordable housing should consist of a variety of housing types, both ownership and rental, to meet various housing needs, including single family units, duplexes and condominiums; secondary dwellings and caretaker houses; and accessory apartments and apartments over retail.

The development of five single family affordable homes on a 4.5 acre parcel in the southwest corner of the island, and designed according to the reduced density allowed non-profit developments as well as flexible residential design, is underway with construction and occupancy expected by 2016 or early 2017.

### *Seasonal Worker Housing*

In addition to the need for year-round housing is the need for seasonal housing for the employees of the hotels, inns, restaurants and shops that serve the tourism industry. Unless they have a family home on the island or local connections that include shelter, all seasonal employees need to either have housing provided as part of their employment or locate it on their own. As with homeownership, there is a dual market for seasonal rentals – one marketed to vacationers, and one needed for seasonal workers who do not have the resources to compete for housing with the summer visitors.

Many businesses do provide housing for all or some of their employees, but many seasonal workers struggle to find decent and affordable housing on the island and as a result live in sub-standard conditions.

### *Senior Housing*

Currently, none of New Shoreham's low-and-moderate income housing units are designated as senior housing. In recent history, there has been relatively little interest on Block Island for housing specifically designed and dedicated for seniors. In the early 1990s when a project (Martin House) was to have been so-limited, applicant interest was so low that the age limitation was dropped. However, increased demand for housing designed for seniors, affordable and market-rate, can be expected as the population ages. Between the 2000 and 2010 Census, there was a shift in the age breakdown of New Shoreham's population with greater numbers of older and retired persons as compared to the very young and working age adults. As Block Island's senior population continues to grow, so may the need for housing designed for one and two person households at a variety of price ranges. There will be a growing need for smaller, empty-nester type homes for residents wishing to "downsize" their living accommodations and assisted living or caretaker housing.

### *Special Needs*

The island is planning for housing that will include units designed to accommodate those with special needs such as a vision or mobility disability. However, the number of persons sharing any single special need is so small that providing such services through a housing-based program is rarely if ever likely to be feasible on the island.

### *Homeless*

There is no homeless shelter or shelter beds currently available on Block Island, nor a recorded homeless population. However, unofficial helping hands of this close-knit island community do provide assistance for those at the brink of homelessness or without safe shelter.

## HOUSING ORGANIZATIONS

### *Block Island Economic Development Foundation*

The Block Island Economic Development Foundation (“BIED”) has been a leader in the development of affordable housing units, including nine units at Old Harbor Meadows, and the 20-unit all-affordable project on West Side Road.

### *Block Island Housing Board*

The Block Island Housing Board was established to administer the Block Island Housing Trust Fund which is principally funded by a seasonal house rental tax, limited to 1% of the prevailing market rate. The seasonal rental tax is assigned against every property owner or person who rents, leases or lets any living quarters in a seasonal manner (six months or less). It consists of no more than one percent (1%) of the actual rental received for seasonal rental.

The Housing Board can also accept loans, grants and private donations. The duties of the Housing Board are to use its available funding to create affordable year-round and seasonal housing. It can do so by purchasing, selling, developing or restoring real estate and then selling, renting or leasing property with appropriate restrictions to ensure affordability in perpetuity.

As of 2015, the Housing Board has been responsible for the development of two single family ownership units, with five more to be constructed in 2016.

## LOCAL HOUSING PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

### **Town of New Shoreham Zoning Provisions**

On Block Island addressing housing needs has been a community effort involving a truly broad array of organizations and people, including not just the Town and nonprofits, but individuals who have made donations of land as a result of zoning incentives. Since the last Comprehensive Plan update (2009) there have been many efforts to increase opportunities, as well as many completed projects. This can be traced to the regulatory facilitation for such housing, which is particularly strong and is summarized below.

### *Section 405 Affordable Housing*

The principal zoning regulation providing for the development of affordable housing units is Section 405 which allows an increase in residential density for the provision of affordable units. Market units must have the minimum required lot area for the appropriate zone, but affordable units can be approved for half the minimum required lot area per unit. Affordable units in a non-profit development can be approved for a quarter of the minimum required lot area. The density increase is granted as a special use permit by the Zoning Board of Review, with development plan review by the Planning Board. As of 2015 this provision has resulted in the development of thirty-one LMI and two affordable single family home ownership units. Both projects were developed by non-profits.

### *Section 319 Planned Development Zone*

The planned development regulations were initially established for the purposes of developing affordable units, or just below rate market units, as part of a major development or redevelopment of one or more parcels in certain zoning districts. It allows the Town Council to rezone parcels as a PD Zone following the approval of a development plan by the Planning Board. As part of the approval, the Town Council can grant waivers or relief from the requirements of the underlying zoning district to allow a variety of uses, with an emphasis on affordable housing, as well as flexible dimensional standards.

As of 2015 this provision has resulted in the development of eight ownership and one rental housing unit at Old Harbor Meadows, all which qualify as state LMI units, and nine affordable ownership units (out of thirty-two) at Salt Pond Settlement, which involved the conversion of an inn to condominiums.

### *Section 513 Accessory Apartments*

This section allows the Zoning Board to grant a special use permit to allow an accessory apartment in either a principal residential building or accessory structure for rental to either year-round residents or in the case of such units provided in the commercial zones, to seasonal workers. Vacation rental is prohibited, enforced by the Building Official in the form of a signed affidavit recorded with the deed, and by periodic inspection. An owner may voluntarily deed restrict such apartment as affordable in exchange for a property tax reduction equivalent to the value of the accessory apartment. In such cases the unit is monitored by the Housing Board to ensure that the renter meets the income limits. The deed restriction can be removed by the property owner, but not without substantial penalty.

As of 2015, this regulation has allowed 37 year-round accessory apartments, none of which qualify as low-and-moderate income housing units, even if deed restricted because the units were not created with a public subsidy.

### *Section 403/404 Secondary Dwelling and Attached Multi-Family Development*

Section 403 of the zoning ordinance was intended to provide additional housing opportunities for Block Island families by allowing more than one dwelling unit per lot provided certain lot area and dimensional standards related to the secondary dwelling are met. Section 404 allows the development of multi-units in existing buildings in the commercial zones. Both regulations also allow the Zoning Board to grant dimensional variances (lot areas, setbacks, coverages) if the secondary dwelling is to be affordable, (such variances otherwise prohibited for secondary dwellings).

As of 2015, while a number of secondary and multi-family units have been developed, it has not resulted in the creation of units with affordability restrictions or low-or-moderate income units.

### *Section 411 Commercial/Residential Mixed Use*

This section, modified in 2009, allows the establishment of apartments over stores in the mixed use and commercial zones provided at least 40% of the units (or a minimum of one) are either employee housing (as regulated in Section 513) or state defined LMI units.

### *Section 712 Comprehensive Permits for Low and Moderate Income Housing*

This section includes the procedures for the provision of low and moderate income units by either non-profit or private developer as a comprehensive permit as allowed under the RI Low and Moderate Income Housing Act.

As of 2015 there has only been one comprehensive permit application, which resulted in four market rate units and one qualified LMI unit.

## POLICIES & STRATEGIES

### Adaptive Reuse of Existing Structures

Where possible, there is a preference for achieving affordable housing units through creative reuse of existing structures. This is exemplified by the Salt Pond Settlement, where below-market units were created through adaptive reuse of an inn.

Existing structures, otherwise slated for demolition, preserved from other sites can also be used. A program to move and re-use “tear-downs” for conversion into affordable or public housing units is supported by the demolition delay provided for in the zoning ordinance. The Demolition Review ordinance (Section 711) is designed to allow alternatives to be taken, including relocation of the structure onto another site, where it can become an affordable unit. However, costly upgrades, including bringing structures into compliance with existing building codes, can be a deterrent.

Adaptive re-use of structures on-site and the relocation of structures to be otherwise demolished are viable options, but require a program in place to both provide funding for conversion (the subsidy) and receiving land.

### Appropriately Locate Affordable Housing

There is also a preference for sites requiring less auto dependence and in areas that are already served by infrastructure, facilities and municipal services. Structures located within the village (downtown and transition areas) are especially appropriate for such adaptive reuse, because of the available density and variety of allowable uses and housing types. Targeting housing development in these areas can reduce municipal and resident expenses. Infrastructure extensions including new roads, sewers, water mains, and electricity lines can be expensive, even without taking into account the cost of maintaining the infrastructure over time. While these costs are often not borne by the municipality, they are spread across all of the rate payers, increasing user fees and the overall cost of living in a community. From an overall cost perspective,

the best place to target new residential development is within existing developed areas and for New Shoreham that suggest the village area. However, at the same time it is important that a diversity of housing opportunities be available throughout the island and not concentrated to one area. Therefore, there is support for the creation of well-sited affordable units outside of the village as well.

### **Advocate for Fair and Effective Affordable Housing Legislation at the State Level**

It is the Town's position that all units which are developed or established with a local subsidy, including density bonuses for private developers, and which are deed restricted, should be counted on the Low-and-Moderate Income Housing Chart despite being sold to residents with slightly higher median incomes. The skewed housing market on Block Island can justify this increase. An adjustment for Block Island should be part of amendments to the state law that allows some accommodation for local conditions.

### **LOCAL EFFORTS INCLUDE PETITIONING THE STATE TO EXPAND THE INCOME RANGE TO 140% OF AREA MEDIAN INCOME FOR INCLUSION ON THE LOW AND MODERATE INCOME HOUSING CHART.**

### **Develop a Housing Program for Municipal Employees**

Alternatives for addressing the housing needs of town or school employees otherwise unable to afford to live on the island, whether through housing subsidies for key employees or the acquisition of housing units must be explored. Cost-effective options to accommodate seasonal municipal employees and consultants for the town needing temporary housing should also be explored.

### **Support Construction of Seasonal Workforce Housing**

A great challenge to operating a business on Block Island is the lack of affordable and temporary housing for the seasonal workforce. As such, many businesses including inns, restaurants, and shops provide housing as part of their employment package in order to recruit seasonal workers. Seasonal workers not provided with housing often live in sub-standard conditions including overcrowding in order to afford housing during the peak summer season.

To address this critical housing and economic development issue, the Town should work cooperatively with employers to promote the development of multi-unit temporary employee housing. Seasonal employee housing can be developed with relatively low construction cost per unit by taking advantage of the sharing of facilities such as kitchens. Allocating land and minor funding from the Housing Board should be explored along with community cooperation in developing and furnishing the units.

### **Evaluate Local Tax Assessment Policy**

Steps the Town could take to mitigate any negative impacts of tax revaluation should be identified and explored. The Town could also petition the RI Legislature to enact authorization for New Shoreham to provide homestead tax exemption as has been done for Providence and Woonsocket, providing reduced property taxes for dwellings occupied as a principal residence by a registered voter, and without seasonal

rental. An additional strategy related to local tax policy that should be explored is providing tax incentives to owners for offering year-round rental of their homes to income eligible residents.

## Review and Update Local Regulations Related to Housing

Block Island has taken many steps over the years in its regulations to facilitate housing affordability. However, it is still necessary to review the zoning and land use regulations to ensure that there are adequate provisions for housing alternatives in all appropriate zones, including affordable units, multi-family and mixed use buildings, family compounds and secondary dwellings. The establishment of local regulations to address seasonal workforce housing development should be explored. There is a particular need for regulations related to the provision of on-site seasonal housing for hospitality businesses. New regulations should include a requirement that new or expanding businesses relying on seasonal workers submit plans for how employees will be housed as part of project review and approval.

## Formalize Affordable Housing Units in Perpetuity

There are many ways of reducing the price of a given housing unit and assuring that it stays that way. Communities like Block Island commonly use federal grants to help write down the unit price, and in return attach a deed restriction assuring that the initial level of affordability will be maintained over time and ownership change. Potential locations exist all over the island. The units produced should include ones adapted to meet requirements for seniors and for households having special needs that can be met through adaptation of the housing unit.

As of 2015, there are also about thirty-seven accessory apartments established under Section 513 of the Zoning Ordinance that are not deed restricted or have any type of long term legal protection to keep them as attainable year-round apartments. A stronger monitoring program and/or a tax abatement program should be established to maintain this inventory of year-round apartments.

## Inclusionary Zoning

Block Island does not currently have an inclusionary zoning ordinance. The town will explore inclusionary zoning as a requirement of larger-scale residential development with the option to provide a payment in lieu. A municipal subsidy program including a substantial density bonus would be required to make projects feasible. An inclusionary zoning ordinance can assist the town in maintaining its percentage of LMI units as new residential development occurs. Some benefits of inclusionary zoning are that it requires minimal municipal funding and a distribution of affordable housing units throughout a community rather than concentrated in one location. However, inclusionary zoning will not produce a significant number of units during weak housing markets and in communities with a limited number of large-scale residential development, as is the case on Block Island. The payment in lieu option could provide an additional source of funding or land to the Town for affordable housing efforts.

## Mixed-Use Development

Mixed-use development in appropriate locations would provide the island with a greater diversity in type of housing stock. This type of development makes more efficient use of land and infrastructure and would be appropriate within and nearby the village area (Old Harbor and New Harbor). Housing units could be created over existing commercial structures.

### Redevelopment of Vacant or Underutilized Public Property

Efforts to address housing needs should look for opportunities to use existing buildings instead of new construction to avoid the possible negative impacts related to new development. Buildings currently owned by the Town could provide appropriate locations for the creation of affordable housing units or temporary workforce housing. This strategy has the potential to create units at lower development costs and with less visual impact than new development. However, it could eliminate future use of the public property for other potentially needed public uses.

## Goals, Policies & Implementation Actions

### GOAL HI: Meet the needs of residents for attainable year-round homeownership and rental housing opportunities

POLICY	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIMEFRAME
HI.A. Promote the production of attainable year-round housing	HI.A.1. Consider adopting an inclusionary zoning ordinance with a municipal subsidy system and option to pay-in-lieu	Planning Board	Medium-term
	HI.A.2. Identify additional sources of funding for Housing Trust Fund	Town Council; Finance; Town Manager; Housing Board	Ongoing
HI.B. Increase the supply of rental housing	HI.B.1. Explore providing tax incentives to owners who offer year-round rental of their home to income eligible residents	Town Council; Finance; Town Manager; Housing Board	Medium-term
HI.C. Support redevelopment of vacant or underutilized structures into affordable housing units	HI.C.1. Identify both town and privately owned properties which could be suitable sites for the development of affordable residential units	LCAS; Planning Board; Town Manager; Housing Board	Short-term
HI.D. Protect existing affordable housing stock	HI.D.1. Monitor deed restrictions of affordable housing units and act proactively to ensure units do not expire and transition to market-rate housing	Housing Board	Ongoing
HI.E. Continue to permit forms of housing that are affordable without subsidies such as accessory apartments	HI.E.1. Establish a stronger monitoring program and/or a tax abatement program for accessory apartments	Planning Board; Town Council	Ongoing
		Town Manager; Town Council; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Finance	Medium-term
HI.F. Proactively plan for the future housing needs of the community	HI.F.1. Evaluate demand for senior and special needs housing	Housing Board; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Planning Board	Short-term
	HI.F.2. Acquire and hold land for future affordable housing needs	Town Council; Housing Board	Ongoing

HI.G. Support initiatives to reduce housing cost including utility costs	HI.G.1. Evaluate current tax assessment policies and explore instituting a homestead tax exemption	Town Council; Finance; Tax Assessor; Town Manager	Medium-term
	HI.G.2. Investigate housing subsidy program option for workers (current and retired) fulfilling necessary government functions	Town Council; Finance; Town Manager	Medium-term
	HI.G.3. Explore options for town provision of seasonal and/or temporary housing / overnight accommodations for temporary town employees or contractors	Planning Board; Town Manager; Facilities Manager; Town Council	Medium-term
HI.H. Continue to exceed the state's required minimum of 10% low-and-moderate income housing			
HI.I. Advocate for fair and effective affordable housing legislation at the state level	HI.I.1. In partnership with other municipalities, participate in review and update of current affordable housing legislation	Town Council; Housing Board; Town Manager	Ongoing

**GOAL H2: Achieve sustainable housing production which results in a diversity of housing choices and healthy housing conditions**

<u>POLICY</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>	<u>TIMEFRAME</u>
H2.A. Ensure adequate and affordable housing is available for seasonal workforce	H2.A.1. Foster public private partnerships to address seasonal workforce housing needs	Town Manager; Town Council	Short-term
	H2.A.2. Advance zoning measures to facilitate the provision of seasonal workforce housing by the private sector	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Planning Board	Short-term
	H2.A.3. Conduct an education and outreach campaign to raise awareness about seasonal workforce housing needs; encourage owners to rent rooms to seasonal workers	Housing Board; Town Council	Ongoing
H2.B. Maintain a housing stock that is safe, healthy and sanitary	H2.B.1. Inform homeowners about resources to assist with home repair, maintenance and winterization	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Minimum Housing Inspector	Ongoing
H2.C. Ensure new housing development is directed to areas with existing infrastructure and designed in a way that minimizes impacts on natural and scenic resources	H2.C.1. Promote low housing densities where public services are unavailable and are not planned	Planning Board	Ongoing
	H2.C.2. Promote conservation-style development requiring open space set asides in all new major subdivision	Planning Board	Ongoing

**Timeframes:** Short-term (1-3 years); Medium-term (4-6 years); Long-term (7-10 years)

## Appendix H-I Housing Cost Burden

The Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, available through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, is intended to determine the number of households in need of housing assistance by estimating the number of households which spend greater than 30% of household income on housing, with a focus on low income renters. The following data tables are required by the State for inclusion in local Comprehensive Plans.

According to CHAS data, there is an estimated 25% of households on Block Island that have a housing cost burden (paying more than 30% of their income on housing) and 8% that are severely housing cost burdened (paying more than 50% of their income on housing).

<b>Housing Cost Burden</b>				
<b>Total Households w/ a Housing Cost-burden</b>			<b>Total Households</b>	<b>Total Households w/ a Housing Cost-burden as a percent of Total Households</b>
<i>Households with a Housing Cost Burden &gt; 30% but &lt; 50%</i>	<i>Households with a Housing Cost burden &gt; 50%</i>	<i>Total Households with a Housing Cost-burden</i>		
68	32	100	395	25.3%
* Source: HUD CHAS data derived from 2012 ACS 5-Year Estimates.				

<b>Severe Housing Cost Burden</b>		
<b>Total Households that are Severely Housing Cost-burdened</b>	<b>Total Households</b>	<b>Total Households that are Severely Housing Cost-burdened as a percent of Total Households</b>
32	395	8.1%
* Source: HUD CHAS data derived from 2012 ACS 5-Year Estimates.		

<b>Number of Low-and-Moderate Income households that are housing cost burdened, also as a percent of total LMI households.</b>					
<b>LMI Households w/ a Housing Cost-burden</b>				<b>Total LMI Households</b>	<b>Total LMI Households w/ a Cost burden, as a % of Total LMI Households</b>
<i>Household Income &lt;/= 30% HAMFI</i>	<i>Household Income &gt; 30% to &lt;/= 50% HAMFI</i>	<i>Household Income &gt;50% to &lt;/= 80% HAMFI</i>	<b>Total LMI Households that are Cost-burdened</b>		
25	8	4	37	80	46.3%
Housing Cost-burdened - Households paying greater than 30% of their income on housing.					
LMI Household - A household earning up to 80% of the area median income.					
* Source: HUD CHAS data derived from 2012 ACS 5-Year Estimates.					

<b>Number of Low-and-Moderate Income households that are severely housing cost burdened, also as a percent of total LMI households</b>					
<b>LMI Households that are Severely Housing Cost-burdened</b>				<b>Total LMI Households</b>	<b>Total LMI Households that are Severely Cost-burdened, as a % of Total LMI Households</b>
<i>Household Income &lt;= 30% HAMFI</i>	<i>Household Income &gt; 30% to &lt;= 50% HAMFI</i>	<i>Household Income &gt;50% to &lt;= 80% HAMFI</i>	<b>Total LMI Households that are Severely Cost-burdened</b>		
10	4	4	18	80	22.5%
Severely Housing Cost-burdened - Households paying greater than 50% of their income on housing.					
LMI Household - A household earning up to 80% of the area median income.					
* Source: HUD CHAS data derived from 2012 ACS 5-Year Estimates.					

<b>Number of LMI renter households that are housing cost-burdened, also as a percent of total LMI households</b>					
<b>LMI Renter Households w/ a Housing Cost-burden</b>				<b>Total LMI Households with a cost-burden</b>	<b>Total LMI Renter Households w/ a Cost burden, as a % of Total LMI Households</b>
<i>Household Income &lt;= 30% HAMFI</i>	<i>Household Income &gt; 30% to &lt;= 50% HAMFI</i>	<i>Household Income &gt;50% to &lt;= 80% HAMFI</i>	<b>Total LMI Renter Households that are Cost-burdened</b>		
4	0	0	4	37	10.8%
Housing Cost-burdened - Households paying greater than 30% of their income on housing.					
LMI Household - A household earning up to 80% of the area median income.					
* Source: HUD CHAS data derived from 2012 ACS 5-Year Estimates.					

<b>Number of LMI owner households that are housing cost-burdened, also as a percentage of total LMI households.</b>					
<b>LMI Owner Households w/ a Housing Cost-burden</b>				<b>Total LMI Households with a cost-burden</b>	<b>Total LMI Owner Households w/ a Cost burden, as a % of Total LMI Households</b>
<i>Household Income &lt;= 30% HAMFI</i>	<i>Household Income &gt; 30% to &lt;= 50% HAMFI</i>	<i>Household Income &gt;50% to &lt;= 80% HAMFI</i>	<b>Total LMI Owner Households that are Cost-burdened</b>		
20	8	4	32	37	86.5%
Housing Cost-burdened - Households paying greater than 30% of their income on housing.					
LMI Household - A household earning up to 80% of the area median income.					
* Source: HUD CHAS data derived from 2012 ACS 5-Year Estimates.					



# 7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

New Shoreham 2016 Comprehensive Plan

## VISION

**Block Island will have an economy which meets the financial and employment needs of its residents while providing the necessary products and services to support a year-round community and influx of seasonal visitors. Island industries, including tourism, will have low impact on the natural, cultural, and scenic resources of this special place.**

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# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Rhode Island Rising, Rhode Island State Guide Plan, Economic Development Element, RI Statewide Planning Program, December 2014.

Town of New Shoreham Broadband Plan and Network Designs. Submitted on behalf of EA Engineering, Science & Technology, Inc. for Broadband Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Office of Digital Excellence. Prepared by: Tilson, January 13, 2015.

## Overview

Over its settled history, Block Island's economy has shifted from farming and fishing to tourism. While there are a number of jobs providing necessary government and local services, Block Island's modern economy is principally based on its status as a highly desirable vacation and tourist destination. The majority of businesses on the island are located within the Old Harbor Historic District and are open seasonally.

The tourism industry remains strong and has the potential to increase with the addition of amenities and activity offerings. Both public and private sectors must work to ensure that the tourism industry does not exceed the island's carrying capacity and impact the valuable natural and scenic resources on which it depends.

There is a desire to increase the economic opportunity and diversification of industry on the island but challenges exist including limited commercial land, a small year-round population, high utility and transportation costs, and the need for upgraded telecommunications infrastructure. Some of these challenges are easier to overcome than others and the town has already taken significant steps to reduce these barriers. Future economic development supported and pursued on Block Island should:

- ✓ CREATE MORE YEAR-ROUND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
- ✓ BE IN KEEPING WITH THE ISLAND'S SCENIC NATURAL BEAUTY
- ✓ BE OF APPROPRIATE SCALE
- ✓ SUPPORT EXISTING BUSINESSES AND ATTRACT NEW INDUSTRY
- ✓ HAVE MINIMAL IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE ISLAND'S NATURAL RESOURCES
- ✓ HELP ATTRACT AND RETAIN FAMILIES AND SUSTAIN A VIBRANT YEAR-ROUND COMMUNITY

## Employment

*Table 11-1 New Shoreham Employment* illustrates the tourism industry's leading role in providing employment opportunities on the island with high figures in the categories of accommodations, food services, and retail. These figures do not include the large numbers of seasonal workers who come to the island to work in hospitality and retail. While many island residents either own seasonal businesses or are employed in them, the majority of the tourism related jobs on Block Island are held by non-resident young workers, including many international citizens.

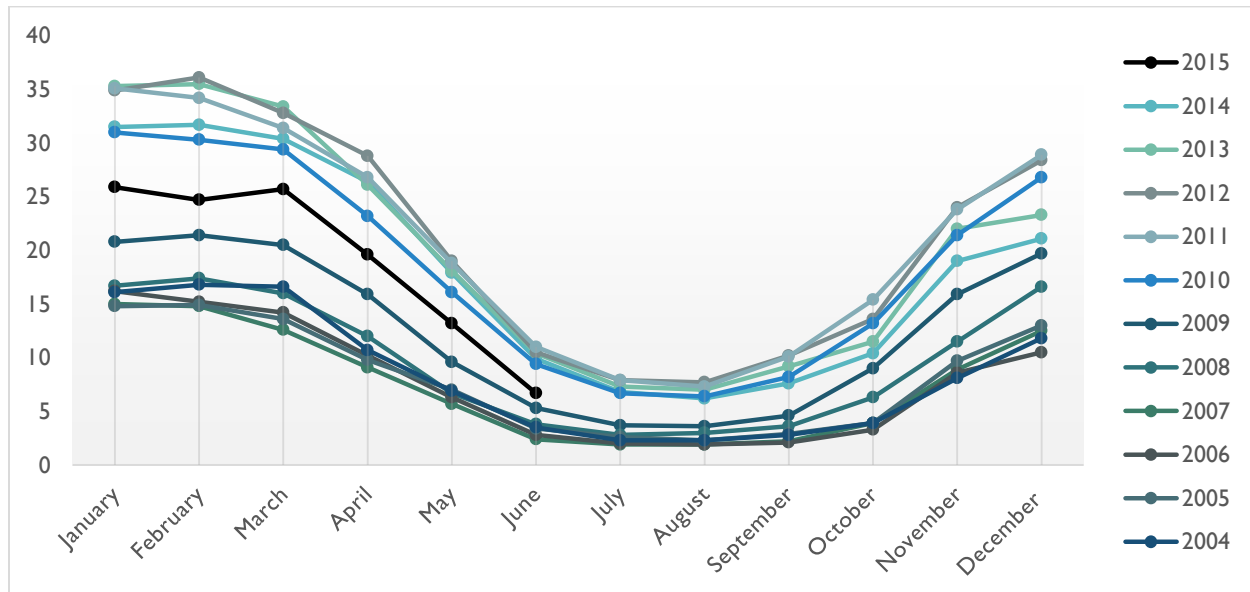
Circumstances unique to the island also make it difficult to take an accurate count of the number of employed persons in any given year, including many year-round residents who hold multiple jobs during the tourism season, and island residents who leave during the winter to take seasonal employment elsewhere.

<i>Table 11-1 New Shoreham Employment</i>				
<i>Category</i>	<i>Years</i>			
	<i>2006</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2014</i>
Total Private Employment	744	732	788	830
Total Private and Government	867	859	909	952
Accommodation & Food Services	356	352	409	452
Government	123	127	121	122
Retail Trade	102	103	94	98
Construction	92	75	56	59
Real Estate & Rentals & Leasing	36	44	54	50
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	31	31	*	33
Administrative Support & Waste Management	30	29	37	34
Other Services	21	18	23	22
Professional & Technical Services	9	15	18	16
Health Care & Social Assistance	*	*	13	11
Manufacturing	12	12	11	9
Transportation & Warehousing	11	11	10	11
Information	9	*		
Management	*	*		
Agriculture and Fishing	*	*	*	
Utilities	*	*	*	
Wholesale Trade	*	*	*	
<i>Source: RI Department of Labor and Training</i>				
<i>*Data collected for other categories but not shown due to the possibility of identifying the data of a specific employer</i>				

## Unemployment

New Shoreham's high unemployment rate is a function of the seasonal nature of work on the island. As *Table 11-2 New Shoreham Unemployment Rate* illustrates, there is a clear need for more year-round employment opportunities on Block Island.

**Figure 11-2 New Shoreham Unemployment Rate**



## Poverty

According to American Community Survey (2006-2010) estimates, there were 102 persons living below the poverty level on the island. This is a rate of 9.7% (based on total population of 1,051 from the 2010 Census). While this is lower than the state average of 11.6%, it is higher than many comparable Rhode Island communities.

## An Older Population

Block Island's demographic trends must be considered as part of long range planning to maintain and strengthen its economy. As described in the Land Use chapter, the island has a growing number of retired residents. According to the 2010 Census, 21.3% of the year-round population is 65 years of age or older. This is an increase over the 2000 Census figures, which indicated that 17.3% were 65 years of age or older. This segment of the population has needs and desires for specific services to permit and encourage them to reside on island.

Another demographic trend is a drop in the population of school aged children, as evidenced by decreased enrollment at the Block Island School (see Community Services and Facilities chapter). While the school has gone through fluctuations in enrollment and class size throughout its history, this ongoing trend reflects the difficulty of young families in finding both suitable long term employment and permanent affordable housing on the island. The school system itself is a major employer and the center of many community activities. On

any given year it employs about 45 people, although some of these are part-time positions, and makes up about 37% of the total annual town budget. Most importantly, a vibrant year-round community needs all age groups, including school-aged children in numbers that can sustain a viable school system.

### Existing Economic Activities

*The following industry sectors represent significant employers, large revenue generators and substantially contribute to the local tax base:*

#### TOURISM

There is little of the island economy that is not directly or indirectly reliant on tourism activity for its financial base. Seasonal economic activity includes businesses in the hospitality industry – hotels, inns, restaurants, and bars. It also includes a range of retail; bicycle, moped and sports equipment rentals; real estate, property rental and maintenance services; landscaping; wedding and catering services; spas; taxi and guide services; and fishing charters. There are also the businesses related to transportation to and from the island; the ferry and airline services, which have intensified schedules during the tourism season.

Activity is concentrated during the three summer months, although the season is considered to run from before Memorial Day through Columbus Day, encompassing many weeks of “shoulder” season. During the peak tourism season, 20,000 people a day can arrive by ferry, airplane, or personal watercraft, and more than 10,000 visitors stay overnight in rental housing, inns and on boats.

While seeking economic diversification, it is still necessary to support and enhance tourism. This includes meeting visitors’ expectations for quality and comfort, one example being the installation of air conditioning in hotels and inns, often requested by guests but largely absent due to the high electricity costs on the island, another, the provision of clean public restroom at the town’s main tourist attractions, most importantly beaches and New Harbor. It also includes attracting tourists with more activities and experiences that occur in the off-season. An extended tourist season, while not drawing the large numbers of visitors that arrive in the summer, can strengthen the island economy as well as sustain social opportunities and services at times when they may otherwise not be available. Marketing efforts should also continue to target “shoulder” season offerings as some would argue Block Island is near carrying capacity during summer months. The town must first work to reduce the costs of electricity in order to facilitate any significant expansion of the tourism season.

Recent efforts to improve open space and amenities within the Old Harbor Historic District by the Old Harbor Task Force should be expanded. Most visitors arrive in Old Harbor and first impressions are important. Wayfinding signage and other amenities such as benches, bicycle racks, and refuse and recycling containers should be attractive and in keeping with the character of Block Island. A downtown merchants’ association could also assist in maintaining an attractive and cohesive built environment within the Old Harbor Historic District.

Block Island’s tourism economy is based on its exceptional natural resources – its beaches, bluffs, Great Salt Pond and other coastal water bodies, forests and fields, freshwater ponds, habitat areas and hiking trails. It is also based on its cultural heritage and landscapes – its distinct countryside, harbors and quaint historic village.

Many desirable tourism activities such as birding and hiking depend on the protection and stewardship of these outdoor resources. This includes maintaining trails, protecting habitats, controlling invasive species, and aggressively working to control the incidence of Lyme disease. It is critical that the island protect its natural environment and authentic landscapes (see Natural and Cultural Resources chapter) and that the tourism activities that make use of, or rely on, these island resources do so in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable manner.

### **A top priority of the town is to ensure that tourism and tourism-related activities do not compromise the island's character or natural and cultural resources.**

Indicators on the financial health of the tourism industry on Block Island tend to follow a pattern consistent with regional and State tourism figures including a dip during the recent recession and a subsequent rebound. Recent years have seen the addition of airline service from T.F. Green to Block Island. Now, more than 10 million people live within two hours of a ferry or airline with service to Block Island. With expanded transportation options, the island's growing popularity as a wedding destination, and increased marketing efforts in the shoulder season, it is not unrealistic to expect an increase in the number of visitors and tourism dollars in future years. The town must ensure that any increase in the number of visitors or tourism activities on the island do not exceed the island's carrying capacity and negatively impact the town's natural resources or its residents' ability to enjoy them.

### **CONSTRUCTION TRADES & REAL ESTATE**

The construction trades, which represent a principal year-round activity, are supported by a strong second and vacation home market. The vacation home market results in a demand for both construction and real estate services on the island along with other associated industries. Jobs in these areas key closely to the overall economy; they are at a high level when the economy is growing, but are lower when the economy is stable or declining. The construction trade, in particular, is dependent on an increased rather than level demand for new houses or reconstruction of existing housing stock. The degree of construction activity, particularly as it relates to new house construction, often results in a conflict between this crucial part of the local economy and the broader goal of limiting growth to protect the natural and cultural resources of Block Island.

### **MARINE**

There are three large marinas and several smaller marinas located on Block Island that collect fees for dockings and moorings and a variety of other local businesses which support the boating community. See *Chapter 3. The Great Salt Pond* for additional discussion on the local and regional economic impact of New Harbor and its businesses.

## Diversification and Achieving a Year-Round Economy

In order to diversify the economic base, business activities in addition to those related to tourism and tourism-based construction and real estate must be promoted on the island. The Town should proactively seek out new and diversified economic development activities as a means to improve the local business climate and quality of life on the island. Ideally, new industries and businesses should:

- ✓ BE SMALL IN SCALE AND RESIDENT-OWNED
- ✓ MINIMIZE NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS WHILE CONSERVING ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
- ✓ SERVE RESIDENTS' NEEDS FOR PRODUCTS OR SERVICES
- ✓ SELL GOODS OR PRODUCTS GROWN, CRAFTED, OR MANUFACTURED ON THE ISLAND

Many businesses and economic activities are consistent with the goals of this chapter, such as agriculture and aquaculture; a range of arts and crafts production; education and medicine; and any number of “geography-free” businesses. These businesses and others with limited impact on our scenic and natural resources should be supported and pursued.

### Light Assembly

Recognizing the need to achieve a year-round economy and to address an outright prohibition on manufacturing use, in 2009, the Town adopted light assembly zoning regulations. These regulations specifically allow, and provide standards for, light assembly or manufacturing business operations in all commercial districts with the granting of a special use permit. As defined in the ordinance, the business must employ at least two full-time year-round employees and have a dedicated work space of at least one thousand square feet. Examples of appropriate businesses include but are not limited to: wood products such as signs and furniture, paper products, such as printing and book binding, and textile, such as processing fibers into yarn and weaving. Since 2009, the Town has only seen the addition of one business as a result of this zoning amendment. There are likely other barriers beyond permitted uses, such as lack of available commercial land and affordable housing, impacting the growth of this industry.

### Agriculture & Aquaculture

By the late eightieth century, most of the trees on Block Island were felled for fuel and construction material and also to establish farmlands. After the mid-nineteenth century, tourism superseded farming as the island’s economic base and gradually scrub vegetation filled many of the former farmlands.

Today, Block Island has a small number of active agricultural operations (See Map ED I Agriculture) and is host to a farmers market held twice weekly during the growing season. With the high cost of land on Block Island, the establishment of new large scale farming operations seems unlikely. However, agriculture is changing and opportunities do exist within the local economy of Block Island to promote the expansion of agriculture. In many existing farming communities, accessory uses to support agriculture are a growing portion of revenues for farmers and are often necessary to maintain working farms. This growing industry of agritourism and value-added agricultural products could prove successful on Block Island with its large number of visitors seeking activities and locally-made products. On Block Island, agriculture could also be more readily utilized as an accessory use to other businesses (ie farm-to-table restaurants, animal farm at

inns). Several restaurants currently utilize large gardens to supply their kitchens with fresh produce and to market their establishments as “farm-to-table.”

Another industry established on Block Island is aquaculture. Aquaculture, also known as aquafarming, involves cultivating freshwater and saltwater populations under controlled conditions. Commercial aquaculture businesses currently operate within the salt-water ponds linked with the Great Salt Pond. The town supports sustainable aquaculture operations that do not have a negative impact on surrounding water quality, ecological communities, or recreation.

## IMPROVING THE LOCAL BUSINESS CLIMATE

### Local Economic Challenges

*In addition to the challenges listed above in relation to demographics, other factors unique to the island create barriers to business activity that the community must address in order to increase economic development opportunities.*

#### *Lack of Available Land and Commercial Space*

Opportunities for new businesses are limited by the high cost and small inventory of commercially zoned land or business properties. There is limited turnover of existing businesses and a very limited amount of undeveloped land zoned commercial where a business could build to suit. Further, existing businesses in the construction trades struggle to find permissible locations to store equipment. The town should conduct a review of the current zoning ordinance and map to identify potentially suitable additional areas where commercial uses would be appropriate.

Another strategy to address this challenge and to facilitate the development of new businesses is providing incubator space for start-up businesses on Block Island. Public-private partnerships, local tax incentives and grant opportunities should be explored to make this initiative viable and successful.

#### *Cost of Living and Doing Business on an Island*

While New Shoreham has consistently had the lowest property tax rates in Rhode Island, there are also many added expenses relating to life on an island that impact both residents and business owners. A fundamental aspect of living and working on an island is the added transportation related costs as all goods, supplies, materials and equipment must be transported by ferry or plane.

Historically and currently heating oil and electricity costs are high on Block Island. Large utility bills can make operating a business during non-peak months not viable. As stated in the island’s 2012 Energy Plan, “*Electricity prices on Block Island are among the highest in the country due to the small size of the system, reliance on diesel as a power source, transportation costs, seasonal demand swings and isolation from the grid.*”

## THE OFFSHORE WIND PROJECT, CONSTRUCTED IN 2016, IS EXPECTED TO PROVIDE PROPERTY OWNERS AND BUSINESSES ON THE ISLAND WITH A DECREASE IN FUTURE ELECTRICITY COSTS.

Lower utility costs would have considerable impact on the bottom line for local businesses and could encourage businesses to extend their operating season.

### *Housing Availability*

The availability of affordable and rental year-round housing is essential to maintaining and building a strong island economy. It is needed foremost for young people and families with moderate incomes, particularly for those who grew up on Block Island and want to make the island their home while they pursue careers and raise families. It is also needed for professionals with specific skill sets in demand, such as school teachers, who want to make the island their home.

Most of the housing inventory on Block Island (65%) is comprised of second and vacation homes, resulting in a housing market skewed to inflated prices. According to Housing Works RI's annual Housing Fact Book, in 2014 the median home price on Block Island was \$1,100,000, requiring an annual income of \$278,406 to purchase. A large majority of housing construction activity is related to vacation homes, as opposed to that for year-round housing, whose construction is typically a result of specific efforts by non-profits to create long term affordable units.

An additional challenge to operating a business on an island with high real estate values is the lack of housing for the seasonal workforce. Many businesses including inns, restaurants, and shops must provide housing as part of their employment package to secure seasonal workers. Seasonal workers not provided with housing often live in sub-standard conditions including overcrowding in order to afford housing during the peak summer season. Arguably, the provision of adequate and affordable rental housing for the seasonal workforce is one of the biggest challenges Block Island must address. See Housing Chapter for additional discussion.

### *Telecommunications*

Keeping the island digitally connected to the world at large is a critical economic issue. Residents seeking work off-island and non-residents providing skills to the island which may otherwise not be available, depend on both commuting and telecommuting. Reliable year-round transportation and access to high speed internet are both crucial. Many residents cannot work mainland jobs and many jobs on the island cannot be held by day commuters because of the limited winter ferry schedule.

The inconsistency of the internet connection, including frequent and sometimes lengthy outages, affects many residents who work, and also vacationers who want to stay connected to their off-island work life. It particularly affects those running a business on the island who rely on the internet for many aspects of their operation, including ordering supplies, marketing, making sales, taking reservations, etc. Tourism in general could be negatively impacted if Block Island becomes known for limited connectivity as increasingly people expect to stay connected while traveling.

## NEW SHOREHAM HAS SECURED A MAINLAND FIBER CONNECTION

Efforts to improve internet service on the island have been underway for several years, involving the Town and its Information Technology (IT) consultants, as well as the Block Island Residents Association and the Block Island Chamber of Commerce. The New Shoreham “Broadband Working Group”, established in 2014, identified options for improving internet reliability through better or alternative broadband access from the mainland. As part of the offshore wind farm project, a subsea power cable including fiber is connected to the mainland for wind farm management and the Town has secured the rights to eight strands of fiber. The Town is currently working with consultants on a universal Home to Network design, cost estimates, and an internet service provider.

Reliable high speed internet is critical to the school, the medical center, the police department and the economy as a whole. Economic activity through telecommunication is not only critical in today’s economy, but is of particular importance on Block Island with its combination of geographic isolation, high energy and transportation costs, and sensitive natural and cultural environment. Jobs provided or enhanced through telecommunication not only contribute to a year-round economy, but have little, if any, secondary negative impacts, such as large energy consumption and waste generation. For more information, review the New Shoreham Broadband Plan completed in January of 2015.

While there may not be broad economic development plans, policies, or tax incentives currently in place or offered through the Town, several major economic development initiatives including those listed above involve significant prior and future investments by the Town. For example, plans have been completed for the Broadband project with a major goal being the advancement of the local business climate on Block Island. The Town’s ongoing affordable housing efforts along with recent changes in policies including adding Light Assembly as a permitted use in all commercial zones are other examples of Town actions which advance economic development on the island.

## Goals, Policies & Implementation Actions

Achieving other goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, particularly those relating to land use, housing, natural and cultural resources, and recreation, are of vital importance in reaching the economic development goals identified in the following section, just as a healthy economy is necessary for those other goals and policies to be achieved.

### **GOAL EDI: PROVIDE A HEALTHY, BALANCED, YEAR-ROUND ECONOMY THAT IMPROVES THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ISLAND RESIDENTS AND EMPHASIZES SUPPORT FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES AND WORKERS.**

<u>POLICY</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>	<u>TIMEFRAME</u>
EDI.A. Promote a diversified year-round economy	EDI.A.1. Create incentives to attract or develop island-grown businesses which provide locally needed products and services while also offering year-round job opportunities	Finance; Tax Assessor; Town Council	Medium-term
	EDI.A.2. Establish an incubator space for business start-ups; explore partnerships and grant opportunities to assist with funding construction and operations	Grant Writer; Town Manager; Town Council	Medium-term
	EDI.A.3. Work with partners to establish an outreach program for unemployed residents	Town Council	Long-term
	EDI.A.4. Work with partners to undertake surveys, market the island's businesses not directly related to tourism, and solicit specific recommendations for any necessary changes in town policies, regulations and taxation	Town Council	Ongoing
	EDI.A.5. Conduct a review of the current zoning ordinance and map to identify potentially suitable additional areas where commercial uses would be appropriate	Planning Board	Short-term
EDI.B. Foster collaboration between business and the local education system	EDI.B.1. Identify and offer quality real-world training opportunities and programs to students	School Department	Ongoing
EDI.C. Support existing local businesses and their needs for public infrastructure and services	EDI.C.1. Establish a working group consisting of residents, local business owners and municipal representatives to develop strategies to better support local businesses	Town Council	Medium-term

	EDI.C.2. Take measures to control the costs of freight and electricity	Town Manager; Town Council	Ongoing
EDI.D. Promote a vibrant, attractive and cohesive built environment and amenities within commercial districts	EDI.D.1. Foster the establishment of a downtown merchants association and other local business associations	Old Harbor Task Force; Town Council	Short-term
	EDI.D.2. Establish a program to ensure the installation of consistent amenities including but not limited to benches and bicycle racks	Planning Board; Historic District Commission; Old Harbor Task Force	Short-term
EDI.E. Cultivate a wide variety of small-scale economic activities that can be easily integrated into the community	EDI.E.1. Determine appropriate opportunities for low-impact, home-based businesses and amend zoning ordinance to allow with a special use permit	Planning Board; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning	Short-term
EDI.F. Promote agricultural operations as a viable economic enterprise, method to preserve open space, and source of local food	EDI.F.1. Amend zoning to encourage agritourism activities and the production of value-added agricultural products	Planning Board; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning	Short-term
	EDI.F.2. Continue to acquire or purchase development rights to farmlands with partners	Block Island Land Trust; Town Council	Ongoing
	EDI.F.3. Investigate options to offer no-cost or low-cost leasing options of conserved lands to farmers	Block Island Land Trust	Medium-term
EDI.G. Ensure commercial activities are in keeping with the character of the island	EDI.G.1. Never permit uses such as heavy manufacturing or commercial gambling that would destroy the character of the island	Town Council; Planning Board; Zoning Board	Ongoing
EDI.H. Promote and support sustainable fisheries and aquaculture	EDI.H.1. Permit in reasonable quantity ecologically sound aquaculture activities (See Chapter 2. The Great Salt Pond)	Harbors Commission; Harbors Department; Town Council	Ongoing
EDI.I. Provide affordable housing to support a year-round economy, and address the need for seasonal employee housing (See Housing Element)	EDI.I.1. Permit affordable year-round rental housing and homeownership opportunities throughout the island	Planning Board; Zoning Board; Block Island Housing Trust	Ongoing
	EDI.I.2. Identify potential locations for seasonal workforce housing	Block Island Housing Trust	Short-term
EDI.J. Ensure economic development occurs in a sustainable and integrated manner	EDI.J.1. Target economic development activities in areas where development and infrastructure exist	Planning Board	Ongoing

ED1.K. Improve access to sustainable broadband internet service for residents, businesses, government and visitors	ED1.K.1. Establish island-wide reliable high-speed internet connection	Information Technology; Broadband Working Group; Town Manager; Town Council	Short-term
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**GOAL ED2: ADVANCE THE ISLAND'S TOURISM INDUSTRY BY PROVIDING A QUALITY VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND PROTECTING THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES UPON WHICH TOURISM DEPENDS**

<u>POLICY</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>	<u>TIMEFRAME</u>
ED2.A. Encourage sustainable tourism and tourism activities that complement the island's unique natural environment and cultural resources	ED2.A.1. Control access to the beaches in a way that protects dunes and bluffs from damage	Conservation Commission; Town Manager	Ongoing
	ED2.A.2. Identify and promote tourist activities for the "shoulder" and off seasons, specifically those which emphasize individual and quality experiences rather than those designed to attract large numbers of visitors	Block Island Tourism Council	Ongoing
	ED2.A.3. Consider establishing a sustainable tourism certificate program for island businesses	Block Island Tourism Council	Long-term
ED2.B. Make investments and manage resources for a high quality tourist experience	ED2.B.1. Provide improved access to beaches and trails, and increase availability of amenities such as bicycle racks, restrooms, benches, informational materials and signage	Conservation Commission; Planning Board; Town Council	Long-term
	ED2.B.2. Implement a consistent and distinctively Block Island wayfinding signage program to help visitors find local services, facilities, landmarks and attractions (T1.E.3.)	Tourism Council; Old Harbor Task Force; Historic District Commission; Planning Board	Medium-term
ED2.C. Protect cultural, historic, and scenic resources that are vital to the island's economy	ED2.C.1. Identify and map significant viewsheds and enact land use regulations to provide protection	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; GIS Department; Planning Board; Town Council	Medium-term

ED2.D. Seek coordination in tourism and marketing efforts among local organizations and state agencies	Schedule regular meetings with organizations and agencies involved in tourism to increase communication	Block Island Tourism Council; Town Council	Ongoing
	Work collaboratively with partners including the Block Island Tourism Council, the Block Island Chamber of Commerce, and Small Business Administration to leverage efforts	Block Island Tourism Council; Town Council	Ongoing

**Timeframes:** Short-term (1-3 years); Medium-term (4-6 years); Long-term (7-10 years)



## 8.

# TRANSPORTATION

New Shoreham 2016 Comprehensive Plan

### VISION

**Block Island will maintain a multi-modal transportation system that moves people and goods to, from, and around the island in a safe, economical, and reliable manner to support island livability and the local economy. Investments in transportation infrastructure will encourage a balance of transportation modes including pedestrian and bicycle and will minimize impacts on natural resources and the unique character of the island.**

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# TRANSPORTATION

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## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Old Harbor Vision & Design Project, Dodson Associates, Ltd. Landscape Architects and Planners, October 2004.

Rhode Island Airport Land Use Compatibility Guidebook, Rhode Island Airport Corporation, April, 2013.

State of Rhode Island Airport Systems Plan, State Guide Plan Element 640, Statewide Planning Program, 2011.

State of Rhode Island Transportation Improvement Program, FY 2013-2016, Adopted July 12, 2012.

Transportation 2035, State Guide Plan Element 611, Statewide Planning Program, 2012.

## Overview

The following chapter provides a summary and assessment of transportation modes to, from and on Block Island. Policies have been established to address the challenges highlighted below and to achieve the stated goals of reducing reliance on the automobile and providing a sustainable transportation system which meets the diverse needs of residents, visitors and commerce.

### **ACCESS TO AND FROM THE ISLAND**

**MORE THAN ANY OTHER RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY, BLOCK ISLAND RELIES ON THE SERVICES OF PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION COMPANIES TO PROVIDE CRITICAL TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS TO AND FROM THE ISLAND. THE COMMUNITY DESIRES AN INCREASED VOICE IN TRANSPORTATION ACCESS AND MANAGEMENT DECISIONS IN ORDER TO SECURE ITS FUTURE.**

### **TRANSPORTATION ON THE ISLAND**

**DURING THE PEAK TOURISM SEASON, ISSUES OF CONGESTION AND SAFETY ARISE ON BLOCK ISLAND BECAUSE OF THE LARGE INFLUX OF PEOPLE AND AUTOMOBILES. ACCOMMODATING MULTIPLE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION SAFELY AND EFFICIENTLY ON NARROW ROADS DURING THE BUSY SEASON IS A CHALLENGE. SHARING THE ROADS IS REQUIRED OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS ALIKE IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE A SAFE AND EFFICIENT MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM.**

## ACCESS TO AND FROM BLOCK ISLAND

*The Town's two harbors and airport serve as the island's main transportation hubs as air and water are the only means to and from the island.*

### Water

#### Ferry Services

The mainland connection by means of the ferry is indispensable to year-round life on the island. The large majority of visitors arrive by ferry and are critical to the island economy. Ferry access to and from Block Island during the summer tourism season is plentiful with a number of options for travelers (See Table TI: Block Island Ferry Service). However, Point Judith State Pier in Narragansett, RI is the only mainland port from which there is year-round ferry service to Block Island and the only service available for vehicle transport.

Interstate Navigation, the company operating the ferry service out of Point Judith, varies its passenger and vehicle service significantly throughout the year in response to demand. The number of daily trips decreases during the shoulder season, and even further during winter months. *On a mid-week winter day there may be only one boat to and from the island, a minimum requirement of the company's operating permit granted by the RI Public Utilities Commission.*

Mainland Destination	Block Island Destination	Operator	Schedule	Months	Vehicle Transport	Sailing Time
Point Judith, RI (Traditional)	Old Harbor	Interstate Navigation	Year-Round	Jan-Dec	Yes	55 min
Point Judith, RI (Hi-Speed)	Old Harbor	Interstate Navigation	Seasonal	June-Oct	No	30 min
Newport, RI	Old Harbor	Interstate Navigation	Seasonal	June-Sept	No	1 hour
Fall River, MA	Old Harbor	Interstate Navigation	Seasonal	June-Sept	No	2 hrs 15 min
New London, CT	Old Harbor	Nelseco Navigation	Seasonal	May-Sept	No	1hr 15 min
Montauk, NY	New Harbor	Viking Ferry Lines	Seasonal	May - Oct	No	1 hour

Interstate Navigation's traditional ferry transports goods, products, and materials, including food, fuel, and construction materials. The town's solid waste is also transported off-island by the ferry to Point Judith. In addition to the traditional ferry, Interstate Navigation provides a seasonal "hi-speed" ferry service to Block Island from Point Judith, Newport and Fall River, Massachusetts.

Two other companies provide seasonal passenger only ferry service. The Block Island Express operates between New London, Connecticut and Old Harbor, and the Viking Fleet operates between Montauk, New York and New Harbor. These ferries provide a much needed service in response to considerable demand from vacationers in Connecticut, New York and further south.

The Town needs to have a stronger voice in capacity, scheduling, fare structures, freight tariffs and other aspects of access management regarding the ferry transportation system. Recent years have seen large increases in freight tariffs including an approximate 20% increase in 2015.

The provision of affordable mainland parking is essential to successful ferry operations and the goals of the Town. The Town supports efforts to limit the number of personal vehicles transported to the island in the summer months. Reduced auto fares and high parking fees have the opposite effect.

In Point Judith, there is seasonal parking for a modest annual fee on a State owned and managed lot. This lot is relied on by Block Island residents for long-term parking of a mainland vehicle, and use for overnight parking for those who travel frequently to the island. A task force that deals with mainland parking issues should be established by the Town Council. Such a task force could focus on the need to maintain affordable mainland parking fees for island residents and property owners. The task force could also advocate for improved parking facilities and amenities.

## Harbors

### ***Personal Watercraft***

For those traveling by private boat to the island, there are two harbors, Old Harbor and New Harbor / Great Salt Pond. Old Harbor accommodates ferry docks, a private marina, and limited dockage, mooring and anchorage for personal watercraft at town-owned docks and anchoring field. The large majority of private vessels arriving to Block Island anchor in the Great Salt Pond or dock at one of the private marinas in New Harbor. As of 2015, the Great Salt Pond can support up to approximately 2,000 recreational boats, which includes both dockage and mooring space. See the Great Salt Pond Chapter and the New Shoreham Harbor Management Plan for additional discussion related to the town's harbors.

## AIR

### ***Block Island Airport***

Located in the center of the island, The Block Island Airport provides essential commercial, emergency, and general aviation air access on its 2,501 foot long runway. Expanded and remodeled in 2009, the Block Island Airport includes a passenger terminal and lounge, a restaurant, car rental service, and ample parking. There is no public transportation option to and from the Block Island Airport. Ground transportation is provided by taxi service. Block Island Airport is owned by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) and managed by the Rhode Island Airport Corporation (RIAC).

Currently, there is only one commercial airline providing scheduled air transport service to and from the island. New England Airlines operates a scheduled year-round service to and from Westerly Airport with a flight time of less than 15 minutes. It also offers charter service to and from Block Island to Westerly and other airports in the region, including T.F. Green.

As with other economic activity, airline operations at the Block Island Airport are seasonal in nature. During the peak tourism season, the scheduled flights occur at least once every hour, and during the remainder of the year about every other hour.

The island airport is also actively used by other charter services as well as private aircraft, including a small number owned by island residents. Over a ten year period from 2000-2009 there were anywhere from three to twelve aircraft based at the Block Island Airport (RI State Airport Systems Plan).

*Scheduled commercial air service plays a vital role for Block Island in that it is the fastest means of access and the only means of access to and from the Island when the ferry service cannot operate, such as during high seas conditions.*

Because of the speed of air transportation, the immediacy of its access, and its ability to operate in inclement weather conditions to the degree that its current approaches permit, Block Island Airport serves as the island's lifeline to the mainland for the emergency evacuation of life-threatened patients. New England Airlines has provided emergency air transport services, and has been critical in transporting residents and visitors to the mainland in response to any number of life-threatening and other emergency circumstances. Currently, critical emergency services are provided by medevac companies using fully equipped and staffed medevac helicopters.

Commercial airlines also fill a variety of important roles for island residents including carrying large volumes of freight year-round, such as the shipping of time sensitive items like prescription medications, critical parts repair and machinery maintenance equipment.

Block Island Airport is an economic generator for the island in that it provides aviation-related industries and jobs. Additionally, it provides convenient access to the island for skilled workers and professionals, seasonal residents and visitors. All who spend money on goods, services, and accommodations, generating additional jobs and huge economic impact. In order to remain competitive and continue to contribute to the local economy, the private management company for Block Island Airport should not charge fees above other similar airports in the region.

A goal of the RI Airport System Plan is for all the airports in the state system to exist compatibly within their community. Municipalities are responsible for implementing proper land use regulations in the vicinity of the airport in order to prevent the development or expansion of incompatible land uses and ensure that development that does occur is related to or compatible with airport operations. Therefore, the Town will adopt an airport hazard overlay zone to meet the requirements of the State, protect the operations of the Block Island Airport and the health and safety of the community.

## NEED FOR STRONGER LOCAL CONTROL IN TRANSPORTATION ACCESS DECISIONS

The Block Island community needs a more effective voice in the management of the ferry and aviation services connecting it to the mainland, as well as the recreational boating capacity of the Great Salt Pond. Aside from direct discussions, or involvement in hearings, with the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission, the Rhode Island Airport Corporation and the Coastal Resources Management Council, the Town currently does not benefit from any official representation on governing bodies making transportation access decisions. As such, the Town would like to explore with the State the establishment of a Port Authority consisting of island representatives appointed by the Town Council.

A local transportation commission could provide a unified voice for the island in crucial sea, air, and related land access management decisions, such as, but not limited to, ferry scheduling and fare structures, freight costs, airport fees, expansions or limits on mooring fields and moped licenses issued. The local transportation commission could also assist the Town in advocating for fair representation and the establishment of a Port Authority. The establishment of such a commission would require a change in the town charter.

*Transportation decisions affecting travel to the island must not be guided solely by demand, but rather by the capacity of the island to accommodate the demand, and to ensure that what makes the island a special place to visit is not compromised.*

## TRANSPORTATION ON THE ISLAND

### ROADWAYS

#### **Private Vehicles**

The on-island vehicle transportation system consists of an approximately 40 mile network of roads. Many of the roads on the island are private and are maintained to minimum standards having unpaved surfaces and narrow widths. A majority of the public roads on the island are State owned and are maintained by the Town with State funding. Under town jurisdiction is approximately four miles of paved roads and six miles of unpaved roads.

Map T1 Transportation System displays the island's roads as classified by the Highway Functional Classification System, recently updated by the State in 2014.

- PRINCIPAL ARTERIAL - A ROADWAY CARRYING THE MAJOR PORTION OF LONGER DISTANCE TRIPS THROUGH AN AREA, GENERALLY SERVING THE MAJOR MOVEMENT OF TRAFFIC NOT SERVED BY FREEWAYS
- MINOR ARTERIAL - A ROADWAY WHICH FORMS THE NETWORK OF CROSS-TRAVEL WITHIN A COMMUNITY, GENERALLY SERVING SHORTER LENGTH TRIPS AND PARALLEL TO A PRINCIPAL ARTERIAL

- COLLECTOR - AN AUXILIARY OR THROUGH ROADWAY WHICH SERVES TO COLLECT AND DISTRIBUTE TRAFFIC BETWEEN ARTERIALS AND LOCAL ROADWAYS
- LOCAL - A ROADWAY WHICH SERVES ONLY TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO ABUTTING PROPERTIES

During the summer season, the road system is host to a variety of vehicles, including cars, trucks and commercial vehicles, taxis, motorcycles, mopeds, bicycles, and pedestrians. Visitors can be distracted, unfamiliar with the geography, and lacking experience on mopeds and bicycles, creating safety issues on the island's roadways. As a safety measure, most unpaved roads are off limits for moped use.

Improving safety and reducing congestion of vehicles, taxis, mopeds, bicyclists and pedestrians is a major priority to the Town. The roadway and sidewalk system in and between the two harbors is subject to intense use during the tourism season, particularly in Old Harbor in conjunction with the arrival and departure of the ferries.

Old Harbor Vision and Design Project, completed in 2004, evaluated the circulation and land use issues of Old Harbor. The result was a master plan that addressed circulation, parking, public parks and infill development. The study included recommendations specifically related to easing congestion and reducing potential conflict between vehicles and pedestrians. Although the plan was never accepted by the Town, specific recommendations could be reevaluated and implemented including creating new pedestrian connections within the village and improving signage for public parking areas.

### ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

Although a substantial number of seasonal workers depend on walking, bicycling, or taxi as means of transportation, there is significant potential for increased use of bicycling and walking as modes of transportation for island residents. *Due to the large margin of error for Block Island of the following American Community Survey data points: (i) The percentage of the population that lives in a household without a private vehicle, (ii) The percentage of the working population that uses public transit for commuting purposes; and (iii) The percentage of the working population that bike or walk for commuting purposes, the Town has determined the data is too unreliable to determine needs opted to not include in this Plan.*

Congestion in the Downtown and surrounding area along with roadways with little to no shoulder make bicycling and walking less desirable and create a perception of being unsafe. Continued enforcement of the 25 miles per hour speed limit will help to lessen the dangers and increase comfort of pedestrians and bicyclists. Improved on and off road pedestrian and bicycle linkages between Old Harbor and New Harbor would be beneficial and have been investigated, along with a seasonal transit option. Infrastructure improvements to better accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians on the town's narrow roads could prove infeasible in many cases. Therefore, a combination of infrastructure investments along with public awareness and safety campaigns could be used to improve overall island safety and conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians. One such project, currently included on the State TIP, is "share the road" signage for Corn Neck Road.

## PEDESTRIAN

### *Sidewalks & Trails*

Due to the congestion in and around the village in the summer, sidewalks are essential for the safe movement of pedestrians. Pedestrians are served by a mostly complete sidewalk system in the village area, with an extension along Spring Street up to the Spring House Hotel, up High Street to the Block Island School and Medical Center, and along Ocean Avenue to New Harbor. All of the sidewalk extensions are on one side of the respective street only. There are a number of street segments without sidewalks that do have heavy pedestrian use, including:

- WELDON'S WAY
- CHAPEL STREET (WESTERLY SIDE)
- OLD TOWN ROAD (FROM BRIDGE GATE SQUARE TO TOWN HALL)
- CORN NECK ROAD (TO INTERSECTION WITH BEACH AVENUE/TOWN BEACH)
- WEST SIDE ROAD (OCEAN AVENUE TO CHAMPLIN'S) – CURRENTLY LISTED IN THE STATE TIP

Sidewalks should be constructed along the state-owned roads in the village area where they are lacking. Town-owned roads with potential pedestrian traffic or unsafe walking conditions should be targeted for improvements as well. Block Island's sidewalk expansion can be accomplished through inclusion of projects on the State Transportation Improvement Program.

The island-wide trail system consisting of over 25 miles of specifically designated walking paths should also be considered part of the transportation network. The Greenway, illustrated on Map T1 Transportation Network, is a continuous trail system between the Great Salt Pond at Ball O'Brien Park and the ocean at Black Rock Road which accesses Rodman's Hollow Preserve. There are a variety of other trails, including Clay Head Trail off Corn Neck Road in the northern part of the island, trails around Fresh Pond and through Rodman's Hollow, and alongside Dickens Farm in the southwest that provide access to parts of the island only available to those on foot. See the Recreation Chapter for additional discussion on trails.

## BICYCLE

### *Sharing the Roadways*

Bicycling is a very popular mode of traveling around the island in the summer. Most bicycling is recreational, however, it is also often the principal means of transportation for seasonal workers. Currently, there are no designated bicycle lanes or bicycle paths on the island and sharing the island's narrow roads with vehicles can at times be hazardous. Previous planning efforts have been undertaken to explore the potential of a dedicated bikeway system, including a feasibility study of a bicycle facility on Corn Neck Road in 2007. The Corn Neck Road project as shown in preliminary design plans would consist of three foot wide paved shoulders on each side of the road between Bridge Gate Square and the intersection with Scotch Beach Road, to be shared by bicyclists and pedestrians with appropriate pavement markings. The project would require some widening within the right-of-way to provide the uniform three foot shoulder width.

The Town should identify and prioritize improvements to enhance bicycle use and safety, including selective road widening to allow the road to be shared by both motorists and bicyclists. However, additional

measures can be accomplished in the short-term to enhance the safety and ease of movement for those without a car including a wayfinding signage program and the installation of additional benches and bicycle racks.

### TRANSIT

The island is not served by the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority or any other public transit system. The island also does not have rail infrastructure or service. As recommended in the Island Energy Plan as a means of reducing emissions, the Town should consider the establishment of a shuttle van or jitney that would provide a needed connection between the two harbors and Town Beach. A service to the airport should also be explored. This would provide a transportation alternative to help reduce congestion in the Downtown and surrounding area. In the shoulder and winter seasons, the jitney could also serve as a form of public transit for seniors and disabled. *Public-private partnership opportunities with taxi operators on the island should be explored.*

## Goals, Policies & Implementation Actions

### GOAL T1: PROVIDE A SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM THAT MEETS THAT DIVERSE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS, VISITORS, AND COMMERCE

POLICY	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIMEFRAME
T1.A. Preserve air and water transportation connections to the mainland and support providers of year-round transportation service	T1.A.1. Adopt an airport hazard overlay zoning district to ensure land use compatibility in the vicinity of the state airport (per the requirements of RIGL 1-3-5 Airport Zoning Act)	Planning Board; Town Council	Short-term
	T1.A.2. Continue to undertake maintenance activities necessary to preserve safe and adequate docks	Town Manager; Harbormaster; Town Council	Ongoing
	T1.A.3. Establish a local Transportation Commission or other similar body that can advocate the town's interests in access management decisions and the provision of mainland parking	Town Council	Short-term
	T1.A.4. Discuss with state leaders the need for island representation on governing bodies making access management decisions relating to Block Island	Town Council; Town Manager	Short-term
	T1.A.5. Advocate for the establishment of a Port Authority with island representatives having an official seat at the table	Town Council; Town Manager	Short-term
T1.B. Manage access to the island to protect quality of life and natural resources	T1.B.1. Work with the Public Utilities Commission to establish daily ferry passenger and vehicle capacities	Town Manager; Town Council	Medium-term
	T1.B.2. Work with the Army Corps of Engineers and CRMC to maintain mooring limit capacity in the Great Salt Pond	Town Manager; Harbormaster; Town Council	Short-term

T1.C. Reduce vehicle congestion and address parking needs in the Downtown and surrounding areas	T1.C.1. Review and revise zoning as needed to reduce amount of required on-site parking and allow for off-site parking, shared parking, and contribution to public parking or a combination of these measures	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Planning Board; Zoning Board; Town Council	Medium-term
	T1.C.2. Establish and maintain limits on rental vehicles including mopeds	Town Council; Police Department	Medium-term
	T1.C.3. Develop a parking plan for the downtown and surrounding area	Planning Board; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning	Medium-term
	T1.C.4. Establish a Parking Task Force to address on island parking needs	Town Council	Short-term
T1.D. Ensure parking is provided in a manner which preserves walkability and enhances the pedestrian experience of historic Downtown	T1.D.1. Provide a public system of satellite parking areas within walking distance Downtown and the harbors	Planning Board; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Town Manager; Town Council	Long-term
	T1.D.2. Explore establishing a fee-in-lieu system to support the development and maintenance of satellite parking areas as an alternative to requiring on-site parking Downtown	Planning Board; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Town Manager; Town Council	Long-term
T1.E. Improve the Efficiency and Safety of Island Roadways	T1.E.1. Work with RIDOT to implement bicycle and pedestrian safety projects on the island	Police Department; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Town Manager; Public Works	Ongoing
	T1.E.2. Conduct regular road and sidewalk condition surveys as a means to better prioritize infrastructure investments	Public Works; GIS Department; Town Manager	Medium-term; Ongoing
	T1.E.3. Implement a consistent and distinctively Block Island wayfinding signage program to help visitors find local services, facilities, landmarks and attractions (ED2.B.2.)	Tourism Council; Old Harbor Task Force; Historic District Commission; Planning Board	Medium-term

	TI.E.4. Conduct a public awareness and safety campaigns in regards to sharing the roads with cyclists and pedestrians and encouraging helmet use	Police Department	Short-term
TI.F. Support an interconnected local street system that allows for efficient movement of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians by encouraging street connectivity			Ongoing
TI.G. Work with RIDOT to ensure that any transportation improvements and amenities including signage and guardrails are of appropriate scale, material and design and do not have a negative impact on the scenic qualities of the island			Ongoing
TI.H. Consider natural hazards including flooding and sea-level rise when making transportation investment decisions	TI.H.1. Evaluate each road currently or potentially impacted by sea-level rise or flooding to determine appropriate actions to limit impacts to the community	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Emergency Management Task Force; Planning Board; Town Manager; Town Council	Long-term
	TI.H.2. Conduct a planning study of Corn Neck Road to identify alternatives to mitigate future impacts from storms and climate change	Planning Board; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Emergency Management Task Force; Town Manager; Town Council	Short-term

**GOAL T2: REDUCE RELIANCE ON PRIVATE AUTOMOBILE FOR ON-ISLAND TRANSPORTATION**

<u>POLICY</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>	<u>TIMEFRAME</u>
T2.A. Respect and support bicycling and walking as modes of transportation rather than merely recreation for visitors	T2.A.1. Review local subdivision and zoning regulations, and amend as necessary, to ensure roadways and amenities are designed for all users	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Planning Board	Short-term
	T2.A.2. Work with partners to install additional sidewalks and bicycle racks in and around Downtown	Old Harbor Task Force; Tourism Council; Planning Board; Town Council	Ongoing
	T2.A.3. Require installation of benches and bicycle racks when reviewing substantial development projects	Planning Board	Ongoing
	T2.A.4. Undertake a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan to address user safety and overall mobility	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Planning Board; Town Manager	Medium-term
	T2.A.5. Submit bicycle and sidewalk projects for inclusion in the State's Transportation Improvement Program and local Capital Improvement Program	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Planning Board; Town Manager Town Council	Ongoing
T2.B. Support the development and maintenance of bicycle and pedestrian paths	T2.B.1. Work with RIDOT to design bicycle and pedestrian paths that are congruent with the island's rural character	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Planning Board; Town Council	Ongoing
	T2.B.2. Ensure walking trails including the Greenway and public right-of-ways to the shore remain passable and have appropriate signage	Conservation Commission; Land Trust; Town Manager	Ongoing
T2.C. Provide increased transportation options for individuals, including seniors and the disabled, with unmet transportation needs	T2.C.1. Explore ways to provide transit options for the disabled and seniors	Town Council; Town Manager	Long-term

T2.D. Discourage travelling to the island with a vehicle	T2.D.1. Advocate for ferry pricing and management decisions that reduce incentives to travel to the island with a personal vehicle	Town Council; Town Manager	Ongoing
	T2.D.2. Advocate for improved mainland parking facilities with affordable rates	Town Council; Town Manager; Tourism Council	Ongoing
	T2.D.3. Work with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and the Town of Narragansett to develop a long-term parking plan in Point Judith	Town Council; Town Manager; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning;	Long-term
T2.E. Make transportation investments that support the local tourism economy and better meet the needs of island visitors	T2.E.1. Provide access to public storage lockers and other amenities which improve the convenience and experience for daytrippers travelling to the island without a vehicle	Tourism Council; Old Harbor Task Force; Town Manager; Town Council;	Medium-term
	T2.E.2. Explore viability of a limited fixed route seasonal jitney bus service to provide access to main attractions for visitors addressing first a connection between Old and New Harbor	Tourism Council; Town Manager; Town Council	Medium-term

**Timeframes:** Short-term (1-3 years); Medium-term (4-6 years); Long-term (7-10 years)



## 9. SERVICES & FACILITIES

New Shoreham 2016 Comprehensive Plan

### VISION

**Block Island will continue to provide high quality community services and facilities that meet the needs of both residents and visitors. Community services and facilities will be provided in an environmentally and fiscally sustainable manner and will strive to preserve the unique qualities and character of Block Island.**

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# SERVICES & FACILITIES

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## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

*A companion document to this chapter, included in Appendix C is the Island Energy Plan which was adopted by the Town Council on June 4, 2012 and approved by the RI Department of Administration, Division of Planning on September 10, 2012. The energy plan addresses all sources of energy production, both conventional and renewable, waste reduction and conservation, and regulation and building design. It includes a set of goals and specific implementing actions for each subject.*

## OVERVIEW

The following section includes a description and assessment of the public services and facilities provided on the island, some of which are privately owned and/or managed, but most of which are a function of town government. *Map SFI Public Facilities* displays the locations of the public facilities on Block Island.

The provision of community services on an island is done under unique circumstances, is sometimes challenging, and is often costlier than it is for communities with similar characteristics on the mainland. In so many areas, the island must be self-sufficient. This is often due to the nature of the service being provided, but also because the opportunities for sharing services with other communities or any kind of regional approach are limited. All infrastructure systems, including public water and sewer, are localized. The school system educates all students, grades K through 12, and graduates on average fewer than ten pupils a year. Housing costs and the infeasibility of year-round commuting present a challenge to teachers and other professionals from the mainland who desire to work on the island, reducing the pool of applicants available for many community service jobs.

In other areas, services are provided but the mainland link is critical. Solid waste is collected and sorted on island, but is ultimately disposed of off-island. Medical services provided on Block Island are of a high caliber and available 24 hours; however, persons requiring emergency care and specialized services depend on access to the mainland. Similar to the recreation department programs, many social and recreational programs for seniors rely on mainland activities, especially during the winter.

The need for reliable high speed internet connection is discussed in the Economic Development chapter. In addition to its importance for businesses and the tourism industry, improved internet is critical to the school, as well as to the medical center, public safety departments, the library, and residents.

## Block Island School

The Block Island School, centrally located in the southeast area of the island, instructs children in grades kindergarten through twelve in a single building. It is staffed with a superintendent, two co-principals and twenty-five teachers, as well as administrative and teaching assistants, a guidance counselor, social worker, school psychologist and an athletic director.

## Enrollment

Over the decade from school year 2003-2004 to school year 2013-2014, enrollment at the Block Island School dropped by 25 students, from 140 to 115, an 18% reduction. There are three identified causes for this change:

1. A DROP IN THE NUMBER OF SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN THROUGHOUT THE REGION AS A PART OF A LARGER DEMOGRAPHIC TREND;
2. A LONG STANDING TREND THAT OCCURS IN THE TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL AS SOME FAMILIES OPT FOR MAINLAND SCHOOLS; AND
3. A SMALL BUT EMERGING DROP IN THE KINDERGARTEN RATIO THAT HAS BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO THE DIFFICULTY OF YOUNG FAMILIES IN LOCATING ATTAINABLE YEAR-ROUND HOUSING.

As *Table SF-1 Block Island School Current Enrollment and Enrollment Projections* demonstrates, enrollment is anticipated to continue to decline over the next 10-year period.

The current school structure is separate grades (K-7) and a five-year (8-12) high school. This generates an expected and understood level of inefficiency with staffing and the facility. The facility has a capacity of 300 students with 15 students per classroom (highest single grade enrollment is currently 14 students). The 2013-2014 teacher to student ratio was 1:4, more than double the state average at 1:9.

In response to the challenges of operating a small and physically isolated school system with declining enrollment, the superintendent and staff, under the direction of the School Committee, researched potential changes to the school organization and structure in 2014. The concepts, which were field evaluated at other schools, include blended learning which is a combination of computer based and direct instruction; multi-grade classrooms; and of interest to the wider community, attracting students from off-island for specialized instruction, including for higher education.

## Education Costs

Per pupil expenditures continue to far exceed state averages, a trend that the recent enrollment drop has amplified. Total per pupil expenditures in the school year 2014-2015 were \$39,672 for the Block Island School versus \$16,075 statewide. In the FY 2014 town budget, the school represented 37% of spending, a figure which is fairly consistent year to year.

Table SF-1: Block Island School Current Enrollment and Enrollment Projections												
Grade	Capacity	2015-2016 Enrollment	Enrollment Projections									
		Students	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
K	15	9	8	5	13	7	8	8	8	9	8	8
1	15	8	8	7	4	11	6	7	7	7	8	7
2	15	6	7	9	7	4	11	6	7	7	7	8
3	15	5	6	6	7	6	4	10	6	6	6	6
4	15	6	5	6	6	7	6	4	10	6	6	6
5	15	10	6	5	6	6	7	6	4	10	6	6
6	15	9	10	6	5	6	6	7	6	4	10	6
7	15	12	9	10	6	5	6	6	7	6	4	10
8	15	12	14	10	12	7	6	7	7	8	7	5
9	15	14	12	14	10	12	7	6	7	7	8	7
10	15	6	14	12	14	10	12	7	6	7	7	8
11	15	7	6	14	12	14	10	12	7	6	7	7
12	15	9	7	6	15	13	15	10	13	7	6	7
Total	15	113	113	110	118	109	105	97	96	91	91	92

Source: RIDE for Current Enrollment; Town of New Shoreham / New England School Development Council, 10/2015 for projections

## Program

Block Island School students receive a very personalized education and a lot of individual attention from teachers. Students develop life-long relationships with their peers and the school faculty. The small classroom size also results in interaction between the different grade levels, both socially and more formally; in-school internships are offered to juniors and seniors to assist teachers of the lower grades.

Integrating computer based and teacher led instruction will be a major focus of public education on Block Island in the coming years. This will require that the technology infrastructure be upgraded, as instructionally, the school's greatest challenge is internet bandwidth. Overall, the internet is of growing importance for expanding secondary offerings through online courses; interactive online state assessments and the necessary preparatory instruction; and data management and integration which is increasingly cloud-based (data retrieved by the state, stored, and accessed through the internet).

Classroom reorganization to allow multi-grade instruction requires further program changes as well as physical space adaption. It is a longer term effort. Developing additional educational opportunities on Block Island will require the involvement of the island community – businesses, the environmental organizations, the arts community and other island groups. The school department undertook a survey to gauge community response to the idea in 2014, and initiated discussion with organizations that could offer educational programs in areas particularly suited to Block Island – the marine and ecological environment, arts, culture and history, and tourism. An initial step will be to develop short-term programs that are of interest to off-island students.

The possibility of establishing a pre-school has been discussed in the past, although no formal planning process has begun. The school department currently works with and supports the private preschool (the Block Island Early Learning Center). The Block Island School funds tuition cost of the private preschool for children (ages 3-5) with special needs.

A strong public school system educating grades K through 12 is critical to maintaining Block Island as a healthy and viable year-round community. Just as the community must make efforts in housing and economic development to provide opportunities for families to live and thrive year-round on the island, the school department must ensure the functioning and efficiency of the school through ongoing review of its enrollment and organizational structure.

## Facility

Renovations to the Block Island School were completed in 2006, resulting in a new full-sized gymnasium and excellent program space. In addition to attractive classrooms, the school has a large cafeteria, an art room, gymnasium, weight room, a music room, a library, wood-working and machine shops, computer rooms and resource rooms. The school fields a co-ed soccer team as well as girls' and boys' basketball, baseball and softball teams.

As of 2014, facility goals included restoring the façade of the original building and addressing various building and site maintenance issues, which are periodically identified and scheduled for correction or repair. A security review conducted during the 2012-13 school year identified a stronger entryway and new interior

door locks as priorities. An energy audit of the building also indicated that the entryway is a source of major energy loss. The school department recently installed a 12 kW ground mounted photovoltaic system to offset the electric energy cost of running the school. In 2016, an additional ground mounted photovoltaic system is being proposed, with the assistance of grant funding, to offset high electricity costs and to serve as an educational tool.

## Additional Challenges

Housing is the principal issue in hiring and retaining new teachers, as those who do not already possess stable, year-round housing tend to seek mainland positions. Turnover is an ongoing issue, ranging from one to four positions annually, although it is expected to stabilize at one to two positions annually on average in coming years.

Student travel to and from the mainland also presents a challenge in the form of attendance, requiring the school to adjust its schedule to reduce the impact of athletic travel on instructional time.

## Public Sewer

The New Shoreham Wastewater Treatment Facility is located on Spring St. just south of the Old Harbor and Downtown area. This facility was originally designed as an Extended Aeration Plant with conventional removal limits for BOD<sub>5</sub> and Total Suspended Solids with liquid sludge disposal. Since the facility's original commissioned in 1978 it has undergone a number of process improvements:

- SOLIDS HANDLING AND SECONDARY SETTLING 1985
- ANOXIC/AERATION SYSTEM IN 1993 AND 2006
- HEADWORKS IN 1997
- CHLORINATION/DECHLORINATION FACILITIES IN 1997 AND 2014 AND SECONDARY SETTLING
- SECONDARY SETTLING IN 2006
- SUPERVISORY CONTROL AND DATA ACQUISITION (SCADA) (2014)

The 2008 Permit allowed the facility to increase its average daily permitted capacity from 300,000 GPD (gallons per day) to 450,000 GPD. The level of treatment has also increased from secondary treatment to an advanced level of treatment that includes a reduction in nutrients and residual chlorine in its effluent discharge.

The sewer district includes all of Old Harbor, and New Harbor as far west as Champlin's Marina. It extends south to include the Spring House Inn and restaurant on Spring Street and the Block Island School and the Medical Center on High Street, and west to include the Town Hall on Old Town Road and properties at the west end of Connecticut Avenue. It extends along Corn Neck Road as far as the Beachead restaurant. The collection system consists of over 3.5 miles of lateral and intercepting sewer pipelines, and five pump stations (see Appendix SF-1 for description and locations of the sewage collection and pumping system). *Map SF2 Public Sewer* displays the current boundary of the public sewer system along with sewer lines and pump station locations.

In addition to processing most of the sewage from the water district, including that from hotels, marinas and public facilities at both harbors, the plant also handles waste pumped by contractors from individual on-site systems and waste from boat pump outs. It is designed and permitted to process an average daily flow of 450,000 gallons, with a peak of 1.2 million gallons per day (GPD). The plant processes a wide range of wastewater flows, from a high of 300,000 GPD (in the summer peak) to a low of 50,000 GPD (during the winter months). The treated effluent is pumped into the ocean from the outfall pipe in the jetty located off of Spring Street.

As it now encompasses essentially all of the commercial areas of the island, the sewer service area is not proposed to be extended any further. Under the current facilities plan, the capacity of the treatment system is adequate to handle present and future wastewater volumes; no expansion is anticipated.

## Public Water

Public water supply for the commercial area of Block Island was once provided by a private company. The water supply and distribution system was acquired by the Town in 1984 and operated as a town department, but is still referred to as the Block Island Water Company. Since 2000, operations and maintenance have been overseen by the Water District Commission, a Town Council appointed board.

With the exception of the area adjacent to and north of Sands Pond, the boundaries of the water district align closely with that of the sewer district. See *Map SF3 Water Supply* for the boundaries of the water district and water mains. In 2011, the water district was extended into the New Harbor commercial area. A large majority of residential properties on Block Island (estimated at 80%) are served by private wells.

The current capacity of the Block Island water system is .225 MGD (million gallons per day). See *Table SF-2* for average monthly and peak monthly water supplied in 2015. Block Island Water does not have an approved WSSMP (Water Supply Systems Management Plan). Block Island Water provides 50% of the total flow for the island in July and August.

	15-Jan	15-Feb	15-Mar	15-Apr	15-May	15-Jun	15-Jul	15-Aug	15-Sep	15-Oct	15-Nov	15-Dec
<b>Average (MGD)</b>	0.02001	0.02206	0.02206	0.03407	0.06216	0.09446	0.14581	0.14817	0.09105	0.04196	0.02492	0.02048
<b>Peak (MGD)</b>	0.03078	0.04965	0.03078	0.04406	0.09946	0.12383	0.17036	0.17448	0.15368	0.07978	0.03165	0.02577

The water supply comes from a well field north of Sands Pond, consisting of three main production wells. At any time, two of the wells are in operation, allowing one to be off-line but serving as a back-up during the high demand season. Three reverse osmosis units provide for 240,000 gallons per day of potable water. Storage capacity consists of two 150,000 gallon tanks.

Total average annual flow generated by the Water Company is 20 million gallons. Peak loads of over 4 million gallons a month occur in July and August, with about 180,000 gallons per day consumed on peak

weekends. The water district also includes a “stand-by” service agreement with several large water users (hotels, restaurants, Town Beach) who now rely on private wells. This has the potential to substantially add to water demand during the summer season.

Over the years, the Water Company has made many system improvements, including reverse osmosis treatment; water main replacements, upgrades for fire protection and extensions; and a concentrate force main extension for a direct permitted discharge into the ocean.

Future demands on the water system may come from any of a number of sources. Further connections within the present water district and/or requests for extension could be precipitated by state regulatory mandates. Future expansion of the distribution lines may extend to small lots adjacent to the district where groundwater supply may be unsustainable, where there may be an endangerment to the public water, or where public health may be an issue.

State regulations require a backup emergency water supply plan. Unlike mainland towns, in an emergency New Shoreham cannot tap into another public water supply. At present, three smaller wells and surface water from both Sands Pond and Fresh Pond remain the approved backup sources.

*The Block Island Water Company acknowledges that public water supply is critical to the Island and that there are no interconnections with other municipalities that could assist in emergency conditions. As an island, the Water Company is required to control the expansion of the water district based upon the ability of the Water Company to produce an adequate water supply to its existing customers.*

*The difficulty with a community such as Block Island, the water demands are not driven by the population within the service area. It is driven by the influx of daily visitors to the Island. Therefore, projected water demands based on population projections and growth within the water district are not applicable in this scenario. To achieve the necessary control in the increase in water users, the Block Island Water Company meets annually to establish an allocation of water that may be sold to users who wish to tie into the Water Company. The maximum capacity of the water treatment system is 245,000 GPD, which is based on the maximum production for the treatment facility. To establish the future water demands, the Water Company factors in daily production during the summer quarter plus the standby user allocation. This combined total is the basis for water consumption over an annual period of time.*

*The difference between the actual usage plus standby requirements and the 80% of the water treatment capacity is what can be distributed to new users. For example, in 2015, the Water Company produced 128,750 gallons during the summer quarter; the standby customers total 55,870 GPD for a combined average summer flow of 184,620 GPD. The Water Company allocates 80% of the production of the treatment plant (245,000 GPD x 80%) allows 196,000 GPD that can be produced and distributed to the public. Based upon 2015's usage and commitment of 184,620 gallons, the available allocation for the year 2015 was 11,380 gallons. In this manner, the Water Company can control the growth within the water district.*

Adequacy of water supply in the event of severe drought is a matter of public concern that goes beyond service to those connected to the town water system. The Water Company has planned carefully for emergencies, including drought, and has a well-considered system of primary sources with redundant back-up sources in the event of emergency need. Those on private wells are generally protected in that such wells are typically designed at a location and depth to provide adequate supply even in drought conditions. The Town's regulations include the management of on-site wastewater treatment systems and restrictions on

underground storage tanks. Taken together, these efforts represent a robust in reducing the island's vulnerability in periods of low precipitation, and minimizing its effects on public health and safety, economic activity, and environmental resources.

Block Island's groundwater supplies are irreplaceable, and essential to the town's quality of life and economic wellbeing. The Town of New Shoreham has a long record of action to protect this critical resource. Island groundwater quality is currently excellent. A primary goal of this local comprehensive plan is to maintain the current high water quality for water supply and protection of unique habitat. Low density zoning for much of the island limits both development potential and future risk to water resources, particularly when coupled with other groundwater protection regulations. However, nitrogen levels in many of the public wells are slightly elevated, underscoring the need for continued implementation of the town's comprehensive wastewater management program. Leaks from underground fuel tanks and other hazardous material spills are an ongoing concern, especially in the wellhead protection area encompassing the downtown commercial district. Sewers in much of this area reduce risk of contamination from wastewater discharges provided sewer lines are watertight. However, sewers also reduce groundwater recharge, which can lower groundwater levels and promote salt water intrusion.

## On-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems

As of 2015, there are 1,674 on-site wastewater treatment systems (OWTS's) on the island. Since the adoption, in the late 1990's, of the Wastewater Management Ordinance which regulates the installation of new on-site systems, and separate regulations in the Zoning Ordinance which provide for the maintenance and inspection of existing systems, Block Island has been aggressive in protecting its groundwater from failed and inadequate OWTS's.

Under the required inspection program for all OWTS's, conventional systems are inspected on a three year cycle, while alternative systems and systems within critical resource areas are inspected annually. The Town contracts with an environmental services company which provides and manages a database of all systems on the island. Since 2006, there have been 272 failed systems identified through the inspection program which have been replaced.

The Office of Wastewater Management oversees the inspection program with the objective of protecting the island's sole source aquifer, the Great Salt Pond, Fresh Pond and Sands Pond from any pollution from septic system effluent. It also reviews all new system designs prior to their submittal to the RI Department of Environmental Management for approval. This review ensures that proper design and treatment levels are adhered to for specific areas and soil conditions on the island.

One concern is the prevalence of septic system drain fields consisting of deep concrete chambers, referred to as galley. Such drain fields are considered inadequate for pollution removal, particularly when the bottom of the drain field is located less than three feet from the seasonal high groundwater table. Galley drain fields are specifically prohibited in new or enlarged on-site wastewater systems, however, as of 2014 there are 242 existing systems on the island with galley drain fields. Local regulations requiring the replacement of these systems are being considered.

In addition, following the completion of the first maintenance inspection of all septic systems on the island, some drain fields could not be identified and were classified as “unknown”. This raises concerns that many are not of an approved type, or could be failing. As of 2014, there are 282 systems on the island with unknown drain fields, meaning that their functioning or effectiveness in removing pollutants is not certain.

Among these systems with potentially inadequate or failing drain fields, 117 of them are within critical resource areas including the Great Salt Pond, Fresh Pond and Sands Pond watersheds. Identification and replacement of all failed systems must be done on Block Island, with priority placed on those systems within the critical resource areas.

## Solid Waste Disposal

All of the solid waste generated on Block Island, including recyclables and sludge from the sewage treatment plant, is trucked off-island. With the exception of scrap metals, all waste is disposed of or processed at the state-owned Central Landfill (RIRRC) in Johnston, Rhode Island. Waste is taken to the town-owned transfer station on West Beach Road by residents, individual businesses and private haulers, where it is stored, sorted and compacted in preparation for transport off the island. The cost of processing material on island far exceeds the cost of shipping to RIRRC.

The transfer station is a solid waste facility licensed by the RI Department of Environmental Management with an operating capacity of 25 tons per day. The Town contracts with a private company, currently Block Island Recycling Management, to operate the transfer station and to truck the waste and recyclables to the landfill and elsewhere. The facility itself, is in need of improvements, and specifically identified is the need for a drainage plan. With facility improvements including additional processing capabilities, more recyclables may be able to be removed from the waste stream, specifically construction and demolition debris.

The operation of the transfer station is a “pay as you throw” system. All entities pay a disposal fee for solid waste based on weight. Residential customers do not pay a fee for recyclables (nor for waste oil), although commercial customers do. A description of the management of the transfer station and the volumes of refuse and recyclable materials is contained in the Island Energy Plan. It also includes specific recommendations relating to recycling and the potential use of alternative technologies to dispose of solid waste.

There are separate fee schedules for appliances (white goods) and metals, mattresses and furniture (bulky items), batteries, tires and even automobiles, all of which are disposed of at the Central Landfill or recycled. Construction and demolition waste is disposed of at the same rate as the other solid waste, as is yard waste, the large majority of which consists of brush, which is chipped and stored, and when stockpiles reach a certain volume, shipped to the Central Landfill. In order to reduce transportation costs, it would be advantageous to compost leaf and yard waste on-island.

The Town has a separate services agreement with the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation to dispose of all waste from the island. RIRRC receives a tipping fee of \$32 per ton, the municipal rate, provided Block Island does not exceed its annual municipal cap. As with all communities, the cap is based on

population. Because of the substantial increase in population and activity during the summer tourist and vacation season, RIRRC grants Block Island a seasonal cap adjustment allowing additional tonnage. As of FY 2017, the seasonal cap allotment is 1,079 tons and the Town is also permitted 28 tons of yard debris.

The operator of the transfer station serves as the Town's agent, handling all payments to the RIRRC. As a result, there is no direct cost to the municipality to dispose of the waste generated on the island, with the exception of the waste generated by the Town itself (school, town hall, police and fire stations, town beach, etc).

In order to reduce financial and environmental costs, Town policies and programs should be in place to promote and expand on-island recycling and composting. Reducing the amount of material, such as glass and yard waste, that must be transported to mainland landfills would create a more efficient and environmentally sustainable solid waste management program. The Town should implement public education efforts and programs which encourage and incentivize recycling and composting by residents and businesses. Per State requirements, profit-sharing funds received from RIRRC must be directed towards programs that promote recycling and composting.

Currently, in cooperation with RIRRC, the transfer station holds a hazardous waste collection event every other year. Beyond that, island residents must transport their hazardous waste to RIRRC. Increased opportunities to dispose of hazardous waste properly and safely on island should be explored.

## Solid Waste Recycling and Diversion Rates

The official recycling rate on Block Island, as reported by RIRRC annually, is approximately 20% of total waste (by tonnage). Many communities in Rhode Island have a higher recycling rate, but these rates are a measure of the residential waste only. On Block Island, the recycling rate is measured against all solid waste, including commercial, which makes up approximately 90% of the total.

***New Shoreham Mandatory Recycling Rate (2015): 19.7%***

***State Average Mandatory Recycling Rate (2015): 36.0%***

***New Shoreham Rate of Overall Material Diversion from Landfill (2015): 20.4%***

***State Average Rate of Overall Material Diversion from Landfill (2015): 35.6%***

As the rates above indicate, New Shoreham is below the State average recycling and diversion rates and the state mandated 35% recycling rate and 50% diversion rate. A goal of this plan is to identify steps the Town can take to achieve and exceed those rates.

## Electric Power

Block Island's interest in alternative energy is related not only to the high cost of electricity on the island but

a concern with dependence on fossil fuels and its environmental impact, particularly in this era of rising awareness of climate change. As stated in the Island Energy Plan: “life on the island is infused with a sense of self-reliance, a strong conservation ethic and sensitivity to the environment.” A goal identified in the Island Energy Plan is to establish renewable energy systems at all feasible municipal locations, with specific emphasis on additional solar PV (photovoltaic) systems.

Block Island Power Company (BIPCO) provides virtually all of the electric power needs of the island. However, beginning in the late 1980’s, there was a movement toward use of individual solar panels, both domestic hot water and photovoltaic, as well as individual wind energy conversion systems (WECS). A few households are not connected to the BIPCO distribution system, demonstrating that it is feasible to use a combination of alternative energy sources to live off the grid.

According to BIPCO, as of 2016, there are an estimated 22 residential properties, five non-residential properties and two wind turbines on the island that generate renewable energy and are registered/interconnected with BIPCO. There may also be some additional residences which are off the grid supported by solar and unregistered.

There has been considerable discussion over the years on the need for and viability of additional turbines on the island, including larger capacity turbines. In September 2014, the offshore wind farm proposed by Deepwater Wind, LLC received its federal permits through the U.S Army Corps of Engineers. The first was for five wind turbine generators with a cable connection to Crescent Beach on Block Island, while the second was for the 21 mile cable to the mainland from Crescent Beach to Scarborough State Beach in Narragansett. A cable connection to a National Grid substation in Narragansett will bring the wind farm power to the mainland grid and fiber (high speed internet) to the island. Construction of the offshore wind farm and cable to the mainland was completed in Summer of 2016. It is the first offshore wind farm in the Eastern United States.

In September 2016, New Shoreham voters approved the debt necessary to purchase BIPCO shares. The Town has agreed to purchase a 2/3 majority interest in BIPCO and convert it to a nonprofit organization with professional management and a Board of Directors elected by the ratepayers. An advisory transition team has been appointed by the Town Council to oversee the purchase and transition of the Power Company.

The Island Energy Plan should be updated to reflect the recent and fundamental changes related to electric power (community control of BIPCO and the development of an offshore wind farm).

## Island Free Library

The mission of the Island Free Library is to fulfill the informational, cultural and recreational needs of its patrons by providing a full spectrum of library services. These include:

1. ACCESS TO PRINT, AUDIO, VIDEO AND ELECTRONIC FORMATS;
2. FOSTERING A LIFELONG LOVE OF READING WITH PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS; AND
3. PROMOTING COMPUTER LITERACY THROUGH APPROPRIATE FORMS OF INSTRUCTION.

The library has a full-time director and a staff of four. It offers a number of programs and activities for both children and adults that include arts and crafts, reading programs and book clubs, movie nights, computer instruction and musical events. The library is a strong community resource, encouraging use of its space by other groups and organizations for discussions, meetings and tutoring.

In 2002, the Island Free Library underwent extensive renovations and expansion, doubling its floor area, providing greatly expanded children's and juvenile areas, separate computer rooms for adults and children, and enlarged office space. The structure is currently adequate, however, technology will require continual upgrading, and children's services will also need to be gradually expanded in order to maintain compliance with State mandates.

## Block Island Medical Center and Public Health Services

The Block Island Medical Center is a fully equipped medical facility which offers both daily care and urgent care services. Opened in 1989, it is the sole provider of medical care on the island. It is staffed year-round by a physician, a nurse practitioner and a registered nurse. It also provides facilities for telemedicine and regular visits by several specialists providing dental care, orthodontics, acupuncture, chiropractic care, podiatry, and massage therapy. During the summer the medical staff supervises students and residents from Brown University Alpert Medical School who assist with patient care.

As expected, the Medical Center is busiest in the summer, a reflection of both the high number of daytrippers who may suffer a range of seasonal afflictions, from the minor (sunburns) to the more serious (broken bones or concussions from bicycle and moped accidents) and the medical needs and medical emergencies related to the substantial increase in the resident population during the summer months.

In addition to daily care, the Medical Center offers free blood pressure clinics, flu shot clinics and Lyme testing and referrals, and study groups. When critical care is needed, the medical center and the Block Island Rescue Squad, in conjunction with the ferry and airline companies and a regional helicopter ambulance service, arrange for and provide emergency transport to mainland hospitals.

The Medical Center is maintained and operated by Block Island Health Services, Inc. a private non-profit governed by an elected board which consists of seven from among its paid membership, two from the general public (New Shoreham registered voters or property owners) and an appointee from both Block Island Rescue and the Town Council. In addition to the physician, nurse practitioner and nurse, the staff includes an executive director, an office support specialist / receptionist and financial specialist. While it receives operating funds from the Town, the Medical Center also relies on patient fees, donations, grants and special event revenues.

The medical center property and an adjoining parcel which contains two staff residences, including the Doctor's House and the Davidson House for the Nurse Practitioner, are owned by the Town of New

Shoreham. A major renovation was completed to the Doctor's House in 2016. **There still remains a long term need to provide additional housing for medical center staff, particularly for the summer residents and medical students.**

On Block Island the high per capita incidence of Lyme disease and the less common but often more serious (and harder to diagnose) babesiosis, both tick borne viral diseases, are of special concern. The high incidence is most likely related to the large population of deer, who host part of the life cycle of the deer tick which carries and transmits the diseases to humans. The Town Council appointed an advisory Deer Task Force in 2011 to recommend policies to achieve a reduction in the deer herd.

The Medical Center tracks the number of Lyme disease bacterium and babesiosis cases, and provides this information to the Town and the Deer Task Force on a regular basis. The center diagnosed 73 cases of Lyme in 2013 and 53 cases in 2014. However, the actual number of cases are likely underreported as many vacationers contract the disease on the island but are diagnosed at home, and others may be unaware of their infection.

#### *Mental Health*

A mental health task force referred to as NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Block Island has been a major advocate for increased mental illness support and services on Block Island. The group's goals are to bring more on-island services, to educate the community about mental illness and to support families with mental illness. A member of the Medical Center staff serves on the task force.

Currently services related to mental health on Block Island include: free telemedicine conferences with psychiatrists at Butler Hospital in Providence and Brown University Medical School; public educational programs on various mental conditions and illnesses; response training; and a family support group. As of 2015, the Medical Center provides the space for a part-time case worker who handles referrals for the telemedicine program. This position is hired by NAMI (national) and Butler Hospital and is paid through fundraising efforts by NAMI Block Island. NAMI Block Island is advocating for a full-time staff person with broader functions and a long-term funding source for the position.

The Block Island Medical Center, NAMI Block Island, the school department, the police department, the churches and various island organizations must work together to address public health concerns on Block Island, particularly mental health and substance abuse. It is recommended that the NAMI BI Mental Health Task Force continue to expand its task force to include representation from various organizations that will assist the group in better advocating for the identification of at risk individuals, provision of counseling, and identification of available resources both on and off island. Currently serving on the NAMI BI Task Force are individuals who also represent the School, Library, Medical Center, Wellness Coalition, and Planning Board.

#### *Telemedicine*

The difficulty of travel to places where such specialized health services are available poses an inherent challenge for Block Island residents. In an effort to combat this challenge, there is a strong desire to increase telemedicine opportunities on Block Island. Of particular need, are telemedicine conferences for children.

## Community Center and Services

The Old Harbor Meadow Community Center was built in 2002, and is run by the Block Island Economic Development group (BIED). BIED is a private non-profit whose mission is to improve the economic and social conditions for residents of Block Island, including development of affordable housing. The community center is located in the center of Old Harbor and is part of a development, Old Harbor Meadows, which includes eight ownership and one rental low and moderate income housing units. The community center also houses a private pre-school. The space is available to rent for community activities such as senior activities, art gallery space, or meeting space for town boards and island organizations.

### Early Learning Center

The Early Learning Center is housed in half of the community center. Its location off the street provides easy access to the Island Free Library and other community activities and natural resources. The original center was founded in 1977 and operated as a private nursery school by the Town of New Shoreham. When it moved to the Old Harbor Meadow Community Center building, its services were expanded to include a preschool and child care program. The Early Learning Center is a state licensed teaching facility. It is funded by tuition, support from the Town, and private donations.

### Senior Services

Census figures indicate a large increase in the number of Block Island residents over the age of 55. A breakdown by age of island residents as counted in both the 2000 and the 2010 Census is shown in Table SF-3 New Shoreham Census by Age.

Age	2000	2010
Under 5	63	36
5-19	137	133
20-34	163	126
35-54	353	330
55-74	230	329
75+	64	97
TOTAL	1,010	1,051

The small community and the isolation of living on an island, particularly during the winter, present special challenges for seniors, but efforts are made to meet these challenges. Resources on Block Island available to seniors include:

- \* THE PRIVATELY-OWNED COMMUNITY CENTER, DISCUSSED ABOVE, WHICH PROVIDES A COMFORTABLE SPACE FOR SENIORS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES.
- \* THE MEDICAL CENTER, OPERATED BY BLOCK ISLAND HEALTH SERVICES, INC., WHICH PROVIDES PRIMARY CARE, WITH SUPPORT FROM A WELL-EQUIPPED RESCUE SQUAD. LONG TERM CARE IS AVAILABLE AT NEARBY MAINLAND FACILITIES.
- \* VOLUNTEER AGENCIES AND LOCAL CHURCHES WHICH PROVIDE HOME CARE AND ASSISTED LIVING, AND THE "MARY D. FUND" WHICH PROVIDES FINANCIAL SUPPORT.
- \* THE SENIOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE WHOSE CHARGE IS TO:
  1. ORGANIZE PROGRAMS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS (IN ADDITION TO ALREADY ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS SUCH AS LUNCH, MEDICAL, AND RECREATION PROGRAMS);
  2. IDENTIFY AND PROMOTE SENIOR CITIZEN PROGRAMS AND SERVICES; AND
  3. CONSULT WITH THE ISLAND'S SENIORS AND ADVISE TOWN COUNCIL ABOUT THEIR NEEDS, ISLAND-UNIQUE PROBLEMS, AND SUGGEST SOLUTIONS AND ACTIONS THAT WILL BENEFIT BLOCK ISLAND SENIOR CITIZENS.

A variety of recreation and social programs are currently available, including lunches, and inexpensive off-island trips for shopping and shows. Seniors on the island are typically actively involved in community and civic affairs.

The Senior Advisory Committee has conducted surveys of the senior population on Block Island. Results of a survey from 2014 of over 300 senior residents indicate that 91 live alone and 75 need assistance with travel off-island. Ten percent of the 300 seniors surveyed said they currently receive personal care assistance and 180 seniors indicated that they may require the services of a personal care assistant in the near future.

Providing an option for seniors to age in place is an important policy and will require that the town proactively prepare for and consider the needs of its aging population including assisted living needs.

## Public Safety

Block Island's public safety buildings include the police station, built in 1970, the attached fire barn, built in 1972, and the newer rescue barn, built in 2007. These structures are located on the same parcel on Beach Avenue in the village between the two harbors, but closer to New Harbor. There is a need for a new Fire Station, which was identified as an action in the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Block Island's police, volunteer fire and rescue squad, and the harbor master all provide critical public safety services in an efficient, sensitive and highly skilled manner. Relations with the community at large are strong, not only because of the quality of the services but also because almost all of the staff are year-round island residents. There are no issues of inadequate funding or staffing during the off-season. It is important for the island to maintain this high level of public safety, especially during the tourist season. It is anticipated that at some point in the future the island will need the state police presence to expand beyond just weekends to every day during the peak summer period. Paid Fire and Rescue staff may also be necessary at some time in the future.

### Police

As of 2015, the Block Island Police Department has five full-time officers, including the chief, as well as four full-time and two part-time dispatchers. Eight additional officers, as well as three community service officers (bicycle patrol) and one police dog (K-9) work seasonally to handle the extra demand during the busy tourist season. During the months of July and August there is also a Rhode Island State Trooper presence on the island Friday through Sunday.

The department embraces a community oriented policing style typical of a small geographically isolated community where the officers and residents are well known to each other. The police on Block Island rarely deal with serious crime and even in the summer with the large influx of visitors and vacationers, the major challenge in recent years has been managing crowds of day trippers. Incidences of public intoxication occur particular around the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday. The New Shoreham Police Department maintains a Facebook page and is helped out by the Block Island Times which publishes a page every year in the *Summer Times* to guide visitors: "When You're On The Block". This page summarizes the relevant town ordinances, restrictions and policies, and provides phone numbers and other helpful information.

## Fire and Rescue

The Block Island Volunteer Fire and Rescue protects life and property on the island and provides assistance in medical emergencies. Fire and Rescue is staffed by about 75 volunteers. The rescue squad maintains its status as a volunteer organization with the exception of a twelve-week period in the summer when people are paid to be on call in order to avoid any serious lapse in caring for the community and its visitors. Charges are limited to costs for transport to the mainland. The department also conducts fire safety awareness and training in CPR, First Aid and other courses.

## Harbors

The Harbors Department, staffed by a harbor master and administrative assistant, manages Block Island's two harbor areas, Old Harbor and New Harbor (The Great Salt Pond). Responsibilities include issuing mooring permits, managing the town rental moorings and monitoring dockages and overnight anchorages in the Great Salt Pond. The department also issues shell fishing licenses. During the summer the Harbors Department hires over 20 seasonal employees who work between Old Harbor and New Harbor (mostly New Harbor) running the pump-out boats, collecting mooring fees, working in the department office in New Harbor (Boat Basin) and as shellfish wardens.

The Harbors Department prepares an annual "Harbors Guide" to guide visitors arriving by boat. It addresses pump-outs, the mandated landing fee (fifty cents) and the location of showers and other amenities; and it summarizes the harbor ordinances, describes the allowable anchorage areas, and provides phone numbers and other helpful information. A description of the town harbors and infrastructure is also included in a 2013 report "Block Island Harbors Sea Level Rise and Adaptation Study." Improved harbor facilities, including a Welcome Center, have been identified as a need in order to maintain and attract visitors to the island arriving and staying overnight on personal watercraft in New Harbor.

## Municipal Governance

### Town Hall

The Town Hall was rebuilt and expanded in 2007. It houses all municipal departments, with the exception of public safety and public works, and provides the official meeting space for the Town Council and all other boards, commissions and committees. A listing of all Town of New Shoreham departments and services is contained in Appendix SF-2.

### Boards and Commissions

A listing of all town of New Shoreham sponsored or affiliated boards, commission and committees is contained in Appendix SF-3.

### Capital Improvement Program

As required by charter, The Town has a capital improvement program for long term facility needs. In 2014, the Planning Board formed a subcommittee, the Large Capital Asset Subcommittee (LCAS), to work on a ten to fifteen year strategy for all town properties and buildings. The committee was tasked with:

- \* COMPILE A LIST OF ASSETS AND FIELD EVALUATE;
- \* IDENTIFY THE CURRENT AND POTENTIAL LONG TERM USE OF EACH PROPERTY;
- \* IDENTIFY MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR/REHABILITATION NEEDS;
- \* IDENTIFY SOLUTIONS AND CONSIDER FUNDING SOURCES; AND
- \* MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE TOWN COUNCIL AND TOWN MANAGER

These tasks should include public outreach and meetings, and culminate in the preparation of a summary report with both short and long term recommendations and solutions. As a result of the LCAS work, New Shoreham created a new town position effective July 2015, a Facilities Manager, to oversee, maintain and plan for the use of and improvements to town buildings. The establishment of the Facilities Manager is the first step towards the long term goal of proactively managing town facility maintenance needs.

There has been increasing interest in having a range of community facilities and gathering spaces. Specifically, the following facility needs have been identified:

1. A COMMUNITY MEETING SPACE WHICH WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR LARGER ASSEMBLIES AND ACTIVITIES.
2. A DEDICATED SPACE FOR SENIOR CITIZENS TO SOCIALIZE.
3. A "TEEN CENTER" FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO GATHER AFTER SCHOOL AND ON EVENINGS AND WEEKENDS.
4. A FITNESS CENTER
5. AN INDOOR POOL FOR INSTRUCTION, RECREATION AND THERAPEUTIC USE DURING OFF-SEASON MONTHS.

In general, the available programming is as important as, or more important than, developing a new physical space. The community has many facilities available for community activities, both public and private.

Expanded programming can often be achieved through creative use of existing facilities, especially during the shoulder and off-tourist seasons.

## HOUSING FOR MUNICIPAL STAFFING

**MULTIPLE TOWN SERVICES AND DEPARTMENTS INCLUDING POLICE, HARBORS, AND THE SCHOOL, HAVE IDENTIFIED ATTAINABLE YEAR-ROUND AND SEASONAL HOUSING AS A SUBSTANTIAL CHALLENGE IN THE HIRING AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL.** The Thomas House,

owned by the Town, has been pivotal in providing a limited amount of temporary housing for government functions. The second town-owned facility that currently provides temporary / seasonal housing for municipal employees is the Coast Guard Station. However, the structure is in need of significant repair and a more appropriate long-term use for the waterfront property is being explored. A substantial number of seasonal employees, including but not limited to: State Police; local police; community service officers; clam wardens; harbor personnel; life guards; and medical center staff are required to fulfill a variety of municipal functions during the peak tourism season. The Town also is in need of attainable rental housing for longer term year-round personnel such as teachers. Given the private housing market is not providing for these housing needs, the Town must consider the creation of additional municipally-owned housing units for its staffing needs. Currently, the Town does incur housing costs related to specific municipal positions and government functions, as well as, overnight accommodations for town consultants. An analysis should be conducted to determine costs currently incurred and estimated costs related to providing town-owned and operated housing for municipal staffing needs. See Housing Chapter for additional information and discussion.

## Stormwater Management

Block Island has a limited amount of stormwater infrastructure. Therefore, maintenance needs, including the annual cleaning of catch basins, and associated costs are minimal and are currently covered by the town's budget. The town is currently exploring stormwater management measures to ensure the island's water quality, particularly The Great Salt Pond and drinking water supplies, remain of high quality. It is anticipated the Town will take steps in the short-term to increase public education on the importance of stormwater management and to complete a management plan for the Great Salt Pond watershed.

## Sustainable Development and Fiscal Responsibility

*The needs and desires for high quality public services and facilities must be balanced with the needs and desires for both environmental and fiscal sustainability.*

The provision of community services and facilities must be done in a manner that reflects the capability of both community resources and the island environment to sustain growth and demand. On the one hand, Block Island must prepare for the long term impacts of "build-out" and the resulting demand for services, a

function of both total population and the socioeconomic profile of that population. On the other hand, the provision of services and facilities should be done in a manner that supports land use goals, natural resource protection and the long-term ability of the town to fiscally maintain increased services and facilities. For example, the water and sewer districts should be designed to serve the goal of a compact village center but not to encourage growth beyond it.

Sustainable development is linked with almost every other major goal of this comprehensive plan – compact development in the village and harbor areas and low density residential in the countryside; protection of valuable open space, habitat areas and the sole source aquifer; reduced energy consumption and transportation-related congestion; and a reliance on sustainable and manageable economic development. Block Island must consider the allocation of its services in a way that meets, or does not detract from, these goals.

The potential for providing additional or enhanced services as well as reducing costs through regional approaches deserves exploration. Education, tourism, and utilities all have apparent potential as activities or services that could be done in conjunction with other communities. For example, the Island Energy Plan includes a recommendation that the Town pursue a regional composting facility with other Washington County communities. However, Block Island's geographic isolation make such arrangements challenging, particularly coming up with an equitable way of determining expenses and benefits.

## Goals, Policies & Implementation Actions

### Goal SFI: Meet current needs and plan for anticipated future needs of residents for municipal services and facilities

<u>POLICY</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>	<u>TIMEFRAME</u>
SFI.A. Continue to provide a quality K-12 education which utilizes the latest educational tools and technology	SFI.A.1. Make reliable high-speed internet available to the Block Island School and library in order to maintain and expand its educational programming	School; Information Technology	Short-term
	SFI.A.2. Undertake efforts to maintain and improve the long term viability of the public school system in response to reduced enrollment, including a plan to expand education on the island	School	Ongoing
SFI.B. Proactively plan for the long term use and maintenance of all town owned buildings and properties	SFI.B.1. Include costs of necessary and significant improvements to town facilities in the capital budget	Facilities Manager; Planning Board; Finance; Town Manager; Town Council	Ongoing
	SFI.B.2. Explore reuse and rehabilitation of existing town structures for identified community needs	Facilities Manager; Town Manager; Planning Board	Short-term
SFI.C. Support community health needs including mental health	SFI.C.1. Expand access to mental health treatment and substance abuse counseling	Block Island Medical Center; NAMI Block Island; Town Council	Ongoing
	SFI.C.2. Increase telemedicine opportunities	Block Island Medical Center; Information Technology	Short-term
	SFI.C.3. Assist in identifying a long-term funding source for a mental health case worker	NAMI Block Island; Town Council	Short-term
	SFI.C.4. Ensure town departments are represented and contribute to NAMI BI task force	NAMI Block Island; Town Council	Short-term
SFI.D. Provide opportunities for aging in place and support services for seniors	SFI.D.1. Evaluate current and anticipated future need for additional senior support services and staff including a social worker	Senior Coordinator; Senior Committee; Town Council	Medium-term
	SFI.D.2. Promote and permit the development of appropriately located assisted living housing and	Senior Committee; Town Council	Long-term

	transportation services		
SF1.E. Make health and safety of residents and visitors of the highest priority	SF1.E.1. Communicate public safety needs to the State including a potential need for additional State Police presence during summer months	Police; Town Manager	Short-term; Ongoing
	SF1.E.2. Evaluate need for paid fire or rescue personnel	Town Manager; Town Council; Fire	Medium-term
SF1.F. Ensure municipal staffing needs are not compromised by lack of attainable housing	SF1.F.1. Conduct a cost analysis comparing average annual costs associated with housing town staff and consultants and costs associated with the development and ownership of municipal housing for staff.	Town Manager; Facilities Manager	Short-term

**Goal SF2: Ensure environmental and fiscal sustainability in the provision of municipal services and facilities**

<u>POLICY</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>	<u>TIMEFRAME</u>
SF2.A. Promote natural resource conservation, particularly among island visitors	SF2.A.1. Work with Tourism Council, Chamber of Commerce and other partners to promote water conservation, energy conservation and solid waste reduction among tourism industry and visitors	Conservation Commission	Ongoing
SF2.B. Continually explore ways to reduce the costs of delivering services and operating facilities without compromising quality	SF2.B.1. Utilize on-site renewable sources of energy where feasible	Facilities Manager	Ongoing
	SF2.B.2. Explore regional provision of services opportunities	Town Manager; Town Council	Ongoing
	SF2.B.3. Update Island Energy plan to reflect recent BIPCO purchase and off-shore wind farm.	Planning Board	Short-term
SF2.C. Maintain tourism economy by providing quality facilities and amenities for visitors	SF2.C.1. Implement plans to provide improved facilities including a welcome center at New Harbor for visitors arriving by personal watercraft	Harbors; Town Council; Town Manager	Long-term
SF2.D. Meet or exceed the state's mandated 35% recycling rate and 50% diversion rates for solid waste	SF2.D.1. Conduct a waste audit of municipal facilities	Town Manager	Short-term
	SF2.D.2. Launch composting program and public education campaign	Conservation Commission; Town Council	Short-term
	SF2.D.3. Provide incentives to residents to compost and increase recycling efforts	Conservation Commission; Town Council	Ongoing
	SF2.D.4. Make necessary upgrades to the transfer station including drainage improvements and improved processing capabilities	Town Council; Town Manager; Facilities Manager	Long-term
SF2.E. Increase water quality protection efforts including stormwater management	SF2.E.1. Educate the public on the problems associated with impaired stormwater quality, the conditions which contribute to impaired water quality, and the actions which can be taken by the community both individually and as a whole to improve the quality of stormwater runoff	Planning Board; Building, Zoning, Land Use, & Planning; Public Works; Town Council	Short-term; Ongoing

	SF2.E.2. Complete a watershed management plan	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Planning Board; Public Works; Town Council	Medium-term
	SF2.E.3. Review and strengthen current regulations regarding LID (low impact development) (NR2.A.3.)	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Planning Board; Town Council	Medium-term
	SF2.E.4. Continue to identify inadequately functioning or failed systems through an inspection and monitoring program, first targeting critical resource areas	OWTS Inspector	Ongoing
	SF2.E.5. Draft regulations which will require phase out of septic systems which do not meet current standards for on-site treatment and explore funding opportunities to assist homeowners	OWTS Inspector; Planning Board; Town Council	Short-term

**Timeframes:** Short-term (1-3 years); Medium-term (4-6 years); Long-term (7-10 years)

## APPENDIX SF-1

**NEW SHOREHAM SEWAGE COLLECTION AND PUMPING SYSTEM**

The New Shoreham Water Pollution Control Facility's collection system consists of 3.5 miles of lateral and intercepting sewer pipelines and five (5) pump stations. The general layout of the collection system is presented in Figure 6-1.

The lateral system consists of 14,500 feet of 8-inch diameter sewer pipes, while the intercepting lines consist of 3,700 feet of 10-inch through 15-inch diameter sewer pipes. The pressure system consists of 910 feet of 4-inch diameter sewer pipes.

**Interceptors**Ocean Avenue Interceptor West

The Ocean Avenue Interceptor West begins at Ocean Avenue Pump Station No. 2 and terminates at the intersection of West Side Road and Ocean Avenue. The line consists of 750 feet of 10-inch sewer pipes. It serves BIED Housing ("West Side Twenty"), Champlin's Marina, the Block Island Boat Basin, Payne's Dock and two hotels; the service area is principally composed of business properties.

Ocean Avenue Interceptor East

The Ocean Avenue Interceptor East starts at Ocean Avenue Pump Station No. 1 and terminates at the intersection of Ocean Avenue and Beach Avenue. The line consists of 2,600 feet of 12-inch diameter and 500 feet of 10-inch diameter sewer pipes. The upstream contributor is the Ocean Avenue Pump Station No. 2, and the incremental contributors are both commercial and residential.

High Street Connector

The High Street Connector is located 200 feet west of Water Street. It originates on High Street 200 feet west of Water Street and follows a right-of-way in a northerly direction to Chapel Street, paralleling Water Street. The line is 560 feet long. The service area encompasses High Street and Spring Street and consists of both commercial establishments and residential properties.

Chapel Street Interceptor

The Chapel Street Interceptor serves the majority of the sewer area. The interceptor starts at the intersection of Chapel Street and Water Street and proceeds in a westerly direction along Chapel Street to its point of termination at the intersection of Old Town Road and Chapel Street. The interceptor is 1,100 feet long and consists of 400 feet of 10-inch sewer pipes and 700 feet of 12-inch diameter sewer pipes. The upstream contributors are both commercial and residential.

Water Street Interceptor

The Water Street Interceptor serves the entire collection system. The interceptor consists of 800 feet of 15-inch diameter sewer pipes that commences at the Old Harbor Pump Station and proceeds in a westerly direction in a right-of-way to Water Street, then northerly to its point of termination at the intersection of Water Street and Chapel Street.

**Pump Stations**Champlin's Marina Pump Station

The Champlin's Marina Pump Station is located at Champlin's Marina serving 240 boat slips, a restaurant, theater and apartments. The pump station is a below-ground lift station with a wetwell located in the lower level, and a pump chamber located in the upper level.

Block Island Boat Basin Pump Station

The Block Island Boat Basin Pump Station is located at the Block Island Boat Basin serving 70 boat slips, a restaurant and a grocery store. The pump station is a below-ground lift station with a lower level serving as the wetwell, and an upper level for pump motors and controls.

Ocean Avenue Pump Station No. 1

Ocean Avenue Pump Station No. 1 is located on Ocean Avenue, 600 feet east of Connecticut Avenue. The pump station is a below-ground lift station serving an area from Harbor Pond to Champlin's Marina. The station feeds a force main along Ocean Avenue in an easterly direction to Old Town Road, then southerly along Old Town Road to the Chapel Street Interceptor.

Ocean Avenue Pump Station No. 2

The Ocean Avenue Pump Station No. 2 services Champlin's Marina, the Block Island Boat Basin Pump Station and the commercial and residential establishments along West Side Road and Ocean Avenue. The pump station is a below-ground lift station feeding a force main along Ocean Avenue to the Ocean Avenue East Interceptor at Beach Avenue and Ocean Avenue.

Old Harbor Pump Station

The Old Harbor Pump Station is located on Water Street, adjacent to the New Shoreham Wastewater Treatment Facility. This is the main pump station for the collection system conveying all the wastewater flows via a 6-inch force main to the treatment facility. The pump station is an above-ground cast-in-place pump station consisting of a pump chamber and a wetwell chamber with a common concrete wall.

APPENDIX SF-2

**TOWN OF NEW SHOREHAM**  
**DEPARTMENTS AND SERVICES**

**BUILDING, ZONING, LAND USE AND PLANNING** - Building permits and inspections, land development

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**FINANCE** - Financial accounting and management, payroll and benefits, water and sewer utility billing, tax assessment and collection

---

**FIRE AND RESCUE** (volunteer)

---

**HARBORS** - Management of the Town's two harbor areas Old Harbor and New Harbor (Great Salt Pond), including shellfish licensing and mooring field management

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**GIS / IT** - Enterprise-wide development and management of the Town's Geographic Information System and information technology assets

---

**LIBRARY** – Island Free Library

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**POLICE DEPARTMENT**

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**PUBLIC WORKS** - Responsible for town facilities and roads

---

**RECREATION** - Year-round recreational programs, facilities and services for all ages in the community

---

**TAX ASSESSMENT** - Assessment of real estate, tangible property and motor vehicles, administration of personal exemptions, and production of the Town's annual tax rolls

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**TAX COLLECTIONS** - Collection of property taxes and related fees

---

**TOWN CLERK** - Town Council actions, ordinances, licenses, land evidence recording, marriage licenses, birth, death and marriage records, voter registration, public records, probate court, elections and town meetings

---

**WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT** - On-site Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) inspection and maintenance, public awareness

APPENDIX SF-3

**TOWN OF NEW SHOREHAM**

**BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES**

**BLOCK ISLAND HOUSING BOARD** - Provide affordable housing opportunities for year round residents

---

**BLOCK ISLAND LAND TRUST** - Preservation of open space for conservation, recreation, aquifer protection and agricultural uses

---

**BOARD OF ASSESSMENT REVIEW** - Review property assessment appeals

---

**BOARD OF ASSESSORS** - Assessment of real property, personal property and motor vehicle taxes

---

**BOARD OF CANVASSERS** - Voter registration and elections

---

**COMMISSION ON MOTOR VEHICLES FOR HIRE** - Set taxi rates and regulations

---

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION** - Advisory board addressing environmental issues and policies

---

**DEER TASK FORCE** - Recommend ways to reduce deer population to lower incidence of Lyme disease and babesiosis

---

**ELECTRIC UTILITY TASK GROUP** - Evaluate and pursue public ownership of the power source on the island

---

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE** - Plan for and respond to emergency situations

---

**HARBORS COMMITTEE** - Oversee the marine operations of Old and New Harbors

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**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION** - Review and approve developments within the local Historic District

---

**JUVENILE HEARING REVIEW BOARD** - Hear juvenile court cases

---

**LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES** - Oversee operations of the Island Free Library

---

**LARGE CAPITAL ASSET COMMITTEE** - Develop long-term strategy for use and maintenance of all town buildings and properties (Planning Board subcommittee)

---

**NEW SHOREHAM TOURISM COUNCIL** - Promote tourism and enhance its experience on Block Island

---

**NORTH LIGHT COMMISSION** - Oversee the operations and maintenance of the town owned North Lighthouse

---

**OLD HARBOR TASK FORCE** - Address planning issues in the Old Harbor area, and plan for public improvements

---

**PLANNING BOARD** - Review and approve all subdivisions and land development projects, undertake comprehensive planning

---

**RECREATION BOARD** - Oversee the programs and facilities of the Recreation Department

---

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE** - Oversee the School Department, develop annual budget for the Block Island school system

---

**SENIOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE** - Identify and promote senior activities

---

**SEWER DISTRICT COMMISSION** - Oversee management of the public sewage collection and treatment system, recommend sewer rates

---

**SHELLFISH COMMISSION** - Regulation and enforcement of commercial and private shellfishing in the Great Salt Pond

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**WATER DISTRICT COMMISSION** - Oversee management of the public water distribution and treatment system, recommend water rates

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**ZONING BOARD OF REVIEW** - Hear zoning applications, and appeals from decisions of the Building Official, Planning Board and Historic District Commission

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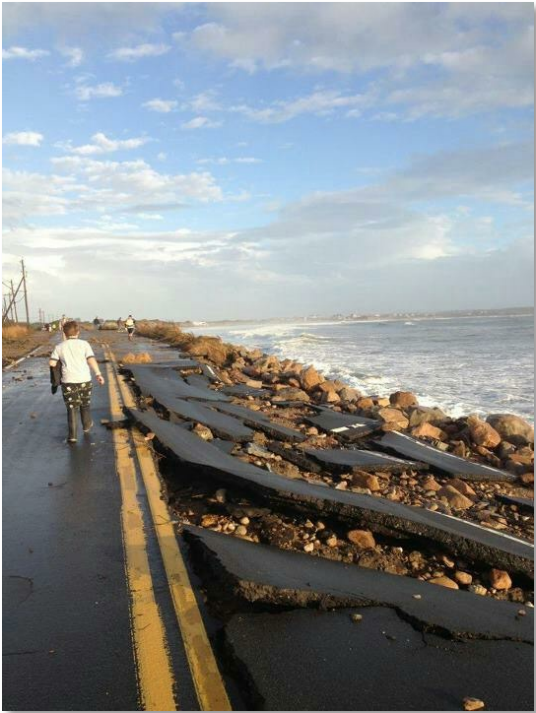
**BLOCK ISLAND PREVENTION TASK FORCE** - Community based drug and alcohol abuse prevention task force (state funded)

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**BLOCK ISLAND EARLY LEARNING CENTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS** - Oversee operations of the Block Island Early Learning Center

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**BLOCK ISLAND HEALTH SERVICES BOARD OF DIRECTORS** - Oversee operations of the Block Island Medical Center



# 10. NATURAL HAZARDS & CLIMATE CHANGE

New Shoreham 2016 Comprehensive Plan

## VISION

**New Shoreham will reduce the risk to people and property from natural hazards and climate change. Increased awareness of the threats, hazards and vulnerabilities will assist the town and its residents in preparedness efforts, implementing mitigation actions and long-term planning.**

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# NATURAL HAZARDS & CLIMATE CHANGE

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## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Block Island Harbors Sea Level Rise Adaptation Study. TOWN OF NEW SHOREHAM, RI.  
AUGUST 1, 2013.

Town of New Shoreham Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2016 (Under RIEMA Review)

## OVERVIEW

Due to its geographical location, Block Island is vulnerable to hurricanes, coastal storms, storm surge and severe winter weather. Increasing vulnerability is the island's dependence on privately owned ferry and airline companies for transportation access to and from the mainland. Residents and the Town must prepare for future coastal storms on the scale of a Super Storm Sandy or greater, which caused significant damage to roads, structures and marine facilities due to wave action, storm induced erosion and flooding. The Town and residents must also plan for the long term impacts that a projected rising sea level will have on the island's road network, two harbors and the mainland harbor in Galilee.

The Natural Hazards & Climate Change element identifies the most likely and significant natural hazards that could affect Block Island, assesses the island's vulnerabilities to these hazards, and establishes goals, policies and actions designed to mitigate the risks from natural hazards and sea level rise.

This section also includes a number of maps which illustrate the island's vulnerable areas to the impacts of storms and climate change. For example, Map NHC 1 displays the flood hazard areas on Block Island, along with conserved lands. The map identifies significant public structures located within the flood zones including the beach pavilion, harbormaster's shack, North Light and the Coastguard Station.

To minimize future losses, communities need a clear understanding of how they are vulnerable to natural hazards and of strategies for increasing their resilience. The prospect of natural disasters including hurricanes, Nor-easters or severe winter storms impacting Block Island and accelerating natural shoreline erosion must be factored into the Town's planning process.

## Priority Natural Hazards Profiles and Potential Impacts

Block Island is most susceptible to coastal storms, hurricanes, severe winter weather and climate change. Storm surge from seasonal storms including hurricanes, Nor'easters and severe winter storms often results in coastal flooding and erosion. Impacts from high winds, heavy rains, ice, and lightning associated with a variety of seasonal storms also pose significant threats to Block Island.

### *Hurricanes*

A hurricane is a tropical cyclone with rotating winds of at least 74 mph and is usually accompanied by rain, thunder and lightning. These seasonal storms are spawned by low-pressure depressions moving over warm, tropical waters and typically occur over the Atlantic Ocean between June and October. Strong winds and heavy rainfall from hurricanes can pose a threat to life and property. When coupled with normal tides, storm surge can raise the mean water level substantially and also greatly contribute to coastal erosion.

New Shoreham's island location makes it particularly susceptible to hurricane related hazards and the island's small size means that the majority of properties and public infrastructure are vulnerable to hurricane impacts to some degree.

*NHC Map 2 Hurricane Inundation* illustrates that an estimated 117 structures are located within areas inundated by water as a result of a Category 4 hurricane surge and a number of public facilities could be at risk of flooding including the power company and state highway garage.

### *Severe Winter Storms*

Another regular natural hazard likely to occur at least annually on Block Island are severe winter storms. Block Island, similar to other coastal areas and islands, falls in the transitional precipitation zone increasing its vulnerability to ice and heavy snow conditions. Due in part to their large size, slow speed and little advance notice, Nor'easters and severe winter storms can at times be more destructive than hurricanes. Typically occurring between November and March, Nor'easters and severe winter weather can bring high winds, heavy prolonged precipitation and long periods of high surf. Blizzard conditions including sustained winds and ice could result in significant loss of power and damage to property. High winds associated with severe winter weather also have the potential to produce significant storm surge leading to the inundation of roadways and flooding of structures.

### *Storm Surge and Flooding*

Storm surge is the abnormal rise in water level caused by the wind and pressure forces of a hurricane, Nor'easter or severe winter weather. Storm surge can result in coastal erosion and minor flooding of low-lying areas nearby the Harbor areas, as well as causing island roads to be blocked or breached by water.

Storm surge most often occurs in and around Block Island's two harbors and impacts the island's roadway system that connects Old Harbor and New Harbor and commercial establishments with the outlying residential areas. The island's critical public safety facilities are vulnerable to the impacts of flooding. The

police station, fire station and rescue barn are all located on the same site accessed by roads (Ocean and Beach Avenues) subject to flooding.

The narrow northern neck of the island, Corn Neck Road, is especially vulnerable to being cut off from the rest of the island. This road serves as an evacuation route and is the only connection many homes on the northern end of the island have to the rest of the island. Recurring damage has occurred to Corn Neck Road as a result of storm surge impacts. During Super Storm Sandy in 2012, Corn Neck Road was significantly damaged for a length of 1,800 feet, isolating one business, restricting access to a number of residences and requiring travelers along the remainder of Corn Neck Road to use an alternate route (Ocean and Beach Avenues).

### *Climate Change and Sea Level Rise*

Climate change and sea level rise are not issues to be addressed in the distant future but something already present and recordable, requiring Block Island to take action now to mitigate potential impacts. The main issues surrounding climate change are rising global temperatures, and the resulting increase in weather extremes such as more frequent floods, droughts and rising sea levels. Climate change and sea level rise also has the potential for displacement of coastal populations and threatened infrastructure.

According to the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), potential effects of a rise in sea level include:

- INCREASED EXTENT OF FLOOD DAMAGE AND GREATER VULNERABILITY TO STORM SURGES IN LOWER ELEVATIONS;
- GREATER RISK TO INFRASTRUCTURE—ROADS, SEWERS, STORMWATER FACILITIES, UTILITIES—IN AREAS MORE PRONE TO FLOODING;
- SALTWATER INTRUSION INTO AQUIFERS CONTAMINATING WATER SUPPLIES;
- HIGHER WATER TABLES RESULTING IN SUBSURFACE ISSUES SUCH AS WET BASEMENTS;
- HIGHER WATER TABLES POTENTIALLY AFFECTING LOW LYING ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE SHORELINE, ESPECIALLY WITHIN GREAT SALT POND
- A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN INCIDENCE OF EXTREME HIGH TIDE LEVELS;
- MORE COASTAL LANDS BECOMING SUSCEPTIBLE TO EROSION DUE TO INCREASED INTENSITY AND FREQUENCY OF STORMS;
- A NET LOSS OF COASTAL MARSHES THAT BECOME INUNDATED AT A GREATER RATE, RESULTING IN A LOSS OF SALT MARSH VEGETATION AND AN ALTERATION OF HABITAT TYPES.

Block Island is one of the most susceptible communities in the State to impacts from projected rises in sea level. Recent NOAA scenarios, which CRMC adopted in 2016 for planning purposes (CRMP Section 145), project 2 meters (6.6 feet) of sea level rise by 2100. One foot of sea level rise is expected by 2035. In 2013, the Town conducted a sea level rise adaptation study (Appendix D) which identified potential strategies the town can implement to prepare for and mitigate potential impacts of sea level rise. Inundation mapping

conducted as part of the study shows land, docks, and roadways surrounding the Great Salt Pond as being either inundated by sea level rise or more susceptible to flooding during extreme storm conditions as a result of sea level rise.

As a result of sea level rise, both hurricanes and severe winter storms will be more damaging to property on Block Island, and coastal flooding effects will be felt farther inland. For instance, storm surge heights will increase as sea level rises, resulting in many more properties being damaged or destroyed during a storm. Residential and commercial structures, roads, and bridges will be more prone to flooding. See *Map NHC 3 Sea Level Rise* which identifies the segments of roadways that could be inundated in the future as a result of sea level rise. The GIS analysis indicates that portions of Corn Neck Road (5 sections), Ocean Avenue (5 sections) and Beach Avenue (2 sections) are projected to be inundated as a result of 3 to 5 feet of sea level rise.

Sea level rise will also have an impact on saltwater marshes. See Map NHC4 SLAMM (Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model) for a visual of the potential impact on saltwater marshes at the 1-foot, 3-foot, and 5-foot sea level rise scenarios. SLAMM maps are available statewide at [http://www.crmc.ri.gov/maps/maps\\_slamm.html](http://www.crmc.ri.gov/maps/maps_slamm.html). For additional discussion see the Natural Resources Chapter.

## Mitigation Activities

*The Town is currently working on implementing a number of mitigation projects that will protect the island and its environment from the impacts of natural hazards and climate change.*

### **Erosion Mitigation Project at Closed Landfill**

Recent storms have eroded the beach and caused the closed landfill to be uncovered. This erosion has resulted in debris on the beach and entering the ocean. This issue, if not corrected, has the potential to cause significant negative impacts on surrounding natural resources. Design work has been completed to construct a revetment from the shoreline to minimize ongoing erosion. The Town has received a CDBG-DR grant that will cover a portion of the construction costs. Construction is expected to be completed in 2017.

### **Dune Protection**

Dunes provide an important natural barrier to the destructive forces of wind and waves and are our first line of defense against coastal storms and beach erosion. They absorb the impact of storm surge and high waves, preventing or delaying flooding of inland areas and damage to island structures. As such, dune restoration efforts are an important priority to the Town. Grasses are planted by the Town and its partners regularly and signs have been installed to remind people to remain off the dunes. The Town is also exploring the use of snow fencing to capture sand and allow dunes to rebuild in a cost-effective and sustainable manner.

Corn Neck Road is used by many daytrippers to access the Town Beach by foot from Old Harbor. In an effort to protect this important dune system, the Town is investigating options to install walkovers and stairs for the public to access the island's most heavily visited beach without compromising the dune grasses and other vegetation which stabilize the dunes.

## Goals, Policies & Implementation Actions

### GOAL NHCI: Reduce current and future risk of natural hazards and sea level rise to the built and natural environment

POLICY	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIMEFRAME
NHCI.A. Plan for effects of projected sea level rise and flooding in the site selection and planning of parks, buildings and other public investments and direct improvements / town investments away from at risk areas	NHCI.A.1. Complete an assessment of the potential impacts to public structures and infrastructure resulting from projected sea-level rise	GIS; Engineering	Medium-term
	NHCI.A.2. Include in the capital improvement program projects required to mitigate threats to infrastructure and properties	Planning Board; Town Manager; Town Council; Facilities Manager	Ongoing
	NHCI.A.3. Evaluate current zoning and land use regulations related to future impacts from climate change and sea level rise	Planning Board	Medium-term
	NHCI.A.4. Conduct a planning study of Corn Neck Road to identify alternatives to mitigate future impacts from storms and climate change (T1.H.2.)	Building, Zoning, Land use & Planning; Planning Board; Town Manager; Town Council	Short-term
NHCI.B. Reduce the impact of flooding in vulnerable areas	NHCI.B.1. Work with the land trust and other stakeholder to identify and protect from development low-lying land vulnerable to impacts from flooding and sea level rise and areas adjacent to coastal wetlands susceptible to increased inundation due to sea level rise	Town Council; Town Manager; Land Trust; Planning Board; GIS; Conservation Commission	Ongoing
	NHCI.B.2. Install public walkover structures at the Town Beach to discourage traversing the fragile dunes (NR3.B.3.)	Facilities Manager; Town Manager; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning	Short-term
	NHCI.B.3. Implement green infrastructure stormwater management strategies to enhance infiltration and increase retention on town properties and road right-of-ways	Engineering, Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Planning Board	Long-term

	NHC.I.B.4. Evaluate the potential impacts of sea-level rise on public sewer infrastructure and potential inundation of onsite wastewater treatment systems	Engineering; Planning; Sewer Department	Medium-term
	NHC.I.B.5. Investigate options to mitigate flooding along Beach and Ocean Avenues and its impacts on public safety buildings and services	Engineering; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Planning Board	Medium-term
NHCI.C. Maintain and implement a FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plan	NHCI.C.1. Apply for funding to assist in implementing projects identified in the town's Hazard Mitigation Plan	Town Manager; Engineering; Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning	Ongoing
	NHCI.C.2. Establish a committee responsible for reviewing progress on implementation of the Hazard Mitigation Plan and activities resulting in CRS credit and other mitigation projects related to potential impacts of sea level rise	Town Council	Medium-term
NHCI.D. Reduce the risk and/or length of power outages on the island	NHCI.D.1. Assess the feasibility of burying power lines particularly in scenic and high risk areas and when road construction is planned	Town Manager	Medium-term; Ongoing

**GOAL NHC2: Minimize risk to the public due to natural hazards through municipal preparedness and response**

<u>POLICY</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>	<u>TIMEFRAME</u>
NHC2.A. Improve the community’s awareness of threats through education and communication	NHC2.A.1. Establish a process to directly contact special populations such as those who are particularly vulnerable due to location, age or infirmity, to ensure their understanding of procedures prior to and following a storm event	Emergency Management; Public Safety; Medical Center; Information Technology; GIS	Short-term
	NHC2.A.2. Collaborate with agencies monitoring the impacts of climate change with efforts such as documenting high tide events, storm flooding impacts, bluff erosion and impacts on species	Emergency Management, Public Safety; Conservation Commission	Ongoing
NHC2.B. Participate in the Community Rating System and achieve reduced flood insurance costs to local property owners	NHC2.B.1. Undertake actions that qualify the town for advanced FEMA CRS scoring	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning; Town Manager	Short-term; Medium-term; Long-term; Ongoing

**Timeframes:** Short-term (1-3 years); Medium-term (4-6 years); Long-term (7-10 years)



## II. LAND USE

New Shoreham 2016 Comprehensive Plan

### VISION

The Town of New Shoreham will ensure that Block Island remains a desirable place to live by promoting sound growth and quality development which preserves and protects the natural environment, rural landscapes, cultural sites, and scenic beaches. Block Island's balance of land uses will support local sustainability and the economic needs of its residents.

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# LAND USE

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## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Land Use 2025: Rhode Island State Land Use Policies and Plan, State Guide Plan Element 121, Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Planning, 2006.

### OVERVIEW

Land use planning is necessary to provide for the protection, appropriate development, use and management of our land and natural resources. Land is a precious and limited resource, particularly on Block Island, and thoughtful consideration must be given to its use. This element presents a description of Block Island's current land use regulations, demographic trends, and includes a build out analysis.

The Land Use Element and Future Land Use Map is a culmination of the goals and policies discussed in previous chapters of this Comprehensive Plan. Recommended future land uses, as illustrated through the Future Land Use Plan, were determined based upon the island's historic development pattern, the natural characteristics of the land, the transportation network, the availability of services and facilities, and the need to protect water quality, environmental quality, and the scenic quality of the Block Island.

## Demographics

Block Island's historical population trends are aligned with its economic activities. From its beginnings as a (non-native) settlement in the late 1700's and early 1800's when the year round residents numbered between 600 and 700 people, who subsisted mainly on farming, it grew to a bustling island supporting anywhere from 1,000 to 1,300 throughout the mid to late 1800's and well into the twentieth century, when the economy shifted to resort activity and fishing. During and following the Great Depression and the Hurricane of 1938, which forced the fishing fleet back to the mainland, the population began dropping significantly, a trend that continued after World War II. By 1960, only 486 people were counted, the lowest recorded Census for the island. After remaining stable for a few decades, the population began climbing, reaching over a thousand people again by 2000. This recent growth is a function of the island's desirability as a retirement and second home community, an offshoot of its tremendous popularity as a vacation location. The US Census counts for the island from 1910 to 2010 are contained in Table LU-1.

Year	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Population	1,314	1,038	1,029	848	732	486	489	620	836	1,010	1,051

The RI Statewide Planning Program generates population projections for all cities and towns based on historic trends. These figures are then adjusted to fit the results of a model for the entire state. Shown in Table LU-2 are two sets of figures for Block Island, both the “official” adjusted population for inclusion in the statewide totals of population projections, and the slightly higher “unadjusted” projections. In both cases, the assumption is that Block Island will continue to grow in population due to its desirability as a year-round community, or in many cases, as the primary (voting) location for people who have more than one residence.

<b>Year</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>2035</b>	<b>2040</b>
<i>Official population estimate</i>	1,093	1,135	1,189	1,239	1,283	1,319
<i>Projected rate of population change</i>	4.00%	3.90%	4.70%	4.20%	3.60%	2.80%
<i>Unadjusted population estimate*</i>	1,116	1,169	1,223	1,279	1,336	1,394

*\*Unlike the official, adjusted projections, these projections do not total to the statewide projection and do not take individual components of demographic change or age/sex cohorts into account.*

A break-down by age of island residents as counted in both the 2000 and the 2010 Census is shown in Table LU-3. These figures indicate that there is a shift underway of older and retired persons replacing the very young, as well as the possible out-migration of young and young-middle aged workers.

<b>Age</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>
Under 5	63	36
5-19	137	133
20-34	163	126
35-54	353	330
55-74	230	329
75+	64	97
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,010</b>	<b>1,051</b>

**Seasonal Changes**

The population of Block Island cannot be accurately evaluated without an accounting of its dramatic seasonal variation, when part-time residents, visitors and vacationers descend on the island for the summer months. It is estimated that the number of people staying on the island, including seasonal residents, renters, guests in hotels, inns and guest houses, and those staying on boats, is over 10,000 on a summer overnight. This figure does not include the day trippers who arrive and leave on the ferries, which is estimated at 15,000 on a typical Saturday or Sunday.

Temporary residents are not counted in the Census, and the seasonal nature of most of the housing stock contributes to the lack of available and affordable year-round housing on the island (see Housing chapter). Aside from skewing the housing market, this influx represents the island’s major economic activities (see Economic Development chapter), while influencing the demand for services (see Community Services and Facilities chapter).

## LAND USE

### Existing Land Use and Pattern

Block Island has 6,076 acres within its land boundaries, excluding the Great Salt Pond and connecting coastal ponds. See Map LU I *Existing Land Use* for an illustration of existing land use as categorized by RIGIS, the State's Geographic Information System.

The existing land use pattern of Block Island can be categorized as having three distinct areas:

- **Village:** A compact mixed-use area, serviced by both public water and sewer, it includes the “downtown” associated with Old Harbor and the area between and around Old and New Harbors. Uses include retail and other businesses, tourism facilities, restaurants, accommodations including major hotels and inns, utilities and government, as well as residential. Year-round apartments and rooms for seasonal staff over stores are desirable future uses to provide a viable mixed-use area.
- **Transition:** A “buffer” zone which consists primarily of single family homes, but also includes some low-impact service establishments and smaller inns and B&B's. This area is partially serviced with town water. It has a lower density than the village, but is still compactly arranged.
- **Countryside:** The remainder of the island, dominated by openness, interspersed with low-density residential uses, and with compatible economic activities including agriculture, home occupations and B&B's. Of necessity, certain public facilities, including the airport, transfer station and the water treatment plant, are located in this area. However, the outstanding characteristic of this portion of the island is the extensive preserved open space and scenic values, which are critically important to the tourism-based economy, and the overall quality of life.

### Current Zoning

The Town zoning designations reinforce this general land use pattern described above, with commercial and mixed use districts confined to the village and harbor areas, a medium density residential district surrounding the village, and a uniform requirement for 120,000 square foot lots outside of that area (low density residential). As described, the village is made up of the areas zoned Old Harbor Commercial, New Harbor Commercial, Service Commercial, and Mixed Use. The transition comprises areas zoned Residential C, Mixed Use and Residential B. The countryside comprises the land zoned RA. See below for descriptions of zoning districts. Zoning districts and the historic district overlay are shown in *Map LU2 Zoning*.

### Residential

The large majority of the island's land area is within the *Residential A (RA) Zone*. The RA Zone comprises primarily rural land mostly remote from the village center and much of which is served by narrow lanes. It is intended that new development be integrated into the existing pattern of fields, walls, ponds and wetlands. A minimum of 120,000 square feet developable land area is required for newly created lots. *Permitted uses include: single family dwellings, accessory residential structures or apartments, accessory uses / home occupations, community residences, family day care homes, farming, rental rooms, and WECS. Additionally, a number of uses are allowed with a special use permit including but not limited to: governmental facilities, recreational facilities, affordable housing, waterfront uses, and stables.*

The *Residential B (RB) Zone* comprises land less remote from the village center than land zoned RA. It is intended to serve as a transition between the higher density of the village area and the low density of the countryside. A minimum of 60,000 square feet of developable lot area is required to create new lots within the RB zoning district. Uses permitted in the Residential B zone are the same as the Residential A zoning district.

The *Residential C (RC) Zone* comprises predominantly residential areas which include a significant component of hotels and inns. The minimum required lot area with sewer is 20,000 square feet and 40,000 square feet without sewer. In addition to the uses permitted in RA and RB zones, RC allows inns and hotels by special use permit.

The *Residential C / Mixed Use Zone (RC/M)* is predominately residential with a significant component of hotels and inns. It is intended that the zone provide for variety of residential uses and retail/residential mixed uses. The same lot size requirements as RC the two mixed use districts RCM , is intended primarily for residential uses, while the RC Mixed and the Mixed Zones emphasize commercial uses as part of the commercial and residential mix. In addition to the uses permitted in the RA, RB, and RC zones, RC/M allowed by special use permit commercial/residential mixed use and light assembly.

The *Mixed Use Zone (M)*, generally located between the two harbors, serves as a transition between the year-round and seasonal residential areas and the mixed residential area. It is intended that the area include a mix of residential dwellings with specially approved retail and service uses. The minimum required lot area with sewer is 20,000 square feet and 40,000 square feet without sewer. Some additional uses allowed in this zoning district include commercial fishing, waterfront uses, and bike rental.

### **Commercial**

The three commercial zones, Old Harbor Commercial (OHC), New Harbor Commercial (NHC) and Service Commercial (SC) are based on their village locations. Uses permitted by right in all three commercial districts include, but are not limited to: retail, restaurants, single family residential, and accessory apartments.

### **Other**

The Planned Development is a district allowing mixed uses, but focusing on affordable housing. It is allowed as a map amendment in specific zoning districts, approved by the Town Council following review of a site development plan.

The Public Education, Public Utility and Medical Center Zones are applied to the school property, the town owned transfer station site, and the medical center property, respectively.

### **Overlay Districts**

The Coastal Zone, not specifically mapped, is based on the location of coastal features such as bluffs, dunes or wetlands and includes the land area within 100 feet of that coastal feature or mean high water. It is subject to change following erosion or movement of coastal bluffs and dunes. It is a highly restrictive zone.

Also indicated on the map is the Historic District, an overlay district which governs development activities within Block Island's historic district. It generally corresponds to the zoning districts between and including the two harbors, including the RC and RC/Mixed Zones.

## Future Build-Out Analysis

*The following section is an assessment of the future residential development capacity of Block Island under current zoning regulations. This build-out analysis includes an assessment by zoning district of both undeveloped and underdeveloped parcels and estimates maximum subdivision potential. The analysis includes a summary table, chart, and map.*

### General Methodology

A spatial analysis was conducted on all 2,200+ parcels within the Town of New Shoreham.

#### GIS Data Layers Utilized

PARCEL BOUNDARIES  
 ADDRESSES - FIRE NUMBER POINT LAYER / E-911 POINT LAYER  
 ZONING DISTRICTS  
 CONSERVED LANDS  
 WETLANDS  
 OPEN WATER  
 ROADS & RIGHT OF WAYS  
 PUBLIC PROPERTIES - TOWN-OWNED LANDS / AIRPORT PARCELS

#### **The first goal of the analysis was to identify all undeveloped parcels with development potential.**

Utilizing the island wide parcel dataset, parcels with assigned fire numbers and those in the State's E-911 system were removed from this part of the analysis (making the assumption that properties with assigned addresses are developed). The following categories of parcels were also removed from the analysis since they have restricted or limited development potential:

- *Public properties*
- *Conserved properties*
- *Private roads, driveways, ROWs*
- *Encumbered by natural constraints (ie open water or wetlands)*

This resulted in a total parcel subset of 285 undeveloped and unrestricted lots.

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*Total Estimated Number of Undeveloped and Unrestricted Lots Island Wide: 285*

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An estimated total number of undeveloped and unrestricted lots was then determined for each zoning district (see below). A subdivision yield analysis was conducted on those parcels with large enough lot

size for potential future subdivisions. Combining the two figures provided a total estimated number of undeveloped and unrestricted lots factoring in maximum subdivision potential based upon current zoning regulations.

The second part of the analysis involved underdeveloped parcels with future subdivision potential. This analysis followed a very similar methodology as described above, however, already developed parcels (those with fire numbers/ addresses) were not eliminated and those parcels (285) that were included in the first part of the analysis (described above) were removed. This analysis provided an estimated number of developed properties with the potential for additional residential development based upon large lot size.

## Undeveloped and Unrestricted Parcels by Zoning District

### **Residential A Zone (RA)**

Within the RA zone there are **197** undeveloped and unrestricted lots. For all newly created lots, 120,000 square feet of developable area is required. 17 of the 197 lots are greater than 240,000 square feet in area. 5 of these lots are a majority protected open space with what appears to be the potential for one building lot. The 14 remaining parcels larger than 240,000 square feet have a potential total yield of 36 lots. Therefore, there is an estimated **219** (197-14+36) total potential undeveloped and unrestricted lots within the RA zone when factoring in subdivision potential.

### **Residential B Zone (RB)**

There are a total of **54** undeveloped and unrestricted lots within the RB Zone. For all newly created lots, 60,000 square feet of developable area is required. 8 lots of the 54 are larger than 120,000 square feet and therefore have the potential to be subdivided in the future. A subdivision yield analysis estimated those 8 lots have the potential to be subdivided into 19 lots. Therefore, there is an estimated **65** (54-8+19) total potential undeveloped and unrestricted lots within the RB zone when factoring in subdivision potential.

### **Residential C Zone (RC)**

There are 5 undeveloped and unrestricted lots within the RC zone. 1 of the 5 lots is greater than 40,000 square feet and therefore has the potential for a two-lot subdivision if connected to sewer. Therefore, there is an estimated **6** (5-1+2) total potential undeveloped and unrestricted lots within the RC zone when factoring in subdivision potential.

### **Residential C / Mixed-Use Zone (RCM)**

There are 5 undeveloped and unrestricted lots within the RCM zoning district. 1 lot is greater than 80,000 square feet and has to potential to be subdivided into a maximum of 4 lots if connected to sewer. Therefore, there is an estimated **8** (5-1+4) total potential undeveloped and unrestricted lots within the RCM zone when factoring in subdivision potential.

**Mixed Use Zone**

There are 15 undeveloped and unrestricted lots within the mixed use zone. 3 of these 15 lots are greater than 40,000 square feet in area and have the potential to become up to 10 individual lots if subdivided. Therefore, there is an estimated 22 (15-3+10) total potential undeveloped and unrestricted lots within the Mixed Use zone when factoring in subdivision potential. Note: this assumes all lots are on sewer in order to be permitted 20,000 square feet in lot area.

*COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS*

*Although not part of this residential build out analysis, it was determined that there are an estimated 9 undeveloped and potentially developable lots located within the Town's commercial zoning districts.*

**Underdeveloped and Unrestricted Parcels by Zoning District**

**The following analysis involves currently developed parcels with future subdivision potential due to lot sizes beyond current zoning regulations.**

**Residential A Zone (RA)**

All parcels greater than 240,000 square feet were selected within the RA zone. Undeveloped and unrestricted parcels (covered in analysis above) were removed from the analysis. Parcels with more than 2 assigned fire numbers if under 360,000 square feet in area and parcels with a substantial amount of protected open space and an assigned fire number were also removed from the subset. Those parcels with natural barriers to development as well as town-owned and airport parcels were also removed from the analysis.

The results indicate that there are an estimated 54 lots larger than 240,000 square feet with an estimated subdivision yield of 153 total parcels within the RA zone. Subtracting out the already developed house lots from the yield (54) provides an estimated 99 potential additional buildable lots from the existing 54 underdeveloped and unrestricted lots within the RA district.

**Residential B Zone (RB)**

Following a similar methodology as described above, it was determined that there are an estimated 24 underdeveloped and unrestricted lots greater than 120,000 square feet in area within the RB zoning district. 15 of these lots have between 120,000 and 179,999 square feet in lot area. However, 2 of these 15 lots have 2 assigned fire numbers and therefore, less potential for future subdivision. Therefore, 13 lots within the RA district could be subdivided in two-lots each, adding **13** additional building lots. There are 4 developed lots between 180,000 and 239,999 square feet in area with the potential for future subdivision. However, two of those lots have significant wetlands present. Therefore, it is estimated that these 4 lots may have a subdivision yield potential of **6** additional lots. Two developed lots have the maximum potential of 4 building lots each, and therefore, **6** additional buildable lots. Two developed lots have the maximum potential of 5-lot subdivisions and therefore, adding **8** potentially developable lots. The final underdeveloped lot of the 24 within the RB zone has the maximum potential of 7 total lots and therefore could add **6** additional developable lots. In summary, underdeveloped and unrestricted lots within the RB zoning district could add an estimated 39 buildable lots if subdivided under current zoning regulations.

**Residential C Zone (RC)**

There are a total of 8 underdeveloped and unrestricted lots within the RC Zone. Three of those lots have the maximum potential of adding one additional lot each. Three other lots have the maximum potential of adding 2 buildable lots each. One lot has a maximum potential of adding 3 additional buildable lots and the final lot has the maximum potential of adding 6 additional buildable lots. In summary, within the RC Zone, underdeveloped and unrestricted lots have the potential to add an estimated 18 additional buildable lots if subdivided under current zoning regulations.

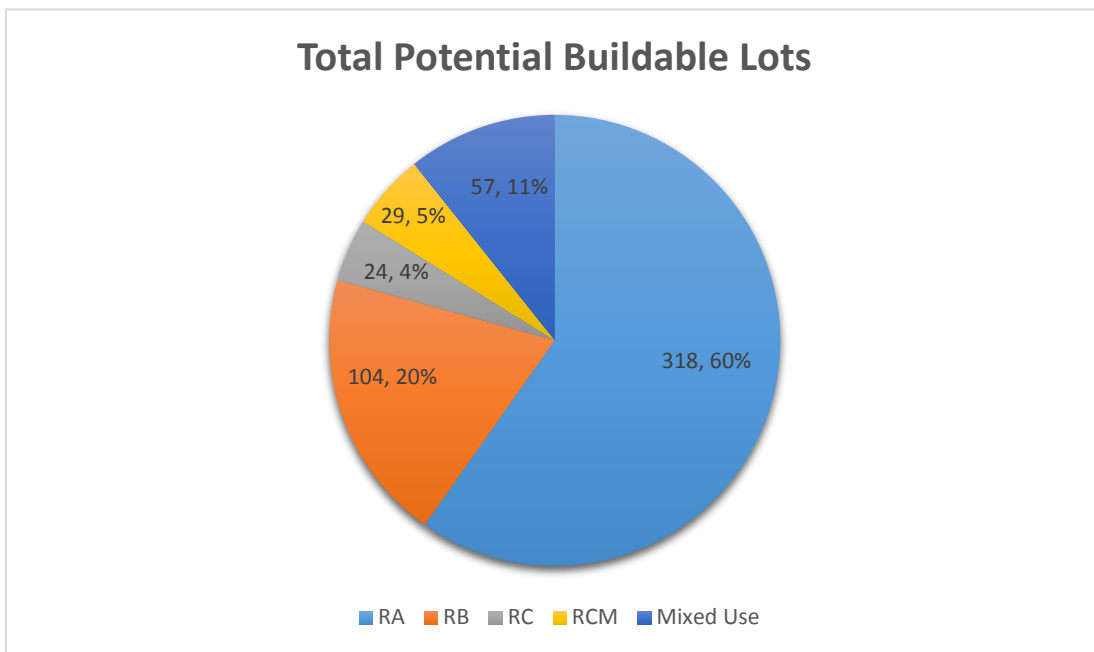
**Residential C / Mixed Use Zone (RCM)**

There are six potentially underdeveloped and unrestricted lots within the RCM zone. 2 of the 6 lots have the potential to add one additional buildable lot each. The 4 other underdeveloped and unrestricted lots have a maximum potential to add 19 additional buildable lots. Therefore, in total, an estimated 21 additional buildable lots could be created from the underdeveloped and unrestricted lots within the RCM zone. Note: this assumes all lots are on sewer in order to be permitted the 20,000 square foot lot area.

**Mixed Use Zone**

Utilizing aerial photography, substantially developed lots within the Mixed Use Zone were eliminated from the underdeveloped and unrestricted built out analysis. Developed lots with approximately 40,000 square feet without access to sewer were also eliminated. Results of the analysis indicate that there is an estimated 8 potentially underdeveloped lots within the Mixed Use Zone with future subdivision potential. 4 of the 8 lots have the maximum potential to add one buildable lot each. 2 lots has the potential to add two additional buildable lots each and the remaining two largest lots have a combined maximum subdivision potential of 27. In summary, an estimated 35 buildable lots could be created from the underdeveloped and unrestricted lots within the Mixed Use Zone under current zoning regulations. Note: this assumes all lots are on sewer in order to be permitted the 20,000 square foot lot area.

Block Island Buildout Analysis Summary Table				
Zoning District	Undeveloped / Unrestricted Parcels (A)	Undeveloped / Unrestricted Parcels plus subdivision yield (B)	Subdivision yield from Underdeveloped / Unrestricted (C)	Total Potential Buildable Lots (B+C)
RA	197	219	99	318
RB	54	65	39	104
RC	5	6	18	24
RCM	5	8	21	29
Mixed Use	15	22	35	57
<b>Total</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>532</b>



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*Total Future Population Estimated at Build-Out: 1,389*

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Average household size on Block Island is 2.07 according to American Community Survey, 2013. Therefore, if 532 single family homes are constructed on Block Island, the Town could expect an additional population of 1,101. However, if the current ratio of seasonal housing units continues in the future (69.3%), this figure would equate to an estimated additional 338 year-round residents.

New Shoreham Seasonal Housing Units		
Total # 2010 Housing Units	Total # 2010 Seasonal Housing Units	2010 Seasonal Housing Units, as % of Total Housing Units
1,808	1253	69.3%
<i>2010 US Census</i>		

Current year-round population for New Shoreham, according to US Census 2010, is 1,051. Therefore, the **total future year-round population estimated at build-out is 1,389.**

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*Year by which Residential Build-Out is Anticipated: 2069*

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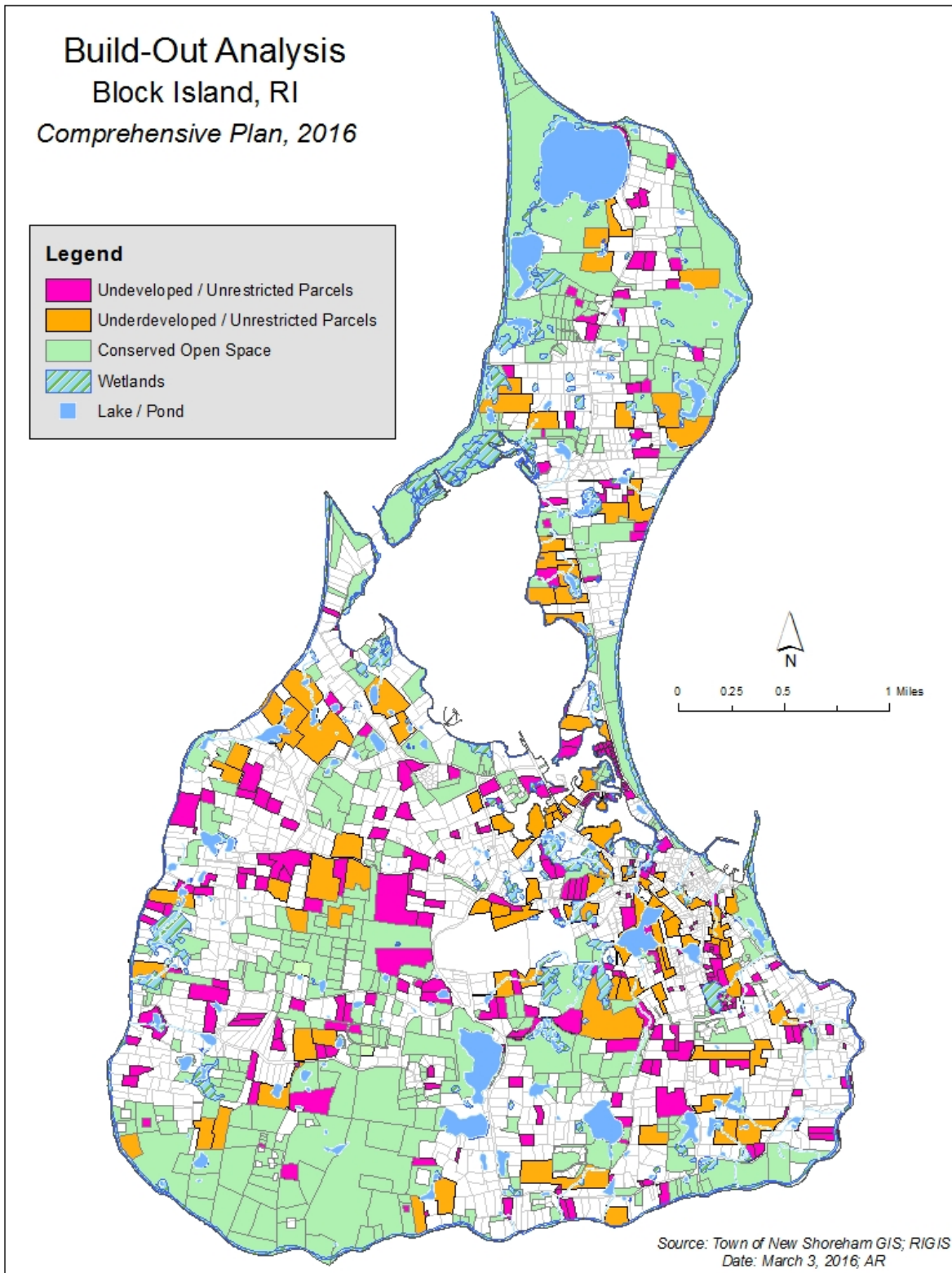
Based on building permit data, the average annual number of new single family dwellings on Block Island between the years 2006 and 2015 was ten (note: this figure does not include replacement dwellings which are tear down and rebuilds on same lot). Therefore, **it is estimated that build-out could occur in 53 years, which would be the year 2069.**

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*Maintaining Affordable Housing Ratio*

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In order to meet affordable housing needs on the island and maintain the town's 10% low-and-moderate income housing percentage, mechanisms and must be in place to ensure that as new development / build-out occurs, affordable housing units are also being developed.



## THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

*Map LU3 Future Land Use* is the visual depiction of the community's desires for types, patterns, and intensities of development. It is a policy statement directing municipal decision-makers as to what types of land uses are desired in each area and setting a vision for the municipality's future growth over the next 20-years. The Future Land Use Map serves as the underpinning for local zoning regulations that legally regulate development in the community.

This Comprehensive Plan update includes a comprehensive update to New Shoreham's Future Land Use Map. The current Future Land Use Map included only three broad categories: village, transition, and countryside. The updated Future Land Use Map includes the categories described below, meets current State requirements and is consistent with CRMC Water Type Classifications. **There are no identified inconsistencies between the Future Land Use Map and the Zoning Map.**

### *A Description of Future Land Use Designations*

The following sections describe the future land use designations as illustrated on Map LU3 Future Land Use including general uses that are desired within each designation and the average density or range of residential densities that are to be permitted.

#### *Low Density Residential*

The majority of the lands on Block Island are categorized as *low density residential*. Scenic landscapes of rural fields, narrow lanes, stonewalls, ponds, and coastal views provide the setting for shingled cottages and farmhouses. New residential development in the low density residential designation should blend into this scenic landscape and be accommodated on lots of a minimum of 120,000 square feet.

#### *Medium Low Density Residential*

The *medium low density residential* designation comprises rural land less remote from the village center than land designated as low density residential. Residential development within this designation should also be accessed from narrow lanes and be integrated into the rural landscape of fields, stonewalls, ponds and wetlands. Density within the median low density residential designation should be a minimum of 60,000 square foot lots.

#### *Medium Density Residential*

The *medium density residential* designation should comprise mostly residential land uses ranging in density from 20,000 square feet to 40,000 square feet depending upon the availability of public water and sewer.

State Comprehensive Plan requirements recommend those areas identified as “Sewered Urban Development” on Figure 121-02(1) of the State’s Land Use 2025 Plan must have a minimum of 5 dwelling units per acre. However, New Shoreham does not feel that density is appropriate for Block Island given the location and importance of drinking water resources, concern to maintain high water quality of the Great Salt Pond, and the desire to preserve the rural character of the island. Current regulations permit a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet if connected to sewer in the higher density zones, double the density (40,000 square feet minimum lot size) if not connected to the public sewer system. The Town does not have a desire to change the current zoning to permit higher densities by right in those zones.

### *Mixed Use*

The *mixed use* designation should include a combination of residential dwellings and appropriate retail and service uses. New residential development within the mixed use designation should range from 20,000 to 40,000 square feet minimum lot size depending upon services available and natural resources present.

### *Commercial*

The *commercial* designation is located adjacent to Old Harbor and New Harbor and therefore land uses should support marine-related activities. Within the village and lands connecting the two harbors permitted land uses must accommodate the service and utility needs of the island. New residential development within the commercial designation should occur on 20,000 square foot lots.

### *Public*

The *public* land use category includes land holdings of local, state, and federal governments or their agencies. The purpose of this category is to recognize the extent and locations of public land holdings and how they interact with adjacent land uses.

### *Recreation*

Publicly held land for recreation purposes including parks, ballfields (Heinz Field) and beaches have been designated as *recreation* on the Future Land Use Map.

### *Conserved Open Space*

Publicly and privately held lands for *conservation* are depicted in dark green on the Future Land Use Map.

### *Airport*

New Shoreham is host to the Block Island State Airport which is owned and operated by the Rhode Island Airport Corporation (RIAC). The airport property covers an area of approximately 136 acres in the center of the island. All parcels owned by the airport have been designated as *Airport* on the Future Land Use Map.

In Rhode Island, municipalities are legally obligated to establish and enforce appropriate airport land use compatibility planning. In 2013, RIAC prepared the “Rhode Island Airport Land Use Compatibility Guidebook,” to assist local officials with the tools to plan for and enforce land uses that are compatible with their local airports. In conjunction with the recommendations of RIAC’s Aviation Systems Plan, the Town should designate an Airport Hazard Area Overlay District. The purpose of the district is to regulate the types of land uses and the height of buildings and trees in the district to avoid creating airport hazards.

## Special Areas & Policies

### *Harbors*

#### **THE FUTURE WELLBEING OF THE ISLAND DEPENDS ON THE WISE AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF ITS TWO HARBORS.**

The marine and transportation activities associated with each harbor are somewhat different. Old Harbor is best suited to serve as the island’s principal transportation center with docks, parking and storage areas capable of supporting large capacity stern-loading ferries carrying passengers, vehicles and freight. Another area of the Old Harbor, the Inner Basin, is suited for a limited number of commercial fishing and sport fishing craft.

New Harbor in the Great Salt Pond is the third most popular yacht harbor in the northeast (after Newport and Marblehead, Massachusetts). New Harbor is a major economic asset not only for Block Island but for Rhode Island tourism generally. Uses can put stress on the pond’s water quality and ecosystem with its potential for pollution from boats. Protecting the water quality of the Great Salt Pond, a critical natural and economic resource (see Great Salt Pond chapter), is a major priority of the Town.

The intention of the Town has been and continues to be that New Harbor be committed to recreational boating and limited ferry use (passenger only), as well as to commercial fishing, shell-fishing and aquaculture uses, but not to other commercial activities such as ferries carrying vehicles and freight, or boat manufacture and major repair. It is also the intention of the Town to control the level of recreational boating capacity in the pond by limiting mooring and significant dock expansion.

### *Village*

The town would like to encourage mixed-use development similar to traditional New England villages by grouping complementary land use activities. An objective of the Town is to combine uses in the village and surrounding areas in ways that create a built environment with better character, more social interaction and diversity in housing options. Mixed-use development in and around the village can also promote a reduction in auto dependence and infrastructure costs, and help to preserve remaining undeveloped land on the island.

As described in the Transportation element, there is considerable congestion in the downtown area in the summer. Over the years there have been various ideas for better managing this congestion of motor vehicles, mopeds, bicycles and pedestrians. Still needed are more detailed design plans for the village including an underground utility plan, a village parking plan and an overall circulation plan that includes safe

pedestrian access. This work could be spearheaded by the Old Harbor Task Force, a town committee that works on the physical issues of Old Harbor.

### **Land Conservation and Stewardship**

The use of the island's limited land resources should be balanced so that a substantial share of the island's land, at least half of it, will remain permanently in conservation, open space or agricultural use. As of 2015, with 2,210 acres of deeded protected land and 597 acres of water bodies and wetlands, over 46% of the land on the island is permanently protected from development. Reaching a goal of protecting 50% of the land area on the island is consistent with land needs for housing and infrastructure, while ensuring that critical resources, including the island's drinking water supply and the areas of major habitat importance, are protected.

The principal land use goal of this plan, however, is that the actual amount of protected land on the island be not just a given percentage, but that it reflect the need to preserve its cultural heritage as well as protect all of its critical natural resources. A more complete description of the protected lands and the agencies and organizations involved is contained in the Recreation and Conserved Areas chapter.

As the island closes in on, or even exceeds, the 50% protected land goal, maintaining all of the open space and conservation land to the highest standards is the longer term land use goal. The following activities undertaken by a number of island groups, including the Block Island Conservancy, the Block Island Land Trust and the island office of The Nature Conservancy, are critical in the coming years, and for the foreseeable future:

1. MONITORING EASEMENT AREAS SO THAT RESTRICTIONS ARE UPHELD
2. ENSURING THAT MANAGEMENT PLANS ARE FOLLOWED
3. PROTECTING AREAS FROM ENCROACHMENT OR ILLICIT ACTIVITIES (DUMPING, VEGETATION AND SOIL REMOVAL)
4. MANAGING SPECIES AND HABITAT AREAS INCLUDING INVASIVES
5. KEEPING TRAILS CLEARED AND MARKED
6. MAINTAINING FIELDS AND STONE WALLS

### *New Development and the Protection of Community Character*

It is the town's goal to maintain and strengthen the unique character, long-term livability and appeal of Block Island. In order to achieve this goal, the town should protect and promote high quality and appropriate design and construction of all land development projects and subdivisions.

Block Island is sure to see more residential development in the future. The island has done much to lessen the impact on the landscape of new very large and out of scale houses by enacting limits on overall footprint, height and massing. However, it does not regulate design outside of the Historic Overlay District. A design

booklet for new residential development to complement the zoning ordinance amendments enacted in 2008 that control size and massing of new residential structures would guide new homeowners and builders in the design and construction of houses that fit the island's traditional style.

The regulations in place for Conservation-style subdivisions (Flexible Design) also advances the goal of protection of community character. Conservation Development is a site planning technique which bases the layout of building lots and structures on the natural characteristics of the land and reduces lot sizes so that the remaining land can be used for recreation, open space and/or the preservation of environmentally, historically, and culturally sensitive features and/or structures. Conservation-style subdivisions, if designed properly, can achieve the goal of buffering new development from intrusion upon Block Island's scenic vistas. There is a desire to review the current flexible design regulations, however, this subdivision option should conceptually remain and be encouraged for all new subdivisions proposed on Block Island.

### **Sea Level Rise**

The impact of sea level rise and storm surges (see Natural Hazards & Climate Change chapter) must also be accounted for in future land use decisions. As stated in the Block Island Harbors Sea Level Rise Adaptation Study, completed in August 2013:

*As a result of the dramatic impacts depicted by the sea level rise maps, the Town should evaluate its land use and building regulations to consider future development and redevelopment in the most critically impacted inundation areas.*

## Goals, Policies & Implementation Actions

**GOAL LUI: Achieve a balanced and harmonious development pattern that preserves Block Island’s environmental and aesthetic quality and promotes economic vitality and overall livability**

<u>POLICY</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>	<u>TIMEFRAME</u>
LUI.A. Maintain existing land use pattern consisting of village, transition and countryside	<p>LUI.A.1. Review and amend the zoning ordinance and the subdivision regulations as needed to ensure compatibility with the desired land use pattern</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Higher density development should be restricted to the compact village and transition areas that have access to public water and sewer</li> <li>2. Require residential development in the countryside to occur in a density and manner that is sensitive to, and complimentary of, the island’s traditional landscape</li> </ol>	Planning Board; Town Council	Short-term
LUI.B. Direct growth to appropriate areas	LUI.B.1. Evaluate results of build out analysis and make adjustments in policy and regulations as desired to meet the goals identified in this Comp Plan	Planning Board	Short-term
LUI.C. Ensure that municipal land use regulations are consistent with the goals and policies set forth within this comprehensive plan	LUI.C.1. Identify amendments necessary to local subdivision regulations to ensure development occurs in a manner consistent with the goals of this Comp Plan	Planning Board	Short-term
	LUI.C.2. Review Flexible Subdivision Design (conservation-style) to ensure regulations will result in desired development and open space set aside outcomes	Planning Board; Town Council	Short-term

	LUI.C.3. Undertake a review of the Planned Development Regulations, with amendments to extend its application to all of the commercial and mixed use districts and to focus on creative mixed-use development as well as affordable housing	Planning Board; Town Council	Medium-term
LUI.D. Ensure that a significant amount of land is designated and zoned for commercial activity to support residents' needs for services and economic opportunity	LUI.D.1. Undertake a review of all mixed use and commercial zones with possible amendments to their definitions, allowed uses, dimensional requirements and district boundaries	Planning Board; Town Council	Short-term
LUI.E. Ensure harbors and their related infrastructure and land-side support areas are reserved for uses that rely on such coastal access, such as fishing, aquaculture, marine industry and transportation			
LU1.F. Support Block Island State Airport as a critical transportation facility by protecting navigable airspace around it	Amend zoning ordinance to be consistent with applicable state and federal requirements pertaining to airport hazards	Planning Board; Town Council	Short-term
LU1.G. Promote a walkable and thriving mixed-use village district	LUI.G.1. Prepare and implement a Village Design Plan that promotes the historic and walkable qualities of this dense mixed-use center	Planning; Planning Board; Historic District Commission; Old Harbor Task Force	Medium-term
	LUI.G.2. Review regulations for parking and pedestrian access in both the zoning and subdivision regulations, and consider amendments to allow flexibility in parking requirements and to strengthen provisions for sidewalks and pathways as part of new development in the village and transitional areas	Planning; Planning Board; Historic District Commission; Old Harbor Task Force	Medium-term

**GOAL LU2: Protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty and heritage of our coastal community**

<u>POLICY</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>	<u>TIMEFRAME</u>
LU2.A. Promote design excellence and historic preservation	LU2.A.1. Codify strong historic district design regulations	Historic District Commission; Town Council	Medium-term
	LU2.A.2. Develop a photo design booklet to guide in the construction and siting of new development island-wide and encourage architecture consistent with the island's traditional style	Planning; Planning Board; Historic District Commission	Medium-term
LU2.B. Protect culturally important resources either through land acquisition, easement or appropriate design when development occurs nearby			
LU2.C. Maintain an active public open space acquisition program and support partner organizations in their open space acquisition efforts	LU2.C.1. Identify scenic and/or ecologically significant lands that have yet to be protected	BILT	Medium-term
	LU2.C.2. Establish a criteria for prioritizing the acquisition of conservation land	BILT; Town Council; Planning Board	Medium-term

**Timeframes:** Short-term (1-3 years); Medium-term (4-6 years); Long-term (7-10 years)

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# 12. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

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The following table lists all the implementation actions within each of the individual elements identified to achieve the stated goals of this Comprehensive Plan. The standalone implementation program will be used to assist the Town in implementing the plan and for progress updates.

*Note: Highlighted actions are related to items included in the Town's Capital Improvement Program*

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
HC1.A.1. Seek National Register and National Historic Landmark designation of significant properties and explore designation of the island as a whole	Historic District Commission Historic Society	Ongoing
HC1.A.2. Seek National Register Landmark District designation for the North Light	North Light Commission	Short-term
HC1.A.3. Complete survey of historic structures and sites beyond the boundaries of the Historic District.	Historic Society	Long-term
HC1.A.4. Conduct an island-wide inventory of scenic roads and landscape	Historic Society	Long-term
HC1.B.1. Document and photograph high tides and storm flooding impacts, bluff erosion, etc. in the vicinity of historically significant structures	Planning Board Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Town Manager	Ongoing
HC1.C.1. Encourage property owners to voluntarily add their property to the Historic District	Historic District Commission Town Council	Ongoing
HC1.C.2. Evaluate the current boundaries of the Historic District	Historic District Commission Town Council	Short-term
HC1.C.3. Increase monitoring and enforcement efforts of neglected historic properties	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning	Ongoing
HC2.A.1. Work with partners to identify and implement solutions to control vegetation growth and invasive species	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Land Trust Town Council	Medium-term
HC2.B.1. Review local regulations to ensure that the scenic and rural character of roads are protected and that development is concealed to the extent possible from public travelways and vantage points	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board	Short-term
HC2.C.1 Adopt a stonewall ordinance that ensures protection of stonewalls at public vantage points	Planning Board Town Council	Long-term

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
NR1.A.1. Review new State wetlands setback regulations and determine if additional protection measures are required to protect the quality and habitat of the wetlands systems on Block Island	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Conservation Commission Town Manager Town Council	Short-term
NR1.A.2. Develop zoning overlay district with special use permit for high hazard areas that include storm surge inundation, sea level rise and SLAMM projected potential salt marsh areas	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Town Council	Medium-term
NR1.B.1. Identify undeveloped land containing habitats of endangered species and/or having a high potential for coastal wetland migration	Land Trust Town Council	Medium-term
NR1.B.2. Explore issues related to reforestation and identify potential lands where reforestation may be a good option	Land Trust Conservation Commission Planning Board Town Council	Long-term
NR1.C.1. Develop informational guides for property owners on how to manage open fields for wildlife and the best cutting practices to achieve various desired results	Land Trust Planning Board Conservation Commission	Long-term
NR1.D.1. Develop an invasive species management plan for Town-owned open space properties	Conservation Commission Planning Board Recreation	Long-term
NR.D.2. Investigate ordinances relating to the control of invasive flora and fauna	Conservation Commission Planning Board	Medium-term
NR1.E.1. Develop an education program aimed at visitors and renters to promote good environmental behavior and responsible stewardship	Tourism Council Conservation Commission Recreation	Medium-term
NR1.E.2. Institute programs at the Block Island School with partners that encourage outdoor learning, natural resources preservation and stewardship among the next generation	School Department	Ongoing

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
NR2.A.1. Investigate strategies to reduce and limit impervious surface on the island and establish a policy identifying an upper limit on the total percentage of impervious cover on the island to be incorporated in the next update of the Comprehensive Plan	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Town Council	Long-term
NR2.A.2. Enact guidelines and institute an education campaign on the appropriate use of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides; Town should serve as a model of best practices	Conservation Commission Recreation Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Town Manager Town Council	Medium-term
NR2.A.3. Review and strengthen current regulations regarding LID (low impact development)	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Town Council	Medium-term
NR2.A.4. Review and strengthen landscaping requirements to ensure low maintenance native vegetation that minimizes the need for watering and use of lawns, fertilizers, and pesticides are used for all new development projects	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board	Medium-term
NR2.B.1. Draft and adopt regulations to require the preservation or restoration of naturally buffered areas along the Great Salt Pond and significant freshwater ponds	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Town Council	Short-term
NR2.B.2. Determine appropriate minimum buffer width and establish incentives for property owners who maintain a vegetated buffer in excess of the minimum	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board	Short-term
NR2.B.3. With partners, conduct an inventory of vernal ponds; enforce buffers and control use of fertilizers in these area	Land Trust Conservation Commission Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board	Long-term
NR3.A.1. Enact a twelve-month moratorium on individual beach access stair structures	Town Council	Short-term
NR3.A.2. Craft and enact regulations to ensure private beach access structures are located and designed in a manner that minimizes any adverse impacts	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Town Council	Short-term
NR3.B.1. Install beach access signage to encourage pedestrians to remain off dunes	Recreation Town Manager	Short-term
NR3.B.2. Implement an effective public education campaign which explains the importance of people remaining off dunes	Recreation Town Manager Town Council	Short-term
NR3.B.3. Install public walkover structures at the Town Beach to discourage traversing the fragile dunes (NHCI.B.2.)	Facilities Manager Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Town Manager	Short-term

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
RCI.A.1. Partner with non-profits to identify and prioritize open space lands that should be conserved	Land Trust Conservation Commission GIS Town Manager Town Council	Ongoing
RCI.A.2. Collaborate with non-profits when acquiring, developing, and maintaining recreation and conservation areas	Land Trust Conservation Commission Town Manager Town Council	Ongoing
RCI.A.3. Prioritize the conservation of lands abutting conserved lands to create large protected greenways, habitat areas and opportunities for trail extensions	Land Trust Town Council	Ongoing
RCI.B.4. Determine if conservation-style subdivisions should be mandatory for all major subdivisions	Planning Board	Short-term
RCI.C.1. Maintain pedestrian trails including the greenway and right-of-ways to the shore so that they remain passable and have appropriate signage	Conservation Commission Land Trust Town Manager	Ongoing
RCI.C.2. Inventory, document and map all public access points to the shoreline and freshwater bodies; publish and distribute a public waterfront access guide	SAWG GIS Harbors Department Recreation Department	Short-term
RCI.C.3. Create and disseminate a blueways map and guide to promote paddling (GSP2.B.1.)	GIS Harbors Department Tourism Council Recreation Department	Short-term
RCI.D.1. Develop a maintenance plan for town recreational facilities that establishes roles and responsibilities of the various town departments and groups	Recreation Department School Department Land Trust Town Manager	Short-term
RCI.D.2. Add amenities and make upgrades to existing town-owned parks when possible	Town Manager Recreation Department Town Council	Ongoing
RCI.D.3. Construct a staircase to provide access from Water Street to the Harbor and breakwater	Town Manager; Facilities Director; Building Official, Old Harbor Task Force	Short-term

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
RC2.A.1. Develop and implement a fiscally feasible Recreation Master Plan that serves the long-term needs of residents	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Recreation Department Town Manager Town Council	Medium-term
RC2.A.2. Explore location options and financial ability of town to develop and operate an indoor recreational facility	Planning Board Town Manager Town Council	Short-term
RC2.A.3. Identify potential locations for the future development of playing fields to relieve issues related to over-use and scheduling conflicts	Planning Board Town Manager	Medium-term
RC2.A.4. Add additional year-round recreational program opportunities targeted to older adults and seniors	Recreation Department	Short-term
RC2.C.1. Incorporate safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access to town recreational facilities	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Town Manager	Ongoing
RC2.C.2. Retrofit existing facilities when possible to provide increased access to recreational facilities by disabled and seniors	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Town Manager	Ongoing
RC2.C.3. Explore opportunities for increased access to the Block Island School gymnasium for adult recreation programs	Recreation Department School Department	Short-term
RC2.D.1. Require that significant land development projects, including major subdivisions, incorporate open space and recreational amenities	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board	Short-term

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
GSPI.A.1. Working with partners, such as the CGSP, continue to monitor water quality through coordinated and expanded water sampling efforts at various locations throughout the pond	Harbors Department Harbors Commission Shellfish Commission	Ongoing
GSPI.A.2. With partners, conduct complete physical and chemical analyses of the pond's bottom soil	Harbors Commission Shellfish Commission	Short-term
GSPI.A.3. Identify point sources of pollution and initiate immediate action to cease the activity	Harbors Department	Ongoing
GSPI.B.1. Work with partners to conduct a study to identify potential non-point sources of pollution upstream of the Great Salt Pond	Town Manager Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning	Short-term
GSPI.B.2. Encourage local land conservation groups such as the Block Island Land Trust, the Nature Conservancy, and the Block Island Conservancy to prioritize land conservation investments which will have a positive impact on water quality of the GSP	Town Manager Town Council Conservation Commission	Ongoing
GSPI.B.3. Educate property owners on best management practices such as minimizing use of herbicides and pesticides	Harbors Department Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Conservation Commission	Ongoing
GSPI.C.1. Seek grant funding to implement strategies identified in the Block Island Sea Level Rise Adaptation Study	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Land Use & Planning Grant Writer	Medium-term
GSPI.C.2. Identify lands that will provide marsh migration areas for coastal wetlands of the Great Salt Pond in response to sea level rise	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Land Trust Conservation Commission	Medium-term
GSPI.C.3. With the help of partners, pursue dune restoration projects to mitigate erosion and provide habitat along the Great Salt Pond	Town Manager Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Land Use & Planning Grant Writer	Long-term
GSPI.C.4. Consider sea level rise and storm flooding when designing upgrades to or locating public facilities including roads, bridges, structures, utilities, and pump stations	Planning Board Sewer Commission Water Commission Town Manager	Ongoing

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
GSP2.A.1 Survey visiting boaters' experience at New Harbor and their opinions of the island while also collecting valuable data in regards to economic contributions to the local economy during their stay	Harbors Department	Ongoing
GSP2.A.2. Consider offering public restroom and shower facilities, dingy dockage, and storage lockers for New Harbor	Town Manager Town Council Harbors Commission Planning Board	Medium-term
GSP2.A.3. Determine new location for Harbormaster's Office in the vicinity of New Harbor	Town Manager Town Council	Short-term
GSP2.A.4. Establish and maintain a reserve fund dedicated to public improvements for New Harbor	Town Council Finance Department	Short-term
GSP2.A.5. Seek grant opportunities to help fund potential upgrade and expansion of public harbor facilities	Harbors Department Grant Writer Town Manager	Medium-term
GSP2.A.6. Install kiosk that provides information to boaters including the annual Harbor's Guide and a map of the attractions and services surrounding the Great Salt Pond	Harbors Department GIS Department Town Manager	Medium-term
GSP2.B.1. Create and disseminate a blueways map and guide to promote paddling (RC1.C.3.)	Recreation Department GIS Harbors Department Tourism Council	Short-term
GSP2.C.1. Take actions to meet the goals and objectives identified in the locally adopted Harbor Management Plan	Town Manager Harbors Department Harbors Commission	Short-term
GSP2.C.2. Develop a plan with the US Coast Guard and US Army Corp of Engineers which clearly delineates areas for rental moorings, private moorings, anchorages, channels, fairways and turning basins	Town Manager Harbors Department Town Council	Medium-term
GSP2.C.3. Determine scientifically-based maximum number of moorings to prevent negative impacts	Harbors Department	Short-term

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
GSP3.A.1. Review current local regulations (subdivision, zoning etc.) to ensure they provide the necessary protections for the Great Salt Pond	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Conservation Commission	Short-term
GSP3.B.1. Update the Great Salt Pond Management Plan	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Harbors Department	Medium-term
GSP3.B.2. Seek CRMC approval of locally adopted Harbor Management Plan; keep Harbor Management Plan current through future updates	Harbors Department Town Manager Town Council	Short-term
GSP3.C.1. Maintain an inventory of public right-of-ways to the shore and disseminate a map to residents and visitors	Town Clerk GIS	Ongoing
GSP3.D.1. Explore options for the repurposing of the former Coast Guard Station	Town Manager Town Council Large Capital Asset Committee	Short-term
GSP3.E.1. Support the Shellfish Commission and other organizations in their efforts to develop aquaculture projects and expand shellfish and finfish resources	Town Council Harbors Commission Shellfish Commission	Ongoing

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
HI.A.1. Consider adopting an inclusionary zoning ordinance with a municipal subsidy system and option to pay-in-lieu	Planning Board	Medium-term
HI.A.2. Identify additional sources of funding for Housing Trust Fund	Town Council Finance Town Manager Housing Board	Ongoing
HI.B.1. Explore providing tax incentives to owners who offer year-round rental of their home to income eligible residents	Town Council Finance Town Manager Housing Board	Medium-term
HI.C.1. Identify both town and privately owned properties which could be suitable sites for the development of affordable residential units	Planning Board Town Manager Housing Board	Short-term
HI.D.1. Monitor deed restrictions of affordable housing units and act proactively to ensure units do not expire and transition to market-rate housing	Housing Board Planning Board Town Council	Ongoing
HI.E.1. Establish a stronger monitoring program and/or a tax abatement program for accessory apartments	Town Manager Town Council Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Finance	Medium-term
HI.F.1. Evaluate demand for senior and special needs housing	Housing Board Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board	Short-term
HI.F.2. Acquire and hold land for future affordable housing needs	Town Council Housing Board	Ongoing
HI.G.1. Evaluate current tax assessment policies and explore instituting a homestead tax exemption	Town Council Finance Tax Assessor Town Manager	Medium-term
HI.G.2. Investigate housing subsidy program option for workers (current and retired) fulfilling necessary government functions	Town Council Finance Town Manager	Medium-term
HI.G.3. Explore options for town provision of seasonal and/or temporary housing / overnight accommodations for temporary town employees or contractors	Town Manager Facilities Manager Town Council	Medium-term
HI.I.1. In partnership with other municipalities, participate in review and update of current affordable housing legislation	Town Council Housing Board Town Manager	Ongoing

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
H2.A.1. Foster public private partnerships to address seasonal workforce housing needs	Town Manager Town Council	Short-term
H2.A.2. Advance zoning measures to facilitate the provision of seasonal workforce housing by the private sector	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board	Short-term
H2.A.3. Conduct an education and outreach campaign to raise awareness about seasonal workforce housing needs; encourage owners to rent rooms to seasonal workers	Housing Board Town Council	Ongoing
H2.B.1. Inform homeowners about resources to assist with home repair, maintenance and winterization	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Minimum Housing Inspector	Ongoing
H2.C.1. Promote low housing densities where public services are unavailable and are not planned	Planning Board	Ongoing
H2.C.2. Promote conservation-style development requiring open space set asides in all new major subdivision	Planning Board	Ongoing

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
ED1.A.1. Create incentives to attract or develop island-grown businesses which provide locally needed products and services while also offering year-round job opportunities	Finance Tax Assessor Town Council	Medium-term
ED1.A.2. Establish an incubator space for business start-ups; explore partnerships and grant opportunities to assist with funding construction and operations	Grant Writer Town Manager Town Council	Medium-term
ED1.A.3. Work with partners to establish an outreach program for unemployed residents	Town Council	Long-term
ED1.A.4. Work with partners to undertake surveys, market the island's businesses not directly related to tourism, and solicit specific recommendations for any necessary changes in town policies, regulations and taxation	Town Council	Ongoing
ED1.A.5. Conduct a review of the current zoning ordinance and map to identify potentially suitable additional areas where commercial uses would be appropriate	Planning Board	Short-term
ED1.B.1. Identify and offer quality real-world training opportunities and programs to students	School Department	Ongoing
ED1.C.1. Establish a working group consisting of residents, local business owners and municipal representatives to develop strategies to better support local businesses	Town Council	Medium-term
ED1.C.2. Take measures to control the costs of freight and electricity	Town Manager Town Council	Ongoing
ED1.D.1. Foster the establishment of a downtown merchants association and other local business associations	Old Harbor Task Force Town Council	Short-term
ED1.D.2. Establish a program to ensure the installation of consistent amenities including but not limited to benches and bicycle racks	Planning Board Historic District Commission Old Harbor Task Force	Short-term
ED1.E.1. Determine appropriate opportunities for low-impact, home-based businesses and amend zoning ordinance to allow with a special use permit	Planning Board Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning	Short-term
ED1.F.1. Amend zoning to encourage agritourism activities and the production of value-added agricultural products	Planning Board Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning	Short-term
ED1.F.2. Continue to acquire or purchase development rights to farmlands with partners	Land Trust Town Council	Ongoing
ED1.F.3. Investigate options to offer no-cost or low-cost leasing options of conserved lands to farmers	Land Trust	Medium-term

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
ED1.G.1. Never permit uses such as heavy manufacturing or commercial gambling that would destroy the character of the island	Town Council Planning Board Zoning Board	Ongoing
ED1.H.1. Permit in reasonable quantity ecologically sound aquaculture activities (See Chapter 2. The Great Salt Pond)	Harbors Commission Harbors Department Town Council	Ongoing
ED1.I.1. Permit affordable year-round rental housing and homeownership opportunities throughout the island	Planning Board Zoning Board Block Island Housing Trust	Ongoing
ED1.I.2. Identify potential locations for seasonal workforce housing	Block Island Housing Trust	Short-term
ED1.J.1. Target economic development activities in areas where development and infrastructure exist	Planning Board	Ongoing
ED1.K.1. Establish island-wide reliable high-speed internet connection	Information Technology Broadband Working Group Town Manager Town Council	Short-term
ED2.A.1. Control access to the beaches in a way that protects dunes and bluffs from damage	Conservation Commission Town Manager	Ongoing
ED2.A.2. Identify and promote tourist activities for the “shoulder” and off seasons, specifically those which emphasize individual and quality experiences rather than those designed to attract large numbers of visitors	Block Island Tourism Council	Ongoing
ED2.A.3. Consider establishing a sustainable tourism certificate program for island businesses	Block Island Tourism Council	Long-term
ED2.B.1. Provide improved access to beaches and trails, and increase availability of amenities such as bicycle racks, restrooms, benches, informational materials and signage	Conservation Commission Planning Board Town Council	Long-term
ED2.B.1. Implement a consistent and distinctly Block Island wayfinding signage program to help visitors find local services, facilities, landmarks and attractions (T1.E.3.)	Tourism Council Old Harbor Task Force Historic District Commission Planning Board	Medium-term
ED2.C.1. Identify and map significant viewsheds and enact land use regulations to provide protection	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning  GIS Department Planning Board Town Council	Medium-term
ED2.D.1. Schedule regular meetings with organizations and agencies involved in tourism to increase communication	Block Island Tourism Council Town Council	Ongoing
ED2.D.2. Work collaboratively with partners including the Block Island Tourism Council, the Block Island Chamber of Commerce, and Small Business Administration to leverage efforts	Block Island Tourism Council  Town Council	Ongoing

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
TI.A.1. Adopt an airport hazard overlay zoning district to ensure land use compatibility in the vicinity of the state airport (per the requirements of RIGL 1-35 Airport Zoning Act)	Planning Board Town Council	Short-term
TI.A.2. Continue to undertake maintenance activities necessary to preserve safe and adequate docks	Town Manager Harbormaster Town Council	Ongoing
TI.A.3. Establish a local Transportation Commission or other similar body that can advocate the town's interests in access management decisions and the provision of mainland parking	Town Council	Short-term
TI.A.4. Discuss with state leaders the need for island representation on governing bodies making access management decisions relating to Block Island	Town Council Town Manager	Short-term
TI.A.5. Advocate for the establishment of a Port Authority with island representatives having an official seat at the table	Town Council Town Manager	Short-term
TI.B.1. Work with the Public Utilities Commission to establish daily ferry passenger and vehicle capacities	Town Manager Town Council	Medium-term
TI.B.2. Work with the Army Corps of Engineers and CRMC to maintain mooring limit capacity in the Great Salt Pond	Town Manager Harbormaster Town Council	Short-term
TI.C.1. Review and revise zoning as needed to reduce amount of required on-site parking and allow for off-site parking, shared parking, and contribution to public parking or a combination of these measures	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Zoning Board Town Council	Medium-term
TI.C.2. Establish and maintain limits on rental vehicles including mopeds	Town Council Police Department	Medium-term
TI.C.3. Develop a parking plan for the downtown and surrounding area	Planning Board Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning	Medium-term
TI.C.4. Establish a Parking Task Force to address on island parking needs	Town Council	Short-term
TI.D.1. Provide a public system of satellite parking areas within walking distance to Downtown and the harbors	Planning Board Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Town Manager Town Council	Long-term
TI.D.2. Explore establishing a fee-in-lieu system to support the development and maintenance of satellite parking areas as an alternative to requiring on-site parking Downtown	Planning Board Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Town Manager Town Council	Long-term

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
T1.E.1. Work with RIDOT to implement bicycle and pedestrian safety projects on the island	Police Department Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Town Manager Public Works	Ongoing
T1.E.2. Conduct regular road and sidewalk condition surveys as a means to better prioritize infrastructure investments	Public Works GIS Department Town Manager	Medium-term
T1.E.3. Implement a consistent and distinctly Block Island wayfinding signage program to help visitors find local services, facilities, landmarks and attractions (ED2.B.2.)	Tourism Council Old Harbor Task Force Historic District Committee Planning Board	Medium-term
T1.E.4. Conduct a public awareness and safety campaigns in regards to sharing the roads with cyclists and pedestrians and encouraging helmet use	Police Department	Short-term
T1.H.1. Evaluate each road currently or potentially impacted by sea-level rise or flooding to determine appropriate actions to limit impacts to the community	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Emergency Management Task Force Planning Board Town Manager Town Council	Long-term
T1.H.2. Conduct a planning study of Corn Neck Road to identify alternatives to mitigate future impacts from storms and climate change (NHCI.A.4.)	Planning Board Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Town Manager Town Council	Short-term
T2.A.1. Review local subdivision and zoning regulations, and amend as necessary, to ensure roadways and amenities are designed for all users	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board	Short-term
T2.A.2. Work with partners to install additional sidewalks and bicycle racks in and around Downtown	Old Harbor Task Force Tourism Council Planning Board Town Council	Ongoing
T2.A.3. Require installation of benches and bicycle racks when reviewing substantial development projects	Planning Board	Ongoing
T2.A.4. Undertake a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan to address user safety and overall mobility	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Town Manager	Medium-term
T2.A.5. Submit bicycle and sidewalk projects for inclusion in the State's Transportation Improvement Program and local Capital Improvement Program	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Town Manager Town Council	Ongoing

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
T2.B.1. Work with RIDOT to design bicycle and pedestrian paths that are congruent with the island's rural character	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Town Council	Ongoing
T2.B.2. Ensure walking trails including the Greenway and public right-of-ways to the shore remain passable and have appropriate signage	Conservation Commission Land Trust Town Manager	Ongoing
T2.C.1. Explore ways to provide transit options for the disabled and seniors	Town Council Town Manager	Long-term
T2.D.1. Advocate for ferry pricing and management decisions that reduce incentives to travel to the island with a personal vehicle	Town Council Town Manager	Ongoing
T2.D.2. Advocate for improved mainland parking facilities with affordable rates	Town Council Town Manager Tourism Council	Ongoing
T2.D.3. Work with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and the Town of Narragansett to develop a long-term parking plan in Point Judith	Town Council Town Manager Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning	Long-term
T2.E.1. Provide access to public storage lockers and other amenities which improve the convenience and experience for daytrippers travelling to the island without a vehicle	Tourism Council Old Harbor Task Force Town Manager Town Council	Medium-term
T2.E.2. Explore viability of a limited fixed route seasonal jitney bus service to provide access to main attractions for visitors addressing first a connection between Old and New Harbor	Tourism Council Town Manager Town Council	Medium-term

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
SF1.A.1. Make reliable high-speed internet available to the Block Island School and library in order to maintain and expand its educational programming	School Department Information Technology	Short-term
SF1.A.2. Undertake efforts to maintain and improve the long term viability of the public school system in response to reduced enrollment, including a plan to expand education on the island	School Department	Ongoing
SF1.B.1. Include costs of necessary and significant improvements to town facilities in the capital budget	Facilities Manager Planning Board Finance Town Manager Town Council	Ongoing
SF1.B.2. Explore reuse and rehabilitation of existing town structures for identified community needs	Facilities Manager Town Manager Planning Board	Short-term
SF1.C.1. Expand access to mental health treatment and substance abuse counseling	Block Island Medical Center NAMI Block Island Town Council	Ongoing
SF1.C.2. Increase telemedicine opportunities	Block Island Medical Center Information Technology	Short-term
SF1.C.3. Assist in identifying a long-term funding source for a mental health case worker	NAMI Block Island Town Council	Short-term
SF1.C.4. Ensure town departments are represented and contribute to NAMI BI task force	NAMI Block Island Town Council	Short-term
SF1.D.1. Evaluate current and anticipated future need for additional senior support services and staff including a social worker	Senior Coordinator Senior Committee Town Council	Medium-term
SF1.D.2. Promote and permit the development of appropriately located assisted living housing and transportation services	Senior Committee Town Council	Long-term
SF1.E.1. Communicate public safety needs to the State including a potential need for additional State Police presence during summer months	Police Town Manager	Short-term
SF1.E.2. Evaluate need for paid fire or rescue personnel	Town Manager Town Council Fire	Medium-term
SF1.F.1. Conduct a cost analysis comparing average annual costs associated with housing town staff and consultants and costs associated with the development and ownership of municipal housing for staff.	Town Manager Facilities Manager	Short-term

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
SF2.A.1. Work with Tourism Council, Chamber of Commerce and other partners to promote water conservation, energy conservation and solid waste reduction among tourism industry and visitors	Conservation Commission	Ongoing
SF2.B.1. Utilize on-site renewable sources of energy where feasible	Facilities Manager	Ongoing
SF2.B.2. Explore regional provision of services opportunities	Town Manager Town Council	Ongoing
SF2.B.3. Update Island Energy plan to reflect recent BIPCO purchase and off-shore wind farm.	Planning Board	Short-term
SF2.C.1. Implement plans to provide improved facilities including a welcome center at New Harbor for visitors arriving by personal watercraft	Harbors Department Town Council Town Manager	Long-term
SF2.D.1. Conduct a waste audit of municipal facilities	Town Manager	Short-term
SF2.D.2. Launch composting program and public education campaign	Conservation Commission Town Council	Short-term
SF2.D.3. Provide incentives to residents to compost and increase recycling efforts	Conservation Commission Town Council	Ongoing
SF2.D.4. Make necessary upgrades to the transfer station including drainage improvements and improved processing capabilities	Town Council Town Manager Facilities Manager	Long-term
SF2.E.1. Educate the public on the problems associated with impaired stormwater quality, the conditions which contribute to impaired water quality, and the actions which can be taken by the community both individually and as a whole to improve the quality of stormwater runoff	Planning Board Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Public Works Town Council	Short-term
SF2.E.2. Complete a watershed management plan	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Public Works Town Council	Medium-term
SF2.E.3. Review and strengthen current regulations regarding LID (low impact development) (NR2.A.3.)	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Planning Board Town Council	Medium-term
SF2.E.4. Continue to identify inadequately functioning or failed systems through an inspection and monitoring program, first targeting critical resource areas	OWTS Inspector	Ongoing
SF2.E.5. Draft regulations which will require phase out of septic systems which do not meet current standards for on-site treatment and explore funding opportunities to assist homeowners	OWTS Inspector Planning Board Town Council	Short-term

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
NHCI.A.1. Complete an assessment of the potential impacts to public structures and infrastructure resulting from projected sea-level rise	GIS Engineering	Medium-term
NHCI.A.2. Include in the capital improvement program projects required to mitigate threats to infrastructure and properties	Planning Board Town Manager Town Council Facilities Manager	Ongoing
NHCI.A.3. Evaluate current zoning and land use regulations related to future impacts from climate change and sea level rise	Planning Board	Medium-term
NHCI.A.4. Conduct a planning study of Corn Neck Road to identify alternatives to mitigate future impacts from storms and climate change (TI.H.2.)	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning  Planning Board Town Manager Town Council	Short-term
NHCI.B.1. Work with the land trust and other stakeholder to identify and protect from development low-lying land vulnerable to impacts from flooding and sea level rise and areas adjacent to coastal wetlands susceptible to increased inundation due to sea level rise	Town Council Town Manager Land Trust Planning Board GIS Conservation Commission	Ongoing
NHCI.B.2. Install public walkover structures at the Town Beach to discourage traversing the fragile dunes (NR3.B.3.)	Town Manager Facilities Manager  Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning	Short-term
NHC.I.B.3. Implement green infrastructure stormwater management strategies to enhance infiltration and increase retention on town properties and road right-of-ways	Engineering  Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning  Planning Board	Long-term
NHC.I.B.4. Evaluate the potential impacts of sea-level rise on public sewer infrastructure and potential inundation of onsite wastewater treatment systems	Engineering Planning Sewer Department	Medium-term
NHC.I.B.5. Investigate options to mitigate flooding along Beach and Ocean Avenues and its impacts on public safety buildings and services	Engineering  Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning  Planning Board	Medium-term
NHCI.C.1. Apply for funding to assist in implementing projects identified in the town's Hazard Mitigation Plan	Town Manager Engineering  Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning	Ongoing
NHCI.C.2. Establish a committee responsible for reviewing progress on implementation of the Hazard Mitigation Plan and activities resulting in CRS credit and other mitigation projects related to potential impacts of sea level rise	Town Council	Medium-term
NHCI.D.1. Assess the feasibility of burying power lines particularly in scenic and high risk areas and when road construction is planned	Town Manager	Medium-term

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
NHC2.A.1. Establish a process to directly contact special populations such as those who are particularly vulnerable due to location, age or infirmity, to ensure their understanding of procedures prior to and following a storm event	Emergency Management Public Safety Medical Center Information Technology GIS	Short-term
NHC2.A.2. Collaborate with agencies monitoring the impacts of climate change with efforts such as documenting high tide events, storm flooding impacts, bluff erosion and impacts on species	Emergency Management Public Safety Conservation Commission	Ongoing
NHC2.B.1. Undertake actions that qualify the town for advanced FEMA CRS scoring	Building, Zoning, Land Use & Planning Town Manager	Short-term

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Actions	Responsible Party	Timeframe
<p>LUI.A.1. Review and amend the zoning ordinance and the subdivision regulations as needed to ensure compatibility with the desired land use pattern</p> <p>1. Higher density development should be restricted to the compact village and transition areas that have access to public water and sewer</p> <p>2. Require residential development in the countryside to occur in a density and manner that is sensitive to, and complimentary of, the island's traditional landscape</p>	<p>Planning Board</p> <p>Town Council</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>LUI.B.1. Evaluate results of build out analysis and make adjustments in policy and regulations as desired to meet the goals identified in this Comp Plan</p>	<p>Planning Board</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>LUI.C.1. Identify amendments necessary to local subdivision regulations to ensure development occurs in a manner consistent with the goals of this Comp Plan</p>	<p>Planning Board</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>LUI.C.2. Review Flexible Subdivision Design (conservation-style) to ensure regulations will result in desired development and open space set aside outcomes</p>	<p>Planning Board</p> <p>Town Council</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>LUI.C.3. Undertake a review of the Planned Development Regulations, with amendments to extend its application to all of the commercial and mixed use districts and to focus on creative mixed-use development as well as affordable housing</p>	<p>Planning Board</p> <p>Town Council</p>	<p>Medium-term</p>
<p>LUI.D.1. Undertake a review of all mixed use and commercial zones with possible amendments to their definitions, allowed uses, dimensional requirements and district boundaries</p>	<p>Planning Board</p> <p>Town Council</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>LUI.F.1. Amend zoning ordinance to be consistent with applicable state and federal requirements pertaining to airport hazards</p>	<p>Planning Board</p> <p>Town Council</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>LUI.G.1. Prepare and implement a Village Design Plan that promotes the historic and walkable qualities of this dense mixed-use center</p>	<p>Planning</p> <p>Planning Board</p> <p>Historic District Commission</p> <p>Old Harbor Task Force</p>	<p>Medium-term</p>
<p>LUI.G.2. Review regulations for parking and pedestrian access in both the zoning and subdivision regulations, and consider amendments to allow flexibility in parking requirements and to strengthen provisions for sidewalks and pathways as part of new development in the village and transitional areas</p>	<p>Planning</p> <p>Planning Board</p> <p>Historic District Commission</p> <p>Old Harbor Task Force</p>	<p>Medium-term</p>
<p><i>Note: Highlighted actions are related to items included in the Town's Capital Improvement Program.</i></p>		

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# 13. ACRONYMS & DEFINITIONS

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## Acronyms

CGSP – Committee for the Great Salt Pond  
CRMC – Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council  
EPA – United States Environmental Protection Agency  
FIRM – Flood Insurance Rate Map  
GSP – Great Salt Pond  
HDC – Historic District Commission  
LCAS – Large Capital Asset Subcommittee  
NOAA – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
OWTS – On-site Wastewater Treatment System  
RIDOT – Rhode Island Department of Transportation  
RIGL – Rhode Island General Law  
RIRRC – Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation  
SAWG – Shoreline Access Working Group  
SLAMM – Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model  
TIP – Transportation Improvement Program

## Definitions

**Affordable housing** is used to describe housing that is generally affordable, meaning that households would pay no more than 30% of their income on housing.

**Attainable housing** has a sales price or rental amount that is within the means of a household that is moderate income or less.

**Agritourism** refers to any agriculturally based operation or activity conducted for the enjoyment or education of visitors and that generates supplemental income for the farmer. Agritourism can include farm stands, pick-your-own, tours, classes, festivals and fairs, Christmas tree farms, pumpkin patches, winery weddings, guest ranches, and more.

**American Community Survey** is an ongoing statistical survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, sent to approximately 250,000 addresses monthly (or 3 million per year). It regularly gathers information previously contained only in the long form of the decennial census.

**Area median income** divides the income distribution into two equal parts: one-half of the cases falling below the median income and one-half above the median. HUD uses the median income to calculate income limits for eligibility in a variety of housing programs.

**Best Management Practices** is often used to refer to both structural systems used to treat or store polluted stormwater, as well as, non-structural procedural practices such as educating a community about water quality measures.

**Blueways** are routes along a river or across other bodies of water, such as a lake or saltwater, for people using small beachable boats like kayaks, canoes, day sailors or rowboats.

**Broadband** refers to the amount of data that a consumer can download or upload from the internet in a given second; a wide band of frequencies is available to transmit information resulting in users being able to access the internet and internet related services at significantly higher speeds than those available through “dial-up” services.

**Comprehensive permit** is a state-law regulated, single application for special exception to build low and moderate income housing in lieu of separate application to applicable boards (developer goes only to the Planning Board for review and relief instead of also going to the Zoning Board). “Comp permits,” as they are called, require a minimum 25 percent affordable housing.

**Conservation easement** refers to a binding contractual agreement between typically a land trust or government entity and a landowner under which the landowner, permanently or during a time period specified in the agreement, agrees to conserve or restore habitat, open space, scenic, or other ecological resource values on the land covered by the easement.

**Conservation-style subdivision** is a site planning technique which bases the layout of building lots on the natural characteristics of the land and reduces lot sizes so that the remaining land can be used for recreation, common open space, and/or preservation of environmentally, historically and culturally sensitive features and structures.

**Dredging** is an excavation activity or operation usually carried out at least partly underwater, in shallow seas or fresh water areas with the purpose of gathering up bottom sediments and disposing of them at a different location. This technique is often used to keep waterways navigable.

**Eutrophication** is an excessive richness of nutrients in a waterbody (phosphates) frequently due to contaminants from upland runoff, which causes a dense growth of plant life and death of animal life from lack of oxygen.

**Farm, Forest, and Open Space Program** allows property to be assessed at its current use, not its value for development. The purpose of the law is not to reduce property taxes, but to conserve Rhode Island’s productive agricultural and forest land by reducing the chance it will have to be sold for development (RIGL 44-27).

**Farm-to-table** refers to a movement which promotes serving local food at restaurants.

**FIRM (Flood Insurance Rate Map)** is the official map of a community on which the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has delineated the Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs), the Base Flood Elevations (BFEs) and the risk premium zones applicable to the community.

**Fresnel lens** is a type of compact lens originally developed by French physicist Augustin-Jean Fresnel for lighthouses. A Fresnel lens can capture more oblique light from a light source, thus allowing the light from a lighthouse equipped with one to be visible over greater distances.

**Geographic Information System** is a computer system designed to capture, store, manipulate, analyze, manage, and present all types of spatial or geographical data.

**Greenways** are a track of land that is reserved for conservation or recreational use.

**Highway Functional Classification System** is used to define the role a road plays in the nation’s highway network. A roadway’s functional classification is based upon its level of travel mobility and access to

property according to a hierarchy of travel service it provides. A roadway's functional classification now has increased importance when the State determines project priority in developing the state's Transportation Improvement Program.

**HousingWorks** is a coalition of public, non-profit and private organizations in Rhode Island, affiliated with Roger Williams University, which researches and advocates for affordable housing across the state.

**Inclusionary zoning ordinance** is a local regulation which requires a given share of new construction to be affordable by people with low to moderate incomes.

**Invasive species** is an organism (plant, animal, fungus, or bacterium) that is not native and has negative effects on the economy, environment, or health. Not all introduced species are invasive.

**Low-and-Moderate Income Housing** or "LMI housing" is used to describe housing that has been subsidized and deed- or otherwise-restricted for a term not less than 30 years to ensure long-term accessibility to those of low- and moderate-incomes, as defined by the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act, RIGL § 45-53-3.

**Low -and - Moderate Income Housing Act** is the State law requiring that 10% of each municipality's housing stock be "affordable". "Affordable" units are required to have a government subsidy and deed restriction to assure they will remain affordable for a minimum of 30 years. The Act requires that communities that are not exempt, produce an "affordable housing plan" and file an annual progress report with the Housing Resources Commission.

**Mixed use zoning** sets standards for the blending of residential, commercial, cultural, or institutional uses. Mixed use zoning is generally closely linked to increased density, which allows for more compact efficient development while reducing energy consumption and transportation costs. The mixed use buildings that result can help strengthen or establish neighborhood character and encourage walking and bicycling.

**Nonpoint source pollution** comes from many diffuse sources associated with land use activities over a wide land area. When rainfall or snowmelt occurs, sediment, nutrients, organic and toxic substances are carried across the ground and into surface waters and groundwater.

**Point source pollution** means any discernible, confined and discrete conveyance, including but not limited to any pipe, conduit, container, concentrated animal feeding operation, vessel or other floating craft, from which pollutants are or may be discharged.

**Payment in lieu** is an alternative to the actual physical integration of affordable units into a given development. The developer makes a payment of a predetermined sum of money to the community to be used for future development of affordable housing units.

**State Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)** is the multi-year program for scheduling and funding the planning, design, and construction phases of the entire range of transportation projects in the state.

**Mandatory Recycling Rate** includes common recyclables sent to RIRRC's Materials Recycling Facility plus other materials on the RIDEM's Mandatory Recyclables List including leaf and yard debris composted at RIRRC or elsewhere, as well as clothing and other metals reused or recycled elsewhere. RIRRC divides these tons by their total plus the total tons of trash delivered to RIRRC for landfilling.

**Rate of Overall Material Diversion from Landfill** is a measure which expands on the Mandatory Recycling Rate by adding in all other materials that are diverted from the landfill for reuse or recycling. It includes special wastes such as tires, mattresses, clean wood, clothing and shoes, books, motor oil and filters, cooking oil, etc, not on the RIDEM'S Mandatory Recyclables list. RIRRC divides these tons by their total plus the total tons of trash delivered to RIRRC for landfilling.

**Sea level rise** refers to the current and projected rise in sea level associated with climate change and global warming.

**Stewardship** refers to the responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices in a way that takes full and balanced account of the interests of society, future generations, and other species, as well as of private needs, and accepts significant answerability to society.

**Storm surge** is a coastal flood of rising water as a result of atmospheric pressure changes and wind associated with a storm.

**Type I Waters** is identified as “Conservation” in the R.I. Coastal Resources Management Council’s Water Type Classification. Type I waters include water areas that are within the boundaries of designated wildlife refuge areas, water areas that have retained undisturbed natural habitat or maintain scenic values of unique or unusual significance, and water areas that are particularly unsuitable for structures due to their exposure to severe wave action, flooding and erosion.

**U.S. Census** is a decennial population census mandated by the United States Constitution and carried out by the U.S. Census Bureau. It is the number one source of current population data and the latest Economic Indicators.

**Value-added products** most generally refers to manufacturing processes that increase the value of primary agricultural commodities (i.e. strawberries into jam). Value-added agriculture may also refer to increasing the economic value of a commodity through particular production processes, e.g., organic produce, or through regionally branded products that increase consumer appeal and willingness to pay a premium over similar but undifferentiated products.

**Vernal ponds** are temporary wetlands that fill after the snowfall each spring. They become the seasonal breeding and feeding grounds for many intriguing amphibians and insects, as well as the reptiles, birds, and mammals that depend on them for food.

**Watershed** is an area of land that feeds all the water running under it and draining off of it into a body of water.

**Wayfinding** typically refers to an attractive and consistent signage program used to orient and guide unfamiliar motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians, for the purposes of enhancing visitors' experience and promoting local economic development.

**Wellhead protection area** is a surface and subsurface land area regulated to prevent contamination of a well or well-field supplying a public water system. This program, established under the Safe Drinking Water Act, is implemented through state governments.