

# TOWN PLAN - 2025

## **Town of Weston County of Windsor, Vermont**



Church on the Hill, 1964

## **Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Recommended Actions**

*Town Plan Adopted by Selectboard on April 8, 2025  
Town Plan Approved by Windham Regional Planning Commission on \_\_\_\_\_*

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## **Introduction**

The Town of Weston is a rural-residential community, located in the Green Mountains and noted for its open lands, natural forests and small compact village center. Weston is predominantly a rural residential community, although it is also home to municipal building several businesses, non-profits, home occupations, and home businesses. Weston has long attracted summer people, retirees, and second homeowners. Approximately half of residences in the Town are second homes. The way of life is deliberate, relaxed, and rural, and the people of Weston have a strong sense of community spirit and purpose. Our vision for Weston is to foster a diverse community that creates multiple opportunities for people of all ages to interact, recreate, and celebrate the rich social, educational, cultural, environmental, and civic traditions of our community.

### ***Purposes of the Town Plan:***

The Town Plan should be an important document for the community. The local plan is not simply a rhetorical expression of a community's desires. This Plan has been prepared to set a direction for the Town's future that will sustain a vibrant and strong community. It represents a community vision of the future character of the Town, especially with regard to its priorities for land use and conservation of historical, cultural, social and natural resources.

A primary objective of the Plan is to formulate public policy for the effective and harmonious economic, environmental and social development of the Town. The underlying aim of the Plan is to promote the public health, safety, convenience, efficiency, economy, and general welfare of the community and its residents. In doing so, the Plan seeks to foster a proper balance for future growth in the Town, taking into consideration the desires of the people who live in Weston, community needs, the economic and environmental impacts of possible changes, and the physical and economic constraints to development.

This Plan will serve as:

- A policy framework for the Town to help achieve the objectives of its people, and to define the opportunities and limitations for prospective changes in the Town.
- The foundation for existing and future by-laws or ordinances.
- A guide for the Selectboard, Planning Commission, and other town officials in their routine business, in implementing the actions recommended in the Plan, and in their consideration of proposals which would have an impact on the Town.
- A guide for the District Environmental Commission, Public Utility Commission, and Regional Planning Commission as they review any proposals for development and subdivision that come under their respective jurisdictions.
- A document the Development Review Board uses to understand the reasoning behind the Bylaws and Town's priorities for preserving its rural character and natural resources.

### ***Planning Process:***

The Weston Planning Commission began the process of updating the 2016 Town Plan in the Spring of 2023. The Town applied for and received a Municipal Planning Grant from the Department of Housing and Community Development that provided funding support for this project. Planning support and technical assistance was provided by the Windham Regional Commission.

A variety of strategies were used to gather public input that informed the Town Plan update. The Planning Commission developed a community survey that was available online and at the Town Office. The survey

was promoted using a town-wide postcard mailing to all property owners and received 204 responses. Two public informational meetings were held in October and November 2023. Both events were well attended and included additional opportunities for residents to provide feedback. The Planning Commission met monthly from December 2023 to June 2024 to discuss and review draft updates to the chapters in the Town Plan. Drafts of the revised chapters were posted on the Town's website for review and comment by the public. A public informational meeting was held in June 2024 to present the draft plan and solicit feedback before the document was finalized.

***Authority to Plan:***

The Weston Town Plan has been prepared under the Vermont Planning and Development Act (Chapter 117 of Title 24 V.S.A.). This Plan becomes effective upon adoption by the Selectboard after the required public hearings by the Planning Commission and by the Selectboard. Under Vermont law, a Town Plan expires eight years from the date of adoption.

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## Weston Town Plan Vision and Goals

Town Plan Goals consist of statements of objectives, policies and programs to protect the built and natural environment and to guide future growth and development in the Town of Weston. The objectives of the Plan are:

1. To protect and preserve the rural nature, scenic quality and sense of community of Weston.
2. To encourage, support and maintain a community of residents and property owners with age, social and economic diversity.
3. To address the Town's changing needs through a continuous planning process involving input from members of the community.
4. To maintain the Town's historic development pattern with a compact village center (tight, cohesive settlement patterns without strip development or sprawl) within a rural setting, surrounded by undeveloped areas.
5. To assure that basic needs of health, safety and education will be met and maintained at appropriate levels in accordance with the Town Plan.
6. To maintain the Town's growth to be consistent with the Town's ability to provide and pay for satisfactory educational, highway, fire protection and other usual public services, and to discourage growth that will place an undue burden upon the Town's taxpayers or otherwise leads to excessive increases in the tax rate.
7. To encourage and preserve the use of lands for agricultural and forestry purposes in order to keep these resources productive and to preserve the rural character of the historic landscape outside the village center.
8. To encourage energy conservation and work to achieve a balance between the use of renewable energy sources and the aesthetic impacts of renewable energy facilities.
9. To assure that any project for increasing the capacity of any existing highway or developing any new highways will be consistent with the general character of the Town and to require that, where possible, public utilities and transmission facilities share the use of corridors in order to minimize the impact on the environment and to assist desired development patterns.
10. To protect significant natural areas and locations of special educational, scenic, historical, architectural, and archeological significance.
11. To encourage housing that is affordable and meets the needs of a population that includes retirees, families, young working people, long-term residents, and households with every income.
12. To maintain and support a strong, sustainable, diverse economy that provides employment and ownership opportunities for Town residents.
13. To preserve the character of the village center with mixed uses at a scale appropriate to the architecture and historic character of Weston.

14. To encourage the continuation of cultural, spiritual, artistic, and educational endeavors.
15. To encourage the continuation of community spirit and service and to foster an atmosphere conducive to community endeavors.
16. To encourage and support the availability of safe and affordable childcare and early childhood education.
17. To foster a spirit of volunteerism that helps sustain and strengthen the community.
18. To maximize the life, health, safety, and welfare of the community's residents, visitors, and businesses from flood hazards.
19. To balance property owners' rights to reasonably use their land in keeping with overall public health, safety, welfare, and goals of this Plan.
20. To promote social, economic, cultural, and racial diversity.
21. To plan for and prioritize capital improvements consistent with the fiscal ability of the Town.

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## Community Profile

### ***History of Weston:***

Weston was originally the “West Town” of the town of Andover, whose charter was granted in 1761 as part of the New Hampshire Grants. Over the years, Weston became a thriving village with mills, inns, other enterprises, farms and houses. In 1799, Weston was separated from Andover and incorporated as a town by the Vermont Legislature. By 1840, Weston had a population of 1,032.

### ***Settlement Patterns:***

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the village center was the main commercial area of Weston, surrounded by lands that were predominantly dedicated to agriculture and forestry with many of the parcels in excess of 100 acres. Over time, many of these operations became uneconomical, and their owners abandoned the farming or forestry, often selling to people who were not dependent upon or interested in these pursuits. Some of these large parcels reverted to their natural state; others saw a reduction in the acreage of fields.

In the 1930s, the H.C. Jacquith Company sold several hundred acres to the Green Mountain National Forest, further changing the future of Weston’s landscape. At the same time, many part-time and second homes began to be built. Land that was once valued for its commercial and agricultural use became valuable for its "appearance", including open fields and quaint farmhouses and barns. Land that was not appropriate for agriculture or pasture became valued for its views and vistas.

Present land use in Weston is primarily rural-residential in character and is still somewhat related to agriculture and forestry, although not as much as in the past. Several hundred acres have been placed under conservation easements. Because of conservation efforts and the National Forest, the overall density of settlement is relatively low. The settlement pattern has been influenced by the physical composition of the land, especially topography and its septic capacity.

At the center of Weston is the designated Village Center containing numerous residences and community facilities. These include the Town offices, the fire station, the Weston Playhouse/community center, the Walker Farm performance venue, two churches, a library, restaurants, the post office, an inn and several retail establishments. The village center is very picturesque with a portion listed on the National Register of Historic Places and designated as "The Weston Village Historic District," which encompasses the town center and principal village of Weston. Centered on Farrar Park, which serves as the town green, it includes a diversity of architectural styles from the late 18th century to about 1935, and includes residential, civic, commercial, industrial and religious buildings. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. Today the village center is a “tourist attraction” with thousands of visitors flocking each year to visit the Vermont Country Store, Weston Village Store, the Weston Playhouse, the Old Mill, the Farrar-Mansur House Museum and other establishments

Residential settlement occurs mainly along the many gravel roads that fan out from Route 100, which is the major north-south thoroughfare through the Town. Farm acreage and open fields continue to be converted to residential use. Over the years, there have been a number of small and a few larger residential subdivisions.. There also is a significant pattern of large, individual lots of 25 acres or more. This development pattern can fragment the landscape and has raised the concern the character of Weston may change with a population of retirees or people commuting elsewhere to work. However, despite this development, Weston still has a considerable amount of undeveloped open land and forest areas. Preserving these spaces, encouraging working use of the landscape, and promoting housing growth in appropriate areas is vital to maintaining the rural character valued by Weston residents.

Outside the Village Center there is a summer music school, the Weston Priory, and many home

occupations scattered throughout the Town. The public and quasi- public land under local ownership is associated with the municipal buildings, including the library, town garage, and the firehouse, churches and cemeteries. Several properties are owned by non-profit organizations including the Weston Playhouse, the Village Green, Walker Farm Theater, Kinhaven Music School, New Thought Vermont, the Weston Rod and Gun Club, and the Weston Recreation Club.

**Population:**

Weston's population peaked in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with just over 1,000 residents and fell to a low of about 400 people in the 1930s. Beginning in 1970, the town began to see a gradual increase in population from decade to decade. As of the 2020 Census, Weston had a population of 623 residents.

Approximately 45% of dwellings in Weston are used for seasonal purposes. If each second home averaged 2.5 occupants, Weston's overall population would be in the vicinity of 1,250 individuals. The high rate of second homes results in seasonal population flux in the community.

**Table 1: Weston Population, 1840 – 2020**

Year	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1920	1930
<b>Number of Weston Residents</b>	1,032	950	932	931	987	864	756	436	411

Year	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
<b>Number of Weston Residents</b>	457	468	442	507	627	488	630	566	623

Sources: Windham Regional Commission- *Town of Weston Profile 2014* Windsor County Town Census, 2020 Census, Records: *Vermont History Explorer*

According to Census data, Weston's population is growing older. Between 2010 and 2020, the percentage of residents aged 60 years or older increased from 43% to 45% of the town's population. This trend is occurring statewide and has implications for the community in terms of providing housing and services that meet needs of aging residents. During this period, Weston also saw an increase in the number of residents under 19 years in age and residents between 30 – 44 years in age.

According to data from the American Community Survey (ACS), households in Weston are on average wealthier than the average for Windsor County. As of 2022, the median household income in Weston was \$112,625 compared with \$69,492 for Windsor County. However, there are many households that earn less than this; the 2022 ACS data shows approximately 37% of households had an annual income of less than \$75,000.

**Housing:**

In 2020, the number of dwelling units in Weston totaled 560, with 251 used as primary residences, 252 as second homes, and 41 as rental units. New housing construction has remained slow following the 2008 recession with only an average of two to three new residences constructed each year. With the slow production of new housing, it is likely that some of the population increase between 2010 and 2020 was a result of seasonal residents becoming full-time residents. Additional data on housing conditions can be found in the Housing Chapter.

***Economic Base:***

Weston's economy, chiefly dairy farming and forestry through the 19th and first half of the 20th century, is now based on retail sales, tourism, construction, and service businesses, including providing services to second homeowners and retirees. The Vermont Country Store, the Weston Village Store, and the Weston Priory attract a large number of visitors year-round, and the Weston Theater Company and Kinhaven Music School, in addition to attracting visitors, bring a significant number of actors, musicians, and technical staff to the Town during the summer months. The Town's three restaurants provide dining options for residents and visitors, and The Weston and Colonial House offer lodging. Additional information on economic conditions can be found in the Economic Development Chapter.

***Topography/Physical Attributes:***

Open fields, forests, mountains, and the West River Valley characterize Weston. The Green Mountain National Forest owns 9,340 acres of land in Weston, approximately 860 acres are in the Okemo State Forest, an estimated 450 acres are used for agriculture, and 36.2 acres are in the village center. Some of the present farmland and the Village Center lie in the floodway and flood hazard areas of the West River.

***Weston's Future:***

Many of Weston's residents, second homeowners, and visitors may feel the Town is experiencing a particularly optimum combination of factors for the time being. The Town's cultural institutions (The Weston Theater Company, Kinhaven Music School, The Weston Priory, Church on the Hill, Old Parish Church, the library, and New Thought Vermont) are popular, well regarded, and generously supported. Commerce, though not growing significantly, appears to be stable. Weston remains a popular tourist and second home destination providing a meaningful economic benefit. Development is occurring at a slow pace, much open land has been conserved or put into the current use program, and a few agricultural enterprises continue to be viable.

Despite this relative satisfaction with current conditions this could change rapidly and in unpredictable ways, as Vermont and Weston have seen before. Two of the biggest challenges Weston faces are the ability to provide affordable housing and meaningful work opportunities to sustain a diverse community into the future, and how to prepare and respond to the increased threat from flood events.

The Town's population is aging and there is a need to retain and attract young people and families to the area to sustain and grow the community. However, the slow pace of housing development, increased demand for housing, and high construction costs have resulted in a severe shortage of housing options that are affordable to many current and prospective residents. The dependence on tourism as the prime economic driver does not make for a diverse economy, and this presents another challenge for attracting young families.

Climate change has resulted in an increased frequency of heavy rain events in Vermont. Weston is particularly vulnerable to flooding due to the location of the village center and many homes within flood-prone areas of the West River and its tributaries. The July 2023 flood devastated the community with little warning and resulted in the closure of the only market and gas station in town, the Weston Market Place. Tourism numbers were lower after the flood because of concerns regarding road closures and the availability of goods and services. As the community plans for more of these types of flood events in the future, it raises questions about the sustainability of the local economy.

These concerns and others present a challenge to Weston's citizens, elected officials, and the Planning Commission. There is also a need to balance at times competing goals and interests, such as supporting more housing development, while also protecting the natural, historical, and cultural characteristics that define the community. It is the goal of this Plan to address many of these issues on a local level and look for common understanding and solutions.

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## Weston Values

The Town offers an outstanding “quality of life” to its residents, both permanent and part-time, including:

- A rural-residential town, with a cohesive and picturesque village center comprised of residences, thriving businesses, and public facilities.
- A clean environment with natural beauty -- open fields, scenic vistas, mountains, river, valleys, wildlife and forests.
- A sparsely populated community of people with similar and varied backgrounds and interests working together to maintain a cohesive community.
- Opportunity for outdoor recreation.
- Opportunity for cultural, artistic, educational, and spiritual activities.
- Opportunity for community participation and service.

The people of the Town value these qualities and wish to protect and perpetuate them for future generations, while recognizing that over time change is inevitable. This Plan is an attempt to manage and guide this change in a way that will maintain and improve our quality of life.

The Weston Planning Commission also recognizes that as the needs of a community change, the laws, which protect its citizens' way of life, must reflect and support their needs, desires and rights. With this in mind the Planning Commission is committed to periodic evaluation and modification of the Plan to see that it remains responsive to the wishes of the community.

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## **Land Use**

### ***Background***

Weston's existing land use pattern is similar to many Vermont towns: rural residential settlement in outlying areas with a compact historic village center. Historically, much of the residential development in Weston was associated with farming and related agricultural uses, while recent rural settlement has been primarily associated with the construction of single-family homes as permanent residents or second homes. This type of housing and country lifestyle is highly valued, yet usually breaks up continuous tracts of land formerly used for agriculture or silviculture, and can contribute to sprawl.

The village center on the West River is the focal point of the Town, containing a high density grouping of buildings. The Town Office, library, two churches, an inn, two restaurants, Town Green, Weston Playhouse, Fire Station, two museums, and several retail uses are all located in the village, in addition to many residences. The village center provides a center for community interaction and a sense of community place. Recent significant events in the village include the opening of the Weston Theater Company's Walker Farm venue in 2017, and the July 2023 flood, which damaged several residential properties, the firehouse, the Weston Theater, and forced the closure of the Weston Market Place and gas station.

Forestland, open fields, and agricultural uses continue to be a significant land use in Weston. Approximately 44% of the Town's total land area is within Green Mountain National Forest or State Forest land, primarily along the highlands and ridges on the western and eastern parts of town. Open fields are primarily located along the West River valley and along Route 100 south of the village, and agricultural uses continue in Weston today.

### ***Prospective Land Use***

The land use districts, defined in the following paragraphs, are a guide for the growth and development of Weston. Currently, Weston has 7 land use districts: Village, Residential, Rural Residential, Conservation, Shoreland, Commercial, and Industrial. These land use areas provide for a variety of residential, commercial, agricultural, and recreational opportunities for the future while considering local environmental constraints as well as existing land use patterns. While the Town Plan is not a zoning bylaw, it does provide guidance for future zoning changes and updates and serves as guidance to the Development Review Board and any Act 250 applications. The Proposed Land Use Map, designating the boundaries of each district, is an integral part of the future land use plan.

#### **Village District**

The Village District includes the core village area around the Town Green on Route 100, and extends north and south along Route 100 and to the west on Lawrence Hill Road. The purpose of the Village District is to maintain the existing settlement pattern of the village and reinforce the village center as the focus of the town. This district provides for a mix of compatible commercial, moderate and high density residential, civic, educational, and cultural uses. Planning for safe pedestrian travel within the village is critical for supporting this district given the proximity of residences, businesses, and services, the fact that it is on a main State highway (Route 100), and due to limited parking.

While the Village District should continue to be the primary area for commercial and residential growth, there are limitations to development due to the lack of a wastewater system and flood vulnerability. Growth and development in the village will need to be undertaken with these constraints in mind.

### Residential District

The purpose of the Residential District is to provide for moderate density residential development and compatible land uses in areas with convenient access to existing public roads and services. Home occupations and home business, subject to appropriate standards, should also be supported. This district includes lands already subdivided and committed to low and moderate density development, including the residential areas on Slawson Road; Route 100 north of the village; the Piper Hill Road, Dale Road, and Old Tavern Hill Road area; and the Highland View Road and Summit Road area. Within these areas, there are opportunities for infill residential development in existing neighborhoods. This district is expected to accommodate the majority of additional residential development in Weston outside of the Village District.

### Rural Residential District

The purpose of the Rural Residential District is to provide for agriculture, forestry, low density residential development, and other compatible land uses that maintain the Town's rural character, scenic landscape, and natural resources. Home occupations and home business, subject to appropriate standards, should also be supported. Many of the properties in the Rural Residential District are larger lots with established single-family dwellings, but that still remain primarily undeveloped forest or open space land. These lands are located primarily along Holden Hill Road, Lawrence Hill Road, and Landgrove Road, outside of the Conservation District and the more densely settled Residential and Village Districts.

### Conservation District

The Conservation District contains lands that are very sensitive to development for a variety of reasons. They are usually characterized as significant resources such as productive forests, high elevations, steep slopes (often with shallow soils), wetland areas, and stream banks, among others and areas of scenic, ecological, cultural or historical significance. They are essentially undeveloped and may lack access to improved public roads or utilities and services. The Federal and State governments own most of the land in this District. This District also contains lands above 2,500-foot in elevation that require an Act 250 permit for development.

The District includes some lands that have already been developed for very low-density residential uses. These areas are typically either surrounded by or adjacent to Federal or State forestlands. However, these residential lands still provide important wildlife functions and are appropriate to be included in the Conservation District.

In general, lands in this district are suitable for silviculture, including logging, low impact recreational uses, such as nature and hiking trails, cross country skiing and hunting, and very low-density residential uses. Large contiguous open spaces should be preserved in the Conservation District.

### Shoreland District

The purpose of the Shoreland District is to maintain the scenic and ecological resources of Wantastiquet Pond, and preserve and enhance water quality and wildlife habitat through the careful regulation of the location, design, and intensity of land use activities.

### Commercial District

The purpose of the Commercial District is to accommodate commercial uses outside of the Village District. The Commercial District is located along Route 100 between Maple Hill Road and Benson Lane and currently includes a multi-family residential property and the Weston Rod & Gun Club property. New businesses and/or expansions of existing businesses in the Commercial District shall be consistent with the policies and goals of this Plan and shall be in a scale appropriate to other businesses in the district and in keeping with the character of the neighborhood.

### Industrial District

The Industrial District is the primary location for industrial uses in Weston. This district is located in the area of the Route 100 and Johnson Hill Road intersection. This area is appropriate for any additional industrial uses. However, new businesses and/or expansions of existing businesses shall

be consistent with the policies and goals of this Plan and shall be in a scale appropriate to other businesses in the district and in keeping with the character of the neighborhood.

### ***Land Use Implementation***

The proposed land use plan is implemented primarily through the Town's zoning and subdivision bylaws. This section provides additional detail on several land use implementation strategies the Town is currently using or may consider in the future to implement the Town Plan. Additional strategies to support housing development are provided in the Housing Chapter.

#### Village Center Designation

The Town of Weston received approval from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development for renewal of the Weston Village Center Designation in March 2024. Village revitalization efforts have focused on community and economic development and improving pedestrian safety. The State designation offers financial assistance to property owners of income-producing buildings through tax incentives for historic buildings, façade improvements, and building code improvements. Additionally, the designation gives Weston priority consideration for several State grant programs. The designation supports the Town Plan goals to maintain and reinforce the village center as the focus of the community, to preserve significant historic, educational, and cultural properties, and to plan for safe pedestrian traffic circulation in the village.

#### Planned Unit Development (PUD):

The Town of Weston has adopted both zoning and subdivision bylaws that permit clustering of rural residences in planned unit developments (PUDs). The number of residences/structures in a PUD is governed by the density permitted by the zoning rules for the district (i.e., 5 residences on a 10-acre tract in a two-acre zone), but the structures can be placed close together. This permits the conservation of open space on the remaining portion of the parcel. This tool is especially effective for residential development in the Rural Residential District and Residential District.

In contrast to typical subdivisions, PUDs encourage flexibility of design and development that promotes the most appropriate use of land, facilitates the economical provision of streets and utilities, and preserves the natural and scenic qualities of the open lands and forests of the town. When updating the zoning and subdivision bylaws, the Planning Commission will re-examine and update the sections pertaining to PUD and subdivisions. Density bonuses should be explored by the Planning Commission for PUD developments that protect natural resources, scenic vistas, or agricultural lands, and/or provide affordable housing.

#### Overlay Zoning

When updating the zoning bylaws, the Planning Commission should consider whether zoning regulations should contain overlay districts that include provisions that would limit subdivision of large lots in prime agricultural areas into residential parcels unrelated to farming.

The Planning Commission should also consider a Ridgeline/Hillside Overlay or other zoning bylaws to protect scenic vistas and ridgelines, particularly with respect to exterior lighting. The Planning Commission should explore the possibility of linking development restrictions to topography and elevation.

### ***Land Use Policies***

1. Encourage land use and development that is consistent with the Town's historic settlement pattern of a compact village center surround by rural countryside.
2. Provide for safe pedestrian travel in the village, including the development of sidewalks, crosswalks, and other traffic calming measures to slow traffic, particularly on Route 100.
3. Encourage the preservation of scenic vistas, natural resources, agricultural lands, large tracts of forestland, and open spaces.

4. Clustering homes through the Planned Unit Development process should be encouraged to conserve open space and agricultural land, and provide for municipal facilities and services in an efficient manner.
5. Require that structures be sited and exterior lighting be designed so as to avoid impact on scenic vistas.
6. Require that all land development (excluding outdoor recreation, forest management, and agriculture) be sited so as to avoid and protect critical resource areas, including wetlands, floodplains, river corridors, and significant ridgelines.
7. Home businesses suitable for the Village, Residential, and Rural Residential Districts should be encouraged.
8. Lands in the Conservation District are not suitable for any moderate or high-density development because of their attributes. The primary use of lands in the Conservation District should be for agriculture, forestry, open space, and low-impact recreation. Ensure that any development does not diminish the scenic and ecological resources within these areas.
9. Continue to support and encourage working landscapes that are actively used for farming, agriculture, forestry, and outdoor recreation.
10. Maintain the scale of the Commercial District to be consistent with other Town policies and goals while seeking to find adequate space/land for future commercial growth.
11. In general, industrial activities are not in keeping with the emphasis of Weston's other goals and policies and, as a result, the current Industrial District should serve adequately to accommodate these uses.

***Recommendations for Action:***

1. Review and update zoning bylaws for conformance with the Town Plan, with an emphasis on lot sizes, setbacks, density standards, and allowed uses..
2. Maintain the Village Center Designation for the village.
3. Evaluate the designation of additional locations for commercial growth adjacent to or in close proximity to the village center, and complete Town Plan and zoning bylaw updates if needed.
4. Review and update the Planned Unit Development provisions in the zoning bylaws to include density bonus incentives for clustered and conservation development.
5. Consider the use of overlay zoning districts to protect agricultural lands, scenic vistas, forest, and ridgelines.
6. Consider the development of architectural and site design standards for commercial development that would maintain existing community character.

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## Transportation

### **Goals:**

- > *To provide residents of the Town with safe and passable roads at all seasons of the year.*
- > *To ensure that the road system respects the integrity of the natural and built environment.*
- > *To provide safe and appropriate transportation for village center residents and visitors, while preserving the village center character.*
- > *To ensure that traffic speed, parking and pedestrian facilities are handled adequately for the safety and convenience of residents and visitors, particularly in the village center, and in such a manner as to retain the rural character of the Town.*
- > *To keep as many roads as possible as gravel roads in order to maintain the rural character of the Town, using paving only if deemed necessary.*

### **State and Town Roads:**

There are over 56 miles of town and state highways in Weston, which should be adequate to serve the transportation needs of the community for the near future.

**Table 2: Weston State and Town Road Mileage**

<b>Type of Highway</b>	<b>Number of Miles</b>
Class 1 Town Highways	0.00
Class 2 Town Highways	2.85
Class 3 Town Highways	35.41
Class 4 Town Roads	7.77
State Highways	10.67
<b>Total Highways</b>	<b>56.70</b>

State Routes 100 and 155 are the major roadways into and out of Town. Route 100 runs from the Weston/Londonderry town line in a generally northerly direction through the Village Center and then to the Weston/Andover town lines, and serves as the primary transportation artery through Weston, as well as serving the local needs of Weston residents and visitors. State Route 155 connects Route 100 to the Mount Holly town line.

There are two main east-west roads: the Chester Mountain Road which runs east from Route 100 in the Village Center to the Weston/Andover town line, and the Landgrove Road running west from Route 100 in the Village Center to the Weston/Landgrove town line. All of these roads are paved except for a portion of the Landgrove Road.

Most of the remaining town roads are gravel surfaces, and provide access to individual properties throughout the community. In addition to the existing town roads, there are a few private roadways. The Town's narrow, winding gravel roads contribute to the community's scenic and historic character. The fact that few of the Town's roads are paved also limits traffic volume and speed, thus helping to promote safety.

The topography of Weston means that some private residences can only be accessed by steep private roads and driveways. This can present challenges for emergency vehicles as they may not be able to get to a property under all conditions. The Town should ensure that private roads and

driveways for new dwellings are designed so they are accessible for emergency vehicles.

The maintenance of the network of Town roads, bridges, culverts and drainage systems involves considerable work and expense. The cost of road maintenance has been steadily increasing over recent years due to increased expectations for services from Townspeople and increased costs for gravel, materials, equipment, and labor. Several sand and gravel pits in the region have closed recently and this has resulted in increased costs and the need to truck in materials from greater distances. The Town maintains the roads using the Town's road equipment that must be repaired or replaced periodically. Funds are being set aside in the municipal equipment reserve fund to cover future equipment costs. In addition, the Town sets aside funds for general highway maintenance and bridge repair in separate reserve funds.

Travel on area roads can be difficult during "mud season" and other periods of severe weather. In recent years, winters have become milder and the typical "mud season" of late March and April can now occur at different times over the course of a winter with multiple freeze-thaw cycles. This can result in increased labor and material costs for the Town to maintain its roads and in more difficult driving conditions for residents and visitors.

The Town has also experienced a higher frequency of heavy rain and flood events in recent years with significant erosion and washouts on local roads. Recent events that have impacted the Town include Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 and the Great Vermont Flood of July 2023. The 2022 Weston Local Hazard Mitigation Plan notes there are several roads that are especially susceptible to flooding and erosion, including Dale Road, Greendale Road, Felton Road, Holden Hill Road, Obed Moore Road, Old Tavern Road, Piper Hill Road, Shaw Knoll Road, and Slawson Road. Roads in the village area, including Lawrence Hill Road, Park Street, and Route 100, are vulnerable to inundation flooding from the West River.

The Town is continuing to implement the State stormwater management standards for Town roads and upgrading culverts and bridges. In addition, the Town's road crew is maintaining and improving drainage ditches along roadways. These steps will help mitigate the impacts of heavy rain events. While the Town's gravel roads contribute to its rural character, there may be a need to evaluate the benefits of paving sections of road in response to decreased availability of sand and gravel, increased costs for maintenance, and changing climate conditions.

***Transportation Planning for the Village Center.***

Substantial growth in the commercial and social activity in the village center over the years has contributed to increased traffic volumes and pedestrian activity. Economic growth in the area has also led to increased volume of very large trucks and tractor-trailers on Route 100. Data collected by the Windham Regional Commission in 2019 showed the average daily traffic volume on Route 100 was 3,370 vehicles, with higher traffic on weekend days. According to the most recent VTrans High Crash Location Report (2012 – 2016), Route 100 from the Vermont Country Store to the intersection with Chester Mountain Road is considered to be a high crash segment by the State. Between 2012 and 2016 there were 9 reported crashes along this section of Route 100.

There are also safety concerns on Park Street and Lawrence Hill Road. Park Street is designed to be one-way, but vehicles currently drive in both directions due to confusing signage and wide pavement. Pedestrians, including young children, regularly cross Lawrence Hill Road between The Little School and the Town Green. Community members have also noted that all three intersections around the Town Green have design challenges, in particular the intersections of Route 100 with Lawrence Hill Road and Park Street.

Maximizing safety for pedestrians and travelers will require slowing and better managing traffic on Route 100 and surrounding local roads in the village center. Such measures may include traffic calming devices, techniques to control vehicular movement, and redesigning intersections. In addition, dedicated pedestrian facilities such sidewalks, walkways, and crosswalks are needed. The only existing pedestrian infrastructure in the village is a sidewalk on Route 100 from The Weston to

the Village Christmas Shop that is in disrepair and a sidewalk on Lawrence Hill Road bridge with no connecting sidewalk. There are no existing crosswalks in the village.

In 2022, the Town completed a Bicycle and Pedestrian Scoping Study that considered pedestrian improvements on Route 100 in the village. The study recommended a sidewalk on the west side of Route 100 from The Weston to the vicinity of the Vermont County Store where the sidewalk would continue on the east side north to the Village Green. A crosswalk would connect these two segments. The study also recommended a sidewalk on the east side of Route 100 from the Village Green to the Walker Farm venue. The continued evaluation of the project feasibility showed that winter maintenance of the sidewalks would be required. As a result, the project is on hold for the near term and will be reconsidered at a later date.

As more vehicles become electrified it will be important to consider how to increase the number of electric vehicle charging stations in town. This is a particular need for the village area given the concentration of stores, restaurants, and cultural facilities that attract visitors. The Town should support efforts by local businesses and organizations to install charging stations in private off-street parking lots to help meet this growing demand.

### ***Public Transit***

There are not currently any fixed bus routes that run through Weston. The closest available bus routes are operated by Southeast Vermont Transit with stops in Ludlow. Route 57 runs from Rutland to Bellows Falls with stops in Ludlow and Springfield. Route 61 runs from Ludlow to Bellows Falls with stops in Chester and Springfield.

Southeast Vermont Transit provides free door-to-door transportation for riders age 60 or over and for persons with ADA-defined disabilities. Destinations served include non-emergency medical trips, critical care trips, and congregate meal and shopping trips. In 2021, Neighborhood Connections in Londonderry launched the Mountain Town Connector, which provides on-demand transportation for residents in five area towns including Weston. While medical rides are prioritized, rides are also provided for shopping for food and necessities, social and recreational outings, and addressing unexpected transportation hardships. As Weston's population ages, it will be important for the Town to continue to support these transportation services and ensure residents are aware of their availability.

### ***Transportation Policies:***

1. Require that before improvements on Town roads are undertaken the impact of a greater, faster traffic burden should be carefully evaluated and considered.
2. Stonewalls along our roadways are an important part of the rural and aesthetic quality of the Town and should be maintained whenever possible.
3. Encourage the preservation of the rural, historic and scenic character of the Town by retaining the existing paved and unpaved roads with no widening or increase in paving activity unless necessary for public safety, cost management, or improved resiliency. Any widening or paving shall minimize any adverse impact on the existing aesthetics and character of all Town and State roads.
4. Require that all road maintenance activities focus on safety, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, flood resiliency, and prevention of deterioration rather than on facilitation of greater traffic volumes or speed.
5. Maintain Town rights-of-way to improve visibility, maintain utility corridors, provide necessary plowing room, and for the purposes of safety and to provide adequate drainage. Allow the removal of healthy trees from Town rights-of-way only where absolutely necessary.
6. Require that all road cuts and embankments be properly graded and seeded to minimize

erosion and to maintain the scenic character.

7. Retain all existing public rights-of-way whether or not the Town is presently maintaining them, in order to maintain access and provide for future growth.
8. Accept new roads only if they are related to the existing compact road system, thus avoiding unnecessary new mileage, and minimizing the impact of new or improved roads on designated areas of historic or scenic significance, fragile landscapes and major watershed drainage areas.
9. Encourage the continued support of transportation for the elderly residents and those with disabilities, including on demand door-to-door ride services.
10. Encourage efficient and safe pedestrian traffic circulation in the village center, including the development of walkways and other traffic calming measures to slow traffic particularly on Route 100.
11. Encourage the development of sufficient parking in the Village Center. The selection of land for any new parking areas shall be made so that these areas do not detract from the visual, architectural and historical significance of the Town and/or Village Center.
12. Require that all road construction activities, public or private, preserve scenic and historic features of the landscape and have minimal impact on important natural areas.
13. Ensure that all land use regulations continue to limit density and development in remote areas, thereby minimizing negative impacts on Town roads.
14. Support efforts to bury power lines where it would be beneficial for public safety and road maintenance activities at no cost to the Town.

***Recommendations for Action:***

1. Continue to work with the State of Vermont to design and implement a plan to control traffic and pedestrians in a safe manner in the village center (e.g. walkways, intersection modifications, speed indicator signs, and other traffic calming measures).
2. Continue to evaluate the recommendations from the 2022 Bicycle and Pedestrian Scoping Study.
3. Ensure timely maintenance of all roads, culverts, and bridges through capital planning and budgeting. Upsize culverts and bridges as necessary for flood mitigation purposes.
4. Continue to support on-demand transportation services provided by Southeast Vermont Transit and Neighborhood Connections.
5. Support efforts by local businesses and non-profit organizations to install EV charging stations in private parking lots.

## Town Government, Community Facilities, and Services & Recreation

**Goals:** To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of town government, community facilities and services to meet future needs. To offer diverse recreational opportunities to all residents in the Town.

### **Municipal Government:**

The official business of the Town of Weston is conducted at the annual March town meeting. The legislative body (Selectboard) conducts most of the business of the Town between these annual meetings. Elected or appointed officers with administrative and planning responsibilities are shown in the Municipal Government table below. There is also a Selectboard Administrative Assistant position that is filled by the Selectboard. The current roster of officer and staff positions meet the needs of the community, but should continue to be monitored as the needs and priorities for the community may change over time:

**Table 3: Weston Elected and Appointed Town Officers**

Selectboard	5	Elected
Town Clerk	1	Elected
Town Treasurer	1	Elected
Listers	3	Elected
Planning Commission	7	Appointed
Zoning Administrator	1	Appointed
Development Review Board	7	Appointed
School Directors	1	Elected
Justices of Peace	5	Elected
Constables	2	Elected
Moderator	1	Elected
Library Trustees	10	Elected

Town government expense has increased because of inflation and because administration has become more complex in recent years due to mandatory requirements imposed by State and Federal regulations. Further, the administration of the Town highways has been revised by the State with an increase in the number and complexity of the reports required and maintenance and improvement costs. The Town of Weston does not currently provide for public water or sewer systems, or police protection. To provide these services would increase town taxes significantly over present levels. The following table shows the growth in the Town's budget over the last several years:

**Table 4: Weston Town Budget, 2011 – 2022**

	Highway Tax Rate	Highway Expenditures	Town General Tax Rate	Town General Expenditures	School Tax Rate
2011	0.2216	\$666,399	0.1393	\$407,038	Homestead: 1.5587 Non-Homestead: 1.460
2015	0.3009	\$1,103,487	0.1771	\$483,056	Homestead: 1.647 Non-Homestead: 1.6502
2022	0.3464	\$842,702	0.2183	\$546,667	Homestead: 1.5138 Non-Homestead: 1.5445

The Town has a capital improvement program, as provided for under 24 V.S.A. § 4430. A capital

improvement program is a tool that links a town's development plans and capital expenses with the annual budgeting process and can prevent budget and tax rate fluctuations by scheduling expensive projects over multiple years. Capital expenses include projects such as municipal facility construction or renovations, road paving, large culvert or bridge projects, and equipment and vehicles.

The Town maintains a municipal website that includes information for residents and businesses, agendas and minutes for the Selectboard and other Town boards and commissions, and pages for the different Town Departments. The Town uses the website for community announcements and maintains a Town Calendar on the site. There is also an existing community Facebook page that is managed by Weston residents and provides information on local community events and news, independent from the Town government.

***Public Buildings and Land:***

The Town owns the Town Office, the Town Office Annex, the Wilder Memorial Library, the Town Garage, the Weston Firehouse, three cemeteries and several small parcels of land. There are also several buildings and properties that are owned by non-profit organizations and are open for public recreational use, including the Weston Recreation Club, Farrar Park (Village Green), and Cold Spring Brook Park. These properties are discussed in more detail in the Recreation Section below. Other arts and cultural non-profit facilities that play an important role in the life of the community, such as the Weston Playhouse, Weston Theater Company, Weston Rod and Gun Club, Kinhaven Music School, Weston Historical Society Museums, Weston Priory, and New Thought Vermont, are addressed in the Natural, Scenic, Historical, and Cultural Resources Chapter.

The Weston Town Office is located on Lawrence Hill Road across from the Village Green. The Town Office includes office space for the Town Clerk, Treasurer, and Listers and a meeting room for the Selectboard, Development Review Board, Planning Commission, and Conservation Commission. Current space in the building is limited, in particular for holding public meetings for the Town's boards and commissions, and opportunities for additional meeting space should be explored. In addition, the building is located within the West River floodway.

The Town Annex is located adjacent to the Town Office and the entire building is currently leased to the Little School, a non-profit preschool. This building is also located with the West River floodway.

The Town Garage is located on Greendale Road and includes a garage for equipment and vehicles and a storage yard for winter salt and materials for road maintenance. The Town has identified a need for an addition to adequately store equipment and vehicles. In March 2024, voters at Town Meeting approved a 4-year loan up to \$375,000 for the addition of two bays at the Town Garage.

The Weston Firehouse is located on Route 100 immediately north of the village area. The Town of Weston owns the property and building and leases it to the Weston Volunteer Fire Department. The property is located within the West River flood hazard area and has experienced several significant flood events, including most recently during the July 2023 flood. Flooding of the firehouse has resulted in damages to the building and equipment, and diminished the capacity of the Fire Department to respond to emergencies. The Town should consider how to improve the flood resiliency of this facility. Options could include relocating the firehouse, providing better flood proofing for the station in its current location, or by other means. As part of this effort, the Town could consider evaluating other municipal facility space needs, such as the Town Office, as there may be an opportunity to co-locate facilities and services for efficiency and cost saving purposes.

***Emergency Services and Law Enforcement:***

Weston has an all-volunteer fire department within the firehouse located at the north end of the Village on Route 100. The firehouse building and property are owned by the Town of Weston. Duties of the Weston Fire Department range from fire prevention measures to assisting in rescue calls, as well as fire fighting. Weston is a member of the Southwestern New Hampshire Fire Mutual Aid, which may be called upon to assist the Weston Fire Department.

Emergency rescue services are provided to Weston residents by the Londonderry Volunteer Rescue Squad (LVRS) located in the neighboring Town of Londonderry. In addition to Weston, LVRS serves the towns of Landgrove, Londonderry, Peru, Winhall (most), Windham, Stratton (partial), and a small section of Andover (from the Weston town line up to and including Andover Ridge Road. LVRS currently has approximately 50 volunteer members, two advanced life support ambulances, a mass casualty incident trailer, and a heavy duty rescue truck with vehicle extraction tools.

Weston has an elected constable and a currently unfilled second constable who serve on a part-time, when-needed basis. The nearest State Police barracks is in Westminster, approximately 28 miles from Weston. Current policing services meet the needs of the community, but should continue to be monitored and evaluated based on future community needs.

The Town encourages residents to sign up for the free VT Alert communications tool that provides personalized alerts via phone, text message, or email about local emergencies. To register, go to [www.vem.vermont.gov/vtalert](http://www.vem.vermont.gov/vtalert).

### ***Health and Social Services:***

There are no health care facilities based in the Town, although services are available in neighboring communities, including the Mountain Valley Medical Clinic in Londonderry and the Ludlow Health Center in Ludlow, both of which offer a full array of health care services. In addition, there are six hospitals all within approximately one hour drive of Weston: Grace Cottage in Townshend, Rutland Regional Medical Center, Southwestern Vermont Medical Center, Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, Springfield Hospital, and Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. An evaluation of the Town's health care needs suggests that the Town could not, in the foreseeable future, support a full-time physician or specialized health services.

In addition to these health care facilities, there are several organizations that provide health and social services, including several that the Town helps support with appropriations: My Community Nurse Project, Londonderry Volunteer Rescue Squad, Neighborhood Connections, Visiting Nurse Alliance (provides hospice services), the Vermont Center for Independent Living, and Health Care & Rehabilitation Services.

As the population ages, there will also be an increasing need for service providers that offer in-home care and assistance to residents who would otherwise be unable to continue to live at home independently. The My Community Nurse project is one such service provider. The My Community Nurse Project provides in-home nursing care and patient safety checks to support Weston residents as they age and look to remain in the community. The local My Community Nurse Project currently includes one full-time and one part-time registered nurse. Services are provided at no cost to residents and the organization relies on donations from community members and towns, including Weston. The Visiting Nurse Alliance provides more limited in-home services to Weston residents, including hospice services.

### ***Electricity***

Green Mountain Power (GMP) provides electricity to properties in Weston. Three-phase power is available along the line that runs parallel to Route 100 from Londonderry to the village and along Chester Mountain Road to Andover. Three-phase power can deliver more power with greater efficiency and is especially important for commercial uses and to support large-scale renewable energy facilities.

GMP is working towards creating a more reliable and resilient energy system that can better withstand the increasing severity of storms and recover more quickly in the event of power outages. This will be accomplished through upgrading electric equipment, or "hardening," so it is better able to withstand severe weather, for example by undergrounding lines where feasible, creating community microgrids in targeted areas, and increasing the number of residential electricity storage batteries.

In Weston, GMP is currently working on rebuilding the transmission line that runs between Londonderry and the village just to the east and parallel with Route 100. There may be future opportunities to underground lines within the village area, in consultation with the town and property owners. In remote rural

areas where it is more difficult to harden lines, increasing battery storage for customers will likely be a preferred solution. Weston is not currently on a schedule for implementing a microgrid strategy but may be eligible in upcoming years. The town should continue to work with GMP, property owners, and other state agencies to implement strategies for a more reliable and resilient local energy system.

***Telecommunications:***

Cellular phone services are limited in Weston, but have improved over recent years. There are currently two AT&T cellular towers in the community. According to 2022 data from VTrans, AT&T, FirstNet, and VTel have relatively good coverage along Route 100, Route 155, Chester Mountain Road, and Landgrove Road. Other providers have fair to poor coverage along these roadways. The VTrans data does not include coverage along secondary roads off of these main roads.

Fidium Fiber completed a build out of its broadband fiber network in Weston in 2023. Many properties within Weston now have the ability to access Fidium Fiber's network, which provides service speeds up to 2 Gigabytes per second. Weston is also a member of the Deerfield Valley Communication Union District (DVFiber). DVFiber functions as a municipal entity that serves the region with the purpose of providing high-speed broadband access across 22 towns in southern Vermont. DVFiber has a universal service plan that includes providing service to all unserved and underserved areas in its member towns. Once completed, Weston residents would have multiple broadband providers to choose from. The Wilder Memorial Library provides free public high speed internet access 24/7.

Satisfactory electric and landline telephone service is available throughout Weston. Cable TV is available in most of Weston.

***Cemeteries:***

There are three cemeteries in Weston. An elected board oversees the cemeteries in Town and the Town appropriates funds for a portion of cemetery maintenance.

***Library:***

The Wilder Memorial Library was organized as a municipal library by the Weston voters in 1898 and has been operating as a public library ever since. It is located in a 200 year old historic building in the village center on Lawrence Hill Road. The Library has a ten-member Board of Trustees elected at Town meeting. The Library, which is open 23 hours per week, has a staff of two part-time employees, a collection of approximately 5,000 items including books, DVDs, and magazines. There are programs for children and adults, computers for public use with high speed Internet access, and Wi-Fi is available 24/7. Each year the Town appropriates funds to help with the costs of the Library.

In 2022, the Library Board of Trustees completed a five-year Strategic Plan. One of the goals of the Plan is to create a transformed and expanded library with facilities and grounds that are inviting, comfortable, and accessible to all. Specific improvements planned include creating more space for community gatherings, adding a bathroom, and ADA accessibility throughout, and providing meeting space that can be used by members of the public as well as Town boards and commissions to help alleviate the space needs in the existing Town Office. In 2023, an architect was hired and plans are underway for the renovation of the existing library and adding an addition to provide the needed space. Project completion is slated for 2026.

***Solid Waste:***

The Town of Weston is a member of the Londonderry Solid Waste Group (LSWG), comprised of the towns of Landgrove, Londonderry, Peru, Weston, and Windham. Residents of the five member towns are able to use the Londonderry Transfer and Recycling Station located south of Weston on Route 100. Solid waste, recycling, and food scrap collection is available on the site in compliance with the Vermont Universal Recycling Law. In 2022, the transfer station collected approximately 400 tons of municipal solid waste, 784 tons of construction and demolition and bulky trash items, 533 tons of recyclable materials, and 67 tons of food scraps. The LSWG also offers two hazard waste collection events annually.

The LSWG completes the required municipal Solid Waste Implementation Plan (SWIP) for the five member

towns. The consortium has a SWIP in place in conformance with the most recent 2019 State Materials Management Plan.

**Water Supply and Wastewater Disposal:**

The Town of Weston does not have a town water supply or sewage disposal system and instead relies on individual septic tanks with either dry wells or leach fields and individual wells or springs. All water and wastewater issues are managed and controlled by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

**Recreation:**

Many opportunities for recreation are available in Weston. The Town’s rural character is well suited to a wide variety of outdoor activities such as hiking, hunting, cross-country skiing, bicycling, snowmobiling, and fishing, to name just a few. The table below provides an overview of existing recreational resources in the community:

**Table 5: Weston Recreational Resources**

<b>Land or Facility</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Description of Facilities</b>
Green Mountain National Forest	Federal	9,300 acres of land including a campground and hiking, skiing and snowmobile trails
Okemo State Forest	State	860 acres of land. No facilities currently
Weston Recreation Club	Non-Profit Organization	Swimming pond, tennis courts, playground, basketball court
Cold Spring Brook Park	Non-Profit Organization	Walking trails, benches
Farrar Park (Village Green)	Non-Profit Organization	Gazebo, benches
Weston Island	Private	Soccer fields
Weston Rod & Gun Club	Private	Social club
Wantastiquet Trout Club	Private	Social club, fishing and boating pond
Class IV Roads	Town	Class IV roads provide for recreational opportunities (walking, biking)

The U.S. Forest Service owns approximately 9,300 acres of land on the western side of town that is part of the larger Green Mountain National Forest. Much of the land is actively managed for recreational use and, all of this land is accessible to the public. There are formal and informal trails, Forest Service roads, the Catamount Cross Country Ski Trail and snowmobiling routes maintained by the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) that are used for recreational activities and can be accessed through an extensive network of roads and trails in adjacent towns. The U.S. Forest Service maintains Greendale Campground located at the end of Greendale Road. The facility includes 11 campsites. A portion of the Okemo State Forest is located on the eastern edge of Weston and is a part of the 798-acre Terrible Mountain Natural Area that crosses into Andover. There are not currently any facilities or improvements on this tract of land, but it is open to the public.

The Weston Recreation Club is owned and managed by a non-profit organization and is situated on 13 acres of land adjacent to the Town Garage on Lawrence Hill Road. The facility includes a large swimming pond, tennis courts, playground and a basketball court—and can be used by Weston residents and their guests. In addition, the Weston Recreation Club also offers swim lessons and community potlucks. The organization is funded through private donations and annual appropriations from the Town of Weston. In the village area, the Weston Community Association maintains Cold Spring Brook Park and the Farrar Park Association maintains the Village Green. These facilities offer community gathering space and opportunities for passive recreation. The Town makes annual appropriations to each organization to support

maintenance and upkeep. Other private facilities and organizations include the Weston Rod & Gun Club, which hosts an annual fishing derby and other community events, and the Wantastiquet Trout Club.

In 2023, Weston residents approved an article at town meeting to fund the hiring of a Mountain Towns Recreation Director. The cost of this position is shared, proportionately, with four surrounding towns. Mountain Towns Recreation (MTR) exists to support recreational activities in the region for youth and adults. Many Weston families have already begun benefiting from the creation of the MTR Director position, with the immediate responsibility of organizing youth basketball, baseball, softball, and soccer. As the position develops, there will be more initiatives for adult programming, ranging from organized sports to outdoor recreation, to community events.

The Town's natural resources have provided important recreational resources and there appears to be little need for "built" facilities for recreation other than the Weston Recreation Club. Such valued resources include wildlife habitats, streams, the unpaved rural road system and the expanses of undeveloped land, all of which is essential to the quality of life in Weston and helps to attract and retain residents. In addition, recreational opportunities attract visitors to town who provide revenue to businesses and support the local economy.

***Town Government, Community Facilities, Services and Recreation Policies:***

1. The Town's rate of growth should not exceed the Town's ability to provide the community facilities and services needed to support its population.
2. Provide for effective municipal communications to residents and property owners by fully utilizing the town's website.
3. Ensure that municipal staffing and facilities continue to provide for reliable, efficient, and cost-effective local governance and services.
4. Encourage non-profit organizations to continue to operate and provide services to the community and to maintain their properties in good condition for continued public use.
5. Ensure that adequate health care, police and fire protection and emergency services remain available to the community and that the Town continues to support these critical service organizations.
6. Support efforts to upgrade, expand, and improve telecommunications systems in the area so that residents can take advantage of the extensive information and services that are available.
7. Support efforts to create a more reliable and resilient energy system for all Weston residents and property owners and opportunities for the Town and Green Mountain Power to discuss future planned projects.
8. Continue to support and appropriate funds for the Wilder Memorial Library.
9. Continue to participate in the Londonderry Transfer station and encourage its efforts to ensure that it is an efficient regional solid waste management program that complies with the State's Universal Recycling Law.
10. Maintain a Town capital budget and program indicating future needed and desired capital expenditures in order to coordinate the financing of major public expenditures.
11. Require that all new development provide adequate water availability and additional infrastructure needed for effective fire protection.
12. Encourage the review and updating of all emergency plans and works with Windham

Regional Planning Commission's ongoing emergency planning efforts.

13. Support the preservation of the Town's outstanding natural environment for outdoor recreation.
14. Encourage that any development of recreational facilities be as informal and economical as possible and not contribute to the deterioration of our natural environment.
15. Public access to outdoor recreational resources should be protected wherever appropriate.
16. Continue to support the Weston Recreation Club through annual appropriations.

***Recommendations for Action***

1. Monitor staffing needs as future priorities and changing administrative requirements may support additional or expanded town staff roles.
2. Explore opportunities for a trail or walkway along the West River from the village to points to the north and south.
3. Continue the Town's capital budget program, as provided for under 24 V.S.A. § 4430.
4. Support private efforts to provide broadband internet access and cell phone service for all parts of Weston.
5. Encourage town departments and committees to regularly update their sections of the town's website.
6. Complete a study to evaluate municipality facility space needs and recommended improvements, including addressing accessibility for individuals with disabilities.
7. Support planning efforts to evaluate how to improve the flood resiliency of the Weston Firehouse. Options could include relocating the Firehouse, providing better flood proofing for the station in its current location, or by other means.
8. Increase community awareness and participation in the VTAlert program.
9. Support appropriations for the My Community Nurse project to meet the needs of elderly residents who with assistance may continue to live at home.

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## **Natural, Scenic, Historical and Cultural Resources**

### **Goals:**

- > *To identify, protect and preserve natural resources, natural areas, fragile areas and scenic resources such as scenic roads, waterways, landscapes and views, farmlands and open meadows.*
- > *To plan for and protect land, water, air and wildlife resources.*
- > *To balance the potential adverse impacts of earth resource extraction or processing activities against the benefits for the Town or local businesses.*
- > *To identify, protect and preserve important historic and cultural resources.*

### **Natural Resources Background:**

Weston has an abundance and variety of valuable natural resources. The importance of these resources is discussed below. Conservation of natural resources is of continuing public benefit.

### **Topography:**

Weston lies within the Green Mountains and, as a result, has terrain that presents an extreme contrast of form and elevation. The West River Valley, part of the Connecticut River watershed, runs north-south through the central part of the town. Elevations range from 1,200 to 2,200 feet above sea level. Enclosing the West River Valley are several dominant ridgelines. To the west are Peabody Hill and Holt Mountain, to the east Markham and Terrible Mountains. Much of Weston's lands have critical or serious limitations for development where steep slopes, shallow soils and high-water table conditions occur.

### **Forest Lands:**

There are significant public and private woodlands in Weston that support commercial activities such as logging and sugaring and provide natural areas and recreational resources. In addition, forest lands contribute to the scenic beauty and rural character of Weston.

Public forest lands include close to 10,000 acres of Green Mountain National Forest and over 800 acres of Okemo State Forest. National Forest and State Forest lands account for approximately 44% of the total land area in Weston.

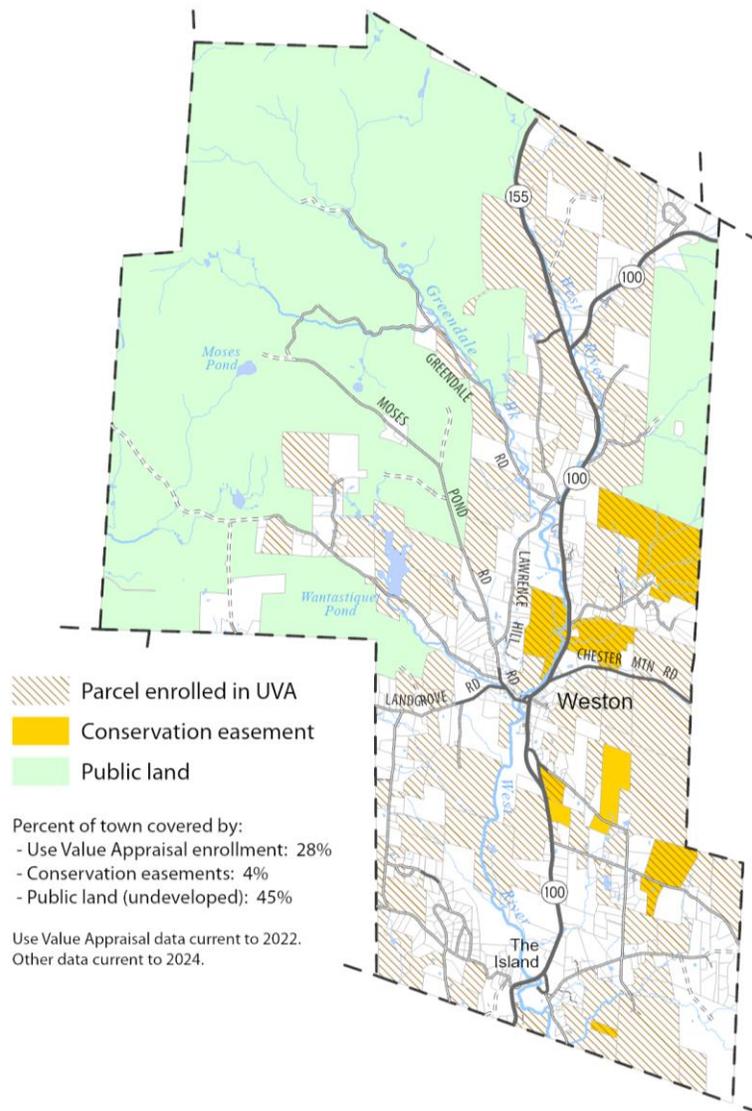
The U.S. Forest Service has developed land and resource management goals for the different management areas within the Green Mountain National Forest. The majority of federal land in Weston is classified as Diverse Forest Use Management Area. The goal for these areas is to support the sustainable production of high quality sawtimber and other timber products, and to provide a mix of wildlife habitats. Public uses include motorized and non-motorized trails, dispersed campsites, and developed campgrounds. The Robert T. Stafford White Rocks National Recreation Area extends into the northwest corner of Weston. In this area, timber management is restricted to maintaining or enhancing wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, or recreational resources. Public uses are limited to non-motorized trails and snowmobile use in the winter.

According to the Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC), there were 2,028 acres of private land in Weston classified as woodland as of 2020. This is a decline from 2,434 acres in 2010. During this same period the amount of residential land increased from 7,696 acres to 8,129 acres. It is important to note that residential land can still have valuable forest land present, but it does mean that there is likely a house on the property and associated improvements.

Vermont's Use Value Appraisal program (commonly referred to as "Current Use") provides a strong incentive for maintaining large blocks of forest land. To provide greater tax equity for forest landowners, and to encourage the long-term productivity of forest land, the program allows these parcels to be taxed on their resource production rather than their value for development purposes. Forest parcels must be a minimum of 25 contiguous acres to enroll in the program (not counting the required 2 acres surrounding a dwelling) and must have a 10-year forest management plan.

The map below shows parcels currently enrolled in the Use Value Appraisal (UVA) program in Weston. These include both forest and eligible agricultural parcels. Approximately 6,349 acres or 28% of the total land area in Weston is enrolled in the UVA program. While enrollment in UVA offers a level of protection, these parcels can be taken out of the program and a property owner may be assessed a Land Use Change tax. The map also depicts public lands in the Green Mountain National Forest and Okemo State Forest and parcels with conservation easements that restrict future development. After accounting for these different areas, only approximately 27% of land in Weston is either not enrolled in UVA, under conservation easement, or public land.

**Figure 1: Town of Weston Current Use, Conservation Easement, and Public Conserved Lands**



Source: Windham Regional Commission, February 2024

**Natural Areas and Wildlife:**

Natural areas are landscape features which have ecological, educational, scenic, and contemplative value as well as being important to the wildlife and the natural heritage of the Town. These areas provide ecological preserves of relatively unaltered environments and can provide habitats for threatened or endangered species. Protecting the critical habitats and corridors for large, roaming species helps to ensure the protection of habitat for other large and smaller species alike, thus protecting important ecosystems within the Town.

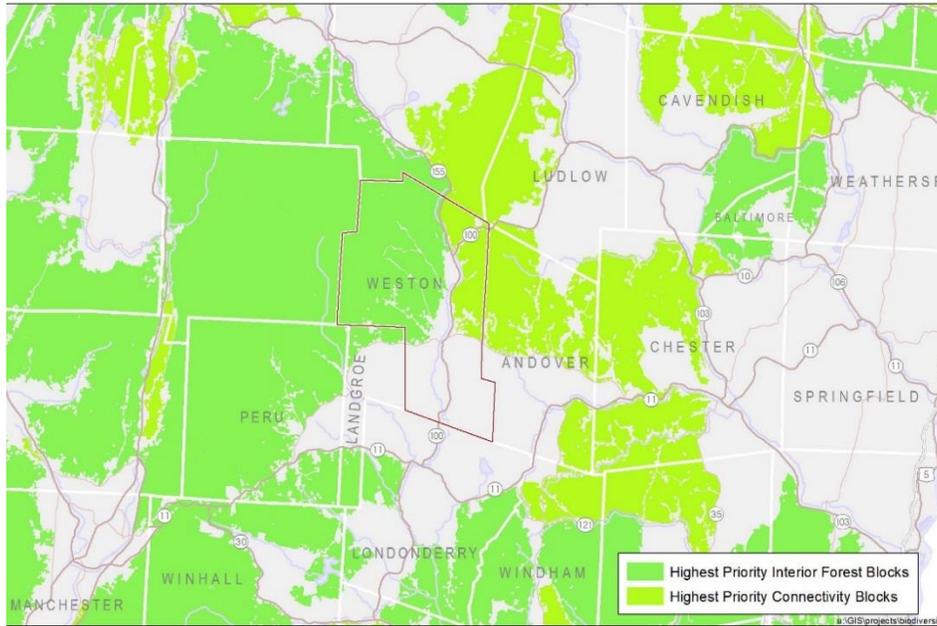
The forested landscape is the primary habitat for large mammals, including black bear, moose, deer, bobcat, fisher, coyote, otter, and beaver. Also in this ecosystem are the smaller mammals, reptiles, amphibians, game birds, raptors, and many valued songbirds and insects which are dependent on diverse forest species.

Maintaining large tracts of connected forestland for the promotion and support of these species is critical. For example: deer wintering areas and bear habitat are necessary for the animals to continue to thrive within that area. For wintering deer, low-lying softwood stands with southern exposures provide critical shelter from deep snow and cold temperatures. Stands of mature beech and oaks and newly regenerated soft mast areas provide important feeding habitats for black bear. Road and housing construction and other forms of development, as well as outbreaks of tree disease and insect infestation, reduce both the quantity and quality of deer wintering areas. Bear travel corridors, especially along Terrible and Markham Mountain, supply a necessary link between feeding and breeding areas. These areas are particularly important since food sources and supplies vary from season to season and from year to year.

Act 171 was enacted in 2016 and requires that Town Plans identify significant forest blocks and habitat connectors and develop policies on how to reduce forest fragmentation, enhance forest health, and support ecological functions. Forest blocks refer to a large contiguous area of forest in any stage of succession not currently developed for non-forest uses. Habitat connectors are land or water that link wildlife habitats, allowing the movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and plants and the functioning of ecological processes.

The maps below show the Highest Priority Forest Blocks and Habitat Connectivity Blocks in Town based on mapping completed by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. The Forest Block on the western and northern side of Weston largely corresponds with the lands in the Green Mountain National Forest. The Habitat Connectivity Block on the eastern side of town includes the Okemo State Forest lands and several large private parcels in the area along and between Route 100 and Route 155 on the north end of town. The first map depicts the larger region and highlights the importance of habitat connectivity at the regional scale. For example, the Okemo State Forest lands in Weston are part of an important habitat link through Andover and Chester that connects large interior forest blocks in Windham and Grafton with the Green Mountain National Forest.

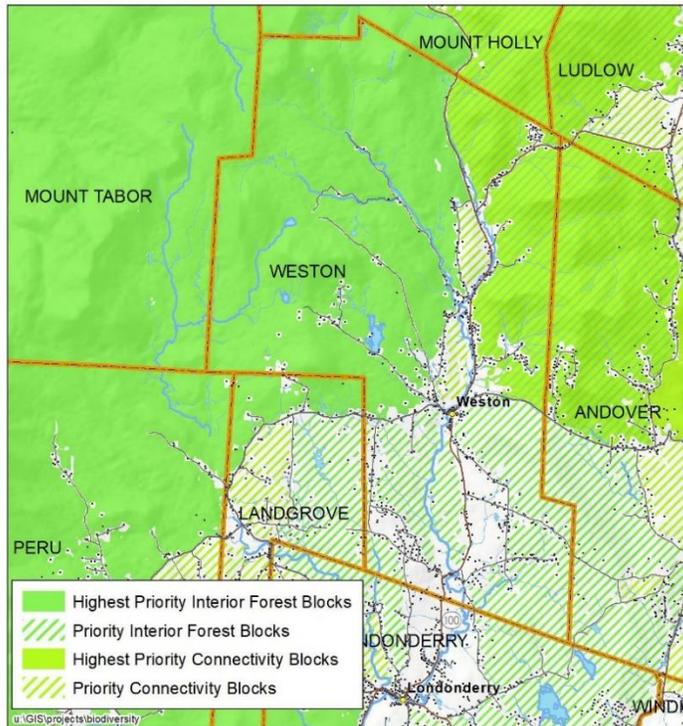
**Figure 2: VT ANR Regional Highest Priority Forest Blocks and Habitat Connectivity Blocks**



Source: Windham Regional Commission, January 2024

Habitat connections are also critical at the local level. The map below depicts Forest Blocks and Habitat Connectivity Blocks in Weston along with the local road network and existing buildings represented with black dots. Roads and more densely settled areas can present challenges for the movement and migration of animals. Route 100 and Route 155 are likely important wildlife crossing areas as they separate Okemo State Forest and Green Mountain National Forest lands.

**Figure 3: VT ANR Weston Priority Forest Blocks and Habitat Connectivity Blocks**



Source: Windham Regional Commission, January 2024

**Water Resources and Quality:**

Weston contains a rich variety of water resources. The most visible of these are the West River, Wantastiquet Pond and several smaller streams. These bodies of water are important fisheries, provide a critical habitat component for many wildlife species, offer opportunities for swimming and other recreational activities, and are critical to the area's aesthetic appeal. They also supply clean water to larger waterways. Weston provides much of the headwaters of the West River. It is critical that these water resources remain free of pollution and the stream banks and riparian vegetation not be damaged.

The 2022 Vermont water quality report shows that the vast majority of waters in Weston are in good condition. The only impaired surface water is Moses Pond, located in the Green Mountain National Forest, due to acidification. The State has adopted a basin planning approach to protecting, restoring, and enhancing water resources. Lands within Weston drain into the West River Watershed (Basin 11). The Basin 11 Plan was last updated in 2021 and inventories problems that impact water quality and plans for addressing them. Relevant strategies for Weston include stormwater management planning for Town roads, requiring stormwater management and erosion control for private development, encouraging best practices for agricultural activities in proximity to waterways, and providing information and resources to property owners with on-site septic systems in proximity to water resources.

The Basin 11 Plan also recommends evaluating the removal of the Old Mill Dam to improve habitat connectivity and the natural course and flow of the West River. The Old Mill Dam is owned and maintained by the Weston Community Association, a non-profit organization, and is an important historical resource in the village center. The Town and the WRC will be completing a geomorphic study that will evaluate the impacts of the dam on upstream flooding.

Shoreland areas border waters with high scenic, resource and recreational value. Wantastiquet Pond is privately owned by the Wantastiquet Trout Club and is the primary shoreland area in the Town. The Land Use Chapter includes the Shoreland District that covers Wantastiquet Pond and a buffer around the pond and provides specific policies to preserve the pond's shoreland.

Weston's residents and businesses depend upon ground water wells for their potable water supply and disposal needs. Protecting these water resources from pollution is critical to maintaining adequate water supplies for area businesses and residents. Private and public on-site wells are regulated and permitted by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation.

Surface waters are predominant landscape features throughout the Town and have often determined the location and form of settlement in Town. High surface water quality is a valuable resource, which supplies rivers that provide fish and wildlife habitat and recharge the riverine aquifers, from which a significant portion of the Town's drinking water is derived. Methods for protecting the quality of the Town's water supplies from various forms of pollution should be a priority.

Wetlands and other surface waters provide specialized habitats for fish, reptiles, and migratory birds while adding to the scenic quality of the Town. These areas, which are protected by State and Federal regulations, can provide important habitats for threatened or endangered species.

**Air Quality:**

Air quality is very good in the Town. Threats to air quality include combustion by-products from wood stoves, industry and manufacturing, agriculture, forestry and waste management practices. The main locally generated cause of air pollution is from vehicle emissions; however, not all of the pollutants are from sources within the Town. The topography, prevailing wind and weather system patterns result in air pollution traveling from other states and other regions of the State. One recent example of this is wildfire smoke originating in Canada that impacted local air quality in Summer 2023. Due to the transport of air pollutants, it is difficult to control all air quality at a local level. The

Town is dependent upon federal and state regulations to regulate both imported and locally generated air pollution.

***Soils Resources:***

Soils characteristics can create opportunities for, or physical site limitations to, a variety of land uses such as: farming, forestry, and mineral extraction and land development. Prime agricultural soils are soils that are rated high for crop production potential. Weston's primary soils are limited and generally located in the river valleys, in particular along the West River north of the village. Since most primary agricultural soils are flat and well drained, these soils are also very developable. Development in the Town has traditionally been encouraged on soils suitable for in-ground sewage disposal systems.

***Mineral Resources:***

There are a number of resources located underground in the Town of Weston, including gravel and sand in the West River valley. Currently, underground mineral extraction does not provide a significant economic resource in Weston. Sand and gravel deposits will continue to be important for building foundations, fill, erosion control, road maintenance and construction needs. In recent years, there has been a decline in the accessibility of gravel and sand resources in the Windham Region for road maintenance, which has contributed to increased costs for municipalities.

Earth resource extraction and/or processing activities can have an adverse impact to the area where such activities are located. Potential impacts include noise, dust, increased truck traffic, air pollution, radiation, surface and groundwater pollution, siltation of streams, increased stormwater runoff, erosion and sedimentation, despoliation of the landscape, and limited utility for subsequent use of the site. For this reason, gravel and sand extraction is regulated as a conditional use in Weston so that sites can be reclaimed and the quality of the environment protected.

***Scenic Resources - Landscapes and Views:***

Weston's scenic landscape including: scenic roads, open lands, the West River, other waterways and water bodies, mountains, ridge tops and forests, is widely appreciated by residents and visitors and is a valuable natural and economic resource. These scenic resources provide a unique visual experience for residents and attract the significant tourism that is so important to the local economy. Conservation of scenic resources should be an important consideration in the planning and design of development, for example as the Town considers its future needs for housing, commercial services, and community facilities. Maintaining scenic qualities requires coordination within the Town, neighboring towns, the region and the State.

The scenic quality of Weston is derived from two major visual components: landscape form and landscape pattern.

Landscape form is the shape or topography of land, which reflects the underlying bedrock formations and past modification by glacial action. The important landscape forms in Weston are:

1) steep slopes, 2) valley floors, 3) intermediate slopes, 4) ridgelines and 5) mountain peaks and hilltops. Each of these forms has an influence on settlement and its impact on scenic quality. For example, settlement generally in each of these areas other than intermediate slopes could be extremely visible from other areas.

Landscape pattern, the other major visual component affecting scenic quality, is the distribution and relationship of features on the land related to nature or the activities of man. The important features of the landscape pattern in Weston are: 1) open fields and woodlands, 2) surface water, 3) farms, 4) scenic views, 5) scenic back roads, and 7) the village center.

The most apparent visual aspect of the Town's landscape is the contrast between open fields and the woodlands that enclose them. The fields are extremely visible and therefore vulnerable to

settlement, while woodlands are better able to absorb settlement with less visual impact if tree cover is conserved.

Outside of the village center Weston's landscape pattern has evolved primarily as a result of agricultural pursuits. The isolated groupings of farm dwellings and buildings are characteristic of these activities and provide focal points of scenic and historic interest. More recently, as agricultural use has declined, second home construction has had a segmenting impact on formerly open land.

There are numerous views with high scenic appeal that exist along the roads within Weston, including panoramic views to Peabody Hill, Holt Mountain and Markham Mountain. Such views also include Terrible Mountain in Andover and views to distant mountains (Stratton, Glebe, Magic, Bromley and Styles Peak), ridgelines, and along the valley of the West River. Another integral element of the scenic countryside is the network of narrow, gravel back roads comprising the town's highway system.

The village center also has high scenic appeal with its attractive village green, historic buildings and small scale. Preservation of the character of the village has been identified as a key concern of Weston residents.

Light pollution or "sky glow" is a cumulative problem. Light projecting upwards from the Town produces a glow, which diminishes the natural quality of the nighttime landscape and night sky. Special consideration should be given to lighting design in order to minimize this cumulative adverse effect of light pollution.

***Historic Resources:***

There are a number of structures and locations within Weston that have historical value, including sites of significant events in the history of the Town, ruins and remains of the Town's historical economy, remainders of the Town's settlement and transportation pattern as well as stone walls and open fields.

Weston has continued to attract both full and part-time residents and tourists through its compatible relationship of architecture and environment, and the character of the village center, which has been consciously maintained by past and present generations of residents. Weston's village center, comprised of many structures of historic value, represents a significant development pattern during an important period in American history. The National Register of Historic Sites and Structures identifies the Village Center in its inventory of Historic Districts. The Weston Village Historic District (1985) is composed of 67 principal structures most of which line Route 100 and Lawrence Hill Road. In addition, the village center is also listed in the State Register of Historic Districts (1977).

The preservation of the character of the village center is very important to the people, community and economy of Weston. The listing of a property in the National Register of Historic Districts does not place restrictions on what an owner can do with their property. The Vermont State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) also only evaluates federal and state projects and Act 250 and Section 248 permit applications for potential impacts to historic buildings and districts. However, Vermont statutes allow towns to adopt historic districts as part of their local zoning bylaws that can address exterior architectural features and other exterior design considerations.

The July 2023 floods had a significant impact on a number of historical properties in the village center. Past flood events have also impacted many of these same properties. Protecting these historical resources should be an additional consideration as the Town works towards improving its resiliency from future flood events.

In addition to the village, there are many structures and sites scattered throughout Weston with historical value, including unique barns and old mill sites, all of which help to contribute to maintaining the social fabric of the community and establishing a sense of continuity between generations of citizens. Each structure, regardless of architectural style, reflects the values and

standard of the period from whence it came.

***Cultural Resources:***

Weston is fortunate to have a large number and strong tradition of cultural resources for a town of its size. For example, the Weston Playhouse has been presenting plays since 1937 when the building was converted from a church to a theater. In 1989, the Weston Theatre Company was organized and has operated the Weston Playhouse since then. In 2017, the Theater Company opened a second venue at Walker Farm just north of the village center that provides a modern space for year-round theatrical productions, live music, and other special events.

Another example is the Kinhaven Music School located on Lawrence Hill Road, which opened in 1952. Kinhaven offers summer music workshops and sessions for youth and adults. The school also hosts public concerts during the summer months.

Weston is also home to the Old Mill Museum, the Farrar-Mansur House Museum, Farrar Park, the Wilder Memorial Library, Old Parish Church, the Church on the Hill, New Thought Vermont, and the Weston Priory, which each year draws thousands of visitors from around the world.

Weston's cultural resources play an important part in the lives of its residents. Many people who settle in Weston come for the cultural aspects as well as the natural and built beauty of the Town. In addition, these cultural resources help attract thousands of visitors to Weston every year and contribute significantly to the vitality of the local economy. Preserving and supporting these resources should continue to be a high priority.

The July 2023 flood significantly impacted riverfront properties on Park Street, including the Weston Playhouse, as well as other cultural facilities in the village center. As a result of the flood, the Weston Theater Company was forced to cancel performances in the Playhouse and move performances to the smaller Walker Farm theater. The Playhouse also sustained significant flood damage as a result of Tropical Storm Irene in 2011. Planning for flood resiliency in the village is critical for preserving these cultural resources and the quality of life and economic activity they support.

***Natural Resource Land Use Policies***

1. Support land capability as an important factor in deciding how the lands of Weston will be used.
2. Consider regulating development within the ecological zone above 2,000 feet.
3. Encourage the Town to consider acquiring open land suitable for public use and encourage gifts of land to the Town for the purposes of resource use and conservation so long as the benefits of such gifts outweigh the costs to the Town.
4. Encourage the Town to cooperate with organizations and property owners engaged in the conservation and preservation of land.
5. Encourage developers of large projects to incorporate open space in their projects for the purposes of recreation and resource conservation.
6. Recognize the scenic and aesthetic value of the approaches to the village center, including Routes 100 and 155, Chester Mountain Road and the Landgrove Road.
7. Work to maintain the environmental, scenic and recreational value and quality of stream and riverbanks.
8. Support the development and expansion of public utility facilities and services within the highway or existing public utility rights-of-way corridors in order to reduce adverse physical

and visual impact on the landscape and achieve greater efficiency in the expenditure of public funds.

9. Efforts shall be made to influence public utility companies and developers to bury utility lines in areas of scenic or historic value, the village center and residential subdivisions.
10. Discourage the highly visible development and extensive clearing of vegetation that could spoil the natural beauty of the ridge tops in Weston.
11. Encourage the evaluation of the impacts of the Old Mill Dam on flooding upstream.
12. Support maintaining rivers and streams in a natural state and retain existing public access.
13. Discourage development in areas where rare or threatened species are located.
14. Settlement on lands of resource value for woodlands should occur in patterns and densities that will not substantially reduce the area or woodland productivity of those lands. Fragmentation of forest blocks and habitat connectors should be avoided.

***Groundwater Policies:***

1. Consider the regulation of development within the following areas:
  - a. Areas above 2,000 feet.
  - b. Drainage areas (watersheds) of upland streams.
  - c. Areas supplying large amounts of recharge waters to aquifers.
  - d. Areas characterized by steep slopes (20 per cent or more).
2. Consider requiring that any builder or developer must give meaningful assurances that any new water supply system or waste disposal system shall not deplete, contaminate or change the quality of any existing water supply system.

***Surface Water, Wetland, Watercourses and Shoreline Policies:***

1. Require that significant wetlands, watercourses and shorelines be protected by appropriate setback and frontage requirements as well as all other development standards that apply. Shorelines and stream banks shall be retained in a natural state and protected from uses and settlement that would cause erosion, prohibit public access, and reduce scenic qualities of surface waters.
2. Encourage the protection of wetlands and watercourses, in accordance with federal and state regulations, for the provision of wildlife habitats, retention areas for surface runoff, recreation and scientific value.
3. Discourage development in flood hazard areas and river corridors.

***Wildlife Policies:***

1. Discourage development within or adjacent to areas of significant wildlife habitat as identified on Town plan maps and preserve such habitats per State law.
2. Prohibit the development in habitats that support endangered or rare species.

***Topography and Soil Policies:***

1. Prohibit development in areas where the topography and soil conditions are such that

development may cause contamination of surface or subsurface waters, soils, erosion or failure of waste disposal systems. Recommend restriction of development in areas with significant water storage potential for fire protection, recreation, or wildlife purposes. The Weston Town maps and the U. S. Soil Conservation Soils maps and interpretation sheets shall be utilized in determining where development can satisfactorily be located.

***Mineral Resources Policies:***

1. Extraction or processing of resources located underground in the Town should not impose an adverse impact upon the residents of Weston.
2. Require that the following factors be considered in order to avoid significant undue adverse impact on the Town or its residents with the extraction or processing of earth resources:
  - a. Noise, dust and air pollution;
  - b. Surface and groundwater pollution, siltation or radiation;
  - c. Storage and disposal of waste materials, both solid and liquid;
  - d. Increased storm water runoff, erosion and sedimentation;
  - e. Despoliation of the landscape and limited utility for subsequent use of the site;
  - f. Decreased highway safety and increased municipal costs due to increased traffic and accelerated deterioration of highways and bridges attributable to transportation activities generated by the earth resources operations;
3. Require that no new earth resource extraction or processing operation, expansion of an existing operation, or resumption of an inactive operation be permitted until a preliminary examination of the proposed operation has shown that there will not be an unreasonable detrimental impact on the Town. Any extraction or processing proposal of earth resources shall include a plan, acceptable to the Development Review Board, for the rehabilitation of the site and guarantees should be received to ensure the rehabilitation at the operators' expense.
4. Require that earth resource extraction or processing operations involve no more than five acres of land at any one time.

***Historic and Cultural Policies:***

1. Encourage community-based facilities and organizations that support cultural needs.
2. Protect places of outstanding educational, aesthetic, archeological, cultural, or historical value from development that unreasonably impairs their character and quality.
3. Discourage development which would adversely affect cultural resources, including their destruction or alteration, alteration of surroundings, or the introduction of non-harmonious visual, audible, or atmospheric elements.
4. Encourage publicly owned, architecturally and historically significant structures be kept as visual and cultural assets. Seek public uses and/or ownership to preserve significant historic sites or structures.
5. Encourage rehabilitation of significant historic sites and structures. Whenever feasible, structures of historical significance shall be converted to new uses which would maintain their architectural or cultural value to the community.
6. Encourage development which preserves the historic and architectural character of the Town, village center and rural landscape.

7. Require that lands adjacent to or including historic places listed in the National Register and any local historical surveys, or areas of historical educational, cultural, scientific, architectural or archeological value be used in a manner that will be compatible with the character of their neighborhood.

***Recommendations for Action:***

1. Identify and catalog significant natural sites that may need protection, including important wetlands and wildlife habitats, important farm and forestland parcels.
2. Identify significant wetlands and watercourses in partnership with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation.
3. In cooperation with the Weston Historical Society, identify and catalog historic sites and structures and archeological sites within the Town and assess the need for further protective measures.
4. In cooperation with the Weston Historical Society and the Preservation Trust of Vermont, assist property owners to identify, preserve, and protect historic sites, foundations, stonewalls, and ruins located on their property.
5. Consider whether to adopt a historical overlay district for the village center as part of the Zoning Bylaws.
6. Consider updates to the Zoning Bylaws to reduce the fragmentation of forest blocks and habitat connectors.
7. Consider the adoption of River Corridor regulations as part of the Zoning Bylaws.
8. Ensure that flood resiliency planning for the Town take into consideration the protection of historical and cultural resources, in particular for properties in the village center.

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## **Education**

**Goal:** To provide effective and efficient educational and child care facilities and programs for Weston residents.

### ***Elementary and Secondary Education:***

In 2016, Weston, Landgrove, Londonderry, and Peru (the Mountain Town Regional Education District) joined an Act 46 Study Committee with the towns of Manchester, Dorset, Mt. Tabor, Sunderland, and Danby to consider consolidation into one large district governed by a single board with a single administration and tax rate. Voters in the nine towns approved the merger in 2017 and the Taconic and Green Regional School District was formed. The School District continues to be a part of the Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union (BRSU). Weston has one seat on the Taconic and Green Regional School Board.

Weston K-8 students attend the Flood Brook School in Londonderry (established in 1968) with students from Landgrove, Londonderry, and Peru. None of the three school districts within the Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union operates a high school and Weston students in grades 9-12 attend a school chosen by their families. Nearly all Weston students choose to attend the independent Burr and Burton Academy in Manchester, although students have also attended Stratton Mountain School, Long Trail School, Green Mountain High School, and others. The School District pays the tuition for students in grades 9-12 at rates approved by voters at the annual district meeting.

### ***Early Education and Child Care:***

The Little School is an independent, non-profit early childhood program and preschool serving children aged 2-5 located in the Town Office Annex (the old Weston School). This space is leased to the school by the Town. The Little School has operated since 1976 and serves families in Weston as well as surrounding towns. Tuition support is offered for eligible children aged 3-5 through Vermont's Universal Pre-K Program (Act 166). Under this legislation, pre-kindergarten programs must meet specific standards that ensure high-quality and effective instruction. In addition, The Little School accepts funding from the Vermont Child Care Financial Assistance Program and has its own financial aid program for families.

Other early childhood programs are available in surrounding communities, including the West River Montessori School in Londonderry and the Northshire Day School in Manchester. Weston's Zoning Bylaws include provisions that allow for family child care operations in a residence and for separate child care facilities.

### ***Adult Education Programs***

Adult education opportunities for Weston residents are available regionally. Vermont Technical College (VTC) has satellite campuses in Bennington, Rutland, and Brattleboro that offer Associates Degrees, career-related certificates, and credit and non-credit training programs. The Tutorial Center offers adult education and literacy classes and has locations in Manchester and Bennington. Vermont Adult Learning operates centers in Rutland, Springfield, and Brattleboro and offers similar adult learning services as well as workforce development programs.

Weston Pop-Up University is another opportunity for adult education. It was organized in 2020 by a group of Weston residents to provide free learning opportunities to the community and is a program of the Wilder Memorial Library. Classes are given during the month of March each year on a variety of topics – including cooking, physics, literature, calligraphy, fly fishing, yoga, cartoons, and karaoke. The classes

are taught by community volunteers and anyone can take a class for free. The goal is to meet new friends, learn new things and discover all that the community has to offer.

***Educational Policies:***

1. Encourage the active participation and input of Town residents into the decision-making process and actions being considered by Flood Brook School, Burr & Burton Academy, the Taconic and Green Regional School District, and the Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union.
2. Continue the current method of providing choice for secondary schooling. Every effort should be made to continue this desirable system, rather than the Town joining one secondary union district. Elementary school students should be made aware of the available secondary school choices.
3. Continue to provide support for and cooperation with the Little School. The Little School is an asset to the community and should be encouraged to continue to provide early childhood programming and preschool education and services so that Weston's youngest students start school ready to learn.
4. Support educational policies to assure that Weston's school students will become self-supporting and participating members of society.
5. Encourage adults to take advantage of the existing adult education facilities and services in the region.
6. Continue to support the Wilder Memorial Library, which is an asset to the community also providing inter-library loan service and computers with Internet access.
7. Strengthen the role of cultural and artistic disciplines in public education.
8. Support safe and affordable child care for Weston families.

***Recommendations for Action:***

1. Town School Board Members should develop a system to keep the people of Weston informed throughout the year of the actions being considered by the schools used by Weston residents.
2. Town representatives to the School Board should push for standards to measure performance of students so that we know that our priorities with respect to learning are being met.
3. The impacts of Act 46 and the consequences on school budgets and education property taxes should continue to be monitored.
4. Maintain the Town Office Annex property in order to continue to support its use by The Little School.
5. Maintain the Wilder Memorial Library property in order to continue its important educational role in the Town.

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## **Energy**

### **Goal:**

- > To encourage the efficient use of energy in Weston and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.
- > To provide for the development of renewable energy sources.

### **Energy Use and Sources:**

Energy is a scarce resource that should be considered in any comprehensive land use planning process. Homes and businesses use a variety of energy sources for heating: fuel oil, gas, wood, wood pellets, solar, electricity and coal. Data from the 2018-2022 American Community Survey shows that approximately 60% of Weston households use fuel oil for heating, 23% gas, 9% wood, 4% electricity, and 4% solar.

With a heating season that generally lasts seven months, it is evident that home and business energy consumption is a significant issue for everyone in the area. Based on the 2023 Vermont Energy Burden Report, Weston residents spend an average of \$2,312 annually on heating costs, which is slightly less than the State average of \$2,447. In addition, Weston residents spend an average of \$1,436 on electricity and \$3,323 on transportation annually. Energy costs are relatively inelastic compared to non-essential items and households often have less ability to reduce spending on heating fuel, electricity, and transportation when costs increase.

### **Energy Conservation:**

Substantial economic savings can be realized through energy conservation. In addition, a reduction in energy usage also reduces the production of environmental pollutants and greenhouse gases emissions. Energy conservation can be facilitated through effective land use planning, building standards and design, and improved transportation efficiency.

As a rural community, development densities in Weston should be relatively low and new development should be along existing roads, thus limiting the need for costly and energy inefficient scattered development. There is also an opportunity to encourage more compact settlement patterns around the village center. Permitting home occupations and supporting broadband and cellular service improvements also supports the objective of energy conservation by reducing the need for some residents to commute to work.

The siting, design and construction of buildings strongly influences the amount of energy required for heating and cooling, as well as the amount of electricity needed for lighting. Proper subdivision design, building orientation, construction and landscaping provide opportunities for passive solar space and domestic hot water heating, natural lighting and photovoltaic electricity production. Additional energy savings can be realized by retrofitting existing building with insulation, weather-stripping, energy efficient windows, LED lights and efficient appliances. Efficiency Vermont provides residents and businesses with energy assessments that identify cost-effective projects to improve efficiency and offers low-interest loans and rebates to help pay for improvements.

The Town can lead by example by considering energy conservation and efficiency when it makes decisions on capital expenditures for town facilities, roads, and other public infrastructure. The Town's Energy Committee is currently evaluating a heat pump system for the Town Office and assessing options for a community solar project in Weston. These efforts are being supported in part by funding from the State Municipal Energy Resiliency Program. Developing walkways in the village center would improve pedestrian safety and reduce the need for driving to access goods and services within the village area.

**Energy Resiliency:**

In recent years, Weston has experienced a higher frequency of power outages, most often resulting from high winds, ice, or heavy wet snow. The goal of energy resiliency is to create a more reliable and resilient energy system that can withstand these types of severe weather impacts and recover more quickly. Green Mountain Power is taking a number of steps to improve the resiliency of its power grid. One example is the Resiliency Zone program that creates community microgrids with backup battery power to parts of a town coupled with local renewable power generation. This program will help keep power on for homes and businesses when the electrical grid is impacted by severe weather. Currently, Green Mountain Power has Resilience Zone projects underway in Brattleboro and Grafton. The Town should continue to communicate with Green Mountain Power about the opportunity for a Resilience Zone project in Weston.

**Renewable Energy:**

The Vermont Community Energy Dashboard shows 28 solar installations in Weston with a total generating capacity of 275 kW. All 28 installations are on residential properties and generally have a capacity of 15kW or less. The Town can help support small-scale renewable energy installations on residential and commercial properties by ensuring zoning bylaws are not overly restrictive while ensuring that siting, design, and screening standards are required to mitigate potential impacts. Homeowners can also take advantage of incentives to lower the cost of installation and recoup their investment, such as the federal solar tax credit, net metering, and State property tax exemption.

Renewable energy facilities with a generating capacity of more than 1 mW require a large amount of land. On average, 8 acres of land are needed per 1 mW of solar and 3 to 4 acres per 1 mW of wind, but it is recommended at least 25 acres is identified for wind projects. These targets are taken from guidance for municipal planning from the Vermont Department of Public Service. Access to three-phase power is also needed for these large-scale renewable projects. Three-phase power is available on the transmission line that runs parallel to Route 100 from the Londonderry town line to the village and along Chester Mountain Road.

Renewable energy projects are evaluated using the statutory criteria in Section 248, which includes the need for the facility, the economic benefit, reliability impacts, and consistency with the State Energy Plan. The process also considers many of the criteria considered under the State's Act 250 land use and development law. Small-scale and large-scale renewable energy projects connected to the grid require approval by the Public Utilities Commission, although the permitting process for larger projects is significantly more extensive. The 2022 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan includes the goal that the State meets 25% of its energy needs from renewable sources by 2025, 45% by 2035, and 90% by 2050.

The Vermont Public Service Department has identified Prime Solar Energy Resource areas based on lands being generally adequate for solar and not having any "known" or "possible" natural resource constraints. In Weston, Prime Solar Energy Resource Areas are generally located in the West River valley and in the southeast corner of town along Piper Hill, Dale, and Old Tavern Roads. Weston has limited opportunities for large-scale wind generation projects. Many of the ridgelines in town are located on federal or state forestland. Markham Mountain is shown as a Prime Wind Energy Source area based on mapping by the Public Service Department, but this area has significant topography constraints and sensitive natural areas.

While the Town is supportive of large-scale renewable energy facilities with a generating capacity of more than 1 mW, it is also critical that these projects not have a detrimental impact on natural, scenic, cultural, and historical resources, or the rural character of the community. For this reason, these projects are prohibited in those areas designated as Conservation District or Village District on the Future Land Use Map. In areas identified as Prime Solar or Wind Energy Resource that do not conflict with the constraints identified in the Town Plan, large-scale renewable energy facilities may be suitable if proper design, screening, and siting standards are met and the natural, scenic, and historic features of the Town are protected to the maximum extent feasible.

**Energy Policies:**

1. Ensure that utilities have demonstrated, using all reasonable measures, that they are maximizing efficiencies and assisting customers in energy conservation before constructing additional generation and transmission facilities.
2. Encourage all new development to follow the energy conservation guidelines developed by the Vermont Department of Public Service for Act 250 permits.
3. Ensure that the state monitors the effects of restructuring electric utilities and protects the interests of small rural communities and their residents.
4. Encourage the use of clean and renewable energy sources for heating.
5. Encourage Town residents to use state and local weatherization and energy efficiency programs that identify areas of heat loss in buildings and provide solutions and financing assistance.
6. Consider the full cost of energy be considered in any new construction or rehabilitation.
7. Encourage landlords to adequately insulate multi-family dwellings, especially those in which tenants are responsible for their own heating bills.
8. Encourage the Town to minimize its own energy consumption by using appropriate energy conservation and efficiency practices and evaluate the potential for renewable energy production at Town properties.
9. Support programs that are designed to increase public awareness of energy issues and to encourage homeowners to conserve energy.
10. Require that all major development proposals fully and effectively address energy conservation and efficiency concerns.
11. Encourage all land use planning be consistent with the objective of energy efficiency.
12. Support alternative modes of transportation that require less energy consumption, including walking, biking, and public transit.
13. Protect all renewable energy resources.
14. Support Green Mountain Power's efforts to improve energy resiliency, including completing tree maintenance within utility line corridors, burying utility lines, and implementing local Resiliency Zones.
15. Require that the development of large-scale renewable energy facilities with a generating capacity of more than 1 mW protect natural, scenic, cultural, and historical resources and maintain the rural character of the town to the maximum extent feasible. Large-scale renewable energy facilities are prohibited in areas designated as Conservation District or Village District.

**Recommendation for Action:**

1. Support the Energy Committee's efforts to study renewable energy resources.
2. Incorporate weatherization and energy efficiency projects for municipal facilities when completing capital improvement projects.

3. Review and update zoning bylaws to ensure small-scale renewable energy resources are not unreasonably constrained on residential and commercial properties and ensure appropriate design standards to mitigate potential impacts on neighboring properties.
4. Update zoning bylaws to include standards for large-scale renewable energy facilities that mitigate potential impacts on neighboring properties and natural, scenic, and historic resources and provide for design, screening, and siting standards.

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## Housing

**Goal:** To maximize access to safe and affordable housing.

**Background:**

Housing is the dominant developed land use in Weston given the rural character of the town and the limited commercial activity outside of the village center. Weston residents live, for the most part, in widely dispersed, single family housing along the major roads in town and away from the village center. The desire for a housing site that is rural in appearance is a priority for many seeking to own property in Weston. This low-density form of single-family housing has contributed to the long-term change of the Town's historic landscape and helps define its sense of place. However, the housing needs for many residents are not being met by the existing housing market.

An adequate supply of year-round housing which offers a variety of size, cost and location is essential to the economic and social health of the Town. It is a benefit to the Town when employees can live close to their workplace, young adults are able to buy or rent a home in the Town and elderly residents are able to remain in the Town with their family and friends. Providing safe, affordable, and convenient housing for senior citizens, very low-income households, and disabled residents is a priority shared by the Town with all towns in the Region.

**Current Housing Conditions:**

According to the 2020 Census, there were 560 housing units in Weston. Since 2000 there has only been modest growth of 23 net housing units. This takes into account new homes that were constructed during this period, as well as dwellings that were demolished. The table below shows the number of zoning permits issued for single-family and two-family homes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and multi-family dwelling units in the last 5 years. On average, approximately 3 permits were issued per year for single-family or two-family dwelling units; only 2 permits were issued for ADUs and no permits for multi-family dwelling units during this 5-year period.

**Table 7: Number of Zoning Permits Issued for Residential Projects from 2019-2023**

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Single-Family/Two-Family Dwelling Units	3	1	3	3	4
Accessory Dwelling Units	0	0	1	1	0
Multi-Family Dwelling Units (3 or more Units)	0	0	0	0	0

*Source: Weston Zoning Administrator*

The vast majority of existing homes in Weston, nearly 90%, are detached single-family residences. Most multi-family rental units are found in buildings with 3 or 4 dwelling units. This reflects the rural character of the town and the lack of municipal water and wastewater that could support multi-family residential buildings with more units.

Approximately 56% of dwellings in Weston were constructed before 1980 and 27% were built before 1950. The age of a dwelling can have implications in terms of maintenance costs and upgrades needed to meet current health and safety codes. Houses that are more than 30 years old typically begin to require significant maintenance and upgrade work. Older homes may also lack adequate insulation or modern electrical wiring and are more likely to have lead paint, which can contribute to additional costs and health and safety risks for residents.

**Table 8: Estimated Year Residential Structure Built**

	1939 or earlier	1940 - 1949	1950 - 1959	1960 - 1969	1970 - 1979	1980 - 1989	1990 - 1999	2000 - 2009	2010 or later
Total	141	19	38	49	92	97	61	86	11
Percent	24%	3%	6%	8%	15%	16%	10%	14%	2%

Source: American Community Survey 2020 5-Year Estimates

**Household Characteristics:**

Weston's population grew from 566 to 623 residents between 2010 and 2020 and during this time the number of households increased from 262 to 292. As of 2020, approximately 30% of households were comprised of 1 person and 40% of 2 people. A statewide trend, and one also seen in Weston, is smaller household sizes as the population ages and families choose to have fewer children. This trend has implications in terms of the amount of space households may need in a dwelling. It is estimated that 40% of homes in Weston have 4 or more bedrooms and only 21% of homes have 2 bedrooms or fewer, possibly pointing to a mismatch in the average size of existing dwelling units and household needs.

**Table 9: Household Size, 2010 – 2020**

	2010	2020
1-person household	81	87
2-person household	116	117
3-person household	30	30
4-person household	27	33
5-person or more household	8	25
Total	262	292

Source: U.S. Census

**Seasonal Housing and Short-Term Rentals:**

Non-resident demand for second home sites has been the primary driver of real estate sales in the Town in recent decades. While the second-home market helps support local economy activity, it can put upward pressure on land, construction, and labor costs, and have the effect of discouraging more modest, year-round housing. Of Weston's total housing stock, 252 units were used for seasonal purposes in 2020, or slightly less than 50% of all dwellings. As shown in the table below, between 2010 and 2020 there was an increase in the number of owner-occupied homes and a decrease in seasonal homes, which may be a result of seasonal homeowners becoming full-time residents during this time.

**Table 10: Housing Occupancy Status, 2000 – 2020**

	2000	2010	2020
Seasonal	236	271	252
Owner-Occupied	219	213	251
Renter Occupied	64	49	41
Vacant	18	32	16
Total Housing Units	537	565	560

Source: U.S. Census

Similar to many towns in Vermont, Weston has seen an increase in the number of short-term rentals in recent years with the introduction of online platforms like Airbnb. As of September 2023, there were 36 short-term rental listings in Weston according to Air DNA, a website that compiles data on short-term rentals. Between 2018 and 2023, the number of available short-term rental units has been in the range of 20 – 40 units. Prior to 2018, there were generally 10 or fewer short-term rentals listed at any given time.

Short-term rentals present benefits and challenges for communities. On the one hand, they help attract visitors to the area by offering more and different types of lodging and can provide a supplemental income source to residents. Seasonal homeowners may also choose to rent out their dwelling when not in use as way to afford the cost of owning a second home. However, there are concerns about the impacts of additional noise and parking that can occur at these units, especially within existing residential neighborhoods. In addition, some short-term rental units could otherwise provide long-term housing for rent or ownership within a constrained housing market.

As a first step, the Town should consider a short-term rental registration program similar to what is being discussed in other towns in the region, such as in Londonderry, Peru, Chester, and Ludlow. This type of program would allow the Town to collect data on existing short-term rentals, better understand trends and impacts, and improve compliance with State regulations. The Town should also continue to monitor discussions at the State legislature on additional steps the State may take to regulate short-term rentals.

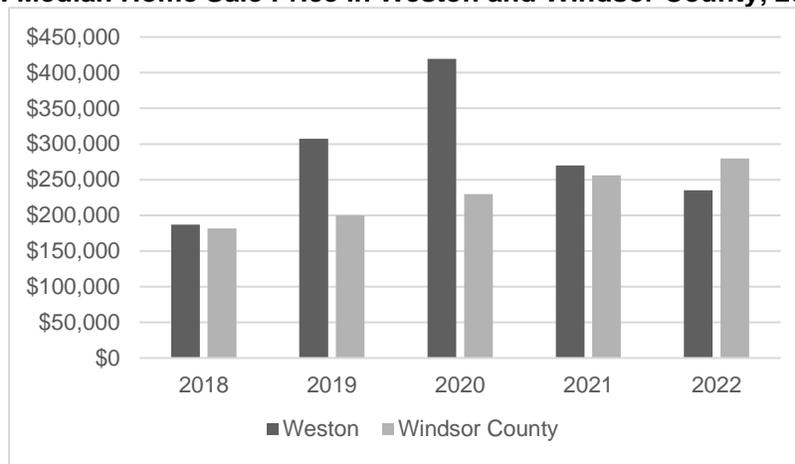
***Housing Affordability:***

Housing is considered to be affordable when a household spends no more than 30% of its gross income on housing costs. Households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing are considered to be “cost burdened.” For homeowners, this includes mortgage payments, property taxes, and insurance. For renters, costs include rent and utilities not included in the rent. The age of a home and associated maintenance costs is not factored into the overall housing costs.

The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates that 27% of homeowners in Weston are cost burdened. The most current ACS estimate does not show any households that rent being cost burdened, however given the small number of renters in Weston this data may be inaccurate. For reference, the 2022 ACS showed that 46% of renters in Windsor County were paying more than 30% of their gross income towards housing.

The chart below shows the annual median home sale price in Weston and Windsor County from 2018 to 2022. Due to the small number of sales in Weston, there is greater variability in the median price from year-to-year compared to Windsor County. For Weston, the median sale price increased from \$187,000 in 2018 to \$235,000 in 2022. However, in 2019, 2020, and 2021 the median sale price was higher than in 2022, including \$419,500 in 2020 (based on 9 sales).

**Figure 4: Median Home Sale Price in Weston and Windsor County, 2018 – 2022**



Source: Vermont Department of Taxes

In order for the 2022 median home sale price of \$235,000 to be affordable, a household would need an annual income of approximately \$85,400. While Weston had a median household income of \$112,625 according to the 2022 ACS, there are a large number of households that earn less than the affordability limit. The 2022 ACS estimated that 37% of households in Weston had an annual income of less than \$75,000, and this median home sale price would be unaffordable for those households.

### **Housing Needs**

Housing, especially affordable housing, is an increasingly important issue for communities and the State of Vermont. Housing costs have increased in recent years for several reasons, including a shortage of housing supply, increased demand, rising interest rates, and the impacts of inflation on construction costs. Rental costs have also increased because of inflation, a limited number of rental units, and prospective buyers not being able to find a home to purchase and needing to continue to rent.

Weston has housing needs that are influenced by state and national trends, but are also unique to a small, rural community that has become an attractive place for second homeowners and retirees. The Town's response to addressing these housing needs should also be implemented at a scale that is appropriate to the rural nature of the community. Based on existing housing characteristics and public input, more housing options are needed for young families, seniors, employees working in the community, and low and moderate-income households. While these groups have different needs for housing, generally smaller sized homes for ownership and rental with access to existing infrastructure and in proximity to the services should be encouraged. Some strategies the Town can consider include:

- Promote accessory dwelling units on single-family residential properties. This may include units within or attached to a single-family home or located in a detached structure, such as on the second floor of a garage or in a standalone structure.
- Support the conversion of existing residential buildings into multiple dwelling units, in particular for 2, 3, or 4 units. Homeownership can be more attainable if a household can earn rental income from a duplex or triplex to offset housing costs.
- Allow for smaller lot sizes and increased density in appropriate areas in the village and areas

in proximity to the village where infrastructure and soil conditions permit.

- Ensure that existing zoning bylaws allow for infill development and building modifications that create more housing units in the village while maintaining existing characteristics.
- Continue and improve upon the existing zoning regulations that allow for Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) where homes are clustered on smaller lot sizes with the remaining land left for open space.

While there are opportunities for additional housing in the village, there are also constraints that will require identifying other areas in town to meet housing demand. The main limiting factor in the village is the lack of municipal wastewater and flood vulnerability. Many septic systems are old and undersized to support additional housing units. When systems fail or need to be upgraded, they must comply with State regulations and the associated costs are significant. The flood hazard area in the village generally extends from the West River to Route 100, and there are limited opportunities for development east of Route 100.

In addition to supporting an increase in housing supply, the Town can also promote programs that support the continued availability of safe and affordable housing. The Windham Windsor Housing Trust based in Brattleboro manages the Green Mountain Home Repair program that provides low cost loans for income-eligible homeowners to complete health and safety improvements and increase energy efficiency, and the Vermont Housing Improvement program for property owners to complete repairs to rental units to meet Vermont Rental Housing Health Code guidelines. As discussed in the Energy Chapter, Efficiency Vermont provides homeowners with incentives for completing energy efficiency projects, which can lower a homeowner's overall housing costs.

***Housing Policies:***

1. Require that new and rehabilitated housing, including seasonal housing, is safe and sanitary and includes adequate provision for public facilities, services and utilities.
2. Encourage a diversity of housing opportunities, including affordable housing for young families, seniors, employees working in Weston, and households with low and moderate incomes
3. Support the provision in the zoning bylaws for one-acre lots within appropriate areas in town to encourage development of affordable housing.
4. Continue to encourage Planned Unit Developments, and include provisions that will provide incentives to include housing opportunities for less economically advantaged persons.
5. Encourage multi-family housing and senior housing.
6. Require that new housing be planned and sited so that it blends with the character of the community and does not destroy natural and scenic resources.
7. Encourage the development of rental housing.
8. Support mixed-use properties that include commercial and residential uses.
9. Consider "incentive/flexible zoning" to allow for higher density housing developments to preserve farmland and undeveloped land.
10. Work with not-for-profit organizations and government agencies to pursue options and meet

housing needs of Weston residents.

11. Restrict new residential development in areas vulnerable to flooding and fluvial erosion.
12. Promote the development of accessory dwelling units on single-family residential properties.

***Recommendations for Action:***

1. Identify areas where moderate residential density could be supported outside of the village center with access to public infrastructure and utilities.
2. Review and update zoning and subdivision bylaws to ensure conformance with the Town Plan.
3. Revise zoning bylaws to reduce barriers to creating accessory dwelling units and multi-family residential buildings.
4. Consider a Town short-term rental registration program.
5. Promote programs offered by the Windham Windsor Housing Trust and Efficiency Vermont that support the continued availability of affordable and safe housing.
6. Partner with neighboring communities to help address shared housing needs and provide informational opportunities for residents and landlords.

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## Economic Development

**Goal:** To encourage a stable economy in the Town of Weston that provides employment opportunities, encourages agriculture and forest related enterprises, and allows for the development of new businesses as well as the expansion of existing ones.

**Background:**

Historically, and typical of a small rural town, Weston's economy had been a diverse one, including retail commerce and inns in the Village, small farms producing agricultural products, harvesting the forests in the surrounding areas, and small manufacturers refining locally produced natural resources.

The current economy is largely dependent on transient visitors and second homeowners. The Town is centrally located among several major ski resorts, and Route 100 traffic provides a steady stream of visitors throughout the year. The historic character of the village center, the scenic agricultural land and natural beauty of our river valley, and the forested ridges surrounding the Town make it a desirable tourist destination, inviting visitors to stop and shop, eat, and sleep, and take advantage of the outdoors, and cultural and spiritual offerings.

An abundance of recreational opportunities are easily accessible in Weston or in nearby communities, including golf, fishing, skiing, snowshoeing, hunting, swimming, boating, hiking, and snowmobiling. Major attractions in Weston include the Vermont Country Store, the Weston Playhouse, Walker Farm performance venue, Kinhaven Music School, the Green Mountain National Forest, and the Weston Priory, among others. The Town should focus its economic development efforts on building on these existing community assets while preserving Weston's small-town rural character and its natural resources.

The increasing number of second homes has stimulated the economy by creating opportunities in service related businesses such as: construction, skilled trades, landscaping, property caretaking, and real estate sales and rentals. The prevalence of tourism and second home ownership does have some undesirable side effects, including extreme traffic congestion in the village center during peak seasons and a very cyclical annual business pattern.

The last decade has also seen renewed expansion of agricultural enterprises as well as growth in home-based businesses and remote work; whether service or professional oriented. The latter has been facilitated by the completion of the broadband network in Weston and improved cell phone service. There is an opportunity to encourage seasonal homeowners that have an option to work remotely to spend more time in Weston. This in turn helps support local businesses through increased patronage.

The table below provides an inventory of existing businesses in Weston in 2024 as compared to 2015. This list is not comprehensive, but is meant to provide a general snapshot of the types of businesses in the community currently, and changes in recent years.

**Table 11: Weston Businesses, 2015 – 2024**

<b>Inventory of Town Businesses</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2024</b>
Antiques	1	1
Art Gallery	2	1
Cultural Arts School (seasonal)	1	1
Grocery/Convenience store/gas station	1	0
Inns/Bed & Breakfasts	4	2
Pre-school & Childcare	1	1
Real Estate Office	1	1
Restaurants	4	3
Retail Establishments	3	3
Theatre Company	1	1

There is a growing recognition of the Town’s economic vulnerability due to the flood risks in the village, given that most of the town’s commercial services are located here. The July 2023 flood forced the closure of the Weston Market Place and gas station, and the temporary cessation of performances at the Weston Playhouse. Following the flood, tourism numbers were lower across Vermont due to the outside perception of ongoing road closures. This had an effect on local businesses, especially those that rely on tourism, including retail stores, restaurants, inns, and landscaping and property management.

Looking forward, there may be a need to locate appropriate areas outside of the village for future commercial growth due to these flood risks. This should be balanced with the need to protect the natural, historic, and scenic resources that help define the community. Commercial development outside of compact villages is often poorly planned and can result in sprawl development patterns that negatively impact the vitality of village centers, traffic safety, and community character. Towns can address these issues by planning for commercial growth in areas that are a natural extension of the village center, and by having design standards for architecture and site design that reflect the existing community character.

Due to the rural setting of Weston, there is also a desire amongst residents for more basic services, such as restaurants, convenience stores, medical offices, a pharmacy, and a bank. While there may be opportunities for some of these types of businesses to locate in Weston, there is the challenge of the community’s small population and its relative proximity to existing larger commercial centers, such as Manchester, Ludlow, and Chester.

***Economic Development Policies***

1. Support economic development efforts that provide diversified and stable local employment opportunities with competitive wages that will enhance Weston’s small town rural character, while maintaining the community’s natural resources.
2. Encourage the development of modern communication services of all types to meet the needs of local businesses and the community.
3. Encourage businesses that provide goods and services that meet the needs of residents, second homeowners, and visitors.

4. Encourage home-based work and entrepreneurial ventures that preserve and revitalize the Town's character and add to the diversity of culture and activities available to residents and visitors.
5. Encourage farmlands to remain in a productive state and encourage land that has previously been used for farming to be returned to farming uses whenever possible. Encourage production and marketing of land-based activities such as agriculture and forest products.
6. Encourage and support Weston's cultural and spiritual based economy, including civic, religious, and non-profit organizations that contribute much to the quality and diversity of life in Weston.
7. Encourage sensible forest management and agricultural practices in accordance with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and applicable State law.

***Recommendations for Action***

1. Promote nearby technical training centers to enhance employment opportunities for local residents.
2. Review and update the zoning bylaws to support desired business growth and development in appropriate locations in town.
3. Explore opportunities to partner with adjacent communities on marketing strategies for the region to increase tourism and business revenue.

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## **Flood Resilience**

**Goal:** Strengthen flood resiliency by anticipating, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from flood events with minimum impact to the well-being of the community, local economy, and environment.

**Background:**

Weston's historic settlement pattern is along the West River valley, taking advantage of the gentle terrain, rich soils, and proximity to the river. Much of the area where human activity has altered the landscape is within the West River floodplain and as a result increased the community's vulnerability to flooding over time. This is of particular concern in the village which has a concentration of civic, commercial, and cultural facilities. The mountainous topography on either side of the valley also includes streams that can quickly overbank during heavy rain events causing flooding. Weston has experienced several significant flood events, the most notable recent ones being the July 2023 flood and Tropical Storm Irene in 2011.

The impacts of flooding go beyond damage to buildings and roads and also affect community well-being. For example, the July 2023 flood led to the closure of the only gas station and market in town because of flood damage. As a result, residents have needed to travel to adjacent towns for shopping and services, but this has also taken away a place where community members were able to gather and socialize. There are also significant municipal costs associated with repairing town roads following severe weather events. While state and federal funding is available to assist in repairs if there is a declared disaster, municipalities often bear the full cost of localized flood events.

Weston is susceptible to two types of flooding: inundation flooding and fluvial erosion. Inundation flooding occurs when there is a rise in water levels that results in a flood event. Fluvial erosion occurs when streambanks are eroded by the movement of rivers and streams during storm events. Areas vulnerable to inundation flooding are identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on Flood Insurance Rate Maps. Fluvial erosion hazard areas have been mapped by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR). However, flood events can also impact properties not located within a FEMA or ANR flood hazard area. For example, heavy rains can result in driveway washouts, in particular in areas with steeper slopes.

Flood resilience refers to a community's ability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from a significant flood event with minimum impact to the well-being of the community, local economy, and environment. This chapter identifies areas of risk and vulnerability in Weston and strategies for better preparing for future flood events. Weston has an adopted Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), last updated in 2022, that address flood hazards and mitigation actions in more detail as well as other natural hazards the community needs to plan for. The Town Plan incorporates the Weston LHMP by reference. Additional information on is available at <http://floodready.vermont.gov/>.

***Inundation Flood Hazard Areas:***

Inundation flooding occurs when there is a rise in water levels in a stream channel or other waterbody that results in water spilling out onto the floodplain. This type of flooding can result from heavy rainfall or snowmelt, or when a stream channel is blocked by ice or debris. Areas vulnerable to inundation flooding have been mapped by FEMA and are referred to as Special Flood Hazard Areas. This include the *floodway*, which is the channel of a watercourse and the adjacent area needed to convey floodwaters, and the *flood fringe*, which is the remaining area of the floodplain.

The Natural Resources Town Plan Map shows the location of Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) in Weston. The entire length of the West River is located within the SFHA. Other waterways in the SFHA include Greendale Brook, and the unnamed streams along Route 100 east of Route 155, Trout Club Road, and Parker Lane and Moses Pond Road. According to FloodReady Vermont, there are 39 buildings in the SFHA, most of which are in the village area. This includes prominent civic and cultural buildings and sites such as the Town Office, Town Annex (currently used by The Little School), Weston Fire Station, Weston Playhouse, and Farrar Park. The map below of the village shows the location of the SFHA in red and the mapped River Corridor in yellow.

**Figure 5: Map of SFHA and River Corridor in Weston Village**



<u>Map Location Key</u>	
1.	Town Office & Annex
2.	Wilder Library
3.	Farrar Park
4.	Post Office
5.	Weston Playhouse
6.	Old Mill Museum
7.	Weston Market Place
8.	Weston Fire Station

Source: FloodReady Vermont

For property owners to be eligible for insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program a town must adopt and administer flood hazard regulations for designated Special Flood Hazard Areas. Weston has adopted these regulations as part of its zoning bylaws and the Zoning Administrator and Development Review Board are responsible for administering the regulations. The zoning bylaws identify areas that are unsuitable for their intended purposes because of flood hazards, restrict or prohibit uses that are dangerous to health, safety, or property in times of flood, and require that uses vulnerable to flooding be protected against flood damage.

***Fluvial Erosion Hazard Areas:***

A significant portion of flood damage in Vermont occurs outside of the FEMA mapped floodplain areas and along smaller upland streams, as well as along road drainage systems that fail to convey the amount of water they are receiving. This type of flooding is referred to as fluvial erosion. If a stream cannot spill out of its banks, the power of the trapped water increases and the channel digs down or cuts out further to the sides. Where roads, bridges, culverts, or buildings are nearby, these adjustments can cause significant and costly damage. Property owners in fluvial erosion hazard areas outside of FEMA SFHAs are not required to have flood insurance and may be less aware of their flood vulnerability.

The Vermont ANR released updated River Corridor maps in 2019 showing the area needed to address fluvial erosion hazards. A River Corridor is the area that provides the physical space that a river or stream needs to express its energy and meander without having to dig down into or cut out to the sides of a stream bed. The River Corridor includes a 50-foot buffer on both sides of the

meander belt to prevent disturbance and allow for bank stabilization.

Weston has areas of mapped River Corridor as shown on the Natural Resources Town Plan Map. There is significant overlap between the River Corridors and SFHAs, particularly along the West River and Greendale Brook. Portions of Jenny Coolidge Brook and the unnamed stream adjacent to Trout Club Road are identified as River Corridors but are not within the SFHA. It is important to note that fluvial erosion can occur outside of River Corridors as well, in particular along road drainage systems. According to GIS mapping analysis by the Windham Regional Commission, there are 49 buildings within River Corridors and 20 of these buildings are also in the SFHA. Most of the structures within River Corridors are located in the village and north along the West River to Chester Mountain Road.

Towns can adopt fluvial erosion hazard regulations that apply to River Corridors to mitigate the impacts of this type of flooding. Typically, regulations address the types of structures and land use activities permitted within the overlay district and may include vegetation and buffer requirements along rivers and streams. Municipalities with adopted River Corridor regulations are eligible for the maximum Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund State match in the event of a declared disaster. Weston does not have fluvial erosion hazard regulations at this time.

***Addressing Flood Resilience:***

There are several steps a community can take to reduce the risks associated with flooding, many of which Weston has already implemented or is pursuing. The following are the four main strategy areas for towns to improve flood resilience:

- **River Corridors:** Conserve land in flood hazard and flood storage areas and discourage further development in vulnerable areas. Weston benefits from having much of the upland forest in the community protected in National or State Forests. There may be opportunities to conserve additional upland forests and land along the West River that naturally stores floodwaters, in particular immediately north of the village.
- **Vulnerable Settlements:** Provide information to residents and property owners in vulnerable areas on how to reduce future flood risks by completing floodproofing measures to their homes and businesses. This includes elevating heating and HVAC systems, utilities, and propane tanks, and converting basements to flood-vented flood storage.
- **Safer Areas:** Plan for and support development in preferred safer areas in the community that are less vulnerable to flood risks. The Land Use chapter identifies proposed land uses and takes into consideration flood risks in identifying areas for future growth.
- **Watershed-Wide:** Participate in watershed-wide planning efforts, such as Vermont ANR basin planning, to address flood resiliency and implement stormwater management techniques that reduce flood risk. Towns can consider restricting development on steep slopes and adopting stormwater management and erosion control standards for new development.

Weston has taken several steps in response to the most recent flood event in July 2023. The Selectboard has appointed a Flood Resilience Committee to guide the Selectboard in spending funding from the State's Municipal Technical Assistance Program. The Town will be hiring a consultant to evaluate the upstream and downstream effects of removing the Old Mill Dam and increasing the hydraulic capacity of the Lawrence Hill Road bridge over the West River. The study will also evaluate possible additional flood mitigation measures.

Separate from this study, a Corridor Plan for the northern portion of the West River is expected to be completed in September 2024 by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation. The Plan will identify additional flood and fluvial mitigation projects in Weston. The Town has also begun to have

conversations with the towns of Londonderry and Jamaica to discuss flood resiliency projects within the three communities.

The 2022 Weston Local Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies several mitigation activities to address flooding and fluvial erosion hazards:

- Form an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Selectboard on costs, benefits, and possible funding sources to minimize flood impacts to the Weston Fire Station, including upgrades to the existing station, building a new station, and improving coordination or consolidating with other local Fire Departments. A similar action step is included in the Town Government, Community Facilities, and Services & Recreation Chapter of the Town Plan.
- Complete bank armoring of the West River near Boynton Road and on Greendale Brook adjacent to Greendale Brook.
- Complete culvert upgrade projects on Upper Old Tavern Road, Holden Hill Road, Dale Road, and Johnson Hill Road.

***Flood Resilience Policies:***

1. Foster the protection and restoration of river corridors, floodplains, wetlands, and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.
2. Protect floodplains, river corridors, and land adjacent to streams through adoption and administration of flood and fluvial erosion hazard area regulations governing development in designated Special Flood Hazard Areas and River Corridors, in order to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure, improved property, people, and the environment.
3. New development in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas should be avoided. If new development is to be built in such areas, it should not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.
4. Support the protection and restoration of geomorphic equilibrium, floodplains, wetlands, and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.
5. Support flood emergency preparedness and response planning.
6. Promote coordination with other towns within the West River watershed to address flood resiliency.
7. Ensure that land use regulations adequately support new development in safe locations not located with flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas.
8. Support best practices for stormwater management and green infrastructure.

***Recommendations for Action:***

1. Ensure that the Selectboard, Development Review Board, Planning Commission, and Zoning Administrator are familiar with Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) that delineate areas that could be inundated by water during flooding and with ANR River Corridor maps that delineate the land area adjacent to streams and rivers that are required to accommodate a stable channel.
2. Pursue a flood resilience management approach that identifies and maps flood and fluvial

erosion hazard areas based on studies and maps provided by the Vermont ANR Rivers Program, and designate those areas for protection to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure and private property.

3. Consider updates to the zoning bylaws to include fluvial erosion hazard area regulations, and include provisions for advance notification of and specific limits on new development activities in identified flood hazard areas, fluvial erosion areas, and/or River Corridors, based on regulatory templates developed by the ANR DEC Rivers Program.
4. Regulate any new development in identified flood hazard areas, fluvial erosion hazard areas, and/or River Corridors to ensure that development does not excessively exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.
5. Consider updates to the zoning bylaws to strengthen regulation of development activities that might increase the amount and/or rate of runoff and soil erosion from upland areas. This may include stormwater management guidelines, restrictions on development on steep slopes, or other measures.
6. Consider the recommendations from the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, the hydraulic study for the Old Mill Dam and Lawrence Hill Bridge, the DEC West River Corridor Plan, and other strategies for restoring the stream geomorphic equilibrium conditions and enhancing the emergency preparedness that will mitigate the risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and municipal investments.
7. Seek grant funding or other financing to flood proof or relocate critical municipal facilities located in the SFHA, River Corridor, or other flood-prone areas.
8. Encourage education of residents and property owners about flood proofing strategies and resources and emergency preparedness activities.
9. Review the Town's policies and regulations to ensure the Town is eligible for the maximum amount of federal and state funds to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate flood events.

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## Implementing the Town Plan

Effective implementation of this Plan requires careful consideration and action by the Townspeople, their Selectboard, Planning Commission, and other local boards, commissions and organizations. As the Town continues to grow, Weston will need to develop methods to appropriately guide and manage development. Among the many available methods which should be considered, are the following:

1. **Planning:** The Weston Town Plan should be regularly be reviewed and, if necessary, amended to reflect new developments and changed conditions affecting the Town. The existing planning program should be strengthened, with the Town boards, especially the Planning Commission, taking the lead. Discussions of planning issues should become a regular part of their agendas. Effort by all the people of the Town is needed to sustain and enrich such programs.

2. **Community Needs/Actions:** The Plan contains a set of recommended actions at the end of each section. The recommended actions are presented in one place in the Implementation Program located at the end of this section. Following approval of the Plan, the Selectboard and Planning Commission should work with representatives of the community and establish a schedule for the discussion and possible implementation of these recommendations.

3. **Land Use Regulations:** Zoning bylaws, including flood hazard, fluvial erosion, shoreland and wetland regulations, subdivision regulations and other ordinances, allow the Town to permit, prohibit, restrict, regulate, and determine land development, including, without limitation, the following:

- a) Specific uses of land, watercourses and other bodies of water.
- b) Dimensions, location, erection, construction, repair, maintenance, alteration, razing, removal, and use of structures.
- c) Areas and dimensions of land to be occupied by uses and structures, as well as areas, yards and other open spaces and distances to be left unoccupied by uses and structures.
- d) Density of populations and intensity of use.

Such land use regulations may, if necessary, be used to assure the public health and safety, environmental quality and protection of the quality of life.

4. **Land Acquisition:** Acquisition by the Town in fee simple, by lease, by easements of development rights, and by gift are the most certain methods for protecting and assuring access and enjoyment of valuable recreational and scenic lands. Landowners can also negotiate conservation agreements with organizations such as the Vermont Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy to protect productive agricultural and forestlands, wildlife habitat, natural areas, or public recreation lands.

5. **Taxation:** Vermont's Use Value Appraisal Program (Current Use) encourages long-term agriculture and forestry uses of property through tax incentives. The Program encourages the maintenance of undeveloped land for farming, forestry, and public recreation. The Town may also provide property tax relief for qualifying farm, forest, and open space landowners by adopting local tax stabilization programs to reduce local property tax burden. For general purposes, the assessing and taxing of land shall seek to strengthen the policies spelled out in this Town Plan, so long as they do not conflict with State laws or policies.

6. **Voluntary Action:** Privately-agreed restrictive covenants binding on purchasers of land, special attention and consideration given by private landowners to the objectives of this Plan and its policies when they decide to build or subdivide, formation of non-profit conservation or community land trusts, participation in the Act 250 review process by abutting landowners, and participation in Town planning by citizens concerned about the future of Weston are all ways to implement this Plan.

**7. Relationship Between Plan and Plans for Surrounding Areas:** The relationship between the Plan and the development trends in, and Plans for, the surrounding area has been considered. It is the goal of this Plan, and future planning processes, to communicate and cooperate with neighboring towns in addressing mutual concerns on matters such as roads, educational facilities, state aid, health care, economic development, land development, waste disposal and recycling, housing, and recreation. Further goals include planning regional development by participating actively in the Windham Regional Commission and in the Taconic and Green Regional School District. The following section provides a discussion on the compatibility of the Plan with the plans for surrounding towns and the Windham Region:

- Londonderry (Town Plan adopted October 2, 2017): Londonderry is situated to the south of Weston. The Londonderry Plan classifies the area along the shared border with Weston primarily as Rural Residential-3, which provides for agriculture, forestry, and low-density residential development. Properties along Route 100 are classified as Rural Residential-1, which provides for moderate density residential uses. This is compatible with Weston's Plan, which designates this area of town as Residential District and Rural Residential District.
- Andover (Town Plan adopted September 10, 2018): Andover is situated to the east of Weston. The Andover Plan classifies most of the land area along the shared border with Weston as Conservation District. There is a small area designated as Rural/Residential that includes the existing residential developments on Andover Ridge Road. This is compatible with Weston's Plan, which designates most of this area as Conservation District and Rural Residential District along Chester Mountain Road and Obed Moore Road.
- Ludlow (Town Plan adopted October 7, 2019): Weston and Ludlow share a small border area at the northeast corner of town along Route 100. The Ludlow Plan designates these areas as Rural Residential District. The adjacent land in Weston is designated as Conservation District, Rural Residential District, and Residential District for the existing residential development on Slawson Road.
- Mount Holly (Town Plan adopted February 13, 2024): Mount Holly is situated to the north of Weston. All of the land along the common border is shown as Forest and Conservation. Much of this land is located in Federal or State forests. This is compatible with Weston's Plan, which shows this area as Conservation District.
- Mount Tabor: Mount Tabor is located to the west of Weston. The community does not currently have an adopted Town Plan. Most of the town is part of the Green Mountain National Forest, including the shared border with Weston.
- Landgrove (Town Plan adopted in 2017): Landgrove is located to the west and south of Weston. The Landgrove Plan designates the land along the shared border as Rural Residential District and Conservation/Agriculture/Resource District. This is compatible with Weston's Plan, which shows these areas primarily as Conservation and Rural Residential Districts, and Residential District along Landgrove Road.
- Peru (Town Plan adopted June 15, 2022): Peru and Weston share a small border area at the southwest corner of town. The Peru Plan designates these areas primarily as Forest and Recreation with a small area designated as Rural Residential (5 Acre) for an existing residential subdivision. This is compatible with Weston's Plan, as all of the land on the Weston side of this border is located within the Green Mountain National Forest and is designated as Conservation District.
- Windham Regional Plan: The 2014 Windham Regional Plan was re-adopted in June 2021. The proposed land use designation and policies in the Weston Town Plan are consistent with the Windham Regional Plan. The Windham Regional Plan encourages growth and development within existing settlement areas, such as Weston's village center. Important forestland and natural resource areas are protected and maintained in the Weston Town Plan consistent with the Regional Plan's goals and policies.

### Implementation Program

The Implementation Program summarizes the recommended action steps from each section of the Town Plan. The actions are intended to implement the goals, objectives, and policies identified in the Plan. The Implementation Program recommends who in Town should lead each efforts and notes any partners. The anticipated timeline for each action is categorized as Short Term (completed within 1-4 years), Long Term (completed within 5-8 years), or Ongoing for activities that are part of the Town's normal operations. The Potential Resources column identifies funding sources or non-monetary assistance, such as volunteer time.

<b>Land Use</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Recommended Lead/Partners</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Potential Resources</b>
Review and update zoning bylaws for conformance with the Town Plan, with an emphasis on lot sizes, setbacks, density standards, and allowed uses.	Planning Commission	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Maintain the Village Center Designation for the village.	Planning Commission/ Selectboard	Ongoing	Volunteers
Evaluate the designation of additional locations for commercial growth adjacent to or in close proximity to the village center, and complete Town Plan and zoning bylaw updates if needed.	Planning Commission	Long-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Review and update the Planned Unit Development provisions in the zoning bylaws to include density bonus incentives for clustered and conservation development.	Planning Commission	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Consider the use of overlay zoning districts to protect agricultural lands, scenic vistas, forest, and ridgelines.	Planning Commission	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Consider the development of architectural and site design standards for commercial development that would maintain existing community character.	Planning Commission	Long-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers

<b>Transportation</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Recommended Lead/Partners</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Potential Resources</b>
Continue to work with the State of Vermont to design and implement a plan to control traffic and pedestrians in a safe manner in the village center (e.g. walkways, intersection modifications, speed indicator signs, and other traffic calming measures).	Selectboard	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, State Funds
Continue to evaluate the recommendations from the 2022 Bicycle and Pedestrian Scoping Study.	Selectboard	Short-term	Volunteers
Ensure timely maintenance of all roads, culverts, and bridges through capital planning and budgeting. Upsize culverts and bridges as necessary for flood mitigation purposes.	Selectboard/ Road Foreman	Ongoing	Town Budget, Grants, State Funds
Continue to support on-demand transportation services provided by Southeast Vermont Transit and Neighborhood Connections.	Selectboard	Ongoing	Town Budget, Volunteers
Support efforts by local businesses and non-profit organizations to install EV charging stations in private parking lots.	Selectboard	Ongoing	Volunteers
<b>Town Government, Community Facilities, Services, and Recreation</b>			
Monitor staffing needs as future priorities and changing administrative requirements may support additional or expanded town staff roles.	Selectboard	Ongoing	Town Budget, Volunteers
Explore opportunities for a trail or walkway along the West River from the village to points to the north and south.	Selectboard	Long-term	Volunteers
Continue a capital budget program as provided for under 24 V.S.A. § 4430.	Selectboard	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Support private efforts to provide broadband internet access and cell phone service for all parts of Weston.	Selectboard	Ongoing	Volunteers
Encourage town departments and committees to regularly update their sections of the town's website.	Selectboard	Ongoing	Town Budget, Volunteers
Complete a study to evaluate municipality facility space needs and recommended improvements, including addressing accessibility for individuals with disabilities.	Selectboard	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers

Action	Recommended Lead/Partners	Timeline	Potential Resources
Undertake planning efforts to evaluate how to improve the flood resiliency of the Weston Firehouse. Options could include relocating the Firehouse, providing better flood proofing for the station in its current location, or by other means.	Selectboard/ Fire Department	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Increase community awareness and participation in the VTAlert program.	Selectboard/ Fire Department	Ongoing	Volunteers
Support appropriations for the My Community Nurse project to meet the needs of elderly residents who with assistance may continue to live at home	Selectboard	Short-term	Town Budget
<b>Natural, Scenic, Historical, and Cultural Resources</b>			
Identify and catalog significant natural sites that may need protection, including important wetlands and wildlife habitats, important farm and forestland parcels.	Planning Commission/ Conservation Commission/ Land Trusts	Long-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Identify significant wetlands and watercourses in partnership with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation.	Planning Commission/ Conservation Commission/ State	Long-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
In cooperation with the Weston Historical Society, identify and catalog historic sites and structures and archeological sites within the Town and assess the need for further protective measures.	Weston Historical Society	Long-term	Volunteers
In cooperation with the Weston Historical Society and the Preservation Trust of Vermont, assist property owners to identify, preserve, and protect historic sites, foundations, stonewalls, and ruins located on their property.	Weston Historical Society	Ongoing	Volunteers
Consider whether to adopt a historical overlay district for the village center as part of the Zoning Bylaws.	Planning Commission	Long-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Consider updates to the Zoning Bylaws to reduce the fragmentation of forest blocks and habitat connectors.	Planning Commission	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Consider the adoption of River Corridor regulations as part of the Zoning Bylaws.	Planning Commission	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers

<b>Action</b>	<b>Recommended Lead/Partners</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Potential Resources</b>
Ensure that flood resiliency planning for the Town take into consideration the protection of historical and cultural resources, in particular for properties in the village center.	Selectboard/ Planning Commission	Ongoing	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
<b>Education</b>			
Town School Board Members should develop a system to keep the people of Weston informed throughout the year of the actions being considered by the schools used by Weston residents.	School Board	Ongoing	Volunteers
Town representatives to the School Board should push for standards to measure performance of students so that we know that our priorities with respect to learning are being met.	School Board	Ongoing	Volunteers
The impacts of Act 46 and the consequences on school budgets and education property taxes should continue to be monitored.	Selectboard	Ongoing	Volunteers
Maintain the Town Office Annex property in order to continue to support its use by The Little School.	Selectboard	Ongoing	Town Budget
<b>Energy</b>			
Support the Energy Committee's efforts to study renewable energy resources.	Energy Committee	Short-term	Volunteers
Incorporate weatherization and energy efficiency projects for municipal facilities when completing capital improvement projects.	Selectboard/ Energy Committee	Ongoing	Town Budget, Grants
Review and update zoning bylaws to ensure small-scale renewable energy resources are not unreasonably constrained on residential and commercial properties and ensure appropriate design standards to mitigate potential impacts on neighboring properties.	Planning Commission/ Energy Committee	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Update zoning bylaws to include standards for large-scale renewable energy facilities that mitigate potential impacts on neighboring properties and natural, scenic, and historic resources and provide for design, screening, and siting standards.	Planning Commission/ Energy Committee	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers

<b>Housing</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Recommended Lead/Partners</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Potential Resources</b>
Identify areas where moderate residential density could be supported outside of the village center with access to public infrastructure and utilities.	Planning Commission	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Review and update zoning and subdivision bylaws to ensure conformance with the Town Plan.	Planning Commission	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Revise zoning bylaws to reduce barriers to creating accessory dwelling units and multi-family residential buildings.	Planning Commission	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Consider a Town short-term rental registration program.	Selectboard	Short-term	Volunteers
Promote programs offered by the Windham Windsor Housing Trust and Efficiency Vermont that support the continued availability of affordable and safe housing.	Selectboard	Ongoing	Volunteers
Partner with neighboring communities to help address shared housing needs and provide informational opportunities for residents and landlords.	Selectboard/ Planning Commission	Ongoing	Volunteers
<b>Economic Development</b>			
Promote nearby technical training centers to enhance employment opportunities for local residents.	Selectboard	Ongoing	Volunteers
Review and update the zoning bylaws to support desired business growth and development in appropriate locations in town.	Planning Commission	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Explore opportunities to partner with adjacent communities on marketing strategies for the region to increase tourism and business revenue.	Selectboard	Long-term	Town Budget, Volunteers

<b>Flood Resilience</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Recommended Lead/Partners</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Potential Resources</b>
Ensure that the Selectboard, Development Review Board, Planning Commission, and Zoning Administrator are familiar with Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) that delineate areas that could be inundated by water during flooding and with ANR River Corridor maps that delineate the land area adjacent to streams and rivers that are required to accommodate a stable channel.	Selectboard/DRB/ Planning Commission/ Zoning Administrator	Ongoing	Town Budget, Volunteers
Pursue a flood resilience management approach that identifies and maps flood and fluvial erosion hazard areas based on studies and maps provided by the Vermont ANR Rivers Program, and designate those areas for protection to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure and private property.	Selectboard/ Planning Commission	Ongoing	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Consider updates to the zoning bylaws to include fluvial erosion hazard area regulations, and include provisions for advance notification of and specific limits on new development activities in identified flood hazard areas, fluvial erosion areas, and/or River Corridors, based on regulatory templates developed by the ANR DEC Rivers Program.	Planning Commission	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers
Regulate any new development in identified flood hazard areas, fluvial erosion hazard areas, and/or River Corridors to ensure that development does not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion.	DRB/Zoning Administrator	Ongoing	Town Budget, Volunteers
Consider updates to the zoning bylaws to strengthen regulation of development activities that might increase the amount and/or rate of runoff and soil erosion from upland areas. This may include stormwater management guidelines, restrictions on development on steep slopes, or other measures.	Planning Commission	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants, Volunteers

<b>Action</b>	<b>Recommended Lead/Partners</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Potential Resources</b>
Consider the recommendations from the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, the hydraulic study for the Old Mill Dam and Lawrence Hill Bridge, the DEC West River Corridor Plan, and other strategies for restoring the stream geomorphic equilibrium conditions and enhancing the emergency preparedness that will mitigate the risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and municipal investments.	Selectboard	Short-term	Town Budget, Grants
Seek grant funding or other financing to flood proof or relocate critical municipal facilities located in the SFHA, River Corridor, or other flood-prone areas.	Selectboard	Ongoing	Town Budget, Grants
Encourage education of residents and property owners about flood proofing strategies and resources and emergency preparedness activities.	Selectboard	Ongoing	Volunteers
Review the Town's policies and regulations to ensure the Town is eligible for the maximum amount of federal and state funds to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate flood events.	Selectboard	Ongoing	Volunteers

## Consistency with Vermont's State Planning Goals

Weston's response to the Vermont Planning Goals (24 V.S.A. § 4302) can be found throughout the Plan. Often times the goals, and therefore the responses, overlap from section to section. Our specific responses to the goals are shown in the table below as they are found in our objectives and policies.

The Weston Town Plan was prepared by the Weston Planning Commission with assistance from the Windham Regional Commission. It contains all of the required statements, plans, elements and maps pursuant to 24 VSA Section 4382.

Statewide Planning Goal	Relevant Weston Town Plan Objectives and Policies
<p>1. To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.</p>	<p>Town Plan Objectives #1, 4, 7, and 13            Land Use Policies #1, 3, 4, 8, and 9            Transportation Policy #13            Natural Resource Land Use Policies #2, 5, 6, and 14            Historic and Cultural Policy #6            Economic Development Policy #5</p>
<p>2. To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and that maintains high environmental standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes.</p>	<p>Town Plan Objective #12            Economic Development Policies #1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7</p>
<p>3. To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters.</p>	<p>Town Plan Objectives #5, 14, and 16            Historic and Cultural Policy #1            Educational Policies #3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8</p>
<p>4. To provide for safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation systems that respect the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.</p>	<p>Town Plan Objective #9            Land Use Policy #2            Transportation Policies #1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 13            Energy Policy #12</p>
<p>5. To identify, protect, and preserve important natural and historic features of the Vermont landscape, including: significant natural and fragile areas; outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands, and wetlands; significant scenic roads, waterways, and views; important historic structures, sites, or districts, archeological sites, and archeologically sensitive areas.</p>	<p>Town Plan Objectives #1 and 10            Land Use Policies #3, 5, 6, and 8            Transportation Policies #2, 3, 6, and 12            Natural Resource Land Use Policies #2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 12            Surface Water, Wetland, Watercourses and Shoreline Policies #1, 2, and 3            Historic and Cultural Policies #2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7            Flood Resilience Policies #1, 2, 3, 4, and 7</p>

<b>Statewide Planning Goal</b>	<b>Relevant Weston Town Plan Objectives and Policies</b>
<p><b>6.</b> To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, and land resources.</p>	<p>Town Plan Objectives #1, 7, and 10  Transportation Policies #6 and 8  Natural Resources Land Use Policies #7, 12, 13, and 14  Groundwater Policies #1 and 2  Surface Water, Wetland, Watercourses and Shoreline Policies #1, 2, and 3  Wildlife Policies #1 and 2  Topography and Soil Policy #1  Energy Policy #4  Flood Resilience Policies #1, 2, 4, and 8</p>
<p><b>7.</b> To make efficient use of energy, provide for the development of renewable energy resources, and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.</p>	<p>Town Plan Objective #8  Energy Policies #2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13</p>
<p><b>8.</b> To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Vermont residents and visitors.</p>	<p>Town Plan Objective #10  Town Government, Community Facilities, Services, and Recreational Policies #13, 14, and 15  Natural Resource Land Use Policies #5, 7, and 12  Surface Water, Wetland, Watercourses, and Shoreline Policy #2</p>
<p><b>9.</b> To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries.</p>	<p>Town Plan Objective #7  Land Use Policy #9  Natural Resource Land Use Policies #3, 4, and 14  Economic Development Policy #6</p>
<p><b>10.</b>To provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont’s natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.</p>	<p>Mineral Resources Policies #1, 2, 3, and 4</p>
<p><b>11.</b>To ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters.</p>	<p>Town Plan Objective #11  Housing Policies #1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 12</p>
<p><b>12.</b>To plan for, finance, and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.</p>	<p>Town Plan Objectives #5 and 6  Town Government, Community Facilities, Services, and Recreational Policies #1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 13</p>
<p><b>13.</b>To ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and to integrate child care issues into the planning process, including child care financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development.</p>	<p>Town Plan Objective #16  Education Policies #4 and 9</p>

Statewide Planning Goal	Relevant Weston Town Plan Objectives and Policies
<p>14. To encourage flood resilient communities.</p>	<p>Town Plan Objective #18  Land Use Policy #6  Transportation Policy #4  Town Government, Community Facilities, Services, and  Recreational Policy #13  Natural Resources Land Use Policies #11 and 12  Housing Policy #11  Flood Resilience Policies #1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8</p>

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## **Town Plan Maps**

A series of maps have been prepared to assist planners, public officials, and citizens to understand Weston and to assist in the planning process and governmental and business decisions. These maps are for planning purposes only. The policies and actions and associated narrative discussions in the body of the Town Plan prevail as the guidelines for the Town's future growth.

- Map 1. Land Cover
- Map 2. Existing Land Use
- Map 3. Community Facilities
- Map 4. Natural Resources
- Map 5. Transportation System
- Map 6. Future Land Use