

## GOALS AND POLICIES ELEMENT

### 4.1 Introduction

The Goals and Policies Element seeks to provide a concise statement for all components of the Comprehensive Plan. It is designed to give an overall perspective of the plan organization by functional areas with summaries of goals and policies in each area.

#### 4.1.1 Overall Goal Statement

The Town of Exeter shall remain essentially a low-density residential community, recognizing the community's responsibility, as a steward, to maintain the unique rural identity of the town, its assets and resources.

The Town of Exeter shall try to manage current and future growth and development in a manner that does not adversely affect or detract from Exeter's unique natural, environmental and economical resources, or the general character of the Town. These assets enhance the quality of life for town residents and are vitally important to the social, economic and environmental well being of the town.

### 4.2 Economic Development

#### 4.2.1 Goal

Promote economic diversification that contributes to the tax base and creates jobs in areas that are accessible, appropriate from an environmental stand point, and whose location and design will not detract from the rural character of the Town; to preserve and enhance unique Town features that could support a recreational/agriculturaly based economy.

#### 4.2.2 Policies

1. Provide for small-scaled, architecturally sensitive, landscaped shopping areas consistent with Exeter's rural town character, with adequate off-street parking and loading areas.
2. Inventory and analyze the existing economic development in Town to determine the character and extent of the economic base and its potential for expansion.
3. Inventory and analyze potential sites for new economic development and for structures having economic reuse potential.

4. Protect, promote and support the Town's agricultural and recreational base.
5. Investigate and implement alternatives to strip commercial developments.
6. Create commercial centers to provide concentrated areas of services in appropriate parts of Town.
7. Encourage the adoption of a "Planned Unit Development Ordinance" that would allow mixed-use developments in acceptable locations.
8. The Town should actively support re-use by the private sector of the Ladd Center facility, provided the proposed re-use is of economic and environmental benefit to the Town.
9. Promote and coordinate economic development opportunities at the state, regional and local level, utilizing the Exeter Economic Development Commission and other related Town bodies, in order to attract desirable businesses to Exeter.
10. Encourage the formation of an Exeter Chamber of Commerce to foster support and cooperation among businesses.

### **4.3 Land Use**

#### **4.3.1 Goal**

To allow development that is consistent with the natural constraints of the land; can be effectively supported by town services, without placing an undue burden on the residential taxpayer, and; insures the development of planned, rural-village centers and industrial uses that are consistent with the character of the Town of Exeter, while contributing to positive tax base diversification.

#### **4.3.2 Policies**

1. Allow future residential development at a scale and density that is consistent with the character of western Exeter, and relates to the constraints existing in eastern Exeter.
2. Support the development of planned "Village Centers" that cluster services and other ancillary uses in locations convenient to the general

population of the town. Such centers should be developed in accordance with an approved development plan that provides details concerning building layout, site design, circulation, environmental constraints, etc.

3. Support efforts to redirect business growth to proposed village centers.
4. Promote the development of environmentally appropriate industrial uses along the I-95 corridor area where access to the interstate and other major roadway systems is convenient and available.
5. Investigate future re-zoning of the industrial land over the Chipuxet Aquifer to low-density residential use.
6. Promote the use of conservation development techniques to preserve open space and other natural features.
7. Adopt a Growth Management Ordinance, based on the report in Appendix A, to insure that residential growth can proceed equitably and fairly in a manner that does not outpace the Town's ability to provide required services, particularly education.

## **4.4 Housing**

### **4.4.1 Goal**

Investigate and evaluate current housing stock and future housing needs in order to balance housing, and encourage the development of housing, that will blend with the rural and agricultural character of the Town. Coordinate housing policies with Town services and facilities.

### **4.4.2 Policies**

1. Promote and if feasible adopt ordinances providing for conservation development as a means to address environmental constraints, preservation of open spaces, land use management and circulation improvements and a range of housing choices in new residential development.
2. Support development Plan Review Ordinance to review development proposals for consistency with specific standards according to input from all related commissions, organizations, and individuals.

3. Actively promote the maintenance of existing housing stock through rehabilitation programs available via grants and other available public and private funds.
4. Support efforts to create special needs and senior citizen housing alternatives.
5. Consider zoning alternatives to expand affordable housing stock. Such alternatives could include, but are not limited to the following:
  - Allowing accessory apartments by right
  - Adopt inclusionary zoning provisions
  - Allow duplex development as a special exception
6. Consider and, if feasible, adopt a PUD (Planned Unit Development) Zoning Ordinance that allows for a mix of uses.
7. Support the creation of a Housing Land Trust or Housing Board to promote the expansion of affordable housing opportunities in Exeter.
8. Recognize mobile homes as an affordable housing alternative, and work to provide rehabilitation assistance where required.
9. Assist rental property tenants who may wish to investigate ownership options and work with the South County Community Action Program and the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation (RIHMFC) on initiatives.

## **4.5 Facilities and Services**

### **4.5.1 Goal**

Develop a master management plan for all existing public facilities and services, mapped where appropriate. This management plan should include all publicly operated facilities and services plus quasi-public and private facilities that provide services to the general public. Facilities and Service to be included in the management plan are:

- Public elementary and secondary schools-
- Police, fire and rescue services, i.e. public safety-
- Library services

- Public Highways, including roadway maintenance;
- Solid Waste Management
- Municipal office functions;
- Animal Shelter
- Transfer Station
- Parks & Ball Fields/Courts

#### 4.5.2 General Policies

A general analysis of the effectiveness of each such facility and service, noting any deficiencies in quality of services provided.

A forecast of current and future needs for such facilities and services, based largely upon projections of land usage and population change utilized in the other plan elements. The forecast should be based upon generally accepted standards of need or on standards developed by the town for this purpose and must be in conformity with local goals and policies established to govern the provision of such facilities and services.

A program that will schedule actions designed to accomplish the recommendations presented.

#### 4.5.3 Education Policies

1. With sufficient means the Town will strive to meet the future demands for educational space, in the most cost effective way possible.
2. Continue to provide the highest quality of education possible to all residents in the district, as education is not limited to K-12 grade students.
3. The Town will *mindfully* plan for the future needs of the school population on a regular and on-going basis.
4. Develop, and update upon need, a “Strategic Plan” to guide the future direction of the Exeter/West Greenwich School System. The plan should include the following elements:
  - Appointment of “Steering Committee”
  - Comprehensive Needs Assessment
  - Goal Setting
  - Development of a Plan of Action
  - Implementation Plan

- Evaluation Schedule

#### 4.5.4 Public Safety Policies

1. Continue to support cost-effective efforts of our Volunteer Fire Companies to provide the best possible service to the town.
2. Ensure that the town, its residents, business and industry are afforded the best public safety services possible.
3. Encourage innovative approaches to the provision of improved fire and police services.
4. Support the creation a full-time or part-time position for a 911 Coordinator who would evaluate and update Exeter's 911 system and ordinance.
5. Continue support of both the Exeter Emergency Dispatch and Exeter Rescue.
6. Require the installation of water storage facilities where access to water is difficult. Also, require the provision of easements in subdivisions to provide permanent access to water sources. Require developers to install Dry Hydrants to fire company specifications.
7. Encourage the expansion of Neighborhood Crime Watch Program.
8. Explore the need for a Town operated or regional animal control facility and related ordinances. **DONE**

#### 4.5.5 Public Library Policies

1. Improve library services and facilities as cultural assets to the community and recognize the current and future needs of the community when assessing expansion of facilities.
2. Assess the need to modernize and improve library services being provided by the Manton Free Public Library. **GONE**
3. Explore the possibilities of forming a regional library exchange or trust with adjacent communities.

#### 4.5.6 Highway Department Policies

1. Work to improve local roads and drainage in a systematic manner throughout the town by coordinating with the RIDOT to ensure the best results with respect to state funded projects.
2. Establish and maintain a “Pavement Management Program” that prioritizes and schedules roadway/drainage improvements according to an established set of criteria.
3. Evaluate alternatives to current road maintenance practices to determine the feasibility of improving maintenance on a system-wide basis.
4. Assess the viability of adopting an "Impact Fee" for new developments to help support the need to improve existing roads servicing new developments.

#### 4.5.7 Solid Waste Management Policies

1. Continue to provide a clean, well run solid waste management facility for town residents.
2. Support preparation a long-range solid waste management plan for the community. The Solid Waste Management Plan should be reviewed on an annual basis.
3. Investigate innovate waste management and reduction techniques including expanding the volunteer recycling program and composting to reduce disposal costs and overages.

#### 4.5.8 Municipal Facilities Policies

1. Promote and develop Town Hall as a “town center” that enhances and complements the character of the town, provides adequate facilities for the effective management of town business, and is convenient for all town residents.
2. Consider expansion flexibility when designing all new Town facilities.

3. Continue to identify and secure sites that could function as potential water sources for a town operated water system. Control, through purchase, lease or other means the future development of these sites.
4. Support development of a long-range water/wastewater management program for the town that ensures the protection of the town's water supply, while evaluating alternatives relative to the future sources of this resource and their long-term protection. The plan should include:
  - Analysis of special districts such as Wastewater Management and Well Head Protection areas.
  - Local regulatory controls or mechanisms option designed to enhance or exceed current state controls in terms of water supply (aquifer) protection.
  - Project the future needs/demands for water and wastewater services and provide means to meet those needs.
  - Determination of areas to be served by systems in terms of their priority with respect to environmental protection.
  - Public education programs promoting the importance of maintaining sewage disposal systems.

## 4.6 Natural and Cultural Resources

### 4.6.1 Goal

Effective Natural and Cultural Resources protection starts with a complete study of the Town's inventory and the development of strategies with respect to such resources. The inventory must include all resource areas that are considered to have significance to both the natural and human environment such as:

- Surface Water Systems
- Groundwater Systems
- Wetlands
- Vernal Pools
- Soils
- Flood Plains
- Flora/Fauna
- Historic Sites & Structures
- Historic Cemeteries

### 4.6.2 Policies

1. Support basing future land use decisions and zoning on physical and environmental constraints, including hydric soils, wetlands, groundwater aquifers and recharge areas etc.



2. Investigate innovative land use techniques to avoid or minimize development impacts to natural resources, such as requirements to reduce impervious surfaces while retaining more natural vegetation.
3. Support the adoption of a groundwater protection ordinance, which limits/prohibits land uses with a potential to contaminate or pollute surface or groundwater.
4. Require septic system maintenance programs in areas where septic system failures could adversely impact on surface or groundwater resources.
5. Require vegetative buffers from all surface water bodies and wetlands to protect water quality and wildlife habitat.
6. Educate and encourage users of hazardous materials and pollutants to use and dispose of these materials properly while utilizing the best management practices to decrease risk of contamination.
7. Town Council should appoint and support a Historic Preservation Commission to ensure that significant historic resources are fully protected and maintained. The Commission would concentrate on preservation efforts including the development of grant applications.
8. Consider adding a Historic Overlay District to the Town's Zoning Ordinance and or the right to designate individual buildings or sites, which are determined to be of historic value.
9. Include a Historic Pathway through the Town as an educational and recreational resource tied into a Town bicycle/pedestrian path, and inventory all roads in Exeter for designation and protection as scenic highways.
10. Inventory historic records and store them in a climate-controlled location.
11. Encourage the appropriate re-use of historic structures in accordance with the zoning district where they are located through preservation or rehabilitation.

12. Support educational efforts, which focus on the natural and cultural resources of the Town, including, but not limited, to Exeter history, past and present cultural events, environmental issues.
13. Petition the RIDOT to have Route 102 and Route 165 designated as "Scenic Highways."
14. Establish environmental protection ordinances to protect the town's aquifer system, high water table areas, prime farmlands, historic resources, prevent soil erosion associated with land removal or development, while preserving as many natural features as possible.
15. Create a network of open spaces and greenways in the Town based on Map 5.7.A, Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Areas. Implement the preservation of open spaces identified on this Map by adopting zoning and subdivision amendments that provide for conservation development techniques.

## **4.7 Circulation**

### **4.7.1 Goal**

To provide adequate traffic circulation within the Town of Exeter and adjunct to the community; to integrate new development, both commercial and residential, into the existing circulation patterns; coordinate all road design, construction, maintenance, and drainage in a systematic, environmentally appropriate, and cost effective manner.

### **4.7.2 Policies**

1. Develop evaluation criteria and implement a systematic "Roadway Management Program" utilizing a relevant database to classify roadway condition and drainage problems, in order to develop town-wide priorities for maintenance and repair.
2. Subdivision, local street, collector, and highway designs should be in accordance with reasonable standards, with respect to pavement widths and other design considerations. The design widths chosen should reflect the rural character of the Town (22ft. wide pavement suggested).
3. Petition the RIDOT to have needed road and bridge maintenance scheduled through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Comprehensive Bridge Improvement Plan.

4. Support the establishment of Park and Ride areas, for example, Rt. 3 and 102 (south/west side).
5. Work with RIDOT, RIPTA, and adjacent communities to increase public transit options and to expand public transit service.
6. Conduct feasibility study on the benefits of "Impact Fees." If feasible the revenue generated by such fees would assist the Town financially in the upgrade of public infrastructure, commensurate with new growth.
7. Develop a circulation priority plan identifying possible links between adjacent subdivisions and identify areas that need improvement. Support the incorporation of specific evaluation criteria into the circulation plan and review plan on an *as need* basis.

## **4.8 Open Space & Recreation**

### 4.8.1 Goal

The Town of Exeter will take responsibly for providing adequate recreation facilities and open space resources to its citizens, and protect, conserve and develop these resources through local action and programs. The Recreational and Open Space polices will facilitate the meeting of this responsibility by the Town.

### 4.8.2 Policies

1. Encourage imaginative alternatives, including but not limited to the purchase of easements, tax deferments, regulatory devices, in conjunction with outright acquisition of land to supplement the supply of outdoor recreation opportunities.
2. Develop special provisions to be included in the Town's Subdivision Regulations enabling the Town to reserve suitable open space for recreation and conservation purposes within large-scale subdivisions.
3. Acquire easements where full rights to land are not necessary to realize the desired recreation or conservation goal. Some of the more important easements to be considered are: scenic easements, access easements for hiking, fishing, etc.; and conservation easements to protect wetlands, streams, water bodies and ground water resources.

4. Encourage desirable gifts of land and money from private individuals and organizations for recreation and conservation purposes.
5. Encourage the Conservation Commission to establish greenbelt areas as connections between open space lands to form a continuous path or nature trail system and work to preserve the open space "Greenbelts" as a means to protect residential environments from conflicting land uses.
6. Encourage and support private organizations in their work of supplying and enhancing recreation opportunities and in providing for the conservation and preservation of open space resources for all age groups.
7. Establish a sound and continuous Capital Improvement Program to efficiently allocate funds for orderly acquisition and development or recreation facilities and open space resources according to the priority needs of the Town and in a manner to take advantage of Federal and State matching programs.
8. Encourage the State Department of Environmental Management to continue to expand the Arcadia Management Area and to offer additional recreation opportunities.
9. Encourage the establishment of land trusts to help preserve sensitive natural areas and open space, including prime farmland.
10. Coordinate the Town's Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Plan with the State Land Use Plan and policies and the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan to prevent and avoid duplication of services, efforts and costs and take full advantage of those programs designed to aid the community.
11. Establish incentives to encourage the continued use of prime farmland for agricultural purposes.
12. Develop a master plan for a bikeway/nature trail system for the Town to connect local and regional recreational facilities parks, and unique natural areas, utilizing existing right-of-ways where possible while coordinating these designs with appropriate State agencies and adjacent communities.

13. Encouraged walking paths in all subdivisions, where appropriate and in a manner that they become paths as opposed to a structural sidewalk system.
14. Consider the establishment of a Recreation Commission and provide sufficient financial resources and direction to:
  - Organize the community for year-round recreation geared to the Town's needs.
  - Operate activities on property under public or private jurisdiction in conjunction with regular public activities.
  - Expand and maintain ~~recreation~~ recreational facilities.
  - Facilitate coordination and cooperation with the school department.