

# 11. Goals and Objectives

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North Stonington's 2013 Plan of Conservation and Development requires the town to take charge of its future with renewed intensity. In order to achieve sustainability – protecting the things we cherish about our town while keeping it affordable – we must solicit the businesses we want for the town, define North Stonington's aesthetic in landscaping and architecture so that it can be followed, and have a cohesive plan for protecting our natural resources and farms. Our plans must result in actions such as the adoption of better regulations, solicitation of appropriate development, acquisition of conservation lands, and intelligent use and preservation of natural resources. These can only be achieved by a meaningful dialogue between informed town leaders and an energized and active populace.

While the Plan of Conservation and Development is produced by the Planning and Zoning Commission, it states the intention and commitment of the town as a whole. The following goals and objectives then, are for everyone: leaders and volunteers, boards and commissions, tax payers and residents. Each corresponds to one of the themes, or core values, identified in the *Visioning Session*.

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## I. Build vitality and enhance the assets and abilities of the town and maintain our strong sense of community.

**Rationale:** A community that is self-reliant and participatory, efficiently using local and outside resources, has a higher level of volunteer service, and is a community that is able to turn plans into action.

**Core Value:** Community

### Objectives and Strategies:

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#### A. Help residents connect.

1. Work to increase civic, cultural, and educational opportunities and capitalize on existing natural and recreational assets.
  - a. Work with the schools to improve volunteer programs and to develop after-school programs and/or internships that connect students with the environment and with town government and other organizations.
  - b. Create an Arts and Cultural program that utilizes the Hewitt Farm, Fairgrounds, and other appropriate properties for concert series, guided hikes, an artist in residence program, and agricultural events (in addition to the Fair).

- a. *Support the Grange, Wheeler Library, the Historical Society, the Garden Club and other local organizations by holding membership drives and attend events.*

**2. Create community gathering areas and revitalize the Village.**

- a. *Consider tax incentives to businesses who will locate in the village (i.e., hardware store location and former law office).*
- b. *Develop or identify a possible location for a community center to provide all residents with a meeting and recreation place.*



Depiction of the possible re-development of the former law office and hardware store in the Historic Village. In addition to possible tax incentives to locate a business in the Village center, simple façade improvements, the addition of sidewalks and crosswalks and the introduction of street furniture are possible investments that could be made to give new life to the area. Both buildings offer mixed-use opportunities and would provide a much sought after gathering place for residents and visitors. Rendering by Julia M. Leeming, Architect

**3. Promote greater mobility.**

- *Properly mark existing trails and link more trails to the village area.*
- *Address the issue of speeding on the roads.*
- *Encourage or require bike and footpaths in all new subdivisions.*

**B. Use the internet more effectively to communicate local views and board and commission activity.**

1. Publish e-newsletter that provides monthly progress reports from each board and commission.
2. Use social media to better communicate with residents.
3. Make websites more user-friendly and informative.

**C. Provide creative and consistent ways for residents to participate in local government and the planning process.**

1. Expand the leadership base.
2. Proactively encourage residents to become involved in the town on commissions and committees and to attend meetings.
3. Support and encourage volunteerism.
4. The town must reciprocate and share the leadership role by empowering its existing boards, committees, and commissions and giving them the resources and support needed to pursue their stated goals.
5. Consider internship programs with the high school so that students can become a pool of committed and knowledgeable citizens that can hold office in the future.



## **II. Diversify and Grow the Local Economy**

**Rationale:** In order for North Stonington to compete in the current economy, and still retain its character, it must be specific and deliberate in its planning efforts. North Stonington must attract appropriate commercial development in order to diversify the tax base, stabilize the tax rate, and reduce the burden on homeowners.

**Core Value:** Progress

### **Objectives and Strategies**

**A. Work to create a positive, competitive business climate by increasing developer confidence, flexibility in land use regulations, clarity in design standards, and greater predictability in the application process.**

1. Invite developers and architects to participate in regular meetings to discuss ways to improve the permitting process.
2. Consolidate the Commercial Development, Office Research, and Village Commercial Zones into one unified Economic Development Zone and review/update permitted uses. Evaluate all zones and permitted uses to determine land uses that are more compatible with the town's vision.
3. Create flexible zoning regulations that reflect a clear vision for our commercial and industrial zones and streamline application process to increase developer confidence and predictability. Regulations should allow for broader interpretations and not attempt to define everything but they should be reflective of clear master plans and aesthetic concepts that define and guide the

developer to a final project that is both successful for the developer and sustainable for the town.

4. Actively and deliberately communicate plans and achievements via e-newsletter, North Stonington Bulletin Board, social media, and/or traditional press.

**B. Expand upon North Stonington's existing strengths and opportunities to provide a framework for success.**

1. Sustain economic development through green energy technology and agriculture.
  - a. *Encourage and permit green energy facilities (research and development or actual production facilities) and other self-funding commercial and/or industrial uses.*
  - b. *Promote agricultural businesses and supportive industries that are vital to the local and regional economy.*
2. Invest in infrastructure necessary to support business growth.
3. Accentuate and promote the positive attributes of North Stonington that would make it appealing for a business to locate here (i.e. natural resources, good schools, educated workforce etc.).
4. Pursue place-based economic development.

**C. Be proactive, responsive and deliberate in all planning efforts to better prepare for and manage the rate, style, and amount of change.**

1. Ensure that the built and natural environments reflect the heritage of North Stonington.
  - *Create speculative master plans or concept plans for the Highway Commercial and Commercial 2 Zone and the zones around the rotary. Include specifications and regulations to minimize traffic impacts, address infrastructure needs and availability, and treat the Shunock River as an amenity.*
  - *Adopt clear and specific design guidelines and architectural standards to better inform future development and/or consider forming a Design Review Committee to advise the Planning and Zoning Commission.*
  - *Hold workshops and charettes, and utilize student resources to develop site specific plans for select parcels (i.e. Wintechog Hill, conservation subdivision).*
2. Complete the *Sewer Study* to determine the exact cost/benefit associated with extending sewers into the CD and/or I Zone. Continue investigating the feasibility and cost of a possible sewer connection with Stonington. Tie this, and other municipal decisions, to thoughtful master planning of the commercial zones by the Planning and Zoning Commission.
3. Study and plan new and innovative ways of bringing small businesses to designated commercial and industrial areas. Identify existing properties that can be readily renovated or rehabilitated for such uses.
4. Hold joint meetings of boards and commissions to discuss ways to improve our response to economic development opportunities, and to be more deliberate and less reactive in our approach to planning.
5. Implement the 2012 Economic Development Action Plan through Economic Development Commission funding, actively inviting greater public participation and involvement, greater



accountability of Commission members to attend and participate, and by completing tasks identified in the Implementation Plan.

**D. Engage in careful planning with the help of an educated, professional staff and informed and committed resident volunteers.**

1. Provide ongoing support for planning staff by utilizing interns and consultants when necessary.
2. Consider hiring an economic development specialist.
3. Utilize visual planning aides and software to determine and better conceptualize potential development possibilities (to more effectively manage change).
4. Hold regular informal neighborhood meetings and/or planning workshops on a variety of planning topics relevant to North Stonington.
5. Actively commit to adopted vision and goals. Keep POCD “alive” through implementation and monitoring.

**E. Support a diverse community and general fiscal sustainability.**

1. Attract young adults back to the community and help retain our senior residents.
  - *Expand housing choice to include small-scale multifamily units, senior housing, and micro-assisted living facilities in select areas.*
  - *Create more work and volunteer opportunities.*
  - *Promote the positive attributes of North Stonington that make it appealing to locate or remain here.*
2. Host more community events.



Annual Garden Club Plant Sale



"A Country Store Sale" event at the Wheeler Library

3. Establish an *Incentive Housing Zone* and partner with non-profit developers to create a neighborhood of starter homes and/or workforce housing.
4. Fully support the schools. Improve communication and cooperation between school administration and Board of Education, and town departments and commissions.
5. Ensure greater fiscal responsibility within all town departments by increasing transparency, resident participation and access to the process, and communication.

### III. Promote, protect and enhance the natural resources, historical, architectural, and agricultural heritage of North Stonington as a fundamental part of the town's identity, tradition, quality of life, and prosperity.

**Rationale:** North Stonington has consistently had a strong identity and real capacity for growth, but has not been articulate and specific about protecting its rural or unique character in a way that will actually help guide land use decisions and ensure the type of progress that will protect its identity and tradition. Clear regulations and strategies along with a holistic approach to planning that considers conservation, development, heritage, and community as one interactive system will ensure our continued prosperity.

**Core Value:** Sustainability

#### Objectives and Strategies:

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**A. Ensure that all new development will be of appropriate scale and design relative to its location.**

1. Develop design guidelines that are clear yet flexible to ensure good (suitable) design but allow for creative alternate designs. Design guidelines or architectural standards should clearly reflect the desired "look" for North Stonington (in keeping with its rural character).
2. Master Plan specific areas with the help of consultants or planning students to develop a clear concept or visions for the specific areas that include desired uses and design and considers all impacts to the natural resources.

**B. Limit (number or location) or prohibit uses that will contribute to an excessive increase in traffic, road widening, light pollution and/or noise pollution.**

1. Revise zoning regulations and specifically prohibit undesired uses or limit to designated areas.
2. Consider adopting a realistic – i.e., enforceable - noise ordinance.
3. Review and revise regulations pertaining to light pollution.
4. Encourage participation at Board of Selectman meetings so that concerns related to traffic, roads, speeding, and crime etc. can be heard and addressed by the appropriate person or entity.

**C. Invest in the necessary planning and land purchase, and enact appropriate regulations to ensure the preservation and protection of North Stonington's valuable natural resources and open space.**

1. Establish an overall goal for the amount of open space to be permanently protected.
2. Identify existing and potential wildlife or green corridors on a map and encourage preservation and purchase of open space parcels within. Concentrate on connecting corridors by utilizing all types of open space and learn how they can work together to create these corridors.

3. Continue to prevent urban sprawl through effective zoning regulations and master planning.
4. Encourage and facilitate the private purchase of open space (by land trusts or other similar organizations).
5. Promote purchase/transfer of development rights and permanent conservation easements.
6. Continue to preserve farmlands and forests (under PA 490, 10 mil or permanently).
7. Continue to support fee-in-lieu of provision in subdivision regulations to create and maintain a funding source to be used to purchase desired parcels (consistent with the Plan of Conservation and Recreation Lands) and to facilitate acceptance of only meaningful set-aside areas (rather than random bits of open space).
8. Enforce wetlands regulations.
9. Actively support goals, objectives and actions identified by the Conservation Commission in the Plan of Conservation and Recreation Lands (PCRL).
10. Invest in necessary planning and infrastructure improvements, and enact appropriate regulations to ensure the preservation and protection of North Stonington's lakes and waterways.

**D. Engage in proactive planning to ensure that all future plans consider the need to preserve North Stonington's character, and clearly identify smart development choices.**

1. Increase awareness about littering, pollution, and blight.
2. Enforce/maintain existing regulations concerning setbacks, buffers and lot size. Create a Future Land Use Map as well as a Future Conservation Plan Map and revise zoning regulations to support these plans.
3. Identify and protect cemeteries, pre-contact and historic sites, and archeological remains prior to site disturbance. Keep inventories of historic, cultural and archeological resources/sites current and in a format that is most useful to land use boards and commissions.
4. Encourage creative adaptation and reuse of historic structures.
5. Promote North Stonington as an active agricultural community and protect existing farms and encourage/support new farming operations.



Brian Banker Plowing Community Gardens

- *Expand allowable principal and accessory agricultural uses and re-introduce agricultural related school programs (during or after school).*
- *Consider farm-to school program or student run farmer's market.*
- *Encourage succession plans and the transfer of development rights to protect farms.*
- *Develop a farm and forest preservation plan.*

## IV. Expand housing choice to accommodate the needs of residents of all ages and incomes.

**Rationale:** The development of a variety of new housing types and designs would make the town more attractive to prospective new businesses by providing workforce housing, and would give young people and seniors an affordable in-town option.

**Core Value:** *Livability*

### Objectives and Strategies

#### A. Align North Stonington's housing policies with state requirements.

1. Maintain Rural Residential Preservation Zone (R-80) as low density by allowing new housing type and design in designated *Housing Opportunity Zones* (outside the R-80 Zone) as informed by changing market demands and demographic trends.
2. Educate potential homebuyers about assistance programs.
3. Provide incentives to secure affordability through deed restrictions (i.e. tax abatement, housing rehabilitation program).

#### B. Maintain overall densities while allowing additional housing opportunities.

1. Adopt conservation subdivision regulations, small-scale multi-family unit, senior housing, and mixed use zone regulations.
2. Encourage more accessory apartments and rental opportunities including possible well-planned farm-worker housing.

#### C. Maximize the potential of existing housing units to meet housing needs.

1. Allow conversion of single-family home into micro-assisted living facility/residential care homes.
2. Convert “naturally occurring” affordable housing into qualified affordable units.
3. Evaluate if tax delinquent properties can be repurposed as qualified affordable units.

#### D. Encourage the private sector to create housing choices.

1. Facilitate the creation of senior housing and micro-assisted living facilities.
2. Consider requiring qualified affordable units to be provided in some or all new housing developments.
3. Actively work with potential developers to create “friendly 8-30g” developments in a desired location so as to raise our percentage of qualified units and avoid inappropriately scaled or undesired housing development in unsuitable locations (i.e., Gardencourt).



Example of a micro-assisted living facility - Marbridge Rest Home - Photo from [www.carch.net](http://www.carch.net).



Example of mixed-use building