TOWN OF BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND

PLANNING BOARD COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN UPDATE MEETING

Agenda
Thursday, November 19th, 2026 at 5:30 PM
Conference Room at Department of Community Development
35 Washington Street (Former Guiteras School)

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Agenda Items

B1. Review Revised Housing Element

B2. Review New Planning Areas Map for the Land Use Element

B3. Review Revised Outdoor Recreation Element, Map and Inventory

B4. Review Revised Facilities Map

B5. Review Revised Natural Hazards/Climate Change Element

C. Adjournment

Date Posted: November 12, 2026

Posted By: mbw

Housing

Introduction

The Town of Bristol is home to a culturally and economically diverse population. The quality of life in Bristol attracts homebuyers from across the region. The Town's community spirit encourages pride and long-term commitment to the community, including people's homes and neighborhoods.

The Town of Bristol recognizes that adequately maintaining and constructing a diverse array of homes is vital for the quality of life in our community and the health of our local economy. It is also critically important for making sure the children and grandchildren of our families with deep roots in the community are able to make their homes here into the future and continue the Town's tradition of pride. The whole town benefits when people have access to a variety of housing types and prices that meet their needs at various stages of life.

Bristol also recognizes that it has limited land and environmental issues, including low-lying lands subject to flooding, that will continue to constrain how many new homes are built and where in town they can best be accommodated. Fortunately, Bristol already has one of the most diverse housing stocks in Rhode Island outside the urban core, with single-family homes of various sizes, two-families, three-families, and both small and larger-scale apartments and condominiums. Unfortunately, the cost of housing is increasingly out of reach for the average household in town, even for more modest housing in traditionally working-class neighborhoods.

Having housing that is safe and affordable is important in order to keep the younger generations in Town, help provide Town services such as the volunteer Fire Department and have a strong workforce. The Town is also aging, and in great need of more independent and assisted living opportunities for seniors as well as support services to help people better age in place. What is good for the growing elderly population is actually good for all residents, such as making streets more pedestrian friendly.

In this challenging situation, the overarching goal is to develop housing policies that meet the needs of our residents and employers, support our neighborhoods, make efficient use of our existing infrastructure, and protect our remaining natural resources today and into the future. There are no easy solutions left, and every decision the Town will make regarding housing will have tradeoffs. This Housing Chapter lays out local policies and implementation actions to provide a range of housing choices, recognizing the local, regional, and statewide housing needs of people at a range of income levels and all stages of life.

One of the major objectives of the Housing Chapter is to reassess the Town's existing strategies to facilitate the development and maintenance of at least 10 percent of the Town's housing stock as subsidized affordable housing as defined by the Rhode Island Low and Moderate Housing Income Act. However, this Housing Chapter also recognizes that market rate housing development and renovation of the existing housing stock are just as important for meeting the long-term housing needs of the community.

Low or Moderate Income Housing

The State's definition of "low or moderate income housing" includes:

'any housing whether built or operated by any public agency or any nonprofit organization or by any limited equity housing cooperative or any private developer, that is subsidized by a federal, state, or municipal government subsidy under any program to assist the construction or rehabilitation of housing affordable to low- or moderate-income households, as defined in the applicable federal or state statute, or local ordinance and that will remain affordable through a land lease and/or deed restriction for ninety-nine (99) years or such other period that is either agreed to by the applicant and town or prescribed by the federal, state, or municipal government subsidy program but that is not less than thirty (30) years from initial occupancy' (www.rilin.state.ri.us).

Low to moderate income (LMI) households in Bristol are defined as those reporting incomes below 80 percent of the median household income for the Providence-Warwick Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

Throughout this chapter, the term "***LMI Housing***" or "***Low-Moderate Income Housing***" will refer to subsidized housing units that count toward the Town's low or moderate income housing goals. The term ***"affordable housing"*** will refer to any home that is generally affordable to the occupant, whether market rate, subsidized, owner-occupied, or renter-occupied.

2016 Comprehensive Plan Implementation Progress

Since adoption of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, Bristol has advanced several initiatives intended to expand housing opportunities, preserve existing housing, and respond to changing community needs. Significant actions and developments include:

- Housing Development and Redevelopment: The Town has supported redevelopment opportunities, including the Bristol Yarn Mill and former Oliver School projects, that are expected to contribute additional housing units, including qualifying low- and moderate-income (LMI) housing.
- Inclusionary Zoning: Following changes to state law, the Town reinstated its inclusionary zoning provisions in 2025, requiring an affordable housing

component in qualifying residential developments and establishing a local mechanism to encourage LMI housing production.

- Accessory Dwelling Units: Bristol has amended its zoning regulations to accommodate accessory dwelling units consistent with evolving state requirements, expanding opportunities for smaller residential units within existing neighborhoods.
- Housing Rehabilitation: The Town has continued participation in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to assist income-eligible homeowners with necessary repairs and improvements.
- Short-Term Rental Regulations: In 2026, the Town adopted regulations governing short-term rentals, establishing standards for new short-term rental uses intended to address neighborhood compatibility and potential impacts on year-round housing availability.
- Affordable Housing Partnerships: Bristol has continued working with the Bristol Housing Authority, East Bay Community Development Corporation, and other housing partners to maintain and expand housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households.
- State Housing Legislation: Changes to Rhode Island housing laws have expanded opportunities for housing development and revised the methods used to calculate municipal progress toward the statutory 10% LMI housing threshold, including provisions recognizing qualifying rental assistance vouchers.

Community Engagement

This chapter was updated with input from many stakeholders, as summarized below. First, several key stakeholders were interviewed to get a sense of how the Town's housing needs have changed since the last comprehensive plan was adopted. Interviewees included the Bristol Housing Authority, the East Bay CDC, local developers, and the Town Administrator. Next, Town staff discussed the latest housing data and trends with the Planning Board and reviewed the existing Goals, Policies, and Actions for housing, considering what has been accomplished, what is in progress, what has not been accomplished, and what might be missing. The Town hosted a public meeting on May 22, 2024, where residents were asked to provide their thoughts on the Town's current housing actions and how they might be updated. Participants were also asked three big-picture questions:

Question #1: What is working well with the housing supply and market in Bristol?
Question #2: What needs are not being met? Discuss issues that you, your family, your friends, or your neighbors have had in trying to find the types of housing you need at a price you can afford.

Question #3: What are your big ideas? Be creative! What do you think the community can do to tackle these issues together?

After this discussion, the meeting became an open house. Participants were invited to walk around and look at informational display boards, including:

- Goal and Policy Boards – Modified existing Goals and Policies
- Existing Action Boards – Participants were asked to place dots on the board indicating whether they support, support with changes, or do not support an action.
- Potential Action Boards – The same dot exercise was used to evaluate potential new actions.
- Big Ideas Board
- Zoning Map of Bristol – Where should LMI housing be encouraged?

The first part of the meeting was live-streamed online. In addition, the Town prepared an online survey that replicated many of the same questions discussed in person. In total, approximately 120 people participated in the public meeting and/or the online survey. The Goals, Policies, and Actions presented below were all informed by this feedback.

Comprehensive Plan Public Workshops and Survey

Housing was also a prominent topic during the broader Comprehensive Plan workshops and community survey conducted as part of the overall plan update. This additional outreach reinforced many of the concerns identified through the housing-specific engagement while providing further perspective on how residents view housing in relation to growth, neighborhood character, infrastructure, and other community priorities.

Housing affordability was a recurring concern, particularly the ability of younger households and families to remain in or return to Bristol and the limited options available to seniors who wish to downsize. Participants also expressed concern about the availability of year-round housing and the effects of seasonal homes, short-term rentals, and student rentals on the existing housing stock. Comments identified a need for starter homes, affordable rentals, smaller and accessible housing options, and better coordination with Roger Williams University regarding student housing and properties such as the Almeida Apartments.

Participants also frequently supported making greater use of existing developed properties rather than relying primarily on development of remaining open land. Suggestions included rehabilitating existing housing, adaptively reusing vacant or underutilized buildings, considering appropriate reuse of former school buildings, and encouraging mixed-use development in suitable locations. At the same time, residents emphasized balancing additional housing opportunities with infrastructure capacity,

environmental protection, and preservation of Bristol's historic and small-town character.

Bristol Housing Data and Trends

Snapshot

The following provides a snapshot of key housing characteristics in Bristol, based on the 2020–2024 American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates. Bristol's housing stock has increased steadily, although relatively slowly, since 2000. This growth has been modest compared with the increases experienced from the 1950s through the 1980s. Of the Town's estimated 9,510 housing units, 8,731 (91.8%) are occupied and 779 (8.2%) are vacant. However, only 74 units, representing 0.78% of the total housing stock, were identified as available for sale or rent. The overall vacancy rate includes properties used seasonally, recreationally, or occasionally and therefore overstates the amount of housing actually available to households seeking a home.

Housing Costs

Housing costs in Bristol have increased substantially over the past decade, presenting growing affordability challenges for both homeowners and renters. Rising home prices, rental costs, and the incomes required to secure housing have made it increasingly difficult for many households to find affordable housing in the community.

Home Sales Prices

As shown in Table H-1, the median sales price of a single-family home in Bristol increased from $320,000 in 2014 to $662,500 in 2025, an increase of approximately 107%. Much of this growth occurred after 2020, with prices increasing by 15.2% between 2024 and 2025 alone. These trends reflect the substantial increases in home prices experienced throughout Rhode Island and the broader region and have created additional barriers to homeownership, particularly for first-time homebuyers and households with moderate incomes.

Condominiums provide an alternative to single-family homeownership, including opportunities for residents seeking smaller or lower-maintenance housing. Median condominium sales prices in Bristol have been approximately $600,000 over the past two years, illustrating that these housing options are not necessarily affordable or financially attractive to all households seeking to downsize from larger single-family homes.

~~As shown in Table 1, the median sales price of a single-family home in Bristol increased from $320,000 in 2014 to $575,000 in 2024, an increase of approximately 80%. Much of this growth occurred after 2020, reflecting the significant increases in~~

~~home prices experienced throughout Rhode Island and the broader region. These increases have created additional barriers to homeownership, particularly for first-time homebuyers and households with moderate incomes.~~

Table H-1. Bristol Median Single-Family Home Sales Prices, 2014–~~2024~~2025

Year	Median Sales Price
2014	$320,000
2015	$294,000
2016	$300,000
2017	$320,000
2018	$322,500
2019	$335,000
2020	$380,000
2021	$479,500
2022	$500,000
2023	$627,394
2024	$575,000
2025	$662,500

Source: HousingWorks RI, Housing Fact Books, 2015–2026. Data represent median single-family home sales prices for the calendar year indicated and are reported in actual dollars (not adjusted for inflation).

~~Source: HousingWorks RI, Housing Fact Books, 2015–2025. Data represent median single-family home sales prices for the calendar year preceding publication.~~

According to the 2026~~2025~~ HousingWorks RI Housing Fact Book, a household would need an estimated annual income of $~~191,440~~210,505 to afford a median-priced single-family home in Bristol, based on a median sales price of $~~575,000~~662,500. The estimated monthly cost of homeownership was $~~4,786~~5,262, illustrating the substantial income needed to enter the local housing market.

Rental Housing Costs

Rental housing costs have also increased considerably. According to HousingWorks RI, the average monthly rent for a two-bedroom unit in Bristol increased from approximately $1,657 in 2019 to $2,037~~02~~ in ~~2024~~2025, an increase of ~~21%~~23%. A household would need an estimated annual income of $ 81,463~~80,080~~ to afford the average two-bedroom rental without spending more than 30% of its gross income on housing.

Table H-2. Bristol Average Two-Bedroom Monthly Rent, 2019 and ~~2024~~2025

Year	Average Monthly Rent
2019	$1,657
~~2024~~2025	$2,~~002~~037
Change	+~~21~~23%

Source: HousingWorks RI, ~~2025~~ 2026 Housing Fact Book.

U.S. Census data provide additional perspective on housing costs across the existing housing stock. Between the 2016–2020 and 2020–2024 American Community Survey (ACS) five-year periods, Bristol's median gross rent increased from $1,141 to $1,579, an increase of 38.4%. Over the same period, the median value of owner-occupied housing increased from $347,300 to $485,000, an increase of 39.6%.

These Census measures reflect rents paid by existing tenants and estimated values of owner-occupied homes, rather than current asking rents or actual home sales prices. Together, these indicators demonstrate the substantial increase in housing costs experienced in Bristol in recent years.

Housing Affordability Implications

The combined effects of rising home prices and rents have increased affordability challenges for Bristol households. According to the 2026 HousingWorks RI Housing Fact Book, approximately 29% of owner households (1,697 households) and 38% of renter households (1,087 households) are cost burdened, meaning they spend at least 30% of their household income on housing costs. Bristol's median household income of $97,764 is substantially below the estimated $210,505 annual income needed to afford a median-priced single-family home. These affordability challenges may limit opportunities for younger residents, first-time homebuyers, older residents seeking to downsize, and workers employed in the community to obtain suitable housing.

~~The combined effects of rising home prices and rents have increased the financial burden on many Bristol households. According to HousingWorks RI, approximately 27% of owner households and 39% of renter households are cost burdened, meaning they spend at least 30% of their household income on housing costs. These~~

~~affordability challenges affect households at different income levels and may limit opportunities for younger residents, first- time homebuyers, older residents seeking to downsize, and workers employed in the community to obtain suitable housing.~~

Source: HousingWorks RI, ~~2025~~ 2026 Housing Fact Book~~, Bristol municipal profile, page 40.~~

Housing Trends

Age and Condition of Housing Units

According to the 2020-2024 American Community Survey, Bristol has a relatively old housing stock, with 28% of housing units built before 1939 and just 3.6% between 2010 and 2019. A substantial portion of Bristol's housing stock was also constructed during the 1950s through the 1980s, reflecting both the Town's historic development patterns and its periods of suburban residential growth.

Older homes contribute to Bristol's historic character and architectural heritage but may also present maintenance, rehabilitation, and energy-efficiency challenges. Some older properties may contain materials such as lead-based paint that require special consideration during renovations.

The age of Bristol's housing stock also presents challenges for accessibility and aging in place. Older homes may have stairs, narrow doorways, and other features that make them difficult to navigate for residents with mobility limitations. The 2026 HousingWorks RI Housing Fact Book identifies accessibility as an important housing concern for older adults statewide. Improving the accessibility of existing homes and expanding opportunities for smaller, accessible housing can help residents remain in the community as their needs change.

The majority of owner-occupied houses have five to seven rooms. By contrast, most renter-occupied apartments have four to five rooms. Most owner-occupied homes have three bedrooms, whereas most renter-occupied homes have one to two bedrooms.

Table H-3 shows the distribution of occupied housing units by structure type in Bristol. While single-family detached homes account for the majority of occupied housing units, approximately 37% are located in other housing types, including attached single-family homes, two-family homes, and multifamily buildings. This mix of housing types contributes to the diversity of Bristol's housing stock.

Table H-3. Occupied Housing Units by Structure Type, 2014-2023

Year	Single - Family Detached	Single - Family Attached	2-Unit Structures	3-4 Units	5+ Units

2014	5,486 - 64.2%	222 - 2.6%	1,077 - 12.6%	914 – 10.7%	855 - 10%
2019	5,202 – 62.6%	387 – 4.7%	1,068 – 12.9%	599 – 7.2%	1048 – 12.6%
2023	5,316 – 62.7%	397 – 4.7%	1,043 – 12.3%	756 – 8.9%	968 – 11.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year estimates, Table S2504, Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units.

Housing Construction

As the previous subsection discussed, a very large proportion of Bristol's housing units were constructed before the 1990s. Proportionally, according to the Rhode Island Department of Housing, the years following 1990 saw less housing construction[1]. Only 13% of owner-occupied housing units were constructed in 2000 or later, compared to 25% between 1980 and 1999. For renter-occupied housing units, only 6% were constructed in 2000 or later.

Construction data from the last 10 years reveals a tendency toward building single-family over multifamily homes and indicates that housing production has remained relatively modest in recent years. . This is not surprising given the Town is approaching build out. Table H-4 below shows an average of about 20 new housing units per year since 2015. According to the Rhode Island Department of Housing's 2024 Integrated Housing Report, the 27 units finished in Bristol in 2024 represent 2.9% of all housing units finished in the state that year. This compares favorably to Bristol's population which represents about 2% of the State's population.

Table H-4. New Housing Units Issued Certificates of Occupancy, 2015–2024

Year of Certificate of Occupancy	Single Family	Multi Family	ADU	Total Units
2015				**16**
2016				**17**
2017				**25**
2018	15	2	0	**17**
2019	8	0	3	**11**

[1] Rhode Island Department of Housing. *2022 Integrated Housing Report*. January 2023. 2022_Integrated_Housing_Report_FINAL921271.pdf. (Page 18)

2020	21	0	0	**21**
2021	23	0	0	**23**
2022	16	8	0	**24**
2023	17	0	2	**19**
2024	11	16	0	**27**
TOTAL since 2015	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**200**

Source: Town of Bristol, 2025. Data on the distribution of units by housing type were not available for 2015–2017.

The number of housing units permitted increased substantially in 2025. Bristol issued permits for 139 housing units, including 12 units in one-unit buildings and 127 units in one multifamily development. Seven of the permitted units were accessory dwelling units (ADUs), included within the total. However, only three new residential units received certificates of occupancy during 2025. Because permitted housing units may take several years to be completed, the distinction between permits issued and certificates of occupancy provides important context for evaluating both the development pipeline and actual housing production.

Occupancy

According to the 2020–2024 American Community Survey, there were approximately 8,731 occupied housing units in Bristol, 66.1% of which were owner-occupied and 33.9% renter-occupied. Of the Town's estimated 9,510 total housing units, approximately 8.2% were vacant. However, this includes seasonal, recreational, and other housing units not necessarily available for year-round occupancy.

There are many factors that can affect occupancy rates. One factor is age of homes. Many of the homes that renters live in are older.

Another factor is short-term rentals. According to a 2023 report from the Rhode Island Foundation, Bristol had 106 units listed on short-term rental websites, outpaced by municipalities like Narragansett (784) and Providence (313), but well above municipalities like Warren (42), Cranston (41), and East Greenwich (8).[2] In 2026, the Town adopted regulations governing short-term rentals. At the time of adoption, 107 short-term rentals were registered with the Town and permitted to continue under provisions applicable to existing registered units. New short-term rentals are subject to additional zoning standards, including owner-occupancy and

[2] Rhode Island Foundation. *Housing Supply and Homelessness in Rhode Island.* April 2023. http://assets.rifoundation.org/documents/RI-Foundation-Coalition-x-BCG-Final-Report-June-2023-vF-1.pdf.

parking requirements and~~, in certain circumstances,~~ special use permit review. Continued tracking of short-term rental activity will help the Town evaluate whether changes in their number or location are affecting the availability of year-round housing.

Academic institutions like Roger Williams University can be another factor. Some housing units may be unoccupied during transition periods in the academic calendar, and students compete for in-town rental housing with local families and working age adults.

Framework for Housing

Housing 2030

In 2025, the State Planning Council adopted *Housing 2030: Building Rhode Island's Future* as the housing element of the State Guide Plan. Housing 2030 establishes statewide and municipal housing production goals intended to increase housing supply, diversity, affordability, and accessibility. Bristol is identified as a "Modest Growth" community, with a five-year housing production goal of 289 units, including 43 affordable units. ~~These goals provide additional context for the Town's housing policies and implementation strategies and should be considered together with Bristol's infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, existing development pattern, and limited remaining developable land.~~The Town recognizes these as Bristol's assigned housing production goals and will pursue opportunities to advance them through appropriate infill development, redevelopment, adaptive reuse, and affordable housing partnerships, while considering infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, and the Town's existing development pattern.

Relevant State Guide Plan Elements, Reference Documents & Consistency

The Housing Element is consistent with and supports the goals and objectives of the Rhode Island State Guide Plan and other statewide planning initiatives addressing housing production, affordability, land use, and community development. Relevant plans and policy documents include:

1. **Housing 2030: Building Rhode Island's Future** – Establishes statewide and municipal housing production goals and strategies to increase housing supply, affordability, diversity, and accessibility.
2. **Land Use 2025** – Provides the statewide framework for directing development toward appropriate locations, supporting efficient use of existing infrastructure, and conserving important natural and cultural resources.
3. **Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning Standards Manual** – Establishes guidance for preparing municipal comprehensive plans and coordinating housing policies with other planning elements.

Bristol's Housing Element supports these statewide objectives through policies and implementation strategies that encourage additional housing opportunities, promote affordable housing production and preservation, facilitate appropriate redevelopment and adaptive reuse, and coordinate housing development with infrastructure capacity, environmental protection, and community character.

The Town recognizes the housing production goals assigned to Bristol under Housing 2030 and will pursue opportunities to advance these goals through its land use policies, housing partnerships, and implementation program. The Housing Element is coordinated with the Land Use, Economic Development, Transportation, and Public Services and Facilities Elements to support an integrated approach to future housing development.

Zoning for Residential Uses

The Town of Bristol is divided into 18 base zoning districts, of which 12 districts allow for one or more types of standard residential use. Compared with many of its neighbors, Bristol's zoning allows for a wide range of housing types. Notably, Bristol has five zoning districts in which multi-household dwellings are allowed by right.

Table ~~4~~H-5. Types of Residential and Mixed-Use Zoning Districts and the Types of Housing They Allow, 2024.

Name of District	Types of Housing Allowed	Minimum Lot Size (in Square Feet)	Notes
R-80 Zone	Single Household Dwelling	80,000	
R-40 Zone	Single Household Dwelling	40,000	
R-20 Zone	Single Household Dwelling; Two-Household Dwelling	20,000	Two-Household Structures allowed if at least one unit is deed restricted LMI housing.
R-15 Zone	Single Household Dwelling; Two-Household Dwelling	15,000	Two-Household Structures allowed if at least one unit is deed restricted LMI housing.
R-10 Zone	Single Household Dwelling; Two-Household Dwelling	10,000	
R-10SW Zone	Single Household Dwelling;	10,000	

	Two-Household Dwelling		
R-8 Zone	Single Household Dwelling; Two-Household Dwelling	8,000	
R-6 Zone	Single Household Dwelling; Two-Household Dwelling; Multi-Household Dwelling	6,000	6,000 square feet for the first dwelling unit and 4,000 square feet per additional dwelling unit where public water and sewer required.
LB Zone	Single Household Dwelling; Two-Household Dwelling; Multi-Household Dwelling		
MMU Zone	Multi-Household Dwelling		Residential on upper floors of buildings only.
D Zone	Single Household Dwelling; Two-Household Dwelling; Multi-Household Dwelling		
W Zone	Single Household Dwelling; Two-Household Dwelling; Multi-Household Dwelling		Ground floor commercial uses are required for larger-scale multi-household dwellings.

Housing in Bristol's Neighborhoods

Bristol is a community of many distinct neighborhoods with different housing types and conditions. The types and density of housing that exist in these neighborhoods today largely correspond with what is allowed in their underlying zoning districts. The Land Use Chapter of this Plan divides the Town into 16 Planning Areas, which functionally represent 16 different neighborhoods. Please refer to that chapter for more detailed information, including a map of the various Planning Areas. Below is a summary of the housing types, ages, and density generally found in each of the neighborhoods.

Northeast

Located in the far northeastern corner of Bristol, this neighborhood is largely built out into subdivisions. The area along the Kickemuit River consists of smaller homes and cottages, many built before World War II. Inland, most homes were built after the war up through the 1980s and tend to be larger. Density ranges significantly, with lots as small as 3,000 square feet along the coast to nearly ½ acre inland and on the southern end of the neighborhood. While 2-family homes are allowed throughout the neighborhood, most homes are single-family.

Kickemuit

Located just south of the Northeast neighborhood, Kickemuit is more rural in character with some of the Town's last remaining farms. Protection of open space and agricultural lands remains a priority here, however, there remain opportunities for mixed use development along Metacom Avenue on its western border. The zoning in this area requires 15,000 square foot minimum lot sizes, however, many homes sit on much larger lots of ½ acre or more. Development here is more recent, with most homes built in the late 1980s or later.

The Narrows & Hopeworth

Located just south of the Kickemuit neighborhood, The Narrows and Hopeworth neighborhoods have similar characters, with some older, smaller homes on smaller lots along the waterfront, and larger, newer homes on larger lots inland. Like other neighborhoods bordering Metacom Avenue, there are opportunities for mixed use development along that corridor. The zoning in this area generally requires 10,000 - 15,000 square foot minimum lot sizes, however, there is a wide range of density in the neighborhood, with some homes on lots of 5,000 square feet or less and others of 1/3 acre or more. While 2-family homes are allowed in this neighborhood, the vast majority of existing homes are single-family. Development here has occurred in phases, with some coastal and farm cottages having been built prior to World War II, but with most homes built anywhere from the 1950s to the 1990s. The Narrows is home to the Rhode Island Veterans Home while Hopeworth is home to a former landfill.

Mount Hope

Located just south of the Hopeworth neighborhood, Mount Hope is a largely undeveloped are of farmland and forests. There is a subdivisions just off Metacom Avenue at Tower Street similar in character to the inland parts of Hopeworth and the Narrows. Just south of Mount Hope Farm is the Bristol Landing development, a denser condominium community with a variety of attached and detached housing types.

The College

Located on the southeastern tip of Bristol, this area is home to Roger Williams University. Many students live in dormitories on campus, and the Town is in regular communication with the university to expand housing options on campus so that fewer students are competing with other renters for off-campus rental housing.

The Estates

Located on the southwestern tip of Bristol, this area, as its name suggests, is made up of large homes on large lots, often of one acre or more. Many of the homes are newer, sometimes having replaced older structures on site. This neighborhood is also home to the Columban Fathers Monastery and the Blithewold Museum. The Columban property could provide housing potential should the monastery ever close.

Downtown Neighborhood

This neighborhood wraps around the Downtown "core" to the south and east. The southern part of the neighborhood is relatively low density with many single-family homes on lots of 1/3 acre or greater. Much of the area is forested, including the area around the Town's Water Treatment Facility. The part of the neighborhood east of the Downtown "core" has a significant variety of housing types, ages, and densities, with zoning requiring minimum lot sizes of only 6,000 – 8,000 square feet. Some of the homes in this area are old farmhouses predating World War I while others have been built only within the past few years, and everything in between. While two-family and multi-family housing is the exception and not the rule in terms of existing housing stock, there is certainly a presence of this housing diversity which is allowed by zoning. There are also opportunities for mixed use in this neighborhood.

Downtown Core

The Downtown Core is the historic heart of Bristol, with the highest concentration of historic buildings and a wide variety of housing types. This area has the oldest and densest housing stock in Bristol with a range of single-family homes, two-family homes, three-family homes, multi-family homes, and mixed use along the Town's major commercial corridors. Traditionally, this neighborhood has been home to a wide swath of Bristol's socioeconomic layers, from the working class to the very wealthy. In spite of the sharp increases in housing values over the last ten years, the

shear variety of housing in this neighborhood helps maintain that traditional socioeconomic diversity.

High School

As the name suggests, the High School neighborhood surrounds Mount Hope High School, the regional public high school for students from Bristol and Warren. Considering the high school and its grounds, several cemeteries, parks, forested areas, and marshy areas, much of this neighborhood remains undeveloped. However, much of the developable land in this area has been filled in with housing subdivisions since World War II – primarily single-family homes on lots of 15,000 square feet or more. However, the southern portion of the neighborhood adjacent to Downtown has some older homes on smaller lots, including several two- and three-family homes, particularly along Bayview Avenue. The Gooding Avenue corridor on the north end of the neighborhood is primarily zoned for commercial uses and has notable potential for future mixed use development. This neighborhood is also home to the Bristol Housing Authority's Benjamin Church Manor, a multi-family development for seniors.

Industrial Area and North Central

These two neighborhoods, located due north of the High School neighborhood, have limited residential areas around their peripheries. As the name suggests, the Industrial Area is made up primarily of industrial or commercially zoned land, as well as the Town Forest and the Bristol Golf Park. The North Central neighborhood is largely forested in the center, with some subdivisions around its edges. Residential development in both areas has occurred in pockets mostly since World War II and extending to the 21st century. Earlier subdivisions tend to have smaller homes on smaller lots (some of less than 10,000 square feet) while newer subdivisions tend to have larger homes on lots of ¼ acre or more.

Northwest and Highlands

These two neighborhoods are located in the far northwest of the Town adjacent to Narragansett Bay. The core of the Highlands neighborhood was built in the 1920s and the neighborhood retains many of the homes from this era on lots of ¼ acre or more with many mature trees. The far southern end of the neighborhood was largely built out in the 1950s and 1960s, with smaller homes on 10,000 square foot lots. Areas to the north were built out in the 1960s to 1990s with larger lots and homes. Most of the Northwest area was developed as a Planned Unit Development in the 1970s and 1980s, as the North Farm condominium complex. This community largely consists of townhouse style development.

State Park and Poppasquash

These two neighborhoods are the least densely populated in the Town. State Park consists of Colt State Park, Bristol Town Beach, the Town's Community Center, the North Burial Ground, and other areas set aside for recreation. It is not populated. Poppasquash is located on the Poppasquash Neck peninsula and consists of single-family homes on large lots (at least an acre and often much larger) or forested land.

Bristol's Housing Agencies and Programs

The Bristol Housing Authority (BHA) works to make affordable housing opportunities available to Bristolians. The BHA oversees Benjamin Church Manor, an affordable housing complex of 130+ units for the elderly. As of 2024, there are over 300 people on the waitlist. The BHA also manages the Town's participation in the RI Centralized Waiting List Portal for the Housing Choice Voucher Rental Assistance Program. These vouchers help subsidize rents in private rental homes.

The East Bay Community Development Corporation (EBCDC) is a nonprofit organization that has been working for over 30 years to build and preserve affordable housing for low to moderate income residents in Bristol, Barrington, and Warren. The EBCDC is currently responsible for over 300 apartment units in those three towns and Franklin Court Independent Living and Franklin Court Assisted Living (both in Bristol). Originally called the Bristol Foundation, the East Bay CDC was born in 1989, the result of a study the Town of Bristol had commissioned. Its inception was initially focused on revitalizing the neighborhood around the Kaiser Mill Complex. The Kaiser Mill Complex is now home to Franklin Court Assisted Living.

The Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI) is an association of the state's Community Development Corporations (CDC). To help make housing more affordable for Rhode Islanders, HNRI advocates for state policies, connects first-time homebuyers and landlords with classes on home buying, and provides housing-specific informational resources to homebuyers, homeowners, tenants, and member organizations. HNRI is also affiliated with the Community Housing Land Trust of Rhode Island (CHLT), a nonprofit which works with developers and municipalities across Rhode Island to develop affordable housing. After construction, they also work with different stakeholders to ensure the property is compliant with deed restrictions requiring it to be affordable. HNRI plays this role for many properties in Bristol.

Bristol offers property tax exemptions for qualifying senior homeowners, reducing the taxable assessed value of their homes. Table ~~5~~ H-6 identifies the exemption amounts by age, as established in the Bristol Town Code.

Table ~~5~~H-6. Bristol's Tax Exemptions for Seniors By Age

Ages 65-69	Ages 70-74	Ages 75 and Older
$15,000	$ 17,500	$ 20,000

Source: Bristol, RI Town Code., § 27-9. - Entitlements and amounts (2026).

~~Bristol has a Home Repair Program funded by Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and managed by Church Community Housing. The Town started the program in order to help residents, notably those with limited financial means, improve their homes. To receive support through this program, applicants must meet certain income requirements determined each year by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).[3]~~ Bristol participates in the state-administered Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, which provides funding for the Town's Home Repair Program. The program is administered locally through Church Community Housing Corporation and assists income-eligible homeowners with necessary home repairs and improvements. Eligibility is based on income limits established annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Funding is subject to State approval and availability.

In addition to the Town's existing Home Repair Program, the State launched a Statewide Home Repair Program funded through the 2024 housing bond. The program provides assistance to lower-income homeowners for urgent repairs intended to maintain safe living conditions and preserve existing housing. The Town should continue to make residents aware of available home repair assistance programs and resources ~~State and local resources available~~ to maintain and rehabilitate Bristol's aging housing stock.

~~[3] For more information about the Town's program, visit: https://bristolri.gov/330/Bristol-Home-Repair-Program.~~

Issues and Opportunities

Housing Production Barriers and Opportunities

Bristol faces several constraints to new housing production, including limited remaining developable land, increasing construction and financing costs, environmental limitations, infrastructure capacity, and the availability of suitable redevelopment properties. While many of these factors are influenced by broader market conditions or are outside the Town's direct control, local land use regulations, infrastructure planning, and development review procedures can influence the feasibility and location of new housing.

The Town can help address these barriers by identifying appropriate redevelopment and adaptive reuse opportunities, evaluating zoning and dimensional standards, coordinating housing development with infrastructure capacity and planned improvements, and working with public and private housing partners. Existing water, wastewater, transportation, and other infrastructure may support additional housing in suitable developed areas, while capacity limitations, drainage concerns, and environmental constraints may restrict development in others. These considerations are addressed in greater detail in the Land Use, Public Services and Facilities, Transportation, and Natural Resources Elements.

Cost Burden

One of the best sources of data on local housing needs and problems, including cost burden, is the Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) developed by U.S. HUD. Cost Burden refers to any household paying more than 30% of its income on housing. Severe Cost Burden refers to any household paying more than 50% of its income on housing. Table ~~6~~ H-7 below summarizes cost burdened households of various kinds within Bristol.

According to the 2017–2021 CHAS data, nearly one-third of Bristol households were cost burdened. Whether people choose to or are forced by circumstances to spend more than 30% of their incomes on housing, this means they have less disposable income to spend both on other necessities such as food and health care, and at local shops, restaurants, and service providers. In other words, the entire economy is impacted.

Low- and moderate-income (LMI) households, defined as those earning less than 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), experience substantially higher rates of housing cost burden than households overall. Approximately two-thirds of LMI households are cost burdened, and more than one-third are severely cost burdened, leaving less income available for other necessary expenses. While approximately 30% of Bristol households were renter-occupied during the CHAS reporting period, renters accounted for more than half (52%) of cost-burdened LMI households. However, a

substantial proportion (48%) of cost-burdened LMI households were homeowners, potentially including older residents living on fixed incomes.

Table ~~6~~H-7. Bristol CHAS Data, 2017-2021: Cost Burden

	Number of Households	Percent
Number of Cost Burdened Households	2,514	31.2% of total households
Number of Severely Cost Burdened Households	1,125	14.0% of total households
Number of LMI Cost Burdened Households	1,770	66.7% of LMI households
Number of LMI Severely Cost Burdened Households	905	34.1% of LMI households
Number of LMI Cost Burdened Households that are renting	920	52.0%
Number of LMI Cost Burdened Households that own their home	850	48.0%

Source: Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), 2017-2021

More recent data from the 2020–2024 American Community Survey indicate that housing cost burdens remain significant in Bristol. Approximately 37.9% of renter households (1,087 households) and 29.4% of owner households (1,697 households) were cost burdened, spending 30% or more of their household income on housing costs. The CHAS data presented in Table ~~6~~ H-7 provide additional detail regarding the income and tenure characteristics of cost-burdened households.

Local Needs

CHAS data tracks four different housing problems: incomplete kitchen facilities, incomplete plumbing facilities, more than 1 person per room, and cost burden greater than 30%. Table H-~~8~~7 captures households with at least one such problem, organized by renters vs. owners and by household income. The acronym "HAMFI" - HUD Area Median Family Income - is calculated by HUD for each jurisdiction and will not necessarily be the same as other calculations of median incomes (such as a simple Census number), due to a series of adjustments that are made by the agency. The numbers in the "Percent" column represent the percent of households in each category with at least one housing problem. For example, in the first row of statistics in Table 7, "485" represents 89% of all renter households earning less than 30% HAMFI.

Table ~~7~~H-8. Bristol CHAS Data, 2017-2021.

Household Income	Households with at least 1 Housing Problem	Percent

RENTERS		
≤ 30% HAMFI	485	89%
> 30% - ≤ 50% HAMFI	285	95%
> 50% - ≤ 80% HAMFI	150	28%
> 80% - ≤ 100% HAMFI	40	14%
> 100% HAMFI	10	1%
Total	**970**	**38%**
OWNERS		
≤ 30% HAMFI	245	89%
> 30% - ≤ 50% HAMFI	235	72%
> 50% - ≤ 80% HAMFI	370	55%
> 80% - ≤ 100% HAMFI	175	46%
> 100% HAMFI	340	9%
Total	**1,365**	**25%**

Source: "Consolidated Planning/CHAS Data," Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research, last accessed: October 30th, 2024, https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html#year2006-2020.

It is no surprise that income generally correlates with housing problems. The lower a household's income, the more likely it is to have at least one housing problem. The one notable exception is that renter households making less than 30 percent of the HAMFI are a little less likely to experience housing problems than households making between 30 percent and less than 50 percent HAMFI. One possible explanation is that a greater portion of very low-income renters are receiving some sort of housing subsidy, giving them access to higher-quality homes. Also of interest is that LMI homeowners (those making less than 80% HAMFI) are far more likely to experience housing problems than LMI renters. For renters, households making over 100 percent HAMFI have very little exposure to housing problems. However, nearly 10% of owner households making that income do.

Transportation, Parking, and Housing Opportunities

Access to transportation and parking availability influence where additional housing can be accommodated and the feasibility of residential redevelopment. Bristol's established downtown, commercial corridors, and other developed areas offer opportunities for infill housing, mixed-use development, and adaptive reuse where existing infrastructure and access to transportation can support additional residential uses. Improving pedestrian connectivity and access to transit and community services can also benefit older residents and households with limited transportation options.

Off-street parking requirements can present challenges for housing development, particularly on smaller parcels and within established commercial areas. The Town should consider opportunities for shared parking and flexible parking standards,

where appropriate, to support compatible residential and mixed-use redevelopment while addressing neighborhood parking needs. These considerations should be coordinated with the Land Use and Transportation Elements.

Homelessness

Homelessness remains a significant housing challenge in Rhode Island, although reliable data at the municipal level are limited. The January 2026 Point-in-Time count identified 2,236 people experiencing homelessness statewide, including 1,820 people staying in shelters and 416 people who were unsheltered. This represented a decline from 2,373 people counted in 2025.[1] The Point-in-Time count provides a one-night estimate of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness and does not capture everyone who experiences homelessness over the course of a year.

Comparable municipal-level counts are not readily available for Bristol. Small numbers may be suppressed to protect confidentiality, and people experiencing homelessness may receive shelter or services outside the community in which they previously lived. One locally available measure is therefore the number of school-age children identified as experiencing homelessness through the public school system.

Under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, children and youth are considered homeless when they lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition is broader than children living in shelters or unsheltered locations. It also includes children temporarily sharing housing with other households because of housing loss or economic hardship ("doubled up"), as well as children living in hotels or motels. Students may be identified through school enrollment and residency information or through referrals by school staff during the school year, with eligibility determined through the school district's McKinney-Vento process.[2]

The Bristol Warren Regional School District serves students from both Bristol and Warren. Therefore, the figures in Table ~~8~~ H-9 represent the combined regional school district and cannot be attributed to Bristol alone. During the 2024–2025 school year, 21 children in the district were identified as experiencing homelessness. This was similar to the 19 children identified in 2023–2024 and lower than several earlier years, although the relatively small numbers can fluctuate from year to year.[3]

Table ~~8~~H-9. Students Identified as Experiencing Homelessness, Bristol Warren Regional School District

School Year	Students Identified as Experiencing Homelessness
2024–2025	21
2023–2024	19
2022–2023	27
2021–2022	17
2020–2021	22
2019–2020	37
2018–2019	35
2017–2018	24
2016–2017	11
2015–2016	17
2014–2015	18
2013–2014	17
2012–2013	15
2011–2012	13
2010–2011	9
2009–2010	3
2008–2009	3

Note: Figures are district-wide and include students from both Bristol and Warren.

Sources:
[1] Rhode Island Continuum of Care, 2026 Point-in-Time Count.
[2] Rhode Island Department of Education, McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program.
[3] Rhode Island Department of Education data reported by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, *Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbooks*, 2010–2026.

Housing Choices for Older Residents and Downsizing

Bristol's aging population creates a need for housing options beyond remaining in an existing single-family home. Smaller, accessible, and low-maintenance homes, including both affordable and market-rate options, may allow older residents to remain in the community near family, services, and familiar surroundings. Senior-oriented and age-restricted developments may meet the needs of some households, while housing designed for accessibility and aging in place, without age restrictions, can accommodate residents of all ages and abilities.

The need for additional housing choices for older residents is also reflected in statewide trends. The 2026 HousingWorks RI Housing Fact Book reports that approximately 37% of older-adult households in Rhode Island consist of a person living alone, while mobility limitations become increasingly common with age. These conditions highlight the importance of accessible housing, smaller and lower-maintenance homes, and opportunities for older residents to remain connected to their communities. In addition to senior-oriented developments, accessory dwelling units and multigenerational housing arrangements may offer alternatives that allow older residents to remain near family and community support networks.

Expanding housing choices for older residents could also benefit the broader housing market. Additional opportunities to downsize may encourage some longtime homeowners to relocate from larger single-family homes, potentially making those properties available to younger households and families. While this effect cannot be guaranteed, providing housing choices for residents at different stages of life can support greater mobility within the local housing market.

The former Reynolds School on High Street, near the planned senior center, and the Columban Fathers property have been identified as potential locations to evaluate for senior-oriented housing. Any future reuse or redevelopment would be subject to property disposition decisions, site suitability, historic and environmental considerations, and applicable development approvals. Neither property is designated specifically for senior housing through this Plan.

~~Low and Moderate Income~~Low- and Moderate-Income Housing

~~Low and Moderate Income~~Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Data and Trends

The ~~Low and Moderate Income~~Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Act (R.I.G.L. 45-53), mandates that Towns that do not conform to the Act find ways to encourage low-moderate income (LMI) housing development, with a goal of maintaining at least 10 percent of the total housing stock for low-moderate income households.

The Town adopted its ~~Low and Moderate Income~~Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Plan in 2005. The plan contained strategies for achieving the 10% LMI threshold as required under the ~~Low and Moderate Income~~Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Act (Act). These strategies were later incorporated into this housing chapter of the Town's Comprehensive Community Plan.

Why should the Town care to reach the 10 percent goal? If reached, Bristol would no longer be subject to housing development through Comprehensive Permits. Such developments currently may be allowed to override local zoning if they provide a certain percentage of LMI housing. By achieving 10%, Bristol would have more control over local land use decisions in the future. To reiterate, "LMI" refers to "Low-Moderate Income" households, or those making 80% of the Area Median Income or less. Of course, maintaining the 10 percent goal requires additional work – as new market rate units are built new LMI units are needed to keep up. Tools such as Inclusionary Zoning (discussed below) are a good way to maintain the 10 percent goal over time.

Current LMI Count

According to Rhode Island Housing's final 2025 Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Chart, Bristol has 626 LMI housing units, representing 6.74% of the 9,292 year-round housing units used to calculate the statutory 10% threshold. Of Bristol's LMI units, 357 are classified as elderly housing, 226 as family housing, and 43 as special needs housing. The Town's official LMI count is updated annually and may fluctuate as qualifying units and federal rental assistance vouchers are added or removed.

Currently, there are only a handful of potential new LMI units in the development pipeline. The Bristol Yarn Mill will provide or pay a fee in lieu of 26 LMI units (20% of 127 total units), ten built on site, three in residential units across the street from the mill, and through a fee in lieu that the Town intends to leverage to create at least 13 LMI units elsewhere. The redevelopment of the Oliver School is likely to produce two new LMI units.

Rhode Island law allows eligible rental assistance vouchers to count toward a municipality's LMI housing inventory, provided the assisted units meet applicable requirements and are not otherwise counted. According to the 2026 HousingWorks RI

Housing Fact Book, Bristol's certified 2025 LMI inventory includes 119 rental assistance vouchers. Because voucher utilization may fluctuate, the Town should continue to use the official annual RIHousing inventory when evaluating progress toward the statutory 10% threshold and preparing future LMI housing projections.

~~In addition, as of 2024, housing vouchers are allowed to count toward a community's LMI housing target so long as the vouchers are actively being used to rent a home in that community and the unit does not otherwise count as LMI. Rhode Island Housing will be responsible for calculating this number each year for the official LMI count. While the number of voucher holders actively renting in Bristol may fluctuate from year to year or even month to month, the overall number of vouchers available in the state is likely to remain more or less steady for the foreseeable future. Prior to Rhode Island Housing releasing official numbers, the Bristol Housing Authority estimates approximately 165 vouchers are currently in use in Bristol. For purposes of calculating the Town's LMI housing achievements, it is assumed that 165 vouchers are available now and into the future. This can be revisited should the number of vouchers available in Rhode Island ever significantly increase or decrease.~~ Taking the expected 15 LMI units at the Bristol Yarn Mill and the Oliver school and adding them to the official 2025 LMI count of 626 units which includes housing vouchers ~~in the near future~~ the Town should have a total of 641 LMI units ~~(and potentially many more in the later future depending on how the fee in lieu is leveraged – see the Spotlight on the Bristol Yarn Mill below)~~. The calculations throughout the remainder of this chapter assume a baseline of 641 LMI units.

Spotlight on the Bristol Yarn Mill

The Bristol Yarn Mill is a unique case for Bristol. The fee in lieu was based on a negotiation with the Town Council in exchange for a zoning change. The Town worked with a consultant team to explore ways to use the fee in lieu to finance the development of at least 13 LMI units. ~~The most likely~~A potential solution would be to use the $520,000 generated by this fee as a matching grant for a non-profit developer to help finance a more impactful development, such as the purchase and renovation of the Almeida Apartments, currently owned by Roger Williams University, (or another such property) into affordable and LMI housing. This has the potential to produce far more than 13 LMI units. See more under the LMI Housing Strategies below.

Table ~~9~~H-10. Low-Moderate Income Homes, 2025.

Housing Type	# of Units
Elderly	357 (57%)
Family	226 (36.1%)
Special Needs	43 (6.9%)
Total	626 (100%)

Source: RIHousing, Final 2025 Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Chart.

~~Low and Moderate Income~~Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Policy

In an effort to clarify Bristol's position on affordable housing, the following policy statement was developed for the 2009 Comprehensive Plan and re-affirmed with the last plan update as well as this plan update. Bristol supports the development of housing that helps to meet the needs of all Bristol's "local residents". Bristol is also willing to do its share to assist in meeting the housing needs of the regional population, but within the context of a broad, cooperative, fair share policy that involves all of Bristol's neighboring Towns. Bristol has great concerns over pursuing housing strategies based on past theories of public housing provisions, specifically the development of large projects for specific socioeconomic groups.

Bristol is a town that has always had a rich mixture of housing types blended together within the downtown. The outlying single-family neighborhoods have developed in a variety of lot sizes and development patterns. Bristol has never created large multifamily developments that then deteriorated causing yet more problems for residents and non-residents alike. Bristol shall not pursue that strategy in the future. In order to guide affordable housing development in Bristol, the following development standards were adopted.

Affordable housing in Bristol shall:

1. Be integrated with market price units.

2. Be dispersed throughout town rather than being congregated in specific areas or projects. It shall be developed in areas that are suitable for any type of housing development.

3. Be designed so as to physically blend with surrounding market price units in terms of height, massing, site design, and architectural treatment.

4. Be designed to give residents and neighbors pride in their homes.

5. Be developed to give residents the opportunity to share in the ownership of at least some of the units where feasible given the particular needs.

~~Low and Moderate Income~~Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Projected Target

Under the Rhode Island ~~Low and Moderate Income~~Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Act, municipalities are expected to work toward having at least 10% of their year-round housing units qualify as low- and moderate-income (LMI) housing. According to RIHousing's final 2025 LMI Housing Chart, Bristol had 626 qualifying LMI units, representing 6.74% of its year-round housing stock. Based on the 2020 Census count of 9,292 year-round housing units, the Town would need approximately 930 qualifying LMI units to reach the 10% threshold, or 304 additional units beyond the current certified inventory.

The Town anticipates an additional 13 LMI units associated with the Bristol Yarn Mill redevelopment and two LMI units at the former Oliver School. While the Yarn Mill units are committed as part of the approved redevelopment, the Oliver School units are included as a planning assumption pending confirmation of the project's final status and affordability requirements. These 15 units are not included in the official 2025 inventory and will contribute toward the Town's LMI percentage once completed and determined eligible for inclusion in the State's inventory.

Projected Housing Growth

There are several ways to estimate Bristol's future housing needs and corresponding LMI housing targets. Previous Comprehensive Plan projections relied primarily on anticipated population growth. However, updated population projections from the Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning estimate Bristol's population at 22,643 in 2025 and approximately 22,343 in 2045, suggesting relatively stable population levels over the next 20 years. Housing demand is influenced by more than population growth alone, including changes in household size, household formation, aging residents, housing availability, and affordability.

Bristol is also largely developed, with relatively limited vacant land available for new residential construction. Between 2015 and 2024, an average of approximately 20 new housing units received certificates of occupancy annually. However, redevelopment and adaptive reuse opportunities, including larger multifamily projects, may contribute to increased housing production in the coming years.

In 2025, the State adopted *Housing 2030: Building Rhode Island's Future*, which identifies Bristol as a "Modest Growth" community and establishes a five-year housing production goal of 289 units, including 43 affordable units. This equates to approximately 58 new housing units annually, substantially higher than Bristol's historical construction rate.

For purposes of projecting future housing needs and the 10% LMI target, this Comprehensive Plan assumes an average of 30 new housing units annually. This represents a 50% increase over recent production levels while recognizing the Town's limited remaining developable land and the opportunities presented by redevelopment, adaptive reuse, accessory dwelling units, and infill development.

This planning assumption is lower than the State's Housing 2030 goal but represents a reasonable intermediate scenario for long-range analysis. It does not diminish the Town's commitment to pursuing the State's housing production goals as opportunities and resources allow.

Table ~~10~~H-11. Illustrative Housing Growth and LMI Targets, 2025–2065

Measure	2025 Baseline	2045 Projection	2065 Projection
Year-round housing units	9,292	9,892	10,492
Average annual new housing units	—	30	30
Cumulative projected new units	—	600	1,200
Units needed to meet 10% threshold	930	990	1,050
Official 2025 qualifying LMI units	626	626	626
Anticipated Yarn Mill and Oliver School LMI units	—	15	15
Additional LMI units needed beyond existing and anticipated pipeline units	—	349	409

Sources: RIHousing, Final 2025 LMI Housing Chart; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census; Town of Bristol certificate-of-occupancy data, 2015–2024; Rhode Island State Guide Plan, Housing 2030.

Note: Projections represent illustrative planning scenarios using the 2020 Census year-round housing inventory and 2025 certified LMI count as reference baselines. They assume an average of 30 net additional year-round housing units annually over the planning period. The estimates are not official future LMI determinations and should be periodically adjusted to reflect actual changes in the housing inventory and certified LMI units.

For intermediate planning purposes, the assumed average production rate of 30 new housing units annually would result in approximately 300 additional units by 2035, 450 by 2040, and 600 by 2045, measured from the 2025 baseline. These estimates provide illustrative 10-, 15-, and 20-year benchmarks and are distinct from the State's assigned five-year Housing 2030 production goal of 289 units, including 43 affordable units. Actual housing production will be monitored periodically, and the Town will continue to pursue opportunities to exceed the illustrative scenario and advance the State's production goals.

The projections indicate that Bristol will need to increase both overall housing production and the proportion of new or existing units qualifying as LMI housing to achieve the statutory 10% threshold. While new construction will play an important role, affordable housing preservation, rehabilitation, and deed restrictions on existing housing can contribute to the LMI inventory without necessarily increasing the

overall number of housing units.

Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Strategies

As required by the Rhode Island Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Act, the Town has identified specific strategies to increase its supply of qualifying LMI housing and make progress toward the 10% threshold. These strategies build upon existing local regulations, redevelopment opportunities, partnerships with affordable housing developers, and opportunities to preserve affordability within the existing housing stock.

The estimates presented below represent long-range planning targets rather than commitments associated with specific approved projects. Achieving these targets will require ongoing municipal coordination, available funding, willing property owners, and participation by public and private development partners.

Inclusionary Zoning (IZ)

Inclusionary zoning is a tool for encouraging LMI housing as part of new residential development. However, because Bristol is largely developed and much of its future housing growth is likely to occur through smaller infill projects and redevelopment, opportunities for inclusionary housing may be more limited than in communities with substantial vacant land.

Bristol's existing inclusionary zoning provisions establish affordability requirements for qualifying residential developments of five or more units. The ordinance includes an automatic sunset provision effective July 1, 2027. To date, the ordinance has not resulted in the production of qualifying affordable housing units. The Town should review its inclusionary zoning provisions in light of recent changes to state law, including required density bonuses and development incentives, to identify opportunities to improve affordable housing production while considering potential impacts on development density, neighborhood character, and development feasibility.

For purposes of the LMI housing projections, the Plan assumes that an effective inclusionary zoning program remains in place over the planning period. Under the assumed production rate of 30 new housing units annually, Bristol could accommodate approximately

~~Inclusionary zoning is an important tool for encouraging LMI housing as part of new residential development. However, because Bristol is largely developed and much of its future housing growth is likely to occur through smaller infill projects and redevelopment, opportunities for inclusionary housing may be more limited than in communities with substantial vacant land.~~

~~Bristol's inclusionary zoning provisions establish affordability requirements for qualifying developments of five or more units. For purposes of the projections, the Town assumes a 15% affordability requirement for qualifying development, consistent with state law.~~

~~Under the assumed production rate of 30 housing units annually, Bristol could accommodate approximately 600 new housing units over 20 years. Not all new units would be subject to inclusionary requirements. Assuming approximately one-third of new development occurs in qualifying projects, inclusionary zoning could generate approximately 30 LMI units over 20 years.~~

~~Allowing for fluctuations in the mix and size of development projects, a conservative planning estimate of **28 LMI units by 2045 and 56 units by 2065** is retained.~~

Comprehensive Permits

Comprehensive permits represent another significant opportunity to expand Bristol's LMI housing inventory. While municipalities may proactively identify suitable sites, coordinate with nonprofit housing organizations, and encourage affordable housing development, the timing and scale of individual projects depend on property owners, developers, funding availability, and regulatory approvals.

Comprehensive permit projects generally fall into two categories:

- **Town-supported or "friendly" comprehensive permits:** Projects involving sites identified by the Town and encouraged through partnerships with nonprofit or private developers.
- **Developer-initiated comprehensive permits:** Projects proposed independently by property owners or developers.

As part of its long-term affordable housing strategy, the Town has identified properties that may present opportunities for residential development, redevelopment, or adaptive reuse, including potential LMI, workforce and senior housing. Some properties may not be immediately available or suitable for development but could become viable as ownership, market conditions, and funding opportunities change. The identification of these properties does not constitute a development proposal or commitment to a particular use or approval process.

~~This Comprehensive Plan identifies potential redevelopment opportunities where affordable housing could be encouraged over the long term. Some locations may not be immediately suitable or available for development, but~~

~~could become viable as ownership, market conditions, and funding opportunities change.~~

~~Potential sites include:~~

1. ~~Ferreira on Bayview Avenue~~
1. ~~Almeida Apartments on Bayview Avenue (currently owned by Roger Williams University)~~
1. ~~Francis property on Bayview Avenue~~
1. ~~Gooding Plaza shopping center (2nd floor addition and/or additional mixed-use development)~~
1. ~~Former Bristol Toyota building on Metacom Avenue, including potential upper-floor residential reuse~~
1. ~~Perry Property at Metacom Avenue across from Chestnut Street~~
1. ~~King Phillip Hotel, potential adaptive rehab/reuse~~
1. ~~Columban Fathers Monastery at Ferry Road – potential reuse of dormitory building~~
1. ~~St. Elizabeth's Church school – Reuse of vacant school building.~~
1. ~~others?~~

Table H-12. Potential Sites for Housing Development, Redevelopment, and Adaptive Reuse

Property / Location	Assessor's Plat / Lot	Potential Housing Opportunity
Ferreira Property, Bay View Avenue	47/3	Residential development
Almeida Apartments, 201 Bay View Avenue	48/7	Conversion or redevelopment for affordable housing
Francis Gravel Bank, Bay View Avenue	48/8	Residential redevelopment
Gooding Plaza / 6 Gooding Avenue	118/1, 2	Upper-floor residential addition and/or mixed-use redevelopment
Former Bristol Toyota, 706 Metacom Avenue	128/11, 13	Mixed-use redevelopment or upper-floor residential reuse

Perry Properties, 500–502 Metacom Avenue	159/984, 985, 990, 991, 1034	Residential or mixed-use redevelopment
King Philip Property, 400 Metacom Avenue	155/71 and associated sublots	Comprehensive site redevelopment for mixed-use development, with commercial uses along Metacom Avenue and appropriately designed residential uses
Columban Fathers Property, 65 Ferry Road	166/2, 19	Adaptive reuse of existing institutional buildings, including potential senior housing
Former St. Elizabeth's School	23/54, 55	Adaptive reuse of former school building
Thames Street / State Street	**To be confirmed**	**Potential residential infill or mixed-use redevelopment**
Former Benny's Plaza, 655 Metacom Avenue	**94/7**	**Mixed-use redevelopment with residential component**
Bristol Total Fitness, 685 Metacom Avenue	**94/1**	**Mixed-use redevelopment with residential component**
Former Reynolds School, 235 High Street	**14/27**	**Adaptive reuse, including potential senior-oriented housing**

Note for Staff: BOLD properties are additions to the existing Housing Element property list. Thames Street / State Street was raised during the October 22 Planning Board meeting and requires confirmation of the specific parcel and assessor's plat/lot.

The properties listed represent potential opportunities for future consideration and do not constitute development proposals, property owner commitments, or determinations of site suitability.

While not all of these properties are expected to accommodate LMI housing, they illustrate potential opportunities that, together with other sites identified over time, could contribute to the Town's long-term affordable housing production goals.

The Town should ~~also~~ continue identifying suitable publicly owned, underutilized, and privately owned properties that may present opportunities for affordable housing development.

Through proactive partnerships with organizations such as East Bay Community Development Corporation, other nonprofit housing developers, and private development partners, Bristol ~~should~~ will seek to facilitate ~~an estimated~~ approximately **110 LMI units through comprehensive permits by 2045**~~.~~, increasing to a cumulative long-term planning target of 240 LMI units by 2065.

~~Over the longer term, the Town will seek to increase production through this strategy, with a planning target of **240 LMI units by 2065**.~~ Achieving ~~this~~ the long-term target would require an average of six qualifying units annually over the 40-year period, although actual production would likely occur through occasional larger developments rather than consistent annual additions.

~~The larger long-term target reflects an expectation that redevelopment and adaptive reuse will become increasingly important sources of housing production as Bristol continues to evolve. Specific opportunities will require evaluation for infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, neighborhood compatibility, financing, and other development considerations.~~ As Bristol approaches build-out, redevelopment and adaptive reuse are expected to play an increasingly important role as sources of housing production. The feasibility of individual projects will depend on property availability, infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, neighborhood compatibility, financing, and applicable development approvals.

Condition of Variances or Zoning Changes

This has been a successful strategy on a small scale. The Town can pursue this more aggressively, particularly with properties that take advantage of the Metacom Mixed Use zoning district (MMU). Several properties along Metacom Avenue are called out in this comprehensive plan as being appropriate for rezoning for higher density mixed-use, but the zoning is not actually changed until requested by the property owner and agreed to by the Town. Of course, any such development will be subject to Inclusionary Zoning, but the Town can negotiate with property owners to secure even more LMI units in the case of a variance or zoning change.

This strategy is expected to produce a relatively modest number of additional qualifying units, estimated at **20 units by 2045 and 40 units by 2065**.

Units attributed to this strategy must represent additional affordable housing beyond units counted under inclusionary zoning or comprehensive permits to avoid double-counting.

Deed Restricting Existing Housing Stock

This is a strategy that many municipalities would like to see work on a larger scale. This could involve outright purchasing of existing properties by the Town or a non-profit developer (for example, East Bay CDC is always on the lookout for such opportunities); providing tax incentives or cash payments for property owners willing to deed restrict their properties; or obtaining existing buildings through tax sales. If the Town more aggressively partners with East Bay CDC, Habitat for Humanity, and other non-profit developers, it might be reasonable to expect approximately 2 existing units could be deed restricted each year, for a target 45 additional LMI units by 2045. Over the longer term, the Town will seek to expand these efforts through stronger partnerships and additional funding opportunities, with a target of **90 LMI units by 2065**.

Because these units would generally be drawn from the existing housing stock, this strategy can increase Bristol's qualifying LMI inventory without proportionately increasing the total number of year-round housing units.

Potential LMI Housing Progress

20-Year Outlook:2045

Based on the strategies outlined above, Bristol could reasonably target approximately 203 additional qualifying LMI units by 2045, beyond the existing certified inventory and the anticipated Yarn Mill and Oliver School units.

Table ~~XX~~H-13. Projected LMI Housing Progress by 2045

Source or Strategy	**LMI Units**
Official 2025 LMI inventory	626
Bristol Yarn Mill	13
Former Oliver School (assumed)	2
Inclusionary Zoning	28
Comprehensive Permits	110
Conditions of Variances or Zoning Changes	20
Deed Restricting Existing Housing Stock	45
Projected Total LMI Units	**844**

Projected Year-Round Housing Units	9,892
Projected LMI Percentage	**8.5%**
LMI Units Required for 10%	990
Additional LMI Units Needed	**146**

Under this scenario, Bristol would increase its qualifying LMI inventory from 626 units to approximately 844 units by 2045, representing 8.5% of the projected year-round housing stock.

Although the Town would not yet reach the 10% threshold, this would represent substantial progress and would establish a stronger foundation for achieving the statutory goal over the longer term.

The Town will continue to evaluate opportunities to accelerate affordable housing production where feasible, particularly through larger redevelopment projects and partnerships that could generate more units than assumed in these projections.

40-Year Outlook: 2065

Looking further ahead, Bristol could potentially achieve the 10% LMI threshold by approximately 2065 through sustained implementation of its housing strategies.

The long-term projection assumes continued housing production averaging approximately 30 units annually and increased affordable housing activity through comprehensive permits and preservation of existing housing.

Table ~~XX~~H-14. Projected LMI Housing Progress by 2065

Source or Strategy	**LMI Units**
Official 2025 LMI inventory	626
Bristol Yarn Mill	13
Former Oliver School (assumed)	2
Inclusionary Zoning	56
Comprehensive Permits	240
Conditions of Variances or Zoning Changes	40
Deed Restricting Existing Housing Stock	90

Projected Total LMI Units	**1,067**
Projected Year-Round Housing Units	10,492
Projected LMI Percentage	**10.2%**
LMI Units Required for 10%	1,050
Projected Units Above 10% Threshold	**17**

Under these assumptions, Bristol could reach approximately 1,067 qualifying LMI units by 2065, representing 10.2% of its projected year-round housing stock.

Achieving this outcome will require a sustained commitment to affordable housing production and preservation, with particular emphasis on redevelopment, comprehensive permits, partnerships with nonprofit and private developers, and opportunities to deed restrict existing housing.

The Town recognizes that these projections are sensitive to the pace of overall housing development and the availability of funding and development opportunities. Individual projects may contribute substantially more or fewer units than assumed, and some potential development sites may not advance within the planning period.

Accordingly, the Town will periodically evaluate its progress toward the 10% goal using updated RIHousing LMI inventory data, actual housing production, and the status of anticipated affordable housing developments. Strategies and numerical targets should be adjusted as necessary to reflect changing conditions and to maintain a credible pathway toward achieving the statutory threshold.

While the 2065 projection provides a long-term planning horizon, the Town will seek opportunities to reach the 10% threshold sooner as feasible and will continue to pursue the housing production and affordability objectives established in Housing 2030.

Housing Goals, Policies, and Strategies

Housing policies must support a broad range of housing opportunities so that Bristol can continue to provide housing that is affordable to its traditionally diverse population and to ensure that all neighborhoods are livable places. Based on the critical issues described in this chapter and the overarching housing policies stated above, this section presents the goals, policies, and strategies developed by the Town of Bristol to guide its homes and neighborhoods.

The goals and policies are listed first, followed by the strategies. The strategies are inclusive of the LMI strategies discussed above.

Housing Goals and Policies

Goal H1: Work for a continued range of housing opportunities so that Bristol can continue to be home to our traditionally diverse population.

Policy H1.1: Prioritize Town efforts to address local housing needs that the private market is not meeting on its own, whether market rate or LMI, owner or rental, etc. This could include things such as senior housing, assisted living, smaller scale apartment buildings, or housing affordable to individuals or families making less than the Town's median income.

Policy H1.2: Address the housing needs of Bristol's diverse household types, including working families, single-parent households, empty nesters, persons living alone, and older residents. Encourage affordable and market-rate housing choices for older residents, including smaller, accessible, and senior-oriented homes, to support downsizing and potentially expand opportunities for younger households and families to obtain existing single-family homes.~~Address the needs of Bristol's special demographic groups, to include: working families, single parent families, parents whose children are grown, persons living alone, and the elderly.~~

Policy H1.3: Make sure that housing programs first meet the needs of Bristol residents.

Policy H1.4: Encourage a broad range of housing costs, with special emphasis on creating and maintaining houses and apartments that are affordable to working individuals and families making less than the Town's median income.

Policy H1.5: Continue programs to help elderly and others on fixed incomes stay in their homes.

Policy H1.6: Encourage coordination among public agencies and community organizations to leverage their resources and generate new programs that can better meet local housing needs.

Goal H2: Ensure that neighborhoods are livable places.

Policy H2.1: Continue to pursue the expansion of the historic district per the findings of the historic district survey, prioritizing properties with the greatest historical and architectural value.

Policy H2.2: The Town is encouraged to investigate new urbanism techniques such as form-based zoning regulations to guide the design of significant mixed-use redevelopment and design guidelines for infill development to maintain characteristics of existing residential neighborhoods and Bristol's historic downtown.

Policy H2.3: Sidewalks are encouraged for safety and sustainability purposes in new residential and mixed-use developments.

Policy H2.4: Connectivity must be maintained between neighborhoods as essential to quality of life, as well as for safety and convenience.

Policy H2.5: Address the issue of exterior lighting for public and private development, balancing the need for adequate lighting with the need to avoid excessive lighting on nearby residences.

Policy H2.6: Provide adequate water supply and pressure.

Policy H2.7: Buffer neighborhoods from incompatible land uses.

Policy H2.8: The Town should continue to call for adequate buffer zones between incompatible uses (i.e. between adjoining industrial and residential areas).

Policy H2.9: Take into account existing land use patterns when designing new zoning regulations.

Policy H2.10: Promote good design in all future developments that is appropriate to Bristol and to surrounding homes.

Policy H2.11: Require that new developments stay within a scale that is appropriate to Bristol and to surrounding homes.

Policy H2.12: Strengthen the services and amenities that make Bristol a good place to live.

Goal H3: Create affordable housing opportunities and diversify the housing stock.

Policy H3.1: Create a diversity of housing types that meets the current and future needs of low-moderate income residents, employees, and special needs populations. While Bristol does currently have housing for the elderly, families, single persons, and special needs populations, the majority of housing being built in Bristol is out of the reach of the low-mod populations. The housing gap this causes will continue to grow unless Bristol continues to actively and aggressively pursue the development of affordable housing within the town.

Policy H3.2: Meet 10% Goal for Low and Moderate Income (LMI) housing.

Policy H3.3: Provide housing opportunities for the Town's special needs populations. Achieve or maintain, whenever possible, at least a few housing units that will provide opportunities to households of one or more of the groups that have been identified as being of particular need in Bristol. Include careful and creative decisions about how the public purpose of expanded housing opportunity can be combined with other public purposes on any given site.

Policy H3.4: Revise the zoning ordinance to promote affordable housing and housing that meets the needs of all Bristol citizens.

Policy H3.5: Identify potential locations for LMI housing development.

Policy H3.6: Strengthen partnerships and build community support for affordable housing development.

Policy H3.7: Identify existing and new resources for affordable housing development.

Policy H3.8: Encourage public/private partnerships for the creation of LMI housing which will provide additional funding opportunities such as grants.

~~**Housing Strategies**~~

~~Below is a review of the 28 Housing strategies included in the 2016 Bristol Comprehensive Plan, followed by the 25 Housing strategies in this updated plan.~~

~~Review of 2016 Housing Strategies~~

~~Below is a list of the housing strategies included in the 2016 Bristol Comprehensive Plan along with a brief status update on each.~~

~~**H-1 – Create standards for multi-family housing created for affordable housing**~~

~~This was not completed. Moving forward, it may make more sense to consider standards for infill multi-family housing regardless of whether it is LMI or market rate. This is addressed in the updated strategies.~~

~~**H-2- Adopt public advertising campaign**~~

~~This was not completed. However, Bristol sees the value of a public campaign around housing issues and may wish to partner with other municipalities, organizations or the state on this. This is addressed in the updated strategies.~~

~~**H-3 Build an Affordable Housing Trust Fund**~~

~~This was not completed. The Town never received fees-in-lieu from any inclusionary zoning projects. The Town then rescinded its Inclusionary Zoning ordinance (though this plan recommends reinstating it). The updated strategies include options for using a negotiated fee from the Bristol Yarn Mill and other ways to potentially invest in an Affordable Housing Trust Fund.~~

~~**H-4 Work with RWU to encourage more on-campus housing and a right of first refusal for Almeida**~~

~~RWU does have a plan to build more on-campus housing, and they are aware of the Town's interest in Almeida Apartments when they go off-line. This is an ongoing strategy.~~

~~**H-5 Re-institute the Affordable Housing Committee**~~

~~The original appointed Committee provided recommendations to the Town Council and then disbanded. The updated strategies explore new potential roles for a reestablished Affordable Housing Committee.~~

~~**H-6 Develop a Section 8 Home ownership program**~~

~~This was not completed. This is more of a role for local non-profits. Though at the moment, the cost of home ownership is out of reach for most Section 8 voucher holders without a significant subsidy.~~

~~**H-7 Develop a program with Bristol Housing Authority to recruit more landlords for Section 8 since there are more recipients than apartments.**~~

~~This was not completed but is included in the updated strategies.~~

~~**H-8 Develop a program and promote East Bay CDC as the only East Bay Agency recognized as a monitoring agent**~~

~~This has been done informally. Whenever the Town has an applicant for LMI housing we meet with the East Bay CDC as the monitoring agent. The RI Housing Network is the monitoring agent for the LMI homeownership units that had been monitored by Rhode Island Housing. The updated strategies seek to formalize these roles.~~

~~**H-9 Partner with East Bay Chamber of Commerce to raise awareness of need for workforce housing.**~~

~~This was not completed. Again, the Town sees value in raising public awareness and this is addressed in the updated strategies.~~

~~**H-10 Utilize the service of RWU Community Partnerships Center to develop creative ways to provide affordable housing**~~

~~This is ongoing as opportunities present themselves with the CPC. This will be included with the updated strategies.~~

~~**H-11 Continue and expand the CDBG home repair program**~~

~~This is ongoing with a very active CDBG Home Repair Program, and is included in the updated strategies.~~

~~**H-12 – Consider best use or re-use of Town owned property to include housing or apply a portion of the sale to a housing trust or first-time homebuyer. Exceptions**~~

~~**are the former schools on the Town Common which cannot be sold or used for housing per the Grand Deed and the former Guiteras Elementary School.**~~

~~The former Oliver School was recently sold and is proposed for 11 residential units with 2 to be affordable (other parts of the chapter read 2 LMI). Also proposed to have one accessible unit. Remaining town-owned property is limited and there are few opportunities appropriate for housing development. However, the Town acknowledges the value of this approach. It has been included with the updated strategies, even though few results are expected in the near future.~~

~~**H-13 Work with State Legislature to broaden definition of affordable housing**~~

~~Ongoing with Statewide initiatives. Bristol has some landlords that have had long term rentals with rents less than what they could charge as documented "LMI" units. However, these landlords don't want to commit to the 30-year deed restriction and so those units are not counted towards the 10%. The Town is still interested in getting credit for such units.~~

~~**H-14 Identify individual properties and neighborhoods for architectural or historic significance and work with owners for National Register of Historic Places designation.**~~

~~Some preliminary work has been done but need to do more.~~

~~**H15 – Explore and consider form based versus use based zoning to maintain characteristics of existing neighborhoods.**~~

~~This was not completed. The Town is unlikely to pursue form based code in the near future.~~

~~**H16 – Continue to update streets with sidewalks**~~

~~This is ongoing with developments and with the Town and RIDOT. RIDOT is currently working on sidewalks on the west side of Hope Street and Ferry Road as well.~~

~~**H17 – Cul-de sacs should be discouraged where possible.**~~

~~This is ongoing with the Planning Board as part of subdivision reviews.~~

~~**H18 – Adopt a night sky ordinance to address the impacts of exterior lighting on neighborhood.**~~

~~The Town prohibits lights from impacting neighbors with shielding, location, and intensity, but not as a comprehensive "night sky ordinance."~~

~~**H-19 Continue to participate in Community Rating System**~~

~~This is ongoing and the Town is now a Class 7.~~

H-20 To provide incentive for property owners to create deed restricted affordable rental, continue to limit the property tax on the deed restricted unit to 8% of the gross income received.

This is ongoing.

H-21 Continue to list sites for affordable housing and consider scattered units.

The Town needs to update this list as a lot of the sites are no longer available. A new list is included with the updated strategies.

H-22 Continue to require affordable units as a condition for zoning relief and zone changes that include residential.

This is ongoing specifically with the Zoning Board; however, the Board doesn't always agree with staff's recommendations to require affordable units.

H-23 Create an info packet for non-profit developers to help promote creating affordable housing

This was not completed. Local non-profit developers are very aware of the opportunities in Bristol – the bigger problem is finding funding/financing.

H-24 Create design standards for in-fill development

This was not completed. Moving forward, it may make more sense to consider standards specifically for infill multi-family housing. This is addressed in the updated strategies.

H-25 Help seniors age in place

This is ongoing, though more specific strategies around this issue are needed.

H-26 Work with service providers to create affordable child care

This was not completed and is not addressed in the updated housing strategies. However, there is still a strong need for these services which the Town may explore elsewhere in this plan.

H-27 Work with homeless agencies to track homeless individuals or families

This is ongoing and is included in the updated strategies.

H-28 Work with the State to amend current state law on affordable housing including allowing Section 8 vouchers to count toward 10% goal.

State Laws were updated in 2024 to allow active vouchers to count toward the 10% goal. These units have been included in Bristol's LMI housing calculations above.

~~Current~~ Housing Strategies

H1. Adopt a **public advertising campaign** to educate residents on the need for the creation of LMI housing units.

Misinformation and a lack of information can be major barriers to LMI housing. Throughout the public outreach process, participants noted it would be beneficial to educate people about what LMI units are, who needs them, and what is involved in creating them. An advertising campaign could be one approach to significantly educate the public.

The Town should consider utilizing the Rhode Island Executive Office of Housing's Housing Forward educational resources, case studies, and training opportunities to support public understanding of local housing needs and potential solutions.

H2. Build an **Affordable Housing Trust Fund** to help give the Town a tool to invest in creating and maintaining the types of LMI housing most needed by the community in the places where it makes most sense to have it.

This program would provide financial assistance to initiatives that are directly aimed at creating more affordable or LMI housing units. On top of the fee in lieu from the Bristol Yarn Mill development, the Town may choose to seed such a fund through future negotiated fees in lieu, grant funds, or general Town revenues.

H3. Work with **RWU** to encourage **more on-campus student housing** and agree on a right of first refusal to partner with a non-profit housing developer to turn the **Almeida Apartments** into general rental or senior housing (with some or all the units as LMI housing) over time. Funds from an Affordable Housing Trust Fund could be used to help provide a downpayment for this and other large properties, or to help provide gap financing.

Encouraging more on-campus student housing could reduce the number of students who compete with non-students for housing not provided by the university.

H4. Re-institute the **Affordable Housing Committee** to help identify affordable housing opportunities, advocate for / educate about affordable housing needs, and explore more creative ways to achieve affordable housing goals.

The Town had an Affordable Housing Committee (AHC) that helped draft the initial housing strategies back in 2005. Once this was completed, the AHC disbanded. A revived AHC could help create content for a public education campaign on affordable housing, manage the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (in an advisory capacity, should the Town establish a longer term financing source for the Fund), and otherwise support Town staff in implementing the strategies of this chapter.

H5. Develop a program with the Bristol Housing Authority to **educate landlords** and encourage them to participate in the **Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher** program.

Through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides funding to public housing agencies (PHAs), in this case the Bristol Housing Authority (BHA). The PHA then passes on the funds as rental assistance to eligible people (very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled) who can find rental units owned by participating landlords. There are currently more recipients than apartments available. Expanding the number of landlords willing to accept vouchers will make more of the existing housing stock affordable to more people.

H6. Formalize agreements with East Bay Community Development Corporation and the Housing Network of Rhode Island to serve as the **monitoring agents** for privately owned LMI housing units and enforce the policy that any new LMI housing units in Bristol are deed restricted for 99 years.

The Town currently has had this arrangement informally with the East Bay Community Development Corporation, a nonprofit focused on affordable housing, and the Housing Network of Rhode Island. Formalizing these arrangements could involve the Town signing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with these organizations and, as part of those agreements, requiring a tracking system for when deed restrictions are set to expire as well as a deed restriction time period of 99 years. That tracking system would alert Town staff and the AHC (if reestablished) when they need to start working with property owners well in advance to find financing or other mechanisms to extend deed restrictions.

H7. Utilize the services of the **RWU's Community Partnerships Center** to develop creative ways to provide affordable and LMI housing.

RWU's Community Partnerships Center's mission is to undertake and complete projects that will benefit local communities within Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts, while providing RWU students with knowledge in real-world projects that deepen their academic experiences." The Town of Bristol is already a community partner with the center, as is Benjamin Church Manor, which provides affordable housing to Bristol seniors. Town staff and the AHC should approach the Center to assist with any research needed to implement the strategies of this chapter.

H8. Continue and expand the Town's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) **home repair and home maintenance grant and loan programs**.

With CDBG funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Bristol runs a Home Repair Program aimed at helping residents who may have

limited financial means to make improvements to their homes. This program has helped many individuals and families, and could be expanded from other sources, including the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

H9.

H9. Maintain and annually update an inventory of municipally owned or controlled property and evaluate appropriate properties for housing or LMI housing.

Consistent with the State Housing Land Bank Program, the Town should review real estate owned by or under the control of the municipality and identify properties that are not in current or planned municipal use. Appropriate properties should be evaluated for potential residential or affordable housing reuse. Where property is sold rather than directly reused for housing, the Town should consider dedicating a portion of sale proceeds to an Affordable Housing Trust Fund or first-time homebuyer program. The former schools on the Town Common must remain in general public use pursuant to the grand deed and may not be converted to housing.

H 10. Work with the General Assembly to **broaden the definition of LMI housing** to include modestly priced and locally affordable units within the community.

The Town will continue to advocate for this strategy. Certain landlords charge tenants less than the upper limit that officially defines a unit as LMI. In other words, those units could be defined as LMI because they are affordable (would represent 30% or less of a household's income) for people making 80% or less of the area median income (LMI). Many landlords are reluctant to voluntarily take on a 30+-year deed restriction, which is what guarantees long term affordability and is a requirement for most homes to count as LMI. Further, landlords would need to be willing to verify annually the rents they are charging and the incomes of their tenants.

H 11. Continue to participate in the **Community Rating System (CRS) of the National Flood Insurance Program**. Advocate for and explore options to raise the Town's credit for increased discounts on Flood Insurance Policies.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) oversees the CRS, a voluntary incentive program that rewards National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Communities for doing floodplain management activities that go beyond the minimum NFIP requirements. In exchange for performing those activities, the community receives discounts on flood insurance premiums. This approach saves

money, which can benefit the community, and reduces the flood risks the community faces.

The Town is now at a Class 7 CRS rating, meaning that Bristol residents who purchase or renew their flood insurance policies for properties in a Special Flood Hazard Area in Bristol will have their flood insurance premium discounted by 15%. The Town can continue to implement actions that will help improve its ratings under the CRS Program even further.

H12. To provide incentive for creating and maintaining LMI housing, the Town will proactively **reach out to property owners of deed restricted units** to inform them they are eligible to limit the property taxes on the LMI unit to 8% of the gross income received from the unit.

Many Bristol property owners who are eligible for this tax incentive do not take advantage of it. One barrier could be that many property owners are simply not aware that the tax incentive exists. Others are wary of the paperwork it would take to verify their eligibility. To address that barrier, the Town can work to inform property owners about this, including through the public advertising campaign described for strategy 1. In addition, the Town can work with the Housing Network of Rhode Island to provide support to property owners to maintain and submit their paperwork.

H13. Continue to identify locations where the Town would like to proactively encourage the development of LMI housing through **"friendly" comp permits**.

Under Rhode Island law, an applicant proposing to build housing that qualifies as at least 25% low- or moderate-income may apply for a comprehensive (comp) permit, instead of submitting separate applications to different local boards. In other words, the permit allows the developer to move through the approval process more quickly and have a higher density of units in the proposed property. Bristol has identified several properties that may have the potential for friendly comp permits either now or in the future. (See LMI Housing Strategies for more details and a list of the potential properties.)

The Town should consider utilizing the State's Housing Visualizations and Mapping Tool, together with local GIS data, to evaluate potential opportunities for infill development, redevelopment, and affordable housing on suitable properties.

H14. Require or continue to negotiate LMI units as a **condition for zoning relief**, and changes of zone that include residential uses.

The Town currently often negotiates with developers to provide more LMI units in exchange for zoning relief. The Town could set a policy requiring developers to produce a certain number of LMI units in exchange for zoning relief. Alternatively, the Town could continue to negotiate with developers, adjusting the number of LMI units they request on a case-by-case basis. (See LMI Housing Strategies for greater detail.)

H15. Create an **information packet for for-profit developers** to help promote the creation of LMI housing.

The Town could create the packet by adapting resources from Rhode Island and Massachusetts municipalities and from Rhode Island state agencies, such as Rhode Island Housing and the Rhode Island Department of Housing. The packet could include information about income limits and prices for LMI units/rentals, contact information for the monitoring agency, a draft deed covenant, preferred areas for LMI housing development, and references to Bristol's zoning ordinance and historic preservation standards.

H16. Create **design standards for infill development** of multi-family housing to help them blend into the character of existing residential neighborhoods.

Infill development means building on underutilized or unutilized lands within an existing developed area. For example, if someone were to build a triple-decker house on an abandoned lot between several triple-decker houses on a street, they would be practicing infill development. Design standards or form-based code can help ensure that a building looks compatible with its surroundings regardless of what is happening inside. For example, design standards can ensure a building envelope, basic roof shapes, building width and depth, garage placement, etc. look compatible whether the inside hosts one unit or four. So long as the required parking can be accommodated on site, small-scale multi-family can fit into many neighborhoods with the right design.

H 17. The Town will work with local homeless agencies to **track homeless individuals** or families who may have resided within the Town and try to connect them with support services.

Organizations the Town could work with include: East Bay Coalition for the Homeless, Riverwood Mental Health Services, and East Bay Community Action Program.

H18. Monitor short-term rentals and evaluate their effects on the year-round housing supply.

Implement and enforce the Town's short-term rental regulations and maintain an up-to-date inventory of registered short-term rentals. Periodically evaluate the number, location, and characteristics of short-term rentals, including grandfathered units, to determine whether changes in short-term rental activity are affecting the availability of year-round rental and ownership housing. Consider amendments to the short-term rental regulations, as warranted, based on observed housing and neighborhood impacts.

H19. Explore allowing more diverse housing types in more zones. For example . . .

- Allow up to four-family dwellings in the R-8 and R-10 districts.
- Allow two-family dwellings in the R-15 within a ½ mile walking radius of any commercial or mixed-use zoning.
- Explore zoning options for allowing clusters of small-scale cottages or "tiny homes" on single parcels.

Paired with the design standards discussed in H16, allowing a greater diversity of housing in certain zones may be an effective way to introduce housing diversity and more naturally occurring affordable housing in a way that is compatible with existing development.

H20. Evaluate opportunities to expand affordable and market-rate senior-oriented, age-restricted, smaller, and accessible housing to allow older residents to downsize while remaining in Bristol. Consult housing providers regarding documented demand and waiting lists; consider suitable adaptive reuse and redevelopment opportunities, including the former Reynolds School, Almeida Apartments, and Columban Fathers property, without predetermining site disposition or approvals. Explore universal design and accessibility in new construction and substantial renovations.~~Explore more options for **Senior and Accessible Housing** that would allow seniors to downsize from their single- family homes. Explore requirements for universal design and accessibility in new construction or major renovations. The Almeida Apartments may present a good opportunity for additional senior and accessible housing.~~

H21. Explore cooperating with the Housing Network of RI's (HNRI) Community Housing Land Trust (CHLT) where HNRI owns the land while the homeowner owns the home. This would reduce the price of a home by removing the land value. HNRI's existing CHLT can accept donations of land, including with existing housing, and manages the long-term affordability of such properties by setting an affordable resale price. Partnering with this existing entity would provide the Town with all the advantages of a CHLT without the administrative hassles of running one itself.

H22. Proactively foster Local and Regional Partnerships and regularly meet with partners to learn from each other. Communities all over the state and New England are dealing with the same issues.

H23. Review the Town's existing Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance (Section 28-370) before its scheduled July 1, 2027 sunset date. Evaluate the effectiveness of existing requirements, applicability thresholds, development incentives, and financial feasibility, and consider amendments and extension of the ordinance to improve affordable housing production consistent with state law.~~Amend and reinstate the Town's former **Inclusionary Zoning** policy that certain developments must provide a percentage of new residential homes as LMI. Inclusionary zoning should apply to any development of five or more units and at least 15% of units should be LMI. (See LMI Housing Strategies for greater detail.)~~

H24. Support accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in accordance with Rhode Island law while maintaining appropriate standards for their size, scale, placement, and compatibility with surrounding residential neighborhoods. Review and amend the Town's ADU regulations to reinforce existing dimensional standards, clarify ordinance language and review criteria, and discourage variances that undermine the intended accessory character of ADUs.

~~Encourage the Development of **Accessory Dwelling Units** (ADUs).~~

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) provide opportunities for additional housing within established residential neighborhoods, including smaller rental units, multigenerational housing, and opportunities for older residents to age in place. Rhode Island law permits ADUs by right under specified circumstances and limits municipal authority to regulate their size, placement, and other dimensional characteristics. According to the 2026 HousingWorks RI Housing Fact Book, the number of ADUs permitted statewide increased from 163 in 2024 to 287 in 2025. Bristol issued permits for seven ADUs in 2025.

Bristol supports ADUs as a means of expanding housing choices while maintaining their accessory character and compatibility with established neighborhoods. Although the Town has established dimensional standards for ADUs, the Planning Board has expressed concern about variances allowing substantially larger units that could function more like second principal dwellings. The Town should review and strengthen its ADU regulations, including ordinance language and applicable review criteria, to reinforce existing limits on size, height, and placement and discourage dimensional relief that undermines the intended accessory scale of these units, consistent with state

~~ADUs refer to smaller independent residential units that are on the same lot as a single-family home. At a minimum, the Town will comply with all state laws related to ADUs.~~

H25. The Town will continue to track properties subject to tax sale or otherwise available for municipal acquisition~~tax sale properties as they become available~~ and will consider acquiring appropriate properties and then working with local non-profit developers to renovate them as needed and then deed restrict them for LMI housing. (See LMI Housing Strategies for greater detail.)

H26. Pursue and maintain designation as a Rhode Island Housing Champion.

The Town should pursue the State's voluntary Housing Champion designation by continuing to implement housing-supportive land use regulations, training planning and zoning board members, investing in infrastructure and transportation improvements that support housing, utilizing appropriate financial tools, and maintaining a Comprehensive Plan that supports housing and community development. Housing Champion communities receive preferential consideration for certain discretionary State funding programs, providing an additional incentive for Bristol to continue implementing its housing goals.

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Housing Implementation Actions (10/27/2028)

Action
Adopt a public advertising campaign to educate residents on the need for the creation of LMI housing units.
Build an Affordable Housing Trust Fund to help give the Town a tool to invest in creating and maintaining the types of LMI housing most needed by the community in the places where it makes most sense to have it.Build an Affordable Housing Trust Fund to help the Town invest in creating and preserving LMI housing, including the acquisition, rehabilitation, and deed restriction of existing housing units.
Work with RWU to encourage more on-campus student housing and agree on a right of first refusal to partner with a non-profit housing developer to turn the Almeida Apartments into general rental or senior housing (with some or all the units as LMI housing) over time. Funds from an Affordable Housing Trust Fund could be used to help provide a downpayment for this and other large properties, or to help provide gap financing.Work with RWU to encourage additional on-campus student housing and explore opportunities to partner with nonprofit housing developers on the future reuse of the Almeida Apartments for general rental, senior, and/or LMI housing, including a potential right of first refusal.
Re-institute the Affordable Housing Committee to help identify affordable housing opportunities, advocate for / educate about affordable housing needs, and explore more creative ways to achieve affordable housing goals.
Develop a program with the Bristol Housing Authority to educate landlords and encourage them to participate in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program.
Formalize agreements with East Bay Community Development Corporation and the Housing Network of Rhode Island to serve as the monitoring agents for privately owned LMI housing units and enforce the policy that any new LMI housing units in Bristol are deed restricted for 99 years.
Utilize the services of the RWU's Community Partnerships Center to develop creative ways to provide affordable and LMI housing.
Continue and expand the Town's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) home repair and home maintenance grant and loan programs.
Maintain and annually update an inventory of municipally owned or controlled properties and evaluate appropriate sites for housing, including LMI and senior-oriented housing, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse opportunities. Consider the former Reynolds School in coordination with the Town's reuse process and proximity to the planned senior center.
Work with the General Assembly to broaden the definition of LMI housing to include modestly priced and locally affordable units within the community.
Continue to participate in the Community Rating System (CRS) of the National Flood Insurance Program. Advocate for and explore options to raise the Town's credit for increased discounts on Flood Insurance Policies.
To provide incentive for creating and maintaining LMI housing, the Town will proactively reach out to property owners of deed restricted units to inform them they are eligible to limit the property taxes on the LMI unit to 8% of the gross income received from the unit.
Continue to identify locations where the Town would like to proactively encourage the development of LMI housing through "friendly" comp permits.Proactively identify appropriate sites for LMI housing development through comprehensive permits, including redevelopment and adaptive reuse opportunities, and work with nonprofit and private developers to advance feasible projects.
Require or continue to negotiate LMI units as a condition for zoning relief, and changes of zone that include residential uses.Encourage additional LMI housing through appropriate zoning amendments, development incentives, and voluntary agreements with property owners, consistent with applicable State law and local regulations.
Create an information packet for for-profit developers to help promote the creation of LMI housing.

Create design standards for infill development of multi-family housing to help them blend into the character of existing residential neighborhoods.
The Town will work with local homeless agencies to track homeless individuals or families who may have resided within the Town and try to connect them with support services.
Mitigate the effects of Short-Term Rentals on housing market competitiveness.Monitor and regulate short-term rentals and evaluate their effects on the year-round housing supply.
Explore allowing more diverse housing types in more zones. For example: • Allow up to four-family dwellings in the R-8 and R-10 districts. • Allow two-family dwellings in the R-15 within a ½ mile walking radius of any commercial or mixed-use zoning. • Explore zoning options for allowing clusters of small-scale cottages or “tiny homes” on single parcels.
Explore opportunities for affordable and market-rate senior-oriented, age-restricted, and accessible housing, including smaller, low-maintenance units that offer older residents opportunities to downsize while remaining in Bristol. Evaluate potential zoning incentives, universal design considerations, and adaptive reuse opportunities, including suitable institutional properties, while considering infrastructure, historic and natural resource
Explore cooperating with the Housing Network of RI’s (HNRI) Community Housing Land Trust (CHLT) where HNRI owns the land while the homeowner owns the home. This would reduce the price of a home by removing the land value. HNRI’s existing CHLT can accept donations of land, including with existing housing, and manages the long-term affordability of such properties by setting an affordable resale price. Partnering with this existing entity would provide the Town with all the advantages of a CHLT without the administrative hassles of running
Proactively foster Local and Regional Partnerships and regularly meet with partners to learn from each other. Communities all over the state and New England are dealing with the same issues.
Review and amend the existing Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance (Section 28-370) before its scheduled July 1, 2027 sunset. Evaluate the lack of units produced to date, applicability thresholds, affordability requirements, incentives, and feasibility of qualifying projects; recommend amendments and any extension or replacement provisions to better support LMI housing production.
Encourage the Development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).
The Town will continue to track tax sale properties as they become available and will consider acquiring appropriate properties and then working with local non-profit developers to renovate them as needed and then deed restrict them for LMI housing. (See LMI Housing Strategies for greater detail.)
Pursue and maintain designation as a Rhode Island Housing Champion.
Annually track housing production, qualifying LMI units, and progress toward the Town's interim and long-term LMI housing targets. Periodically review and update the assumptions and strategies used to project achievement of the 10% threshold.
Coordinate with senior housing providers and community organizations to assess unmet demand for senior housing, including occupancy, waiting lists, affordability, accessibility, and the types of downsizing options sought by older Bristol residents. Use findings to inform housing strategies and development partnerships.

Responsible Parties	Timeframe
Department of Community Development; Affordable Housing Committee	Short
Town Council; Town Administrator; Department of Community Development	Short–Medium
Town Administrator; Department of Community Development	Ongoing
Town Council; Department of Community Development	Short
Department of Community Development; Bristol Housing Authority	Short–Medium
Department of Community Development; Town Administrator	Short
Department of Community Development; Affordable Housing Committee	Ongoing
Department of Community Development	Ongoing
Town Administrator; Department of Community Development	Ongoing
Town Council; Town Administrator; Department of Community Development	Ongoing
Department of Community Development; Department of Public Works	Ongoing
Department of Community Development; Tax Assessor	Ongoing
Department of Community Development; Planning Board	Ongoing
Department of Community Development; Planning Board; Zoning Board of Review; Town Council	Ongoing
Department of Community Development	Short

Department of Community Development; Planning Board; Town Council	Short–Medium
Department of Community Development; Police Department	Ongoing
Department of Community Development; Town Council	Ongoing
Department of Community Development; Planning Board; Town Council	Short–Medium
Department of Community Development; Planning Board; Affordable Housing Committee	Short–Medium
Department of Community Development; Town Administrator; Affordable Housing Committee	Short–Medium
Department of Community Development; Town Administrator; Affordable Housing Committee	Ongoing
Department of Community Development; Planning Board; Town Council	Short (before July 1, 2027)
Department of Community Development	Ongoing
Town Administrator; Department of Community Development; Tax Collector; Town Council	Ongoing
Department of Community Development; Town Administrator	Ongoing
Department of Community Development; Planning Board	Ongoing
Department of Community Development; Affordable Housing Committee; Bristol Housing Authority	Short

MAP LU5
Planning Areas

TOWN OF BRISTOL RHODE ISLAND

Comprehensive Plan
2027

DRAFT

Narragansett Bay

WARREN

Northwest

North Central

METACOM AVE

Northeast

Kickemuit River

SHERMAN AVE

TUPELO STREET

WARREN

Kickemuit

Industrial Area

GIBSON RD

Highlands

NARROWS RD

GOODING AVE

The Narrows

HOPE STREET

ASYLUM RD

CHESTNUT STREET

ANNAWAMSCUTT DRIVE

High School

HOPEWORTH AVE

Hopeworth

BAYVIEW AVE

TOWER STREET

State Park

Downtown Core

STATE STREET

Mt. Hope

Bristol Harbor

Poppasquash

Downtown Neighborhood

WOODLAWN AVE

MT HOPE BAY

The Estates

FERRY RD

University

HOG ISLAND

MT HOPE BRIDGE

N

Location Inset

CT

MA

RI

Legend

- Planning Area Boundaries
- Streets
- Bristol
- Water Body

0 0.25 0.5 1

Miles

This map is not the product of a Professional Land Survey. It was created by AB Planning + Mapping for general reference, informational, planning or guidance use, and is not a legally authoritative source as to location of natural or manmade features. Proper interpretation of this map may require the assistance of appropriate professional services. AB Planning + Mapping makes no warranty, express or implied, related to the spatial accuracy, reliability, completeness, or currentness of this map.

RIGIS

Prepared by ECH
11/04/26

AB PLANNING + MAPPING

Outdoor Recreation and Open Space

Introduction

Open space and outdoor recreation are essential to Bristol's character, environmental and public health, and quality of life. The Town's parks, conservation lands, waterfront, trails, and recreational facilities provide opportunities for active and passive recreation while protecting natural resources, preserving scenic landscapes, supporting the local economy, and strengthening community resilience.

Bristol's location on a peninsula bordered by Narragansett Bay, Mount Hope Bay, the Kickemuit River, and Bristol Harbor provides exceptional access to the shoreline and distinguishes its recreation system from most Rhode Island communities. Residents enjoy a diverse network of neighborhood parks, athletic facilities, playgrounds, public beaches, conservation areas, trails, public shoreline access points, and waterfront destinations. State-owned resources, including Colt State Park and the East Bay Bike Path, are complemented by privately owned properties, including Mount Hope Farm, Blithewold Manor, Gardens and Arboretum, Audubon properties, and preserves managed by the Bristol Land Conservation Trust. Together, these public and private lands provide year-round recreational opportunities while protecting wildlife habitat, improving water quality, reducing flooding, preserving scenic views, and increasing resilience to climate change.

Since adoption of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, the Town has continued to invest in parks, waterfront facilities, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, recreational programming, and environmental stewardship. At the same time, changing recreational preferences, an aging population, continued demand for youth sports, and the impacts of climate change highlight the need for continued investment and long-term stewardship.

This element establishes goals, policies, and actions to protect open space, expand recreational opportunities, improve public access, strengthen environmental stewardship and climate resilience, and guide future investment in Bristol's parks, recreational facilities, shoreline access, and open space resources.

Goals and Policies

Goal OS-G1. Protect Bristol's open space, natural resources, and scenic landscapes.

Policies

OS-G1-P1. Protect significant open space, wetlands, forests, agricultural lands, coastal resources, and other environmentally sensitive areas.

OS-G1-P2. Expand and connect protected open space where it supports conservation, recreation, and climate resilience.

OS-G1-P3. Support the preservation of working farms, coastal landscapes, and other undeveloped lands that contribute to Bristol's character.

OS-G1-P4. Encourage redevelopment and reuse of previously developed or underutilized properties to reduce development pressure on open space and environmentally sensitive lands.

OS-G1-P5. Work with land trusts, state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private landowners to protect and manage open space.

Goal OS-G2. Maintain a high-quality system of parks and recreational facilities that serves residents of all ages and abilities.

Policies

OS-G2-P1. Maintain and improve existing parks, athletic fields, playgrounds, trails, waterfront facilities, and other recreational amenities.

OS-G2-P2. Provide a balance of active and passive recreational opportunities throughout the community.

OS-G2-P3. Improve accessibility through ADA upgrades and universal design where practical.

OS-G2-P4. Support recreational programs that promote healthy, year-round participation.

OS-G2-P5. Plan recreational facilities and programs to respond to changing demographics, recreational trends, and the needs of residents of different ages and abilities.

Goal OS-G3. Preserve and improve public access to Bristol's shoreline, parks, and open spaces.

Policies

OS-G3-P1. Maintain and improve public access to Bristol Harbor, Narragansett Bay, Mount Hope Bay, and the Kickemuit River.

OS-G3-P2. Protect and enhance public shoreline rights-of-way and waterfront access points.

OS-G3-P3. Improve connections between neighborhoods, schools, parks, downtown, and waterfront destinations through sidewalks, bicycle facilities, transit, greenways, and trails.

OS-G3-P4. Improve signage, wayfinding, bicycle parking, and other amenities that make recreational resources easier to find and use.

OS-G3-P5. Maintain and enhance public waterfront amenities, including docks, boat launches, kayak access, seating, gathering spaces, and other facilities that improve public enjoyment of Bristol's shoreline while protecting natural resources and water quality.

Goal OS-G4. Steward Bristol's parks and open space system through planning, investment, partnerships, and responsible management to meet the community's current and future needs.

Policies

OS-G4-P1. Coordinate open space and recreation planning with land use, natural resource protection, climate resilience, harbor management, and capital improvement planning.

OS-G4-P2. Pursue grants, partnerships, conservation easements, and strategic land acquisition to protect open space, improve recreational facilities, and expand public access.

OS-G4-P3. Prioritize maintenance, rehabilitation, and long-term management of existing parks and recreational facilities.

OS-G4-P4. Periodically evaluate community recreation needs, facility conditions, and recreational trends to guide future investments and improvements.

Accomplishments Since 2016 Comprehensive Plan

Since adoption of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, Bristol has completed or advanced numerous projects that have expanded recreational opportunities, improved recreational facilities, and strengthened stewardship of the Town's open space and waterfront resources.

- Replacement of aging playground equipment and improvements to neighborhood parks throughout the community.
- Conversion of the Town Common tennis courts to dedicated pickleball courts, reflecting changing recreational interests and increasing demand for pickleball.
- Completion of the Independence Park boat ramp replacement project, including a new ADA-accessible boat ramp, parking improvements, stormwater management, and related waterfront enhancements.
- Completion of the Bristol Tree Canopy Plan, establishing a long-term strategy for expanding tree canopy, improving shade in parks and public spaces, and strengthening climate resilience.
- Protection of approximately 120 acres of the former Brown University Mount Hope property as the Mount Hope Community Forest, complementing the transfer of 255 acres of adjacent conservation lands to a preservation trust established by the Pokanoket Tribe.
- Improvements to public shoreline access, waterfront facilities, and harbor infrastructure through implementation of the Harbor Management Plan.
- Expansion of bicycle and pedestrian improvements, including implementation of recommendations from the Bicycle Connectivity Study and improvements that strengthen connections between neighborhoods, parks, downtown, and the waterfront.
- Implementation of green infrastructure and watershed restoration projects, particularly within the Silver Creek watershed, improving water quality while enhancing recreational and environmental resources.
- Expansion of recreational programming offered by the Parks and Recreation Department for residents of all ages.

Open Space and Recreation Inventory

Bristol's recreation system includes Town-owned parks, athletic fields, playgrounds, conservation lands, beaches, trails, shoreline access points, and recreational facilities, as well as significant state-owned and privately owned open space.

The Town owns and maintains many of the community's parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, and recreational facilities. State-owned resources, including Colt State Park and the East Bay Bike Path, provide regionally significant recreational opportunities and attract residents and visitors from throughout Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts.

Privately owned properties also play an important role in Bristol's open space system. Mount Hope Farm, Blithewold Manor, Gardens and Arboretum, Audubon properties, and lands protected by the Bristol Land Conservation Trust provide opportunities for walking, nature observation, environmental education, agricultural programming, and public events.

Mount Hope Farm, a 127-acre historic property, owned and managed by the nonprofit Mount Hope Trust, serves as an important community resource by preserving historic, agricultural, and natural landscapes while providing public access, trails, educational programming, community events, and year-round recreational opportunities. The Town maintains a longstanding partnership with the Mount Hope Trust to support stewardship of this significant community asset.

Maps NR5 and R1 and the accompanying recreation inventory identify the location, ownership, and primary use of Bristol's open space and recreational resources. The inventory builds upon the detailed open space and recreation inventory prepared as part of Bristol's 2008 Open Space Plan and has been updated to reflect subsequent acquisitions, changes in ownership and public access, and improvements to recreational facilities.

Map NR5 illustrates Bristol's protected open space network, including municipal parks, conservation lands, state-owned recreation areas, institutional open space, cemeteries, and privately protected lands.

Map R1 identifies parks, recreational facilities, trails, public shoreline access sites, and other recreational resources that support active and passive recreation throughout the community.

Table R-1 provides an inventory of Bristol's principal public recreation facilities, corresponding to the numbered locations shown on Map R1. The inventory includes Town-owned parks, athletic fields, playgrounds, school recreation facilities, waterfront parks and water access sites, conservation areas, trails, and regional recreation resources. Facilities are grouped by type, with ownership and primary recreational uses identified for each. The inventory includes Town- and State-

owned facilities as well as privately owned properties that provide public recreational access. Additional public shoreline access points, including CRMC-designated rights-of-way, are also identified on Map R1.

Table R-1. Inventory of Principal Public Recreation Facilities in Bristol			
No.	**Facility**	**Owner**	**Primary Recreation Use**
Town Parks, Athletic Facilities, and Playgrounds			
1	Town Beach & Sports Complex	Town of Bristol	Swimming Beach, Athletic Fields, Multi-Use Courts, Playground, Dog Park, Walking/Biking Trails, Outdoor Fitness, Picnicking
2	Quinta Gamelin Community Center	Town of Bristol	Municipal recreation facility housing the Recreation Department offices and providing indoor space for sports, community activities, and recreational programs
3	Paull Park / Ramos Field	Town of Bristol	Little League Field, Playground
4	Veterans Memorial Park	Town of Bristol	Little League Fields, Playground, Basketball Court, Passive Recreation
5	Bristol Town Common	Town of Bristol	Community Park, Playground, Pickleball Courts, Basketball Court, Baseball Field, Passive Recreation, Community Events
6	Rockwell Park	Town of Bristol	Waterfront Park, Playground, Public Dock, Harbor Viewing, Passive Recreation
7	Thomas Park / Silver Creek	Town of Bristol	Neighborhood Park, Passive Recreation
8	Tanyard Brook Park	Town of Bristol	Neighborhood Park, Passive Recreation
9	Coelho Park	Town of Bristol	Neighborhood Park, Playground
10	Cedarcrest Park	Town of Bristol	Open Play/Ballfield, Playground, Basketball Court
11	Sowams Playground	Town of Bristol	Playground
12	Hopeworth Playground	Town of Bristol	Playground
13	Firefighters Memorial Park	Town of Bristol	Memorial Park, Passive Recreation
14	Bristol Golf Course	Town of Bristol	Municipal 9-Hole Golf Course
School Recreation Facilities			
15	Mt. Hope High School Athletic Complex	Town of Bristol	Athletic Fields, Courts
16	Guiteras (former school)	Town of Bristol	Athletic Field, Playground
17	Rockwell Elementary School Playground	Town of Bristol	School Playground
18	Colt Andrews Elementary School Playground	Town of Bristol	School Playground
Waterfront Parks and Public Water Access			
19	Independence Park & Boardwalk	State/Town of Bristol	Waterfront Park, Boat Launch, Fishing, Waterfront Walking/Boardwalk, Community Events
20	Bristol Harbor Boardwalk	Town of Bristol / Private	Waterfront Walkway/Boardwalk, Harbor Access, Passive Recreation
21	Walley Park / Walley Street Beach / Halsey C. Herreshoff Park	Town of Bristol	Waterfront Park, Beach/Shoreline Access, Picnicking, Passive Recreation
22	Union Street Beach	Town of Bristol	Swimming and Wading, Beach/Shoreline Access, Passive Recreation
23	State Street Dock/Pier & Boat Launch	Town of Bristol	Boat Launch, Public Dock/Pier, Fishing, Boating and Harbor Access
24	Church Street Marina / Maritime Center / Manny Sousa Park	Town of Bristol	Waterfront Park, Public Pier, Picnicking, Harbor Viewing and Access
25	Annawamscutt Boat Ramp / Mount Hope Fishing Access	State of Rhode Island	Boat Ramp, Boating and Fishing Access, Shoreline Access
Conservation Areas, Natural Areas, and Trails			
26	Mount Hope Community Forest	Town of Bristol	Conservation Area, Walking Trails, Nature Observation, Passive Recreation
27	Perry-Tavares Farm	Town of Bristol	Open Space, Walking Trails, Nature Observation, Passive Recreation
28	Waypoyset Preserve / Bristol Narrows	Waypoyset Preserve Trust	Conservation Area, Walking Trails, Shoreline Access, Passive Recreation
29	Leahy Pond Open Space	Town of Bristol	Nature Area, Walking Trail, Passive Recreation
30	Lisa Lane Open Space	Town of Bristol	Open Space, Walking Trail, Passive Recreation
31	Children's Grove	Town of Bristol	Pond and Wetland Nature Area, Walking Trail, Nature Observation, Passive Recreation
32	Mount Hope Farm	Private (public access)	Walking Trails, Agriculture, Gardens, Passive Recreation, Community Events
33	Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge (Audubon Society of Rhode Island)	Private (public access)	Walking Trails, Boardwalk, Wildlife Observation, Birding, Environmental Education, Passive Recreation
Regional and State Recreation Resources			
34	East Bay Bike Path	State of Rhode Island	Regional Shared-Use Path, Walking, Bicycling, Running
35	Colt State Park	State of Rhode Island	Walking Trails, Bicycling, Picnicking, Fishing, Paddling/Boat Launch, Open-Field Recreation, Shoreline Access (town-mantained - soccer fields BYSA)

Water-Based Recreation and Shoreline Access

In addition to the parks, athletic fields, open spaces, and recreational facilities identified in Table R-1, Bristol has an extensive network of water-dependent recreational resources. Bristol Harbor, Mount Hope Bay, the Kickemuit River, and Narragansett Bay support sailing, recreational boating, kayaking, paddleboarding, rowing, fishing, swimming, and other water-based activities. Public access is provided through waterfront parks, beaches, docks and piers, boat launches, boardwalks, public shoreline rights-of-way, and other waterfront access sites.

The Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) currently recognizes 34 designated public shoreline rights-of-way in Bristol. These rights-of-way, along with other public shoreline access sites, are identified on Map R1. The Town's Harbor Management Plan provides additional information on the management and maintenance of waterfront facilities and shoreline access areas.

Maintaining and improving public shoreline access remains a priority for the Town. Continued maintenance, mapping, signage, and wayfinding improvements will help residents and visitors locate and use these access points. The Town should also evaluate opportunities to improve accessibility, expand boating and paddling access, and enhance waterfront amenities while protecting water quality and sensitive coastal resources.

Geographic Distribution and Future Recreation Needs

Based on the existing distribution of parks and recreational facilities and available community input, Bristol appears to have a relatively well-distributed recreation system. Larger facilities, including Colt State Park, the East Bay Bike Path, Bristol Town Beach and Sports Complex, and waterfront parks serve residents throughout the community, while neighborhood parks provide recreational opportunities within residential areas. Bristol's compact development pattern and extensive shoreline provide access to parks, recreational facilities, conservation lands, and the waterfront. However, access to particular facilities and recreational opportunities may vary by neighborhood, facility type, accessibility, and transportation options.

State population projections anticipate that Bristol's population will remain relatively stable over the planning horizon, declining from approximately 22,643 residents in 2025 to 21,874 in 2030, followed by gradual growth to approximately 22,331 residents by 2050. Future recreational needs will therefore be influenced less by overall population growth than by changing demographics, continued demand for youth sports, evolving recreational preferences, visitor use of regional recreational resources, and the need to improve accessibility and climate resilience. Recreational needs and facility capacity should be periodically reevaluated to guide future investment and improvements.

Given Bristol's largely developed land-use pattern, opportunities for major new recreational sites are limited. Potential expansion of the recreation system should focus on strategic additions to the existing network, including trail and greenway connections between parks and conservation lands, improved pedestrian and bicycle connections, additional or improved shoreline access, and expanded recreational opportunities within existing municipal facilities. Future investment should also emphasize maintenance and modernization of existing facilities and improved accessibility. Acquisition or conservation of properties that adjoin protected open space, connect existing recreational resources, or provide new public access opportunities should also be considered.

Open Space Conservation

Open space conservation remains an important component of Bristol's recreation system. The Town should continue to identify opportunities to protect priority open spaces through acquisition, conservation easements, partnerships, and other voluntary land conservation tools. Particular consideration should be given to properties that connect existing protected lands, provide opportunities for trails or shoreline access, or protect significant natural resources, including wildlife habitat, groundwater recharge areas, flood storage areas, agricultural lands, and coastal resources.

As recognized in Bristol's 2008 Open Space Plan, scenic vistas, historic landscapes, stone walls, and agricultural landscapes are important features of the Town's character. These resources provide opportunities for passive recreation, including walking, birdwatching, nature observation, and photography. Maintaining access to these natural and scenic areas will remain important alongside continued investment in athletic fields, playgrounds, and other active recreational facilities.

Parks and Recreation Department

The Bristol Parks and Recreation Department maintains the Town's parks, athletic fields, playgrounds, recreational facilities, waterfront parks, and public beaches. Programs include youth and adult sports, fitness and wellness classes, summer camps, seasonal activities, special events, and senior programming. The Department also coordinates facility reservations, athletic field scheduling, and community use of Town recreational facilities, helping ensure that Bristol's parks and open spaces remain active, well-maintained community assets throughout the year.

Public Input

Public input emphasized the importance of preserving Bristol's open space, waterfront, and recreational resources while expanding opportunities for recreation and environmental stewardship. Protection of wetlands, water quality, and wildlife habitat emerged as recurring priorities, particularly in the Silver Creek watershed and

other flood-prone areas. Residents also supported continued protection of open space through acquisition, conservation, and redevelopment of previously developed properties to reduce development pressure on undeveloped land.

Improving public access to the shoreline was another consistent theme. Residents supported maintaining and improving public shoreline rights-of-way, improving wayfinding and signage, and expanding waterfront access while protecting sensitive coastal resources. Additional waterfront recommendations included enhancing public docks, boating and paddling facilities, seating and gathering areas, and public access to Bristol Harbor, while continuing to monitor and protect water quality.

Participants also identified opportunities to improve Bristol's parks and recreation system through continued investment in athletic fields, playgrounds, trails, and recreational facilities. Frequently mentioned priorities included additional youth recreation opportunities, expanded indoor recreation, modernization of play equipment, improved bicycle and pedestrian connections, more benches and seating areas, increased tree planting, pollinator habitat, and improved maintenance of parks, public spaces, and shoreline access sites. Residents also supported expanding environmental education through partnerships with local organizations and educational institutions to promote tree stewardship, native landscaping, fertilizer reduction, and water conservation.

The goals, policies, and implementation actions in this element respond to these priorities by emphasizing open space protection, shoreline access, environmental stewardship, park and trail improvements, climate resilience, and continued investment in Bristol's parks and recreational resources.

Condition of Existing Facilities

Overall, Bristol's parks and recreational facilities are generally well maintained, although continued investment is needed to address aging infrastructure, changing recreational needs, accessibility, and the effects of coastal hazards on waterfront facilities. Several waterfront recreational and public access facilities, including docks, piers, seawalls, and boardwalks, require ongoing maintenance, rehabilitation, or replacement. Future capital improvements should focus on rehabilitation and replacement of aging infrastructure, accessibility improvements, modernization of recreational amenities, and improved resilience of waterfront facilities, trails, boardwalks, and other recreational infrastructure.

Significant recreational facility improvements are also planned as part of the Mt. Hope High School reconstruction project, including a new athletic turf field, softball field, tennis courts, lighting, and related site improvements. These facilities will enhance

school athletic resources and may also support broader community recreation consistent with the Town's policy of encouraging shared use of school facilities.

Specific municipal facility and waterfront infrastructure projects are addressed in the Services and Facilities Element and the Town's Capital Improvement Program.

Climate Resilience

Many of Bristol's most heavily used recreational resources are located along the shoreline. Waterfront parks, public shoreline rights-of-way, boat ramps, beaches, and coastal trails are increasingly vulnerable to coastal flooding, erosion, storm surge, and sea level rise.

As improvements are planned, the Town should incorporate resilient design strategies that reduce future damage while maintaining public access. Strategies may include elevating vulnerable infrastructure, improving drainage, restoring natural shoreline features, and using nature-based approaches to stabilize coastal areas where appropriate.

Future land acquisition should also consider climate resilience by prioritizing properties that protect coastal buffers, flood storage areas, wildlife habitat, and future public shoreline access.

Stewardship and Management

Long-term stewardship of Bristol's parks, conservation lands, and recreational facilities will require continued attention to invasive species management, trail and forest management, habitat restoration, tree planting, signage, and accessibility improvements. Volunteer stewardship programs and partnerships with local organizations can supplement Town efforts to maintain and improve these resources.

The Town should continue working with the Bristol Land Conservation Trust, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Coastal Resources Management Council, Audubon Society of Rhode Island, Mount Hope Farm, private landowners, and other partners to protect open space, manage conservation lands, and support recreational opportunities. Coordination with the Town's capital improvement planning, Harbor Management Plan, and other municipal planning efforts will also help guide future investments.

Relevant State Guide Plan Elements, Reference Documents & Consistency

This element aligns with and supports Rhode Island's statewide policies for outdoor recreation, open space protection, public access, greenways, and natural resource stewardship. The following State Guide Plan elements provide the primary policy framework with which this Comprehensive Plan is consistent:

1. **Element 152 – Rhode Island Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), 2026.** Establishes statewide priorities and strategies for maintaining and improving outdoor recreational facilities, protecting natural resources, enhancing equitable access to recreation, strengthening connections among recreational resources, and supporting long-term stewardship and investment.
2. **Element 155 – A Greener Path: Greenspace and Greenways for Rhode Island's Future.** Establishes policies and strategies for protecting and connecting greenspaces and greenways, including natural corridors, trails, bikeways, scenic landscapes, and other lands having recreation and conservation value.
3. **Element 156 – Urban & Community Forest Plan.** Supports protection, management, and expansion of community forests and tree resources that contribute to recreation, environmental quality, shade, habitat, and community character.
4. **Element 121 – Land Use 2025: Rhode Island's State Land Use Policies and Plan.** Supports coordinated land use and conservation policies that protect natural resources and open space while directing growth toward established developed areas.

This Outdoor Recreation and Open Space Element is consistent with the Rhode Island State Guide Plan, particularly Rhode Island's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), 2026 (State Guide Plan Element 152). Bristol's emphasis on maintaining and improving existing parks and recreational facilities, protecting open space, expanding public shoreline access, improving accessibility, and responding to changing recreational needs advances statewide outdoor recreation priorities. Policies and actions supporting trails, bicycle and pedestrian connections, greenways, and connections among parks, neighborhoods, conservation lands, and waterfront destinations further advance the objectives of A Greener Path. Continued protection and stewardship of forests, tree canopy, wildlife habitat, and other natural resources, together with incorporation of climate resilience into waterfront recreation and shoreline access improvements, support the State's broader goals for conservation, environmental stewardship, and resilient recreational resources.

Supporting Plans

Town of Bristol, Rhode Island. *Open Space Plan.* June 2008.

Town of Bristol, Rhode Island. *Harbor Management Plan and Harbor Ordinances: 5-Year Update 2018–21.* Adopted by the Bristol Town Council April 14, 2021; approved by the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council June 6, 2022.

Town of Bristol, Rhode Island. *Bristol Strategic Tree Canopy Plan.* March 2024.

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16	Guiteras (former school)	Town of Bristol
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Waterfront Parks and Public Water Access		
19	Independence Park & Boardwalk	State/Town of Bristol
20	Bristol Harbor Boardwalk	Town of Bristol / Private
21	Walley Park / Walley Street Beach / Halsey C. Herreshoff Park	Town of Bristol
22	Union Street Beach	Town of Bristol
23	State Street Dock/Pier & Boat Launch	Town of Bristol
24	Church Street Marina / Maritime Center / Manny Sousa Park	Town of Bristol
25	Annawamscutt Boat Ramp / Mount Hope Fishing Access	State of Rhode Island
Conservation Areas, Natural Areas, and Trails		
26	Mount Hope Community Forest	Town of Bristol

27	Perry-Tavares Farm	Town of Bristol
28	Waypoyset Preserve / Bristol Narrows	Waypoyset Preserve Trust
29	Leahy Pond Open Space	Town of Bristol
30	Lisa Lane Open Space	Town of Bristol
31	Children's Grove	Town of Bristol
32	Mount Hope Farm	Private (public access)
33	Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge (Audubon Society of Rhode Island)	Private (public access)
Regional and State Recreation Resources		
34	East Bay Bike Path	State of Rhode Island
35	Colt State Park	State of Rhode Island

lic Recreation Facilities in Bristol
Primary Recreation Use
Swimming Beach, Athletic Fields, Multi-Use Courts, Playground, Dog Park, Walking/Biking Trails, Outdoor Fitness, Picnicking
Municipal recreation facility housing the Recreation Department offices and providing indoor space for sports, community activities, and recreational programs
Little League Field, Playground
Little League Fields, Playground, Basketball Court, Passive Recreation
Community Park, Playground, Pickleball Courts, Basketball Court, Baseball Field, Passive Recreation, Community Events
Waterfront Park, Playground, Public Dock, Harbor Viewing, Passive Recreation
Neighborhood Park, Passive Recreation
Neighborhood Park, Passive Recreation
Neighborhood Park, Playground
Open Play/Ballfield, Playground, Basketball Court
Playground
Playground
Memorial Park, Passive Recreation
Municipal 9-Hole Golf Course
Athletic Fields, Courts
Athletic Field, Playground
School Playground
School Playground
Waterfront Park, Boat Launch, Fishing, Waterfront Walking/Boardwalk, Community Events
Waterfront Walkway/Boardwalk, Harbor Access, Passive Recreation
Waterfront Park, Beach/Shoreline Access, Picnicking, Passive Recreation
Swimming and Wading, Beach/Shoreline Access, Passive Recreation
Boat Launch, Public Dock/Pier, Fishing, Boating and Harbor Access
Waterfront Park, Public Pier, Picnicking, Harbor Viewing and Access
Boat Ramp, Boating and Fishing Access, Shoreline Access
Conservation Area, Walking Trails, Nature Observation, Passive Recreation

Open Space, Walking Trails, Nature Observation, Passive Recreation
Conservation Area, Walking Trails, Shoreline Access, Passive Recreation
Nature Area, Walking Trail, Passive Recreation
Open Space, Walking Trail, Passive Recreation
Pond and Wetland Nature Area, Walking Trail, Nature Observation, Passive Recreation
Walking Trails, Agriculture, Gardens, Passive Recreation, Community Events
Walking Trails, Boardwalk, Wildlife Observation, Birding, Environmental Education, Passive Recreation

Regional Shared-Use Path, Walking, Bicycling, Running
Walking Trails, Bicycling, Picnicking, Fishing, Paddling/Boat Launch, Open-Field Recreation, Shoreline Access (town-mantained - soccer fields BYSA)

#13 Sherman Ave park. Are you referring to Lisa Lane? Is it just the right of way at end of the street?
#32 I see Lisa Lane o.s. So what is #13 above referring to on Sherman Avenue?

Outdoor Recreation and Open Space Implementation Actions (10/29/2026 DRAFT)			
ID	**Action**	**Responsible Parties**	**Timeframe**
OS-A1	Update the Bristol Open Space Plan to reflect current conditions, updated inventories and mapping, conservation priorities, public access opportunities, and the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan.	Department of Community Development	Short-Term
OS-A2	Prepare a Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Plan to prioritize investments in parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, courts, field lighting, waterfront facilities, trails, public gathering spaces, accessibility improvements, and other recreational infrastructure, including improvements that expand programming opportunities and support regional tournaments and community events.	Parks & Recreation Department	Short-Term
OS-A3	Maintain and periodically update a GIS-based inventory of parks, conservation lands, recreational facilities, trails, and public shoreline access sites to support planning, maintenance, and capital improvements.	Department of Community Development	Short-Term / Ongoing
OS-A4	Complete and periodically update a comprehensive inventory and condition assessment of CRMC-designated public shoreline rights-of-way and prepare a prioritized maintenance and improvement program for signage, accessibility, parking, seating, erosion control, shoreline stabilization, and other public amenities.	Harbor Department; Department of Community Development	Short-Term / Ongoing
OS-A5	Implement applicable recommendations of the Harbor Management Plan that improve public access to Bristol Harbor, Narragansett Bay, Mount Hope Bay, and the Kickemuit River, including improvements to boat launches, transient boating facilities, kayak launches, fishing access, docks, waterfront gathering spaces, public seating, and other shoreline amenities.	Harbor Department; Harbor Commission	Ongoing
OS-A6	Complete improvements to the State Street boat ramp, seawall, and public dock to improve public boating access, safety, accessibility, and long-term resilience.	Department of Public Works; Harbor Department	Short-Term
OS-A7	Expand connections between parks, neighborhoods, schools, conservation lands, downtown, and waterfront destinations by implementing priority bicycle, pedestrian, greenway, and trail improvements identified in adopted transportation and recreation plans.	Department of Community Development; Department of Public Works; Parks and Recreation Department	Ongoing
OS-A8	Identify and pursue opportunities to expand Bristol's greenway and trail network through conservation easements, subdivision review, redevelopment projects, and partnerships with adjacent property owners and neighboring communities.	Department of Community Development	Medium-Term
OS-A9	Evaluate municipal parks, recreational facilities, waterfront infrastructure, and public open spaces for vulnerability to flooding, erosion, sea level rise, and extreme heat, and incorporate resilience measures into future capital improvement projects.	Department of Community Development; Department of Public Works; Parks & Recreation Department; Harbor Department	Short-Term / Ongoing
OS-A10	Implement priority recommendations of the Bristol Tree Canopy Plan by expanding tree planting and increasing shade within parks, playgrounds, trails, school properties, parking areas, and other public open spaces.	Department of Community Development; Department of Public Works	Ongoing
OS-A11	Continue implementation of watershed restoration, stormwater management, and green infrastructure projects that improve water quality while enhancing recreational and ecological resources, particularly within the Silver Creek and Tanyard Brook watersheds.	Department of Community Development; Department of Public Works	Ongoing

OS-A12	Evaluate opportunities to expand passive and nature-based recreation opportunities throughout the community through additional walking trails, nature observation areas, interpretive signage, and improvements to existing conservation lands and open spaces in response to community needs.	Parks & Recreation Department	Medium-Term
OS-A13	Pursue grants, partnerships, conservation easements, and strategic land acquisition opportunities to preserve significant open space, protect environmentally sensitive lands, improve recreational facilities, and expand public access to parks and the waterfront.	Department of Community Development; Parks & Recreation Department	Ongoing
OS-A14	Partner with Roger Williams University, URI Cooperative Extension, the Bristol Land Conservation Trust, Audubon, and other organizations to expand environmental education, stewardship programs, and interpretive signage within parks, conservation lands, trails, and shoreline access sites.	Parks & Recreation Department	Medium-Term
OS-A15	Periodically evaluate recreational programming, facility conditions, athletic field capacity, geographic distribution of recreational opportunities, accessibility and other barriers to participation, and changing demographic and recreational needs to inform future capital improvements and updates to the Open Space Plan.	Parks and Recreation Department; Department of Community Development	Ongoing
OS-A16	Continue improving accessibility at parks, playgrounds, recreational facilities, public shoreline access points, trails, and waterfront amenities through implementation of ADA improvements and universal design principles as facilities are renovated or replaced.	Department of Public Works; Parks & Recreation Department; Harbor Department	Ongoing
OS-A17	Pursue planning and partnership opportunities for the development of an indoor aquatics facility or other year-round aquatic recreation opportunities by evaluating potential sites, funding sources, operational models, partnerships, and community demand.	Town Administrator; Parks & Recreation Department	Long-Term
OS-A18	Partner with the State and local youth sports organizations, such as the Bristol Youth Soccer Association (BYSA), to pursue improvements to athletic fields and related infrastructure, including field lighting where appropriate, to expand recreational opportunities and tournament capacity.	Department of Public Works; Parks & Recreation Department	Medium-Term
OS-A19	Replace the Town Common playground and implement drainage, accessibility, and site improvements to enhance safety, accessibility, usability, and long-term resilience.	Department of Public Works; Parks & Recreation Department	Short-Term

MAP SF-1
Public Facilities

TOWN OF BRISTOL RHODE ISLAND

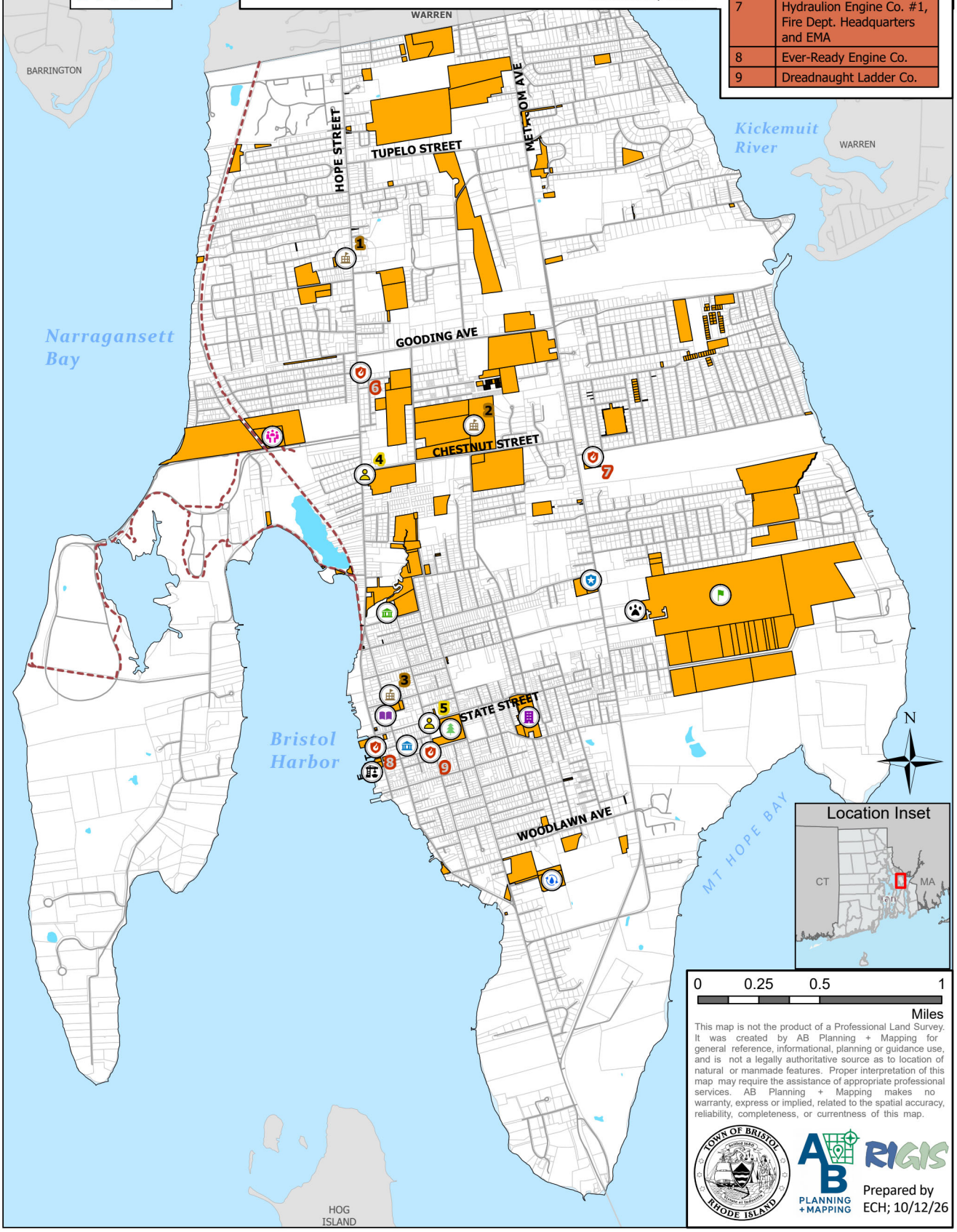
Comprehensive Plan, 2026

DRAFT

Legend

- Town-Owned Parcels
- Roads
- Bike Path
- Water Body
- Animal Shelter
- Bristol Town Common
- Department of Public Works
- Fire Stations
- Maritime Center and Harbor Master's Office
- Police Station
- Quinta Gamelin Community Center
- Rogers Free Library
- Schools
- Senior Centers
- Current Town Hall
- Future Town Hall
- Waste Transfer Station / Compost
- Wastewater Treatment Plant / Water Pollution Control Facility Office

Label	Facility Name
1	Rockwell School
2	Mt. Hope High School
3	Colt Andrews School
4	Benjamin Church Senior Center (Non-Profit)
5	Senior Services and Community Resources Center (former Walley School)
6	Defiance Hose Co.
7	Hydraulion Engine Co. #1, Fire Dept. Headquarters and EMA
8	Ever-Ready Engine Co.
9	Dreadnaught Ladder Co.



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TOWN OF BRISTOL RHODE ISLAND

AB PLANNING + MAPPING

RIGIS

Prepared by ECH; 10/12/26

NATURAL HAZARDS & CLIMATE CHANGE

Introduction

The Natural Hazards and Climate Change element identifies Bristol's primary natural hazard risks, summarizes existing conditions and vulnerabilities, and establishes goals, policies, and actions to guide long-term land use decisions, infrastructure investment, and hazard mitigation efforts. This element builds upon the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan, state and regional vulnerability assessments, and public input to support coordinated decision-making aimed at reducing risk to life, property, critical infrastructure, and community assets.

2016 Comprehensive Plan Implementation Progress

Since adoption of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, the Town of Bristol has advanced hazard mitigation, flood resilience, stormwater management, and climate adaptation through planning initiatives, regulatory improvements, and capital investments. These efforts have focused on reducing flood risks, improving water quality, protecting coastal and historic resources, and strengthening the Town's resilience to changing climate conditions.

Notable accomplishments include:

- Historic Resource Vulnerability Assessment: Evaluated the vulnerability of historic buildings within the Bristol Waterfront Historic District to flooding and identified preservation-sensitive adaptation strategies.
- Resilient Rhody Municipal Resilience Program: Participated in the 2020 cohort of Rhode Island's Municipal Resilience Program (MRP), a statewide initiative administered by the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank. Through a community resilience planning process, the Town identified local climate-related vulnerabilities, assessed community strengths, and prioritized actions to improve resilience to flooding and other natural hazards. Bristol received its Resilient Rhody designation in 2020, making the Town eligible to pursue Municipal Resilience Program Action Grants to support implementation of priority resilience projects.
- Silver Creek Drainage Improvements: Implemented recommendations from the Silver Creek Drainage Study, including drainage improvements in the Sherry Avenue, High View basin, and Varnum basin areas. [Town to confirm specific improvements completed.]
- Mt. Hope High School Drainage Master Plan: Completed a drainage master plan to identify stormwater management improvements. Although plans subsequently shifted to construction of a new high school, drainage strategies identified in the study were incorporated into the new facility's design, with modifications to accommodate the revised site layout.

- Low Impact Development (LID) Regulations: Amended the Subdivision and Development Review Regulations to require LID practices for subdivision and land development projects, strengthening local stormwater management standards.
- FEMA Community Rating System (CRS): Maintained participation in FEMA's CRS program at Class 7 through floodplain management, public outreach, and regulatory activities, providing reduced flood insurance premiums for eligible property owners.
- Bristol Landfill Solar Array: Partnered with NuGen Capital Management to develop a large-scale solar array on the Town-owned former landfill on Minturn Farm Road. Completed in 2024, the project generates renewable energy, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and provides long-term municipal revenue through a land lease and payments in lieu of taxes.
- Bristol Police Department Stormwater Retrofit: Constructed green infrastructure improvements to reduce stormwater runoff and improve water quality within the Tanyard Brook watershed.
- Bristol Golf Course Stormwater Improvements: Implemented drainage and stormwater management improvements to reduce runoff and improve water quality and habitat within the Silver Creek watershed.
- Guiteras School Stormwater Retrofit: Constructed parking lot stormwater improvements adjacent to Silver Creek to reduce runoff and improve water quality.
- State Street Reservoir Improvements: Advanced drainage and reservoir improvements intended to enhance flood storage, improve stormwater management, and reduce localized flooding within the Tanyard Brook watershed. [Town to confirm improvements completed and remaining work.]
- End-of-Road Stormwater Retrofits: Installed stormwater retrofits at several coastal road ends to reduce runoff, erosion, and pollutant loading into coastal waters. Completed locations include Sherman Avenue, San Miguel Drive, Butterworth Avenue, Narrows Road, Annawamscutt Drive, Portside Drive, and Low Lane. An additional retrofit is planned for Sunrise Drive.
- Municipal Tree Planting Initiative: Continued annual tree planting and secured grant funding for approximately 275 additional trees to expand the urban tree canopy, improve stormwater management, reduce urban heat, enhance air quality, and strengthen community resilience.
- Independence Park Waterfront Improvements: Completed waterfront infrastructure and stormwater improvements, including shoreline protection, a new boat ramp and docks, and drainage enhancements designed to reduce erosion, improve water quality, and strengthen resilience to coastal flooding and wave action.
- Annawamscutt/Sowams Stormwater Improvements: Completed a stormwater assessment of the Annawamscutt/Sowams area, including Leahy Pond, with assistance from BETA Group. The study identified opportunities for stormwater management and green infrastructure improvements. A green infrastructure project and water quality treatment structure were

subsequently installed at Sowams Park to improve stormwater treatment and reduce pollutant runoff.

Together, these accomplishments provide a foundation for continued investments in watershed management, flood mitigation, infrastructure resilience, and nature-based solutions as Bristol implements its updated Comprehensive Plan.

Goals and Policies

NH-G1. Minimize the impacts of natural hazards on the Bristol community by reducing risks to life, property, critical infrastructure, historic resources, and economic activity from coastal and inland flooding, severe storms, sea level rise, and other climate-related hazards, with particular attention to areas experiencing recurring impacts.

Policies

NH-G1-P1. Direct growth away from FEMA Special Flood Hazard Areas and other areas subject to significant coastal and inland flood risks, taking into consideration projected sea level rise and future flood conditions. Where development or redevelopment occurs in vulnerable areas, promote appropriate mitigation measures and resilient site design to minimize exposure and potential damage.

NH-G1-P2. Require appropriate stormwater management and resilient site design for new development and redevelopment, including Low Impact Development (LID) practices, to reduce runoff, increase infiltration where feasible, and limit downstream flooding impacts.

NH-G1-P3. Prioritize watershed-based stormwater and drainage improvements, particularly within the Silver Creek and Tanyard Brook watersheds, to reduce chronic flooding and improve water quality through coordinated investments in roads, drainage systems, outfalls, and receiving waters.

NH-G1-P4. Support a phased approach to coastal adaptation that emphasizes near-term, practical risk reduction measures while evaluating and planning for longer-term infrastructure, shoreline, and land use responses to sea level rise and increasing coastal flood risks.

NH-G1-P5. Improve the resilience of critical infrastructure, municipal facilities, transportation routes, and utility systems to flooding, severe storms, and other natural hazards, with particular attention to maintaining emergency access, evacuation routes, and continuity of essential services.

NH-G2. Protect and enhance wetlands, floodplains, coastal buffers, and open space that reduce natural hazard impacts by providing flood storage, shoreline protection, and water quality benefits.

Policies

NH-G2-P1. Protect and, where feasible, restore wetlands, riparian buffers, floodplains, and coastal features that provide flood storage and reduce flooding and erosion. Avoid activities that diminish natural floodplain functions and support opportunities for salt marsh migration and long-term coastal resilience.

NH-G2-P2. Promote the use of nature-based solutions and green infrastructure, where appropriate, to manage stormwater, stabilize shorelines, reduce erosion, and enhance the ability of natural systems to adapt to changing climate conditions.

NH-G3. Strengthen community preparedness, recovery capacity, and climate-informed decision-making through effective hazard mitigation planning, floodplain management, public communication, and coordination with state and regional partners.

Policies

NH-G3-P1. Maintain effective floodplain management practices and continued participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and Community Rating System (CRS), seeking to maintain or improve the Town's CRS classification and associated flood insurance benefits while reducing flood risks to the community.

NH-G3-P2. Incorporate state, regional, and local natural hazard and climate vulnerability data, including available flood risk and sea level rise projections, into land use decisions, capital improvement planning, municipal investments, and hazard mitigation efforts.

NH-G3-P3. Prioritize flood resilience strategies in areas with concentrations of historic structures, commercial uses, and public amenities, particularly along the Thames Street waterfront and within the Bristol Waterfront Historic District.

NH-G3-P4. Design flood mitigation and coastal adaptation measures to maintain public access, support local businesses, and respect the character and architectural integrity of the Bristol Waterfront Historic District.

NH-G3-P5. Strengthen community preparedness and public awareness of natural hazards through coordination with emergency management officials, state agencies, regional partners, and community organizations, with attention to residents who may require additional assistance during emergencies.

NH-G3-P6. Consider the potential impacts of extreme heat, drought, severe storms, and other climate-related hazards in municipal planning, public facility improvements, and community preparedness efforts.

Data and Mapping

Bristol relies on a combination of federal and state mapping resources to understand current and future flood risks, coastal hazards, and potential changes in coastal wetlands, and to inform floodplain management, land use decisions, capital planning, emergency preparedness, and hazard mitigation.

- FEMA Flood Hazard Map (Map NH-1): Depicts FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) flood zones, including VE (Coastal High Hazard Area), AE (1% annual chance flood), X (Shaded, 0.2% annual chance flood), and X (Unshaded, minimal flood risk). The statewide flood hazard dataset was compiled from county-based Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map (DFIRM) databases for Rhode Island, with a FEMA effective FIRM date of 2014.
- **Hurricane Storm Surge Inundation (Map NH-2):** Illustrates areas potentially subject to storm surge inundation under Category 1 through Category 4 hurricane scenarios using the Rhode Island Hurricane Surge (Worst Case) Inundation Areas dataset.
- **Hurricane Evacuation Zones and Routes (Map NH-2A):** Illustrates RIEMA-designated hurricane evacuation Zones A and B and primary evacuation routes. The evacuation zones identify areas where evacuation may be recommended based on storm conditions and are distinct from the hurricane storm-surge inundation areas shown on Map NH-2.
- Sea Level Rise Projections (Map NH-3): Illustrates areas potentially affected by 1, 3, and 5 feet of sea level rise, relative to Mean Higher High Water (MHHW), using state-accepted methodologies.
- Potential Marsh Migration (SLAMM) (Maps NH-4 through NH-6): Identifies potential tidal marsh migration areas under future sea level rise scenarios using the Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model (SLAMM). Data was retrieved from the SLAMM 6.1 model for sea level rise compared to initial conditions in 2010.

These mapping resources provide complementary information for assessing natural hazard exposure and planning for long-term resilience. FEMA flood hazard maps establish regulatory floodplain boundaries, while storm surge, evacuation, sea level rise, and marsh migration maps support broader planning and adaptation decisions. Mapped conditions represent modeled scenarios and should be interpreted in conjunction with local knowledge of recurring flooding, drainage deficiencies, and other site-specific vulnerabilities.

Additional coastal flood scenarios, including storm surge combined with projected sea level rise, are available through Rhode Island's STORMTOOLS mapping resources and can be used to inform future infrastructure planning, development review, and adaptation strategies.

Hazard Mitigation Planning

The Town of Bristol maintains a FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plan, which serves as the Town's primary document for identifying natural hazards, assessing risk and vulnerability, and prioritizing mitigation actions. This Natural Hazards and Climate Change element integrates relevant findings, policies, and mitigation strategies from the Town's *2024 Hazard Mitigation and Flood Management Plan* and references the HMP as a supporting technical document, while focusing on long-range land use, infrastructure, and policy considerations appropriate for a comprehensive plan.

To ensure that the Town's climate resilience approach remains current, the HMP is updated on a five-year cycle, annual review of implementation status, and future versions, once adopted by the Town Council, will serve as the most current source of hazard mitigation guidance, vulnerability assessments, and project-level detail. Implementation of mitigation actions will continue through the HMP, the Capital Improvement Program, and other Town programs, which may be updated independently without automatically requiring amendments to the goals, policies, or implementation program of this Comprehensive Plan.

~~This Natural Hazards and Climate Change element is informed by and consistent with the Hazard Mitigation Plan, while focusing on long-range land use, infrastructure, and policy considerations appropriate for a comprehensive plan. Implementation of mitigation actions will continue to occur through the Hazard Mitigation Plan, the Capital Improvement Program, and other Town programs, which may be updated independently over time.~~

The HMP emphasizes a proactive, long-range approach to hazard mitigation that integrates land use, capital investments, infrastructure management, open space preservation, and coastal resource protection to protect public health and safety, reduce property damage and economic disruption, ensure continuity of critical facilities and services, and strengthen community resilience.

The 2024 HMP identifies 22 mitigation actions addressing natural hazards across Bristol. Several directly support the Comprehensive Plan's long-range land use, infrastructure, and environmental objectives, including watershed-based drainage improvements, resilient coastal infrastructure, wastewater system protection, transportation resilience, preservation of coastal open spaces, and adaptation of historic waterfront resources. Specific mitigation projects, priorities, and implementation details are provided in the HMP and inform the policies and implementation actions of this Element.

Based on Bristol's 2024 Hazard Mitigation Plan and local experience, the hazards posing the greatest risk to the community include:

- **Flooding:** Coastal storm surge, tidal flooding, and inland flooding from heavy rainfall are recurring concerns in low-lying and developed areas.

- **Hurricanes and Nor'easters:** High winds and coastal storms have the potential to cause widespread flooding, infrastructure damage, and service disruptions.
- **Winter Storms:** Snow and ice events strain transportation, utilities, and emergency services.
- **Sea Level Rise (Climate Amplifier):** Rising sea levels are increasing the frequency, extent, and duration of coastal and tidal flooding, particularly along the waterfront and estuarine areas.

Vulnerability Considerations

Bristol faces multiple, overlapping flood and climate-related risks that affect people, property, infrastructure, and economic activity. The 2024 Hazard Mitigation Plan estimates that approximately $377 million in building value is located within the Town's Special Flood Hazard Areas, highlighting the potential economic consequences of flooding. Key exposure and vulnerability considerations include:

- A significant number of residential, commercial, and historic structures are located within FEMA-mapped Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs).
- Bristol contains 13 FEMA-designated Repetitive Loss properties. Repetitive Loss properties are buildings that have experienced multiple insured flood losses, indicating areas that are particularly vulnerable to recurring flooding and where mitigation investments can provide long-term benefits.~~Bristol has documented repetitive flood losses, indicating chronic exposure and ongoing recovery costs in certain neighborhoods.~~ (check with RIEMA on number – might be 12)
- Critical infrastructure, including roads, drainage systems, utilities, and waterfront facilities, is vulnerable to both coastal and inland flooding.
- Wastewater infrastructure, including vulnerable sewer systems and facilities, is subject to potential backflow, tidal flooding, and storm surge, which can disrupt service and affect public health and water quality.
- Natural systems, including wetlands, coastal buffers, open space, and tree canopy, provide important flood protection, stormwater management, shoreline buffering, and heat mitigation benefits that require continued protection and management.
- Transportation access and emergency routes, particularly along low-lying corridors, are sensitive to flood conditions and may be compromised during storm events.

Flooding, including coastal flooding, storm surge, and heavy rainfall events, is identified as the most significant hazard affecting Bristol. Hurricanes and Nor'easters, winter storms, and climate-amplified sea level rise further compound these risks by increasing the frequency and severity of both tidal and inland flooding.

These vulnerabilities inform the Town's land-use decisions, coastal and watershed management, infrastructure priorities, capital planning, and climate adaptation strategies.

Waterfront and Coastal Flooding

Bristol's shoreline is vulnerable to coastal flooding, storm surge, and long-term sea level rise along both Bristol Harbor and the Kickemuit River, Narragansett Bay and Mount Hope Bay. ~~Bristol's downtown waterfront and Thames Street corridor face increasing risk from coastal flooding and sea level rise.~~ State and regional studies identify ~~both~~ risks from ~~direct~~ coastal inundation ~~from Bristol Harbor and~~ as well as "penetration flooding," where floodwaters move inland through streets, driveways, storm drains, and shoreline access points. These pathways increase flood frequency and extent during coastal storms, high tides, and future sea level rise conditions.

Downtown Bristol and the Thames Street corridor are particularly vulnerable because of their low-lying waterfront setting. Key public spaces, parking areas, and waterfront facilities ~~are particularly vulnerable~~, including Independence Park, ~~the~~ Bristol's Maritime ~~Welcome~~ Center, and adjacent parking areas, are susceptible to flooding during coastal storm events. Boat ramps and shoreline access points along the harbor allow floodwaters to move inland, contributing to the inundation of first-floor building spaces, public parks, and roadways during storm events.

The eastern shoreline along the Kickemuit River and Mount Hope Bay also experiences recurring coastal flooding, particularly in low-lying residential neighborhoods and along waterfront roads where tidal flooding, storm surge, and sea level rise affect access and adjacent properties. These areas face many of the same long-term challenges as the downtown waterfront, including increased flood frequency, shoreline erosion, and the need for resilient infrastructure and adaptation strategies.

The waterfront is also economically sensitive. Approximately 56 percent of the buildings in the Thames Street district are commercial, including restaurants, mixed-use buildings, and lodging establishments concentrated in the lowest-lying areas. Flooding therefore affects not only individual properties, but also local businesses, tourism, and municipal revenues. Flooding near the Prudence Island Ferry terminal further raises concerns related to transportation reliability, emergency access, and evacuation.

Transportation and Regional Resilience

Route 114 is a critical north–south corridor serving Bristol, Warren, and Barrington and functions as a designated evacuation route within the Rhode Island Emergency Route Network. Several segments of Route 114 experience periodic flooding during coastal storms, high tides, and heavy rainfall events, conditions that are expected to worsen with sea level rise and increasing storm intensity.

Recent regional planning efforts, including the Resilient Route 114 Study (February 2025), a multi-town study regional planning efforts funded by Statewide Planning, have focused on assessing vulnerability and identifying strategies to improve the long-term resilience of the corridor while maintaining its role as a scenic and historic roadway. The study evaluates roadways, drainage and utility systems, bridges, and culverts vulnerable to coastal flooding from projected sea level rise and storm surge events and identifies strategies to maintain emergency access, evacuation capacity, and regional connectivity.

Regional resilience planning for the Route 114 corridor has also supported the installation of water-level monitoring sensors at several locations in Bristol. These sensors collect real-time data on water levels, providing information that can help document recurring flooding, improve understanding of local flood patterns, and inform future infrastructure planning and flood preparedness efforts.

Bristol County residents rely heavily on Route 114 for commuting to Providence and Kent Counties, reinforcing the corridor's importance to daily mobility, emergency response, and long-term economic resilience.

Flood-Prone Transportation Corridors

Bristol's transportation network is increasingly vulnerable to flooding from coastal storms, high tides, sea level rise, and intense rainfall. Because the Town occupies a peninsula with limited north-south connections, flooding of key roadway segments can disrupt daily travel, emergency response, and evacuation.

The Town's 2024 Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies several roadways subject to recurring flooding or potential future inundation. Poppasquash Road, particularly the state-owned seawall section, is vulnerable to coastal flooding and wave action that can restrict access to the Poppasquash peninsula. Harrison Street and Smith Street are also subject to periodic tidal flooding due to their low elevations and proximity to coastal waters.

[Insert photograph of roadway flooding]

As these roads require future rehabilitation, the Town should evaluate resilient design approaches, such as improved drainage, roadway elevation, or other adaptation measures, where appropriate.

Several flood-prone roadways also serve as emergency evacuation routes. Portions of Poppasquash Road, Hope Street/Ferry Road, Wood Street, Coggeshall Farm Road, and Colt Drive are identified as evacuation corridors in the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Maintaining these routes, planning for alternate access where feasible, and incorporating flood resilience into future transportation investments will help ensure reliable emergency access during coastal storm events and other hazards.

Segments of the East Bay Bike Path are also vulnerable to recurring flooding during coastal storm events and astronomical high tides, particularly at the Silver Creek crossing. Flooding at this location can disrupt recreational access and regional bicycle connectivity, highlighting the need to incorporate resilience into future path improvements.

Sea Level Rise Planning Horizons

Rhode Island's coastal planning guidance uses sea level rise scenarios developed by NOAA and incorporated into the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council's (CRMC) STORMTOOLS mapping program. For planning purposes, approximately 1 foot of sea level rise is projected by 2035, 2 feet by 2050, 3 feet by 2065, 5 feet by 2085, and 7 feet by 2100. These planning scenarios provide a common framework for evaluating the long-term vulnerability of public infrastructure, transportation corridors, and coastal development. **(add to map)**

Community Rating System (CRS) and Local Resilience Initiatives

The Town of Bristol participates in FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System (CRS), a voluntary program that recognizes floodplain management activities exceeding minimum NFIP requirements. Bristol has achieved a CRS Class 7 rating, reflecting sustained efforts in floodplain administration, public outreach, and hazard mitigation, and providing flood insurance premium reductions for policyholders.

CRS participation is complemented by local resilience initiatives, including:

- Public-facing flood hazard information on the Town website
- Flood zone determinations and elevation certificate records
- Documentation of historical storm damage
- A Hazard Mitigation Updates webpage
- A self-guided Coastal Flood Risk and History Walking Tour (StoryMap)

Watershed-Based Flood Mitigation and Planning

The Town has advanced targeted, place-based resilience initiatives to address recurring flooding and water quality challenges, particularly within the Silver Creek watershed, where tidal influences and drainage system capacity constraints contribute to repeated flooding.

The Silver Creek Drainage Study, completed in 2008, evaluated flooding under various storm conditions and identified potential improvements, including drainage system upgrades, sediment management, and other measures to increase drainage capacity and reduce flooding.

Building on this earlier work, the Town has completed additional subwatershed evaluations to address localized drainage and flooding concerns. Recommended improvements are advancing through engineering design and permitting in preparation for construction. Separately, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is evaluating flooding conditions along Hope Street, including tidal influences and potential mitigation measures. Together, these initiatives are helping the Town advance flood mitigation projects and prioritize future investments in the Silver Creek watershed.

The Town is also advancing phased improvements within the Tanyard Brook watershed, including stormwater infrastructure upgrades and restoration projects designed to reduce localized flooding, improve drainage, and enhance water quality.

Together, these initiatives reflect Bristol's ongoing efforts to move from watershed assessments and planning to the design and implementation of infrastructure improvements that address existing flooding and drainage challenges while strengthening resilience to future climate-related hazards.

~~The Town has also advanced targeted, place-based resilience initiatives to address recurring flooding and water-quality challenges, particularly within the Silver Creek watershed, where tidal influence and drainage network capacity constraints contribute to repeated flooding. The Silver Creek drainage study evaluated flood conditions under multiple storm events and identified improvement options, including drainage upgrades and sediment management to increase system capacity.~~

~~Together, these efforts demonstrate Bristol's commitment to combining public education, watershed-based planning, and capital improvement planning to address both existing and future climate-related hazards.~~

State-Identified Priority Assets and Vulnerabilities

Statewide Planning data and analyses further underscore Bristol's vulnerability to flooding and sea level rise, particularly with respect to transportation infrastructure and low-lying coastal areas. Rhode Island Statewide Planning municipal transportation vulnerability fact sheets estimate that approximately seven miles of roadway in Bristol are projected to be inundated under high sea level rise scenarios, with a majority of exposure occurring on locally maintained roads. Statewide analyses also identify multiple bridges in Bristol as vulnerable to both sea level rise and storm surge.

(Source: Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning, Ready, Set, Rhody: Strategies to Improve Resilience, Draft, January 2026.)

Statewide climate resilience planning efforts have identified several assets in or directly affecting Bristol as particularly vulnerable to flooding and climate-related impacts. The State of Rhode Island's Resilient Rhody 2025 planning work identifies

priority transportation, utility, and community facilities that warrant focused resilience planning and coordination. Assets identified within or affecting Bristol include Route 114, Poppasquash Road, the shoreline sewer main along Ferry Road and~~,~~ the Everready Fire Station~~, and Mt. Hope High School~~. These assets are critical to emergency response, transportation connectivity, public services, and long-term community resilience. Identification of these assets informs local planning, capital investment, and coordination with state and regional partners, and supports prioritization of mitigation and adaptation strategies consistent with statewide resilience objectives.

Public Engagement and Community Priorities

Public engagement conducted as part of the Comprehensive Plan update demonstrated strong community awareness of and concern about flooding, sea level rise, and long-term climate impacts. Residents consistently identified recurring flooding in low-lying and coastal areas, particularly within the Silver Creek watershed and along waterfront roadways.

Community priorities identified through surveys and outreach include:

- Improving stormwater infrastructure
- Protecting wetlands and natural buffers
- Limiting development in hazard-prone areas
- Expanding green infrastructure and nature-based solutions
- Planning proactively for sea level rise

There was also strong interest in positioning Bristol as a leader in climate adaptation. These concerns and priorities directly inform the goals, policies, and actions of this element, which seek to reduce risk to people and property, enhance adaptive capacity, and align land use and infrastructure decisions with long-term climate conditions.

Historic Resources

Bristol's historic resources, particularly within the Bristol Waterfront Historic District, are among the community assets most vulnerable to sea-level rise and coastal flooding. Detailed assessment of historic resource vulnerability, including building-level analysis and preservation-based resilience strategies, is addressed in the Historic and Cultural Resources Element of this Plan. This Natural Hazards and Climate Change element builds on that work by integrating hazard mitigation and climate resilience considerations into broader land use, infrastructure, and capital planning decisions.

Relevant State Guide Plan Elements, Reference Documents & Consistency

The Natural Hazards and Climate Change Element is consistent with the goals, policies, and recommendations of the Rhode Island State Guide Plan and other

statewide planning documents that address hazard mitigation, climate resilience, land use, and water resource management. Key documents include:

1. State Guide Plan Element 121 – Land Use 2025
2. Rhode Island Rising: A Plan for People, Places and Prosperity
3. Rhode Island Water 2030
4. Rhode Island State Hazard Mitigation Plan

The goals, policies, and implementation actions contained in this element support and advance the objectives of these statewide plans while addressing Bristol's local hazards, vulnerabilities, and resilience priorities.

Natural Hazards & Climate Change – Implementation Actions (11/3/2026 DRAFT)			
ID	**Action**	**Responsible Parties**	**Timeframe**
NH-A1	Identify, prioritize, and advance green infrastructure and stormwater retrofit projects in locations experiencing recurring flooding, including rain gardens, permeable pavement, and flood storage areas, with improvements informed by local flood monitoring and water-level data, and incorporate these projects into capital planning, watershed-based implementation strategies, and grant applications.	Department of Public Works; Department of Community Development	Short–Medium
NH-A2	Identify and evaluate land acquisition opportunities to support future marsh migration and the protection of coastal wetlands in areas vulnerable to sea level rise, including coordination with regional and state partners where wetlands provide shared resilience benefits.	Department of Community Development; Town Council	Medium–Long
NH-A3	Evaluate existing land use regulations to assess whether climate resilience standards, including impervious cover limits and measures to reduce flood impacts and direct development away from high-risk areas, are adequately addressed, and update regulations as appropriate.	Department of Community Development; Planning Board; Town Council	Short–Medium
NH-A4	Periodically review Bristol's Community Rating System activities and identify opportunities to strengthen credited actions related to floodplain management, open space preservation, public information, mapping, stormwater management, and flood preparedness.	Department of Community Development; Building Official	Ongoing
NH-A5	Evaluate and implement priority resiliency strategies identified in the Route 114 Resiliency Study for low-lying segments of Route 114 in Bristol to reduce flooding, maintain emergency access and evacuation routes, and preserve regional transportation connectivity, including: - Coordinate with RIDOT to evaluate the hydraulic capacity and performance of the existing Silver Creek culvert and associated drainage structures beneath Route 114 (Hope Street) to reduce roadway flooding while maintaining adequate tidal exchange. - Coordinate with RIDOT to install sheet pile cutoff walls along the vulnerable segment of Route 114 adjacent to Silver Creek, as identified in the Route 114 Resiliency Study, to reduce the risk of roadway washout during major coastal flooding events. - Coordinate with RIDOT to install a temporary or deployable flood barrier at the Route 114 seawall gap near Tanyard Brook to reduce flooding that enters the roadway through the adjacent boat ramp area.	Department of Public Works; Department of Community Development; Town Council	Short–Long
NH-A6	Commission a detailed engineering study of evacuation routes to evaluate capacity, identify alternative routes, and assess performance during flood events.	Department of Public Works; Emergency Management	Short–Medium
NH-A7	Construct an elevated berm or other protective measures to reduce flood risk to the Bristol Wastewater Treatment Facility, which may include voluntary property acquisition over the long term.	Department of Public Works; Town Administrator; Town Council	Long-term
NH-A8	Evaluate options to maintain safe and reliable access to the Bristol Wastewater Treatment Facility during coastal flooding and storm events, including potential alternative access routes and improvements to existing access infrastructure.	Department of Public Works; Town Administrator	Long-term
NH-A9	Evaluate and implement priority adaptation strategies consistent with the Ready, Set, Rhody: Strategies to Improve Resilience study and the Bristol Waterfront Historic District Vulnerability Assessment for the Thames Street waterfront area, including measures to address coastal inundation and inland penetration flooding within the Bristol Waterfront Historic District.	Department of Community Development; Town Council	Short–Long

NH-A10	Pursue state and federal funding to support planning, design, and pilot flood-resilience projects within the Thames Street waterfront area.	Department of Community Development; Town Administrator	Ongoing
NH-A11	Coordinate with waterfront property owners and business operators to promote building-scale flood mitigation measures, including temporary and deployable flood barriers.	Department of Community Development	Ongoing
NH-A12	Integrate coastal flooding considerations into emergency preparedness, communication, and response planning related to periodic flooding near the Prudence Island Ferry terminal and adjacent roadways.	Emergency Management; Town Administrator	Ongoing
NH-A13	Work with ferry operators and state agencies to secure grant funding and improve the flood resilience of the Prudence Island Ferry terminal, including elevation or protective measures.	Department of Public Works; Town Administrator	Medium–Long
NH-A14	Establish a dedicated stormwater maintenance program within the Department of Public Works to inspect, maintain, repair, and periodically assess municipal drainage infrastructure and stormwater best management practices (BMPs), including catch basins, culverts, outfalls, and green infrastructure, in order to protect public investments, maximize the useful life and performance of stormwater assets, and reduce localized flooding.	Department of Public Works	Short-Ongoing
NH-A15	Expand participation in emergency notification systems by conducting regular outreach to residents and businesses, especially in flood-prone neighborhoods and waterfront areas, and by promoting sign-ups at Town events and through Town communications.	Emergency Management; Town Administrator	Ongoing
NH-A16	Maintain and improve public-facing hazard and resilience information through a single, easy-to-find Town webpage that includes flood maps, evacuation information, preparedness guidance, permit requirements in flood zones, and links to local and state resources.	Department of Community Development; Town Administrator	Short–Ongoing
NH-A17	Maintain and periodically update the Town's Hazard Mitigation & Flood Management Plan in accordance with FEMA and RIEMA requirements, incorporating current hazard, climate, vulnerability, and infrastructure data and coordinating its recommendations with the Comprehensive Plan and Capital Improvement Program.	Town Administrator; Department of Community Development	Ongoing
NH-A18	Advance recommendations from the Silver Creek Drainage Study and other ongoing watershed and flood mitigation studies and evaluate additional watershed-based flood mitigation improvements, including: - Drainage system upgrades, sediment management, and channel improvements where appropriate, to reduce recurring flooding and improve stormwater conveyance. - Coordinate with RIDOT and other appropriate partners to evaluate and advance flood mitigation improvements at the Silver Creek crossing of the East Bay Bike Path, including potential elevation or redesign to reduce recurring tidal and storm-related flooding and maintain recreational access and connectivity.	Department of Public Works; Department of Community Development	Ongoing