

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Overview

Since the mid-1990s, the Town has taken steps toward defining a “Village Center” along the County Road corridor and stretching into Maple Avenue and adjacent mixed-use streets. The Zoning Ordinance now requires buildings to be built near the street, with parking to the side and rear. Commercial signs must be smaller in scale. Less parking, and therefore less pavement, is required for new development. A streetscape improvement project on County Road and a portion of Maple Avenue added granite curbing, decorative street lights, street trees, bus shelters and a “brick” center turn lane.

These changes have helped to restore character to a commercial stretch of County Road that had been an auto-dominated zone typical in suburban communities: parking lots located in front of buildings, signs cluttering views, and sidewalks in disrepair. Today, Barrington’s commercial core, while still dependent on automobile traffic, is more walkable and visually appealing. More work is needed, however, to build on this success and help attract investment to the Village Center and Barrington’s other smaller commercial districts, in West Barrington and Hampden Meadows.

### Existing Conditions

#### Commercial and Industrial Land Use and Zoning

Barrington’s business and industrial areas (see Map ED-1 and Table 1 on the following page) include:

- County Road from Hilltop Avenue to Rumstick Road, zoned Business.
- Maple Avenue, with parcels zoned Neighborhood Business and Business within an area extending from County Road west and including portions of Waseca and Anoka Avenues.
- The Bay Spring Avenue-Washington Road area, with parcels zoned Neighborhood Business, ~~and Business and Limited Manufacturing.~~ One of the largest vacant Business-zoned properties, an 8.5-acre former elementary school site, was redeveloped as an affordable housing development (Sweetbriar).
- Sowams Road at Kent Street, zoned Neighborhood Business. This area includes a handful of neighborhood-scale businesses.
- Barrington’s three Waterfront Business zones include Tyler Point (marina and restaurant) on the Barrington and Warren Rivers, and the Brewer Cove Haven and Lavin’s marinas on Bullock Cove. These areas are fully developed.

The Town has no agricultural zoning districts.

The sizes of the various commercial and industrial zones are listed in Table 2.

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Since 2010, the Town Council has adopted several amendments to the Zoning Map affecting commercially zoned property. The changes included the rezoning of the remaining residentially zoned parcels on Wood Avenue to Neighborhood Business. In addition, a 10-acre environmentally sensitive Town-owned parcel east of the Bayside YMCA was rezoned from Business to Open Space-Passive. The Planning Board initiated these revisions to bring the Zoning Map consistent with the Future Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan approved by the State in 2010. Changes to size of commercial zones, resulting from the Zoning Map amendments completed since 2010, are shown in Table 2.

Throughout town, there are limited opportunities for commercial expansion in the business zones. Due to the scarcity of vacant land within these districts, new most commercial development will necessitate re-use of existing buildings or redevelopment of infill sites.

### **Commercial Development Trends**

During the 1990s Barrington saw robust commercial development take place, with commercial space increasing by nearly 300,000 square feet, representing an investment of more than \$40 million. Much of the development related to the Barrington Shopping Center. Since 2000, there have been no large-scale commercial developments. New commercial and mixed-use buildings have involved redevelopment of infill sites, typically one acre or less in area. **Table 1** on the next page lists new projects built since 2010, which have added about 33,000 square feet of building area totaling \$5.9 million in assessed value.

~~The largest non-residential development in recent years, not listed in Table 1, was the expansion of the Bayside Y at 70 West Street. Portions of the original 15,350 square foot building were demolished for the expansion, which included construction of a much larger indoor pool. The “new” Y totals approximately 36,000 square feet; the parking lot was expanded as well. The property is tax-exempt.~~

Barrington eating establishments generate approximately \$130,000 to \$140,000 per year for the Town from the meal tax. New restaurant space added in recent years include one at the new Coastal Commons mixed-use development, and two on Maple Avenue —; one replacing a consignment furniture store, the other in a converted residential structure. Other new restaurants opened in town replaced establishments that closed, resulting in no net increase in space.

### **Industrial Development**

The closing of the RI Lace Works in the late 1980s likely signaled the end of manufacturing in Barrington. The 1992 Comprehensive Plan laid the groundwork for the conversion of industrial-zoned properties through recommendations to re-use these sites for senior housing developments—apartments and assisted living facilities. Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance adopted in the mid-1990s permitted Elderly Housing districts to occur in land zoned for commercial or industrial use.

The first project in an “EH” zone was the renovation of the three-story Pilling Chain Mill building in 1996, for the 60-unit Barrington Cove Apartments. At Bay Spring and Narragansett Avenues, the RI Lace Works site was zoned EH. The large building was replaced with the 126-bed Bay Spring Village Assisted Living complex in the late 1990s.

Today, the only industrially zoned land (Limited Manufacturing) remaining in Barrington is a 4.8-acre area to the south of Bay Spring Avenue abutting Allin's Cove. The development potential of the site is unknown. The property is constrained by its proximity to the water and wetlands and floodplain issues, as well as stringent CRMC requirements due to ~~the-its~~ proximity to Allin's Cove.

### **Commercial and Industrial Land Use and Zoning**

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- ~~• Barrington's three Waterfront Business zones include Tyler Point (marina and restaurant) on the Barrington and Warren Rivers, and the Brewer Cove Haven and Lavin's marinas on Bullock Cove. These areas are fully developed.~~

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### **Streetscape Improvements**

Streetscape improvements completed in the early 2000s have enhanced the appearance of the County Road and Maple Avenue commercial areas. On County Road, from Sullivan Terrace to Rumstick Road, the State Department of Transportation added a center turn lane with stamped "brick" pavers, installed streetlights and granite curbing, constructed new wood bus shelters and reconstructed sidewalks.

The Town has completed streetscape improvements on Maple Avenue, a Town-owned street. To

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date, sidewalks, granite curbing and streetlights have been installed on the south side of Maple Avenue from County Road to West Street. Sidewalks and other improvements have yet to be installed on the north side of Maple.

In 2014, Town voters approved a \$1.6 million bond to extend sidewalks, street trees and other streetscape improvements to Waseca Avenue, Wood Avenue, Maple Avenue and West Street. Engineering on the project began in October 2014, with construction completion expected by November 2015.

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## Design Review

A development plan review ordinance, first adopted in the mid-1990s and revised in 2012, requires building design and site plan review of all new commercial development and redevelopment, as well as site plan review of major residential developments. The Town also has modified and strengthened sign regulations during this period. Advance review on behalf of the Planning Board is performed by the Technical Review Committee.

The results of the Town's review process and design standards are evident within commercial areas where new development has occurred since the mid-1990s, most of it focused on County Road. Setback standards, for example, contribute to a pedestrian-friendly street by requiring buildings to be located close to the road, with minimum setback at 3 feet and a maximum setback at 15 feet.

The Zoning Ordinance also prohibits parking to be located in front of buildings, requires sidewalks and bike racks and other features that make for a more walkable community. In addition, the enforcement of the sign ordinance adopted as part of the 1994 zoning amendments has resulted in signage more appropriate to a pedestrian-scaled area, eliminating over-sized and gaudy commercial signs that had existed for years.

The Town has monitored the effectiveness of regulations in achieving the goals established in the Comprehensive Plan. In 2007 and 2012, for example, the Town Council and Planning Board further revised requirements for signage, off-street parking and building and site design to create clearer guidelines and simplify some steps of the review process.

Overall, the aesthetic improvements from projects built in accordance with the regulations and standards established over the past 20 years have helped to provide the town-village center a distinct character and a definable edge.

## Employment

The R.I. Department of Economic Development provides figures of the total labor force made up by residents, and of employment levels within the community itself, for all cities and towns in the State. As indicated by **Table 3** (previous page) and **Table 4** the bulk of employment within Barrington as of 2013 (second quarter) is in health care and social assistance (779 average employment), government (690), retail trade (295) and accommodation and food service (293), similar to the ranking of the largest employment categories statewide.

Since 1982, the largest loss among industry groups has been in the manufacturing sector, which is

consistent with national trends. In 1982, there were 325 manufacturing jobs in Barrington; by 1990, the figure declined to 158, and then to just 47 in 2013. The decline in the 1980s was primarily due to the closing in 1990 of the Rhode Island Lace Works, which once provided about 180 jobs in Barrington. There also are fewer retail jobs compared to previous years (435 in 1990; 295 in 2013).

Employment data reveal the extent Barrington is a bedroom community, with many more working residents in Barrington than there are jobs within town. There are 8,216 Barrington residents in the labor pool, as of 2013 (see **Table 5** on the next page), compared to 3,387 jobs available within town. The number of Barrington residents who work in town is unknown, but it is clear that the average job within town does not pay enough to cover local housing costs. The Housing Network of Rhode Island states that in 2012, the average private sector wage for a job in town was \$36,400. Income needed to pay the average rent of \$1,154 per month for a two-bedroom apartment is about \$46,100 a year. Almost \$98,000 is needed to afford the median house price in 2012 totaling \$334,000. (Housing issues, including affordable housing strategies, are discussed in detail in the Housing & Neighborhoods element.)

Table 5 shows statistics on the labor force in Barrington from 1990 to 2013, including totals on employed and unemployed. From 1990 to 2000, Barrington's total labor force increased slightly, coinciding with the town's increase in population. Since 2000, however, the total labor force has dropped to below 1990 levels. In 1990 the labor force represented 52.4 percent of the population; in 2010, the percentage was about 51.7 percent.

In general, the Town's unemployment levels follow the same pattern as the overall state levels of unemployment, although the percentages are lower, indicating that Barrington residents are employed in industries more insulated from downturns in the economy (see Table 5). For 2013, the town's unemployment rate on average was 6.5 percent, 2.6 percentage points lower than the state's. Though higher than recent historical levels, the town's employment numbers have improved significantly since 2010 when unemployment stood at 8.8 percent in Barrington (11.7 percent statewide).

The number of jobs in town compared to the size of the labor force comprised of people who live in Barrington reflects an emphasis of residential development over commercial and industrial growth. In 2006, Barrington, for example, the town had a total private sector employment of 2,410, or 0.28 jobs for every Barrington resident in the labor force. In comparison, within Bristol there were 0.47 private sector jobs for every Bristol resident in the labor force in 2006; the ratio in Warren was 0.61.

This housing-employment imbalance is reflected in commuting patterns from the 2000 census. In Barrington, just 26% of those in the labor force went to work in Bristol County (much lower than the figure of 40% all of Bristol County's working population). The town's proximity to a major employment center, Providence, which has a much larger economy compared to Bristol County, is likely a factor influencing the high number of out-of-county commuters from Barrington.

### **Farming Operations**

In recent decades, agriculture has comprised a small, and shrinking, share of the labor force in Barrington. According to the Census Bureau, employment in the agriculture sector in the period of 1982 to 2009 has fluctuated in the range of 25 to 33; overall, the share of the total labor force has

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declined from about 1.4 percent in the 1980s to just 0.3 percent in 2009. The data do not specify where those employed in the agricultural sector work, but in Barrington, there is only one area with active farms remaining: the George Street area.

Farms on George Street include Dane Farm—a horse farm—and farm fields cultivated by Four-Town Farm based next door in Seekonk (see **Figure 3**). See **Map ED-2** for the location of farms with active cropland in Barrington – Four-Town Farm in the George Street area and Johannis Farm on Sowams Road.

The Town has partnered with Four-Town Farm with the goal of maintaining farmland in active production—leasing 40 acres in Nockum Hill, and acquiring development rights from Four-Town to ensure additional acreage remains in agricultural use.

**Figure 1** depicts land farmed by Four-Town Farm in the George Street area, including land leased from the Town. Also shown in **Figure 1** is the parcel where the Town acquired development rights as part of a 20-year lease agreement with Four-Town Farm in the early 1990s. In 2012, the lease of 40 acres adjacent to the Douglas Rayner Preserve was extended another 20 years, expiring on June 30, 2032, in exchange for an annual payment of \$10,000 to the Town.

According to RIGIS data, almost all of the land in the George Street area is suitable for farming. About 117 acres – including all of the land actively farmed – are categorized as agricultural soils of statewide importance, and 4.6 acres are considered “prime farmland” (see **Figure 1**).

The only other active farmland—not including community gardens—in town is the Johannis Farm property on Sowams Road, where about 7.8 acres out of a much larger parcel acquired by the Land Conservation Trust remains in agricultural use under terms of the property transaction. Long-term, the Johannis Farm fields, which are in the 100-year flood zone, likely will be impacted by sea level rise (see discussion in Natural Hazards element), as coastal wetlands migrate inland as inundation increases.

Another farm site is the old “Vitulo Farm,” an old dairy farm on Wampanoag Trail that was acquired by the Town in the early 2000s. Sections of the property continued to be farmed by the former owner until 2013, under an agreement with the Town. In 2014, that agreement ended and the farm fields nearest the Trail became the site of the Barrington Community Garden, established through a volunteer effort.

## **Issues and Opportunities**

### **Parking and Infrastructure in Commercial and Mixed-Use Areas**

The 2010 Comprehensive Plan identified multiple issues limiting the potential commercial vitality of the Village Center within the blocks adjacent to County Road, including:

- Lack of on-street parking for customers.
- No off-street public parking lots.
- Poor sidewalk connectivity and areas with sidewalks in poor condition.
- Lack of directional signage.

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- No crosswalks outside of County Road.
- Use of public sidewalk areas (on Maple Avenue specifically) for parking vehicles and other pedestrian obstructions.

The Town is in the process of addressing many of these issues through a \$1.6 million streetscape improvement bond approved by voters in 2014. The request for bond funding was based on streetscape and wayfinding signage concepts in a “Village Center Connectivity Study,” completed in 2013 (see **Figure 2** on the previous page). Construction is scheduled for completion by the end of 2015.

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While infrastructure in the project area will be improved with the bond project, the condition of infrastructure in other commercially zoned areas is subpar—such as sections of sidewalk on Maple Avenue west of West Street, and within the Kent Street Neighborhood Business district.

Another ongoing concern is a lack of adequate public parking, particularly in the Village Center, where public parking outside the Town Hall/Library is almost nonexistent. The Town will need to identify and secure additional public parking—on-street and off-street—in the Village Center to provide an option to park once and walk to the various establishments—and realize the benefits of the planned streetscape improvements.

As our village center becomes a more attractive place to visit and shop, the Town will need to better manage parking. While much parking is available, it is disjointed and mostly privately owned, causing many visitors to continually jump in and out of their cars to make short trips between stores and to “rove” for parking. The Town should take steps to encourage more “park once and shop” activity in the village area. By clearly designating and directing drivers to convenient parking, we can limit the amount of traffic circulating through town. Encouraging customers to walk and explore our growing village area will also benefit downtown merchants.

The town should pursue the shared use and/or acquisition of existing surface parking lots within the village area and open them up to local shoppers and visitors. Underutilized lots along Wood Street, Waseca and Maple Avenue have the potential to be used in this way and to encourage more pedestrian activity along these local streets.

A measure added to the Zoning Ordinance in 2012, allowing the use of shared parking where spaces can be leased off-site to meet some of the parking requirements, has the potential to encourage parking once and walking to multiple destinations. However, this option has not yet been utilized, and should be re-evaluated to determine whether revisions are needed to encourage its use.

### **Land Available for ~~Commercial~~Economic Development**

Today, as with residentially zoned land, Barrington is approaching build-out of properties zoned for mixed-use and commercial use, as the amount of vacant or under-utilized land zoned for commercial development is in limited supply. Two major parcels zoned Business—the Sweetbriar site and the 10-acre parcel between the YMCA and the Barrington Shopping Center (both discussed previously) —no longer represent opportunities for new commercial or mixed-use development. This leaves a handful of vacant or under-utilized parcels zoned for non-residential development, including the following:

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- ~~Approximately 4 acres of wooded land zoned Limited Manufacturing, located to the south of Bay Spring Avenue and abutting Allin's Cove. The development potential is limited by environmental constraints including the proximity to the water and possibly other issues.~~
- ~~A 5.1-acre vacant parcel (a portion of which includes a pond) to the north of Bay Spring Avenue, east of the Bike Path, zoned Business. The amount of developable land is unknown; however, the presence of the pond and other factors impact the amount of upland available for development.~~

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Due to the lack of vacant, developable land in the Business and Neighborhood Business zones, future additional non-residential development in town is likely to be in the form of redevelopment within existing commercial zones.

One of the challenges with redevelopment of existing properties in the Maple Avenue and Bay Spring Avenue areas is the proximity of commercially zoned sites to adjacent residential properties within and adjacent to the commercial zones. It is not just the impact of commercial development on residences on Maple Avenue and adjacent areas, but also the fragmentation of business properties along Maple Avenue which perpetuates the use of the automobile. Efforts to enhance the pedestrian environment of Maple Avenue will be ineffective without greater continuity of the retail district, along with clearly identified and convenient public parking enabling people to park and walk.

Overall, there are few opportunities to expand zoning to permit additional non-residential and mixed-use development in areas not currently zoned Neighborhood Business or Business, without rezoning residential land. One new opportunity area that could support modest non-residential development is the Zion Bible Institute site. (Guidance for the creation of new zoning for the property is included in Appendix III.)

### **Tourism Opportunities**

As a value-added marketing opportunity, tourism is increasingly important to community economic health and diversification. Tourism is recognized as a leading industry in Rhode Island and holds potential for Barrington. Development of tourism would provide additional support for local business. B&Bs can play a major role in encouraging and promoting tourism. In smaller communities the B&B approach is an important part of the tourism strategy.

B&Bs are small and flexible enough to gear their facilities to specific visitor interests (outdoor recreational activities, antiques, farming, etc.) In addition Barrington's unique location between Providence and Newport make it an ideal location for visitors. The addition of B&Bs would allow the Town to benefit from increased revenue. Currently Barrington is one of the only municipalities in the state to receive no room tax revenue. Tourists generally also spend money on food and beverages. While this revenue source has grown in recent years, further improvement of the business district along with the inclusion of B&Bs should result in additional meal tax revenue for the Town. Another potential benefit of allowing B&Bs is historic preservation. By allowing the creation of income-producing properties, B&B zoning could help to preserve some of the larger historic structures.

Town regulations should try to address neighborhood concerns and at the same time provide regulations that do not unduly hamper or discourage the formation of potentially important local businesses.

Some localities have B&B classifications. The most common are: the B&B home (the smallest establishments of two or fewer guest bedrooms), the B&B inn, and the B&B hotel. **Figure 2** is an example of inclusion of a classification of a B&B in a use table.

- *B & B Home (limited to 1-2 guests).* Zoning for a home is usually not a problem because owner/operators have a minimal investment, generate a small income, and attract little community attention. Lodging in a B&B home is a personal matter between the guest and the host.
- *B & B Inn.* The B&B inn, or mid-sized operation, may be situated in a private home maintained by an on-premise owner; yet they are, to a degree, small home-based businesses. The owners intend to recoup some investment costs and generate income and profits. They may see a B&B as a way to maintain and possibly restore an older historic structure. State codes should prevail here.
- *B & B Hotel.* The B&B hotel is generally not a problem because its commercial nature requires that it be located only in areas with more traffic than is characteristic of a residential neighborhood. Also, B&B hotels usually are required to meet all regulations for a food and lodging operation.

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### Defining the "Village Center" Need for Improved Design Guidelines

In recent years, the addition of sidewalks, streetlights, curbing, bus shelters and other improvements on County Road have helped improve pedestrian circulation. The reconfiguration of the Barrington Shopping Center also was a major milestone in providing a visually appealing and walkable commercial center. Infill projects such as the new TD Bank —on an old auto dealership lot and the Coastal Commons mixed-use buildings at Anoka and Wood Avenues—all buildings built close to the sidewalk edge — have also improved the visual appeal and pedestrian-friendliness of the area.

The Zoning Ordinance and Village Guidelines (drafted in the mid-1990s to support the objectives of the Zoning Ordinance's design review standards) have helped to promote more pedestrian-friendly projects. The Zoning Ordinance, however, is most effective as a tool to discourage development the Town does not want—such as buildings with large parking lots in front.

Standards could be written to more explicitly encourage quality design in keeping with the Town's vision for a "town-village center." For example, illustrated design guidelines is a common tool used to clearly state the Town's objectives for building and site design, such as building scale and orientation to the street, signage and awnings, site circulation, landscaping and public amenities (benches, street lights, bike racks). Other strategies are available, including form-based zoning that stresses design over use.

### Promoting the Local Economy

As discussed previously, the employment figures for Barrington show an overall decline of 142 jobs within town from 2006 to 2012 (see Table 4 on Page \_\_\_\_). This period includes the recession of 2007-2009, when unemployment in Rhode Island topped 10 percent. The 2012 job numbers show a rebound in private sector employment in town in the three years after 2009, though those gains were

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offset by a loss in government jobs.

The health care sector has seen the largest growth in employment—increasing by 150 jobs, or 33 percent, from 2006 to 2012. Sectors where employment declined by 25 percent or more during this period include retail (a loss of 98 local jobs), construction (83), wholesale trade (38) and manufacturing (34).

Organizations such as the Barrington Business Association have worked to promote businesses in town, such as through new banners on the decorative light poles on County Road and Maple Avenue. Efforts to improve the aesthetics, infrastructure and signage within the Village Center could help attract additional commercial development as well as draw more people to the area.

Additional steps to strengthen the retail and the accommodation/food services sectors—critical for promoting a walkable retail environment—will require further study, including working and/or consulting with the Business Association, the East Bay Chamber of Commerce and other similar organizations and agencies. An issue that should be evaluated is the potential impact on local businesses of mobile businesses. Food trucks, for example, have been operating in private parking lots and at public events. The Town also has plans to provide space for food trucks at the planned park at “Police Cove” to help attract users to the public space.

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### Evolving Workplace

Changes in the way Americans work and conduct business since the 1990s have been significant. Professional & Technical Services and General Services are the two leading private employment sectors (followed by Construction, Wholesale Trade and Health Care) and make up 30% of all private sector employment.

The rise in telecommuting and knowledge and service based industries require that Barrington refocus its economic development activities to encourage services and activities that support these populations. As the town’s population ages, the number that work part-time or in a consulting capacity will only increase. People working from home not only need services, but a sense of community to support their activities. Town and neighborhood centers can support gathering places that can allow for networking and ease the isolation of working from home.

In Barrington, the percentage of workers working from home is nearly double the percentage for all of Rhode Island. In 2000, approximately 355 people worked from home in Barrington, or 4.5 percent of the total workforce (7,805). This represents a 70 percent increase in home-based workers in town. Statewide, the change was less dramatic. In 2000, 2.2 percent of all workers worked from home, compared to 2.1 percent in 1990. The growth in home-based workers in Barrington is consistent with nationwide trends. According to the Census Bureau, 4.2 million people worked at home in 2000, up from 3.4 million in 1990; the 23 percent increase was about double the increase in workforce nationwide.

### **Infrastructure**

The 2010 Comprehensive Plan identified multiple issues limiting the potential commercial vitality of the Village Center within the blocks adjacent to County Road, including:

- Lack of on-street parking for customers.
- No off-street public parking lots.

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- ~~• Poor sidewalk connectivity.~~
- ~~• Use of public sidewalk areas (on Maple Avenue specifically) for parking vehicles and other pedestrian obstructions.~~
- ~~• Lack of directional signage.~~
- ~~• No crosswalks outside of County Road.~~

~~The 2010 Plan emphasized the need to focus on first improving the retail environment on commercially zoned areas on Maple and Waseca Avenues closest to County Road. The streetscape enhancements would include new and rebuilt sidewalks and curbing, crosswalks, street trees, lighting, street furniture and improved drainage.~~

~~In 2013, the Town hired a consultant to develop streetscape and wayfinding signage concepts in a "Village Center Connectivity Study." The project, initiated by the Planning Board as part of the Comprehensive Plan implementation, also explored options to provide a vehicular connection between Wood Avenue and the Shopping Center. The cost estimate for completing the entire plan totaled more than \$1.5 million. (These concepts are discussed in greater detail in the Circulation element.)~~

### **Bay Spring Avenue - Zoning**

Bay Spring Avenue is a densely developed mixed-use area in West Barrington. The street, from Washington Road to Narragansett Avenue, has been the focal point of some of the largest development projects in Barrington. These include the conversion of the Pilling Chain Mill in 1996 from an industrial use to 60 senior apartments (Barrington Cove Apartments); the redevelopment of the R.I. Lace Works site at Bay Spring Avenue and Narragansett Avenue into a 126-bed assisted living facility; and the development of Sweetbriar—the 50-unit affordable housing development—was built in 2010 on what was the largest remaining vacant commercially zoned parcel in the area.

~~The two largest vacant parcels on Bay Spring Avenue, both have significant development constraints, including coastal zone setbacks. The two sites are:~~

- ~~• A 5.5-acre vacant parcel to the south of Bay Spring Avenue, of which a portion is zoned Residence 10 and the remainder Limited Manufacturing. This site abuts Allin's Cove, which represents a constraint limiting the potential development intensity that could be permitted. **Figure 1** shows a portion of the property on Allin's Cove.~~
- ~~• A 5-acre vacant, former mill site on O'Bannon's Pond, to the north of Bay Spring Avenue, zoned Business. A portion of the site includes the pond. A rambling wooden mill building that once occupied the site was destroyed by fire in the early 1990s.~~

Bay Spring Avenue features a mix of uses from Washington Road to Narragansett Avenue – including two vacant parcels previously cited – the Business-zoned site north of Bay Spring Avenue east of the bike path, and the parcel south of the street abutting Allin's Cove, zoned Limited Manufacturing and Residence 10. Within the Residence 10 zone on Bay Spring Avenue, west of the bike path to Narragansett Avenue, there are several legal nonconforming commercial uses, including an auto repair garage and a commercial building at Lake Avenue. Further study is needed regarding an issue identified by the Planning Board, specifically the potential to allow for a mix of small-scale,

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neighborhood-oriented uses and different types of housing in Bay Spring.

### **Industrial Zoning Limited Manufacturing Zone—Status**

Another question is the future use of the Limited Manufacturing-zoned parcels on Allin's Cove, the last area in Barrington zoned for industrial use. Two of the three parcels in the LM zone have non-industrial uses: a house on a 19,800-square-foot parcel on Bay Spring Avenue, and a portion of a cemetery to the immediate west of the house. As mentioned previously, the vacant 242,000-square-foot industrial-zoned parcel on Allin's Cove, about a third of which is zoned Residence 10, cannot be fully developed due to coastal setback requirements and possibly other constraints.

The Zoning Ordinance permits a wide range of uses within the LM zone, including offices, restaurants, and boatyards. Housing and retail are two uses not permitted within the LM zone. However, the Zoning Ordinance allows for the creation of an Elderly Housing district in the LM zone, which was done to permit the development of the Barrington Cove Apartments and the Bay Spring Assisted Living facility. Conversion of the property on Allin's Cove to Elderly Housing would eliminate the last vestige of Light Manufacturing zoning in town.

### **Evolving Workplace**

~~Changes in the way Americans work and conduct business since the 1990s have been significant. Professional & Technical Services and General Services are the two leading private employment sectors (followed by Construction, Wholesale Trade and Health Care) and make up 30% of all private sector employment.~~

~~The rise in telecommuting and knowledge and service based industries require that Barrington refocus its economic development activities to encourage services and activities that support these populations. As the town's population ages, the number that work part time or in a consulting capacity will only increase. People working from home not only need services, but a sense of community to support their activities. Town and neighborhood centers can support gathering places that can allow for networking and ease the isolation of working from home.~~

~~In Barrington, the percentage of workers working from home is nearly double the percentage for all of Rhode Island. In 2000, approximately 355 people worked from home in Barrington, or 4.5 percent of the total workforce (7,895). This represents a 70 percent increase in home based workers in town. Statewide, the change was less dramatic. In 2000, 2.2 percent of all workers worked from home, compared to 2.1 percent in 1990. The growth in home based workers in Barrington is consistent with nationwide trends. According to the Census Bureau, 4.2 million people worked at home in 2000, up from 3.4 million in 1990; the 23 percent increase was about double the increase in workforce nationwide.~~

### **Tourism**

~~As a value added marketing opportunity, tourism is considered increasingly important to community economic health and diversification. Tourism is recognized as a leading industry in Rhode Island and holds potential for Barrington. Development of tourism within the town will provide additional support for local business.~~

- B&Bs can play a major role in encouraging and promoting tourism. In smaller communities the B&B approach is an important part of the tourism strategy.

- B&Bs are small and flexible enough to gear their facilities to specific visitor interests (outdoor recreational activities, antiques, farming, etc.) In addition Barrington's unique location between Providence and Newport make it an ideal location for visitors.

- Currently Barrington is one of the only towns in the state to receive no room tax revenue. The addition of B&Bs will allow the Town to benefit from increased revenue. Tourists generally also spend money on food and beverage. While this revenue source has grown in recent years, further improvement of the business district along with the inclusion of B&Bs should result in additional meal tax revenue for the Town of Barrington.

B & B zoning could help to preserve some of the historic properties in Barrington, for example the two oldest town properties: (currently for sale and in danger of being torn down) Peck House on Wampanoag Trail and Martin House, Martin Avenue). Town regulations should try to address neighborhood concerns and at the same time provide regulations that do not unduly hamper or discourage the formation of potentially important local businesses.

Some localities have B&B classifications. The most common are: the B&B home (the smallest establishments of two or fewer guest bedrooms), the B&B inn, and the B&B hotel. **Figure 2** is an example of inclusion of a classification of a B&B in a use table.

#### B & B Home (limited to 1-2 guests)

Zoning for a home is usually not a problem because owner/operators have a minimal investment, generate a small income, and attract little community attention. Lodging in a B&B home is a personal matter between the guest and the host. B & B zoning could help to preserve some of the historic properties in Barrington, for example the two oldest town properties: (currently for sale and in danger of being torn down) Peck House on Wampanoag Trail and Martin House, Martin Avenue).

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#### B & B Inn

The B&B inn, or mid-sized operation, may be situated in a private home maintained by an on-premise owner; yet they are, to a degree, small home-based businesses. The owners intend to recoup some investment costs and generate income and profits. They may see a B&B as a way to maintain and possibly restore an older historic structure. State codes should prevail here.

#### B&B Hotel

The B&B hotel is generally not a problem because its commercial nature requires that it be located only in areas zoned for more traffic than is characteristic of a residential neighborhood. Also, B&B hotels usually are required to meet all regulations for a food and lodging operation. Zoning for bed and breakfast uses may entail simply adding them to a zoning district, or it could include quite a list of regulations. The rising popularity of B&Bs is a real boon to small towns.

### Supporting AgricultureLocal Farms

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Town leases at Nockum Hill ~~and Vitullo Farm~~ have helped maintain a farming presence in ~~Barrington town~~. The farms preserve community character in rural ~~parts of Barrington areas~~, helping limit the spread of development to the outskirts of town. ~~T~~, their viability also brings additional benefits supported by the burgeoning “local foods” movement. Specifically, the farm products produced and sold locally provides an alternative to purchasing food that often is shipped long distances. In short, local farms promote a more sustainable community.

~~In recent decades, agriculture has comprised a small, and shrinking, share of the labor force in Barrington. According to the Census Bureau, employment in the agriculture sector in the period of 1982 to 2009 has fluctuated in the range of 25 to 33; overall, the share of the total labor force has declined from about 1.4 percent in the 1980s to just 0.3 percent in 2009. The data do not specify where those employed in the agricultural sector work, but in Barrington, there is only one area with active farms remaining: the George Street area.~~

~~Farms on George Street include Dane Farm—a horse farm—and farm fields cultivated by Four-Town Farm based next door in Seekonk (see Figure 3). The Town has partnered with Four-Town Farm with the goal of maintaining farmland in active production—leasing 40 acres in Nockum Hill, and acquiring development rights from Four-Town to ensure additional acreage remains in agricultural use.~~

Extending the agricultural leases allowing farming on Town land at these locations in the George Street area is a matter of ~~Town~~ policy. There is greater uncertainty as to the long-term viability of farming on private property, in particular in the northeast corner of Barrington near 4-Town Farm, an area that lacks city water and sewer. However, pressure to develop housing in this area, utilizing well water and septic tanks, will grow as the remaining “in-town” land-parcels fill in with development.

To preserve the rural agricultural character of the area, the Town in 2012 changed the Residence 40 zoning on George Street—a zone for single-family houses with 40,000-square-foot lot minimums—to R40-Conservation Development. The R40-CD zone allows for smaller lot sizes in exchange for permanent protection of critical open space areas—including agricultural landscape features, land in farm production, environmentally sensitive areas and other factors.

The R40-CD zone has some limitations in reducing development pressure, as it does not reduce overall density in the area, allowing for the same net density as the R40 conventional zoning. In addition, the zone does not preclude a developer from submitting a comprehensive permit application seeking density increases and housing types, such as townhouses and multi-family developments, that are not in keeping with rural character.

Increased residential development is a threat to the continued viability of farming in Barrington. Farm operations create dust and noise that could impact nearby residences—a concern that would only mount should more George Street parcels be converted to housing, especially relatively dense housing. The spread of development also would likely drive up land values, putting pressure on owners of large lots in the area to subdivide or sell to developers.

The Town has taken steps to create opportunities for agriculture, though on a limited scale. In 2014, the volunteers worked with the Town to begin in the process of establishing community gardens on

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the former “Vitulo Farm” property on Wampanoag Trail. The Town was examining the potential to designate two areas as leased farmland, for use by an organic farm or an orchard. The Town has also permitted farmer’s markets in recent years through the special use permit process. The market at the Congregational Church on County Road at Massasoit Avenue, established with the past five years, attracts a variety of vendors. The new kitchen incubator in Warren, Hope & Main, could increase the demand for farmer’s markets in Barrington.

## Goals, Objectives, Policies and Actions

**Goal ED-1:** Continue shift from an auto-dependent, suburban shopping center form of development toward walkable retail zones in the Village Center and neighborhood business districts.

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**Policy ED-1.1.1:** Support “walkable retail” development in the commercial/mixed-use zones.

**Policy ED-1.1.2:** Invest in infrastructure needed to incentivize businesses to locate in the Business and Neighborhood Business zones.

**Policy ED-1.1.3:** Promote well-designed, compatible mixed-use and commercial development, enhancing public spaces and expanding multi-modal access.

### Actions

- A. Implement recommendations of the 2014 Connectivity Plan to create a user-friendly commercial district with new directional signage, crosswalks and other enhancements.
- B. Extend wayfinding signage and streetscape concepts to commercial districts outside the Village Center.
- ~~C. Support efforts of the Barrington Business Association to promote the district through a banner system, maps and other “marketing” activities.~~
- ~~D. Develop illustrated guidelines for projects in the Business and Neighborhood Business zones to ensure consistent, pedestrian friendly development and streetscape.~~
- E.C. Adopt revisions to Land Development & Subdivision Regulations to add design guidelines to review process.

**Goal ED-2:** ~~Better manage parking in commercial areas to support economic development and to make these districts more attractive places to visit and shop.~~  
Expand public parking within the Village Center.

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**Objective ED-2.1:** ~~Establish Secure~~ 30 to 40 additional on- and off-street public parking spaces within the Village Center by 2020.

**Policy ED-2.1.1.** Provide public parking in strategic locations within commercial areas and explore creative strategies to balance need for off-street parking and a walkable retail environment.

**Policy ED-2.1.2.** Support parking management policies that encourage drivers to “park once” in

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the village areas, reducing short trips between stores and to reduce traffic activity in downtown.

**Policy ED-2.1.32.** Limit encroachment of on-street parking for businesses into residential zones.  
**Actions**

A. A. Conduct a parking study for the Village Center that includes an inventory of existing parking and provides recommendations on the following:

- Managing existing on and off-street parking and improving the effectiveness of the Town's existing shared parking options to make better use of existing parking capacity.
- Identifying new sites for public parking, both on-street and off-street.
- Establishing a funding mechanism to finance public parking lot site acquisition, development and operations.
- Establishing incentives (e.g. public snow removal, etc.) to private lot owners willing to accommodate public use.
- Establishing a menu of potential parking-in-lieu options such as provision of bicycle facilities or payment into a public parking fund, to allow developers to opt out of providing a portion of the required off-street parking.
- Modifying parking requirements in the Zoning Ordinance to regulate maximum as well as minimum number of parking spaces, and to encourage shared parking where differences in peak hour demand allows.

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B. B. Highlight on-street parking in desired locations using painted markings and signage to outline spaces.

C. C. Direct the Town Manager to negotiate with private owners and develop public/private partnerships to allow "public" parking in private downtown lots to encourage visitors to park once and walk in downtown area. If negotiation is unsuccessful, determine if potential purchase of lots would be feasible (e.g. underutilized private lots along Maple Avenue).

D. D. Update village center signage and mapping to direct drivers to new "public" parking lots to "park once" for local shopping trips. [See also Circulation Goal C-2, Action A]

E. E. Develop criteria and Town-wide policy regulating establishment of on-street parking on residential streets and in commercial/mixed use areas.

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~~A. Conduct a parking study for the Village Center that includes recommendations on:~~

- ~~• Sites and strategies for establishing public parking lots and on-street parking and utilizing shared parking within the commercially zoned portions of Maple Avenue and County Road and adjacent streets~~
- ~~• Managing on-street and off-street spaces.~~
- ~~• Establishing shared parking options to meet off-street parking requirements and to eliminate curb cuts and improve safety on Maple and adjacent streets in the Business and Neighborhood Business zones.~~
- ~~• Establishing a funding mechanism to finance public parking lot site acquisition, development and operations.~~

~~B. Evaluate potential revisions to the Town's shared parking program necessary to increase utilization of the option.~~

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**Goal ED-3:** Expand the non-residential tax base while preserving community character, with an

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emphasis on infill development and building re-use over expansion of commercial zoning.

**Objective ED-3.1:** Adopt by 2017 zoning and development standards for a broader table of non-residential uses that are compatible with the community.

**Policy ED-3.1.1:** Encourage appropriate neighborhood-scale uses.

#### Actions

~~A.~~ Allow limited non-residential development uses as part of within a “Mixed-Senior Residential Use Village” zone, as recommended for the Zion Bible Institute property, per Developer Guidance (Appendix III); establishment of the new zone is subject to application by the property owner. In establishing the new zoning district, the Town shall include the following:

~~A.~~

~~B.a.~~ Establish zoning and design standards, such as design guidelines or form-based zoning, for promoting a mix of uses in the mixed-use village zone recommended for the former Zion Bible Institute site, of a scale and location that avoids impacting adjacent neighborhoods.

~~B.b.~~ Establish standards requiring non-residential development in Belton Court to respect the historic qualities of the building and grounds.

~~B.~~ Examine development standards for ~~B-Business~~ and ~~N-Neighborhood Business~~ districts in terms of limiting impacts (such as noise, lighting, stormwater runoff) of development on adjacent residential zones.

~~B.c.~~ Evaluate adding bed and breakfast inns as a permitted or special use in residential zones, with standards to include location, parking and related accessory uses.

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**Goal ED-4.** Strengthen the Town's commercial base with a focus on promoting local businesses and economic sustainability.

**Policy 4.1.1.** Work toward productive working relationship between the Town and the local business community.

#### Actions

A. Form a task force consisting of residents and local business owners to:

- Investigate and evaluate strategies for developing a sustainable, locally owned and run economy.
- Provide a supportive community and networking opportunities for the growing number of business people who work either full-time or part-time from their homes.
- Increase awareness of business development opportunities in addition to retail activity.
- Evaluate impacts of and recommend policy related to food trucks and other mobile business activity.

B. Support efforts of the Business Association to promote the district through a banner system, maps and other “marketing” activities.

C. Identify restrictions in the use table and other regulations in Zoning Ordinance that act as barriers

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~~to home-based businesses and necessary support services; revise and/or eliminate regulations that are overly restrictive, while protecting neighborhoods from adverse impacts.~~

~~D. Investigate potential space in public buildings that could help support home-based businesses, such as common use meeting space.~~

~~E. Conduct study of options, such as zoning ordinance amendments, to permit uses that encourage the provision of services and amenities that will support creative and knowledge based businesses and consulting activity, including the expansion of live-work opportunities.~~

~~F. Conduct market study evaluating retail and office environment in the Neighborhood Business and Business zones, including an evaluation of existing commercial space.~~

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**Goal ED-45:** Promote desired commercial activities in mixed-use areas.

**Policy ED-45.1.1:** ~~Revise zoning to achieve~~**Support** economic development objectives in strategic areas, including the Neighborhood Business zone near County Road and on Bay Spring Avenue. Community input will be needed to determine the type of development desired for these areas, if different than existing zoning.

#### **Actions**

A. Evaluate zoning strategies to promote a more cohesive retail environment in the Village Center. This could include creation of a new zoning district, ~~as a modification, modifying of~~ the N~~ighborhood Business~~ or ~~Business~~ zone.

B. Complete a parcel/zoning study of the Bay Spring area to identify options to promote the type of economic development desired by the community in the area. Study should address the following:

- An evaluation of table of uses pertaining to the Light Manufacturing zone, taking into consideration environmental constraints and neighborhood impacts.
- The feasibility of encouraging "live-work" units, where the business operator lives above first-floor office or retail space, in the Bay Spring Avenue area from Narragansett Avenue to Washington Road.

~~C. Revise zoning regulations to encourage economic development by, for example, reducing parking requirements and limiting new single family residential housing in the Neighborhood Business zones.~~

~~**Goal 5.** Strengthen the Town's commercial base with a focus on promoting local businesses and economic sustainability.~~

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~~• **Policy 5.1.1.** Work toward productive working relationship between the Town and the local business community. Provide a supportive community and networking opportunities for the growing number of business people who work either full-time or part-time from their homes.~~

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#### **Actions**

-

~~A. Appoint a task force consisting of residents and local business owners to:~~

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- ~~A. Investigate and evaluate strategies for developing a sustainable, locally owned and run economy;~~
- ~~B. Provide a supportive community and networking opportunities for the growing number of business people who work either full time or part time from their homes. Explore policies that ensure a healthy mix of uses needed for a vibrant town center.~~
- ~~C. Conduct study of options, such as zoning ordinance amendments, to permit uses that encourage the provision of services and amenities that will support creative and knowledge based businesses and consulting activity, including the expansion of live work opportunities.~~
- ~~D. Conduct market study evaluating retail and office environment in the Neighborhood Business and Business zones, including an evaluation of existing commercial space.~~

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Goal **ED-6**: Support agriculture as a vital component of the local economy.

~~Objective 6.1: Expand amount of land used for farming within Barrington.~~

Policy **ED-6.1.1**: Support farming as a use within historically farmed areas of Barrington.

Policy **ED-6.1.2**: Work with community partners to promote local agricultural products.

~~Policy 6.1.3: Support the protection of prime agricultural lands through acquisition of land or development rights.~~

#### Actions

- ~~A. Explore opportunities to acquire open space properties with agricultural values, with an emphasis on properties under greatest threat from development pressure.~~
- ~~B. Establish a program for purchasing or transferring the development rights of prime agricultural lands.~~
- ~~C. Evaluate whether revisions are needed to restrictions in the Zoning Ordinance related to agricultural uses, to include uses such as farms, farm stands and farmer's markets.~~
- ~~D. Revise Zoning Map to establish agricultural zoning districts where appropriate (including George Street (see **Figure 3**), in areas with historic agricultural use, to include performance standards.~~
- ~~E. Develop the community garden at the former Vitullo Farm site.~~
- ~~F. Review and revise local purchasing requirements to require the purchase of local foods when possible.~~
- ~~C. Evaluate Town-owned open space formerly used for farming for opportunities to lease portions to organic farming operations on a limited scale.~~
- ~~D. Continue to develop the community garden at the former Vitullo Farm site.~~
- ~~E. Review and revise local purchasing requirements to require the purchase of regionally produced foods when possible.~~

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