

10. Community Facilities and Infrastructure

Infrastructure

Residents visualize a town that provides for social and recreational opportunities through the addition of parks or new facilities, and by more efficient use, or repurposing, of existing facilities. Residents envision the provision of infrastructure, the creative use of alternative energy, and expanded transportation options as a way to attract businesses. Residents feel the current roads should be maintained with better accommodation for pedestrians and cyclists.

10.1 Town Government

The Town of North Stonington operates under a Board of Selectmen, town meeting form of government. The town meeting is the legislative body for the town. All town board and commission meetings are open to the public. Most town facilities are located in or near the Village. Recent upgrades to the town hall include the installation of solar panels. Future plans include cosmetic improvements to the Old and New Town Halls.

Typical Calendar of Board and Commission Meetings

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Hewitt Farm Committee (Every other Monday @ 3pm Town Hall)	Board of Selectmen Recreation (6:15pm) (NS Probate Court)	Board of Finance (7:30pm) (Town Hall or Wheeler Gymnasium Music Room)	Planning & Zoning Commission	
Week 2		Board of Selectmen	Board of Finance (7:30pm) (Town Hall or Wheeler Gymnasium Music Room) Inland Wetlands Commission Board of Ed (7:30) Wheeler Gymnasium Music Room	Planning & Zoning Commission	
Week 3	Hewitt Farm Committee (Every other Monday @ 3pm Town Hall)	Board of Selectmen Zoning Board of Appeals (Senior Center)	Board of Finance (7:30pm) (Town Hall or Wheeler Gymnasium Music Room)	Economic Development Commission (6:00pm) Juvenile Review Board (2pm @ The Grange)	
Week 4		Board of Selectmen	Board of Finance (7:30pm) (Town Hall or Wheeler Gymnasium Music Room) Board of Ed (7:30pm) Wheeler Gymnasium Music Room	Conservation Commission (6:00pm) Affordable Housing Commission (6:00pm Wheeler HS Media Room)	

All meetings are held at 7:00 PM, in the New Town Hall conference room unless otherwise noted. Check Town website at www.northstoningtonct.org for times and locations of all meetings.

10.2 Facilities and Services

With the exception of emergency services and the need for a dog pound, the existing community facilities are operating effectively and services are considered adequate to meet the needs of residents at this time. According to the town survey (and supported by other public input), a slight majority was willing to vote for funding for emergency services, infrastructure, and the schools. With respect to land acquisition, the selectmen feel that the town owns sufficient land to meet future community needs, but must be diligent in its search for opportunities to acquire land or vacant space to satisfy future needs. The largest capital improvement projects for the next ten years include renovations to the schools and the construction of a new emergency services facility that will consolidate fire and ambulance services in one building. This leaves a tremendous opportunity to create a cohesive master plan for a municipal "campus" that would include the old firehouse and the existing recreation facility in an integrated whole. This



area along Rocky Hollow and Route 2 is just outside the historic district so its design should mesh with the character of the village with

respect to setbacks, design, landscaping, and location of parking lots. As the gateway to the village, it should also reflect the pride we take in our town, our volunteers, and the people who work for us.

Master planning would not only allow for greater flexibility and creativity on individual sites, but would give the town the opportunity to create a design that reflects our commitment to *carefully* plan for the future needs of residents rather than react piecemeal as needs arise and end up with a disjointed, unworkable, or retrofitted feel to the area. A well-thought

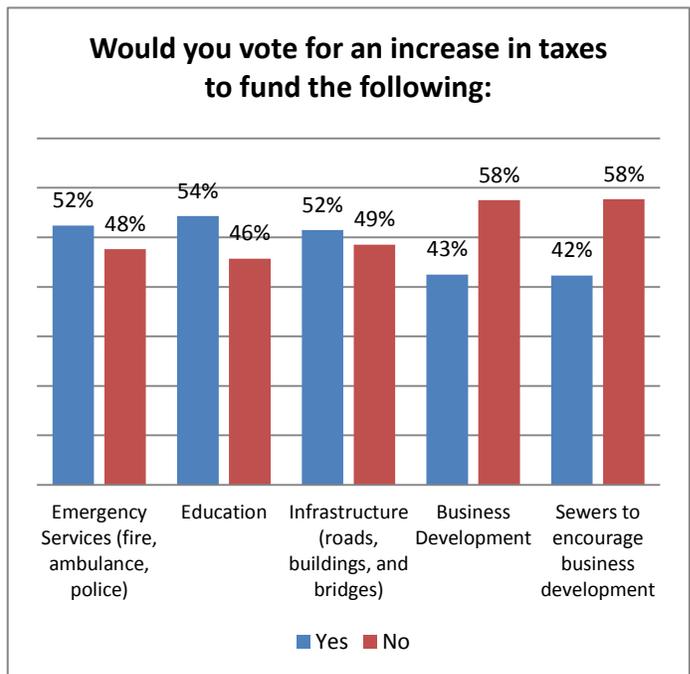


Figure 20 - Source: 2013 Community Survey

out master plan would allow us to build as needed and when funds become available, but end up with a unified whole that looks right and works well.

10.3 Emergency Services

The North Stonington Volunteer Fire Company, founded in 1945, operates one station in the Village and provides fire protection for the entire town. It responds to accidents that occur on I-95, and provides and receives mutual aid to neighboring communities on an as-needed basis. Currently, 48 volunteer fire personnel serve the town.

Recent issues identified with the existing space in both the ambulance and firehouse facilities have prompted a proposal to combine the two facilities in a new building to be located on the eight acre parcel located at the corner of Rocky Hollow Road and Route 2 across from the existing firehouse. The benefits of constructing a new facility include:

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- **increased safety;**
- **reduction in response time by allowing volunteers to spend time and be at the station;**
- **financial savings by combing the ambulance and firehouse into one facility; and**
- **greater emergency operations center capabilities (better communications with all units under one roof).**

use. With respect the ambulance facility, the existing deed restriction dictates that it be reserved for public use. The Boy Scouts have expressed interest in using the facility.



Resident State Troopers provide police protection with offices located in the Old Town Hall. Three troopers work day and evening shifts. Personnel from the Montville Barracks are called in on an as-needed basis to provide around-the-clock coverage. Residents raised many concerns about speeding and growing crime rate in town during the public meetings and in their written survey responses, and questioned the need for more troopers.

The North Stonington Ambulance Association located on Mains Crossing, provides emergency response throughout town. A core paid crew provides services 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. The Association is supplemented by volunteers who work ambulance shifts on the first crew, as first responders, or can form a second ambulance crew when needed.



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10.4 Town Facilities

The Town Garage is located on Wyassup Road. The Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining the road system and for general maintenance of town facilities and public areas. During the past 10 years the facility has been updated to include solar panels, new office space, updated stormwater drainage systems, and a new truck wash station. A new sand and salt shed was constructed at the Town Garage with a covered area used to protect many of the town trucks from constant exposure to the elements.

The Transfer Station located on Wintechog Hill Road provides solid waste disposal. Its “Swap Shed,” built as an Eagle Scout project, provides a “re-use” opportunity for residents. North

Stonington’s recycling program has reduced input into the landfill by an impressive 65%. The transfer station now utilizes a trash compactor; greatly increasing the overall efficiency and capacity of the facility. Other upgrades include improvements to the drainage system and the installation of solar panels. Long-range plans include the completion of the weighing scales.

The North Stonington Senior Center is located in the Holly Green complex. The building has a kitchen and large multipurpose room used by seniors during the day and for town functions in the evening. The center has just over 150 members and provides activities for approximately 60 seniors on a regular basis,



including Wednesday luncheons and planned trips. The center is run by a director with the help of several volunteers who supplement the transportation services provided by the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center (PNC). Currently North Stonington only uses their senior bus for planned recreational outings, and not to transport seniors to appointments or for grocery shopping trips, but hopes to secure funding in the future to expand its own transportation service apart from the PNC. The director assists senior residents in navigating the various state assistance program applications (i.e., insurance, food stamps, and heating assistance), and hosts informational seminars on a regular basis to educate seniors on a variety of topics ranging from Medicare programs to how to avoid falls. With an aging

population, the town should be planning for the possible expansion of the Senior Center to accommodate this growing demographic.

The Recreation Department administers recreational and educational programs and activities to benefit the residents of the community. The **North Stonington Recreation Area** is located on Rocky Hollow Road within walking distance of the schools. Facilities include lighted tennis and basketball courts, a baseball field, and soccer field. There is a



Volleyball Courts at Rocky Hollow Recreational Facility

playground and a “Rec Shack” with rest rooms. Renovations to the Recreation Area were completed 2012. The following infrastructure improvements were made:

- replaced/reconstructed the existing tennis courts;
- replaced/reconstructed the existing basketball courts;
- constructed a new volleyball court – also used as ice-skating rink in the winter;
- replaced and expanded the existing water line and electrical services to the site; and
- constructed stormwater collection and pretreatment facilities.

A very popular and well-organized Little League program uses both the Recreation Area field and a baseball field located on property owned

by the Grange. The town hopes to create additional athletic fields on the school campus in the future. Future goals to expand the Recreation Area include the acquisition of the state owned 15-acre area adjacent to the nine acres the town leases for its current recreation area. The site connects with the school recreational fields and facilities by way of a footbridge across Assekonk Pond.

10.5 Schools

There are three public schools: **North Stonington Elementary School**, **Wheeler Middle School**, and **Wheeler High School**. They are located close to the Village in a campus



NS Elementary, Middle and High School Campus

setting. The campus is bisected by Route 2 with an underground pedestrian tunnel connecting the two sides. The **North Stonington Christian Academy** and the **Cornerstone Baptist Academy**, operated by the Second and (former) Third Baptist Churches respectively, are both private schools located in town. As of August 2013, 739 students were enrolled in North Stonington’s three public schools: Pre-K (17); K-5 (337); 6-8 (149); and 9-12(236). The following chart is taken from the 2013-2014 budget and shows past, current and projected enrollment.

Enrollment as of 10/1	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 Projected	2015-16 Projected	2016-17 Projected	2017-18 Projected
Elementary School (PreK – 5)	371	384	385	378	387	387	383	385
Middle School (6-8)	201	181	176	154	189	187	192	199
High School (9-12)	224	216	203	218	213	212	209	208
Sub-total - In District	796	781	764	750	779	786	784	792
Vocational Agriculture (VoAg)	11	19	14	12	11	6	6	6
Private/RESC Special Education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Magnet Schools	8	9	13	15	17	17	11	11
Technical Schools	17	19	15	9	6	5	5	5
Sub-total - Out of District	36	47	42	36	34	28	22	22
Total In & Out of District	832	828	806	786	813	814	806	814

Several studies have been conducted over the past ten years to determine the current and future needs of the schools. The Ad Hoc School Committee was formed in 2008 for the purpose investigating the school buildings in terms of their current physical status as well as their ability to support current and future student needs. The *2011 Feasibility Study* conducted by Quisenberry Arcari Architects, LLC, presented several options for possible improvements for each school to be completed in stages. For the elementary school, all options recommended the addition of a gym/multipurpose room and moving all general classes such as art, computer lab, and music to the first floor. One option recommended that the sixth grade be moved back to the elementary school as this would increase the state reimbursement rate for any work done here. Recommendations for the middle and high school included a new larger cafeteria to reduce the number of lunch periods needed, remodeling the current cafeteria for classrooms, and to tear down the old middle school. All recommendations were presented to the Board of Selectman, the Board of Finance and the Board of Education. Ultimately, the Board of Education will present their recommendation for town approval via referendum.

The study also discussed the potential costs and savings associated with closing the High School, though the residents ultimately voted to keep the school open. The Superintendent of Schools and Board of Education members made a number of changes to the education specifications from the original feasibility study, and the architects will again review the plan with the new specifications which will be voted on by the residents in 2014. The concerns of the high school facility were clearly documented in the *New England Association Schools and Colleges (NEASC) 2004 Decennial Report* which is available for review.

In 2013, the **Informed Citizens of North Stonington (ICONS)** group organized a *Community Conversation* about North Stonington Schools and their place in the community. A number of ideas were discussed that would be beneficial to the school department and district. Overall, participants felt that the schools were a source of pride for the community. The small class size and low student teacher ratio, quality of students, and quality of the community were the main positive attributes identified. The other major themes that emerged focused more on areas of needed improvement and can basically be grouped into the following categories:

communication, awareness, and participation; coordinated interaction between school community and community resources; budget clarification, prioritization (distinguishing needs from desires), and funding options. Participants all stressed the need for new creative approaches to all issues identified.

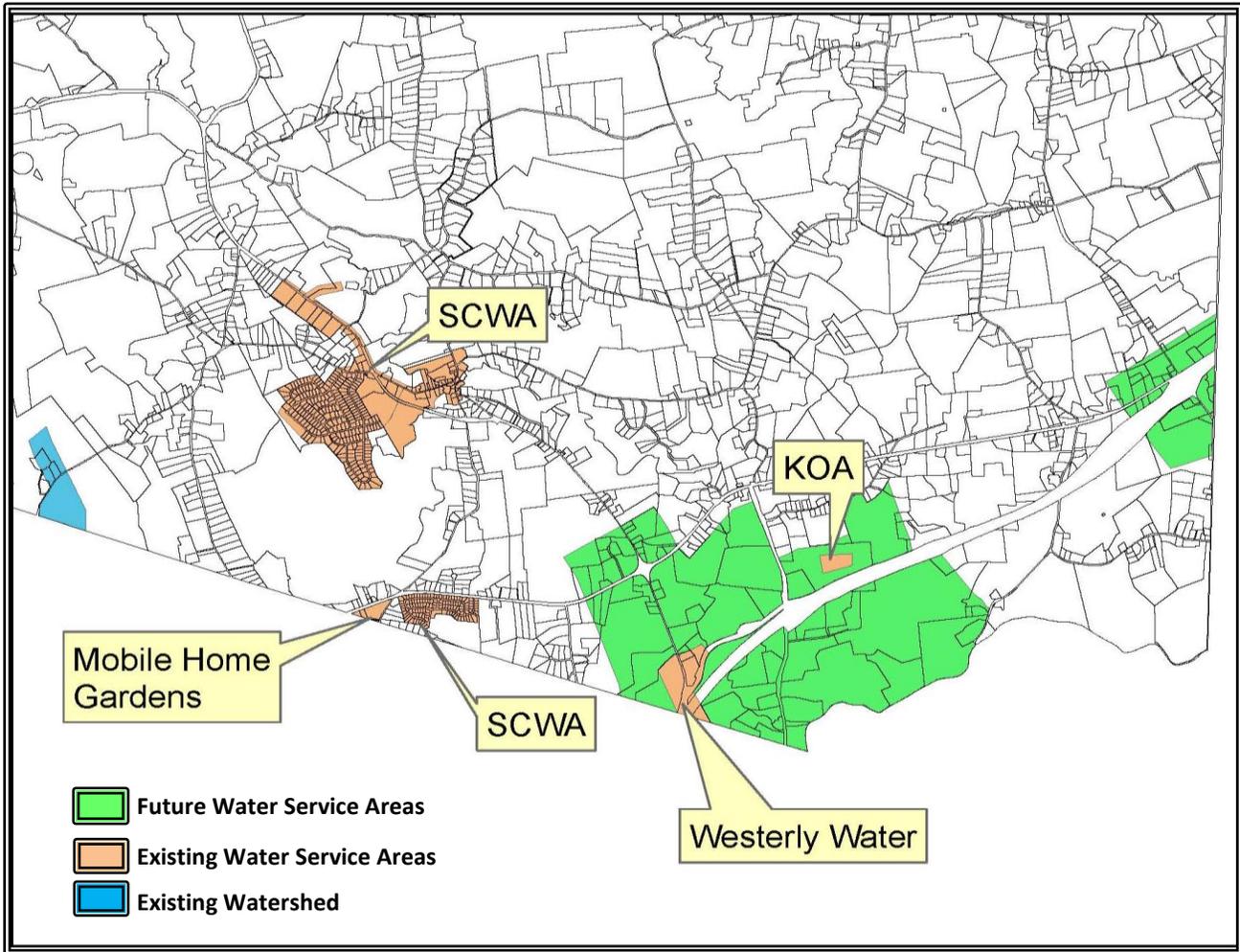
With respect to improving communications, a quarterly newsletter is being developed which will be mailed to all town residents. In addition,

the chair of the Board of Education and the superintendent plan to develop a cooperative effort between the district and town in terms of financing the administration of an adult education program for residents in the district. This cooperative effort should extend further to include discussing short and long term plans for the schools, so that they can be coordinated into, and harmonious with, town wide municipal plans.

10.6 Water Infrastructure

North Stonington is fortunate to have an abundance of surface and groundwater resources, and protecting the quality of ground water continues to be a high priority for the town. The monitoring, management, and distribution of this resource involves private entities, local, state and federal agencies, and non-profit organizations. In some instances, the supply and management of the system crosses town and state boundaries. The vast majority of residential and commercial development is served by private wells. Public drinking water supply services in town are limited. Both the Town of Westerly Water Department and the Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority (SCWA), which provide limited service in North Stonington, possess the capability to expand into and serve development along the Route 2 corridor. The mobile home park and KOA Campground both operate their own

community wells to provide water service. There is no public drinking water from a surface water supply. In 2002, the town was declared an exclusive service provider of water systems. In 2008, an *Exclusive Service Area Water Plan* was completed and which examined the town's existing land use and future service areas. The plan concluded with an analysis of the town's future needs and potential alternative supply sources and confirmed North Stonington's tremendous water resources - more than adequate to meet future demand. The current withdrawal permit could be altered in the future to allow us to increase our demand for the purposes of exporting water. Five rivers and associated watersheds located partially or entirely within North Stonington have been identified to have the potential for potable water supply and are federally recognized as important.



10.7 Sewer Infrastructure

While sewer avoidance in the non-residential zones remains a goal of the town, there is growing recognition of the need for this type of infrastructure if the town hopes to be more competitive in the future and grow its economy. When residents were asked in the 2012 Community Survey whether they would encourage development in the non-residential zones even if it meant introducing sewers to the area, 52% said they would versus 31% who did not agree. Ultimately it will be up to the residents whether or not they want to fund the installation of any infrastructure (water, sewer,

gas etc.), but the town is being proactive in its approach by securing the funding for all the necessary studies that will enable developers and residents to make informed decisions about future infrastructure improvement projects. Currently, no municipal sewer infrastructure exists and there is no inter-municipal agreement with any abutting municipality or entity. Disposal of sanitary waste is by private septic system on all but a very few properties. The Hilltop Inn and Bellissimo Grande Hotel on Route 2 currently operate package treatment plants to handle their waste and two properties near the border with the Town of Stonington tie

into Stonington's wastewater treatment facility under private agreements. Discussions continue to take place between the Towns of Stonington



Package Treatment Plan at Bellisimo Grande Hotel

and North Stonington regarding a municipal sewer service agreement. In 1994, the North Stonington Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) established a sewer service district in the southern part of town and several studies have been conducted to explore the feasibility of other sanitary waste disposal options for future commercial development. Most recently, the town has secured funding to conduct a formal sewer study that would clearly identify the potential flows and cost of construction as well as the potential modifications needed at the Stonington Plant to accommodate an increase in flow.

10.8 Transportation

According to the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, transportation and congestion are major issues for the entire southeastern Connecticut region. Interstate 95 and the four state highways that traverse North Stonington provide connections to and between other towns in the region. I-95, the primary East Coast limited-access highway, has two interchanges (Exits 92 and 93) in North Stonington. Route 2, a state highway that bisects the town from east to west, is a principal access route to Rhode Island beaches, and is an advertised route to Foxwoods Resort Casino. This results in a six-mile trip through North Stonington along its main thoroughfare. Exit 93, almost at the Rhode Island border, provides access to Routes 216 and 184, and to commercial establishments located at this end of the town.

Route 184 from Exit 93 is also used as a "short cut" to Foxwoods. Since 1992, Foxwoods has had a significant impact on traffic in the region. It contributes to an average of 19,000 vehicles

per day on Route 2 in North Stonington. Route 2 has clearly borne the brunt of the increased traffic, but there is also a noticeable increase in volumes on local roads as people seek alternative routes.

Route 2 is constructed to arterial standards between Norwich and Cossaduck Hill Road (Route 201) in North Stonington. South of the Stonington-North Stonington town line, Route 2 has been widened to four lanes. North Stonington residents continue to oppose this type of roadway "improvement." Future development could heighten the desire of the Connecticut Department of Transportation to realign and widen its roads. Residents of the town are acutely aware of the impacts this would have on their quality of life. The town is resolved to do what it can to keep Route 2 a two-lane road that is both safe and scenic.

Rail, Bus, and Air Transportation Services

Passenger rail service is provided along Long Island Sound by **AMTRAK**, with stops in New London, Mystic and Westerly, historically as part of the Northeast Corridor service between

Boston and Washington, DC. Beginning August 17, 2013, the corridor was extended to include stops as far south as Norfolk, VA and to connect the Northeast and the Mid-Atlantic. In addition, **Shoreline East Service** is slowly expanding and can now be accessed in New London as well as in Old Saybrook with its final destination being Grand Central Station in New York City. The fare

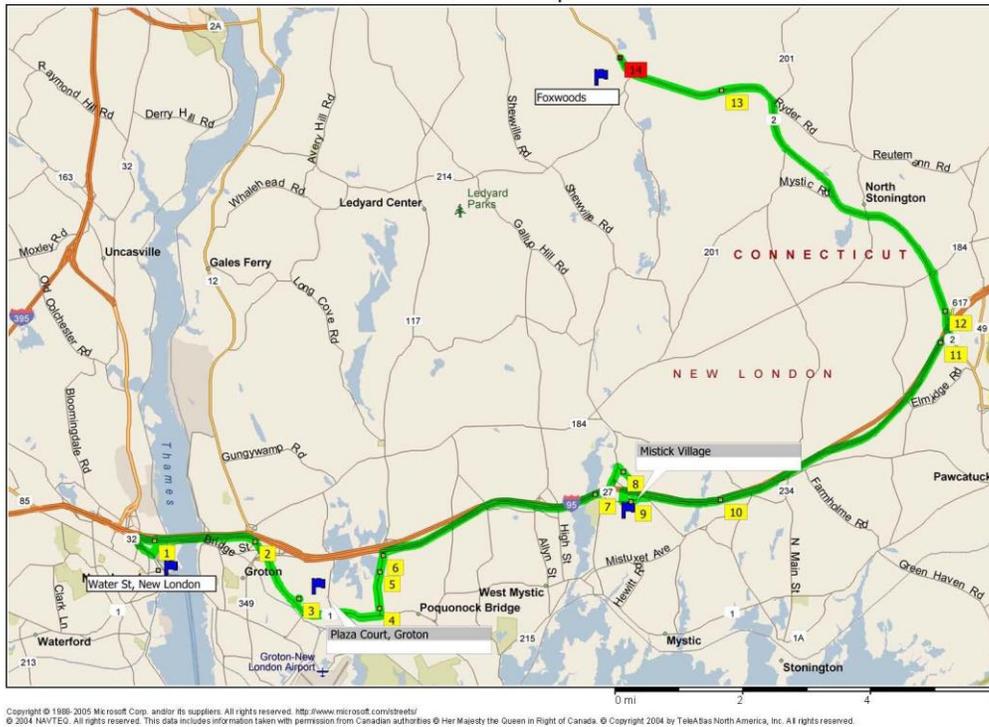
for seniors (especially from Old Saybrook) is minimal, making travel to New York City very inexpensive.

Southeast Area Transit (SEAT) provides local bus service in the region. Only one route passes through North Stonington on a daily basis making two stops along Route 2. There is potential for an expansion of transit services in the future that may include possibility of a *Demand-Response-Van* service rather than an additional fixed bus route.

Primary air service is provided at T.F. Greene Airport in Warwick, and Bradley airport in Hartford (33 and 60 miles away respectively). Groton and Westerly also have small airports nearby to service area residents and visitors.



Route 108 map





Community Facilities Map

Parcel Lines To
10/1/2012

- Cell Towers
- Road Classification**
- ~ PRIVATE
- ~ STATE
- ~ TOWN
- Existing Sewer District
- Water Distribution**
- Projected Water Areas
- Water Distribution Areas
- Facilities**
- + Education
- + General
- + Parks and Recreation
- + Public Safety
- + Public Works

Number	Name
1	Wheeler Elementary School
2	Cornerstone Baptist Academy
3	Wheeler Middle School/High School
4	NS Christian Academy
5	Senior Center
6	Wheeler Library
7	Town Hall Complex
8	Hewitt Property - Trails and Community Gardens
9	School Athletic Fields
10	Grange Ball Fields and Fair Grounds
11	Town Green
12	Rocky Hollow Recreational Facility
13	Kampgrounds of America
14	Billings Lake Boat Launch
15	Camp Wightman
16	Lake of Isles Golf Course
17	Wyassup Lake Boat Launch
18	Little League Fields
19	Long Pond Boat Launch
20	NS Ambulance Assoc.
21	Resident State Troopers
22	NS Fire Company
23	Proposed New EMS Facility
24	Town Garage
25	Transfer Station

