

## CHAPTER 2 LAND USE

### 2.1 Introduction

Little Compton is a unique representation of the typical New England seaside town, and is generally characterized as a rural community. The sum of its many parts -- the Commons and village of Adamsville, the farmland, the seasonal shorefront houses, and the unparalleled shoreline environment -- equals a landscape unlike any other in Rhode Island.

Development in Little Compton is relatively homogeneous. Single family residences on large lots dominate the landscape, interspersed with sizable areas of agriculture, forested areas and wetlands. The shorefront areas are somewhat more diverse than inland areas, ranging in intensity of use from conservation land to large acreage residential estate development to the high density cottage development at Briggs Beach. Large areas of agricultural lands are located throughout the Town, primarily west of Long Highway. Active farms range in size and complexity, including small family farms to a large commercial vineyard. There is no intensive commercial or industrial development. The village of Adamsville and the Commons form the Town's main commercial areas and the center of Town government. Figure 2-1 shows existing land use in the Town.

The primary factors which govern land use in Little Compton include:

- Complete community reliance on groundwater for drinking water supply.
- Environmental constraints, including substantial wetland area, coastal ponds, flood hazard areas, public drinking water watershed area.
- No public sewer or water service.
- A geographic location which limits accessibility.

A combination of these factors and resident sentiment that the unique rural character of the Town be preserved serves to guide future land use in the community.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Chapter 10, Public Participation and Consistency Requirements, for results of citizen opinion survey.

### 2.1.a Existing Land Use

The Town's total area encompasses 14,850+/- acres, of which 1,024+/- acres are inland open water, 2,200+/- acres are wetland, and the remainder, 11,450+/- acres, is upland area.<sup>2</sup> Of this upland area, approximately 1,700+/- acres are protected recreation, conservation and open space land.<sup>3</sup> One quarter of the land area, about 2,700+/- acres, supports some type of agricultural activity.<sup>4</sup> Agriculture has historically been an important economic activity in the Town.

Approximately 17 percent of the land area supports residential uses (2,500+/- acres), i.e., year round and seasonal single family homes, mobile homes, cottages etc. Commercial and industrial uses in Little Compton are limited. Business and commercial establishments account for approximately 100+/- total acres.

Over 550+/- acres are classified as public/institutional uses, of which 450+/- acres are used for streets and utilities, and the remainder for public buildings, cemeteries, and other public uses. Removing the developed and protected land from the total land area leaves approximately 3,900+/- acres, slightly more than the 3,150+/- acres which has been developed to date (residential, commercial, industrial, public/institutional). Table 2-1 illustrates this finding.

**Table 2-1  
 Land Use Changes, 1974 - 1990**

<b>Land Use Type</b>	<b>1974 Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>Estimated 1990 Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
<i>Dedicated Open Space</i>	396	2.7	4,076	27.4
<i>Inland Water</i>	1,024	6.9	1,024	6.9
Agriculture	2,800	18.9	2,700	18.2
Residence	1,450	9.8	2,500	16.8
Commercial & Industrial	50	0.3	100	0.7
Public & Semi-Public	430	2.9	550	3.7
Land Not in Use	8,700	58.5	3,900	26.3
<b>Total Land Area</b>	<b>14,850</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>14,850</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: Since the land use designations shown on the 1974 "Comprehensive Community Plan" map are schematic, broad estimates of land area are computed for each of the use types.

Sources: Little Compton, Rhode Island Comprehensive Community Plan, Little Compton Planning Board, Little Compton Conservation Commission, 1974, Albert Veri & Associates interpolation, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Rhode Island Basic Economic Statistics, Rhode Island Department of Economic Development, 1989/90, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Includes Town, State, semi-public and privately protected properties.

<sup>4</sup> Not all of this acreage is utilized for traditional farming activities such as raising crops or live stock. Portions of each parcel may be uncultivated but are none the less considered to be part of an active farm

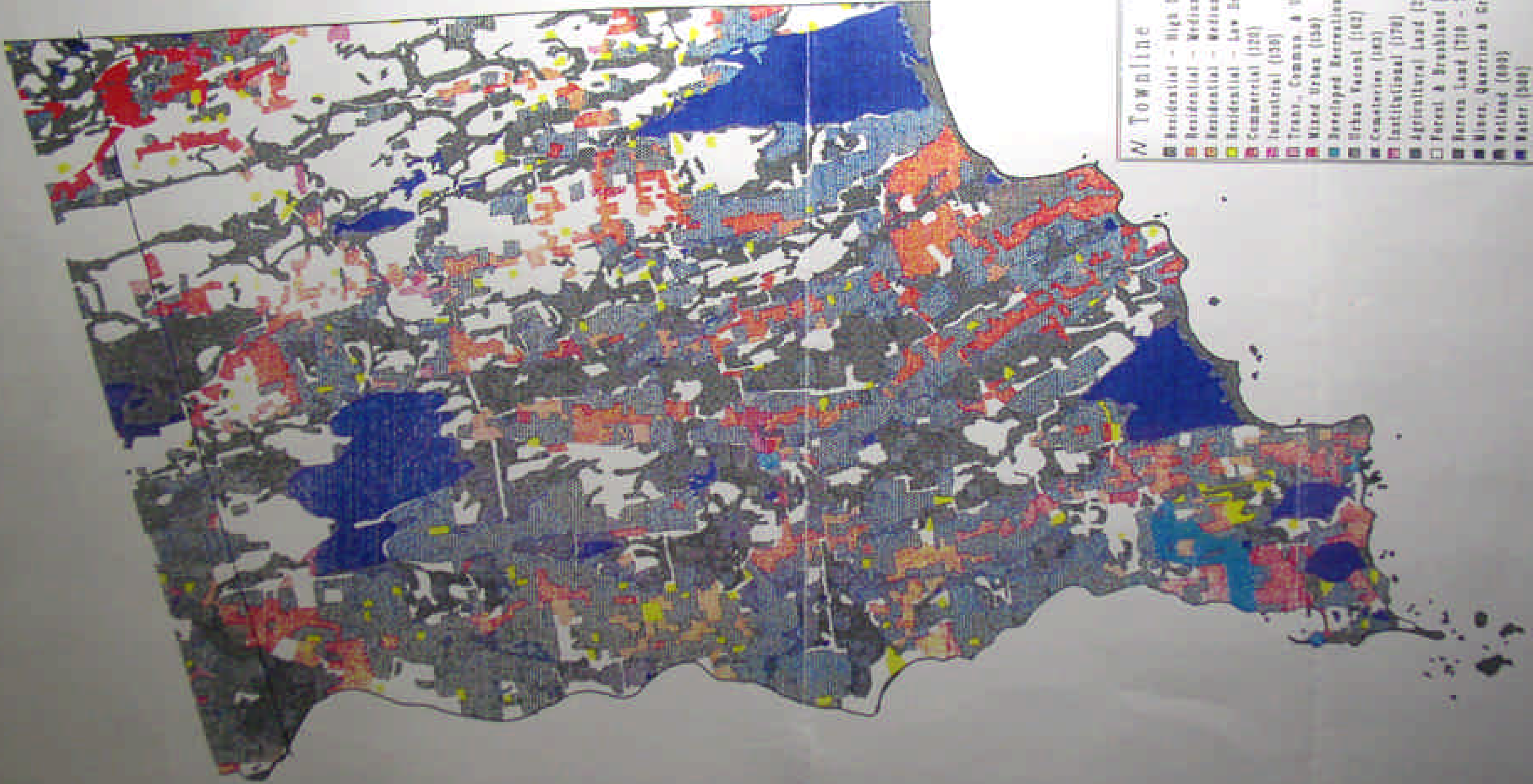
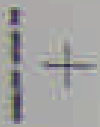
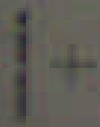


Figure 3-1

# LAND USE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Town of Little Compton, Rhode Island

1/2" = 1/4" MI



## W Townline

- Residential - High Density (110,122)
- Residential - Medium Density (113)
- Residential - Medium Low Density (114)
- Residential - Low Density (115)
- Commercial (120)
- Industrial (120)
- Town, Common, & Mill (161 - 167)
- Mixed Urban (150)
- Developed Recreation (160)
- Urban Vacant (162)
- Cemeteries (163)
- Institutional (170)
- Agricultural Land (210 - 250)
- Forest & Brushland (310 - 400)
- Barren Land (710 - 730, 750, 760)
- River, Quarries & Gravel Pits (740)
- Wetland (800)
- Water (900)

Land use was prepared from 1980 aerial photographs at 1:25,000 scale. The land use data is preliminary and has not been fully reviewed by the RIDES database. All numbers and color coding throughout map are as shown. Refer to the Website Map for more information. The information depicted on this map is subject to change without notice. It may not be subject to legal liability. All numbers are regulatory zone numbers. Copyright © 2000 by the Town of Little Compton, Rhode Island. All Rights Reserved.

## 2.1.b Zoning

Little Compton's existing zoning ordinance, originally enacted in 1968, was amended in its entirety in 1987, and has been periodically amended since then. Agricultural development is allowed anywhere in Town in a residence district. The ordinance separates the Town into three zoning districts, as follows (see Figure 2-2):

- **Residence (R) District** - Approximately 13,650 acres (90+ percent) of the Town is zoned for residential use. Areas within this district are considered suitable for "residential, agricultural and related development" at a density of one single family residence on a lot of two acres, minimum. The minimum lot size relates directly to groundwater supplies having relatively low yields, and community-wide reliance upon individual sewage disposal systems (ISDS). There are no distinctions made between shorefront and inland areas.
- **Business (B) District** - The business zoning district encompasses approximately 90 acres in three areas through the community, Adamsville, the Commons/Meeting House Lane and Sakonnet Point. There is no minimum lot size requirement for a business use within this district, but lots must be of sufficient size to accommodate the required off-street parking and loading area, and a "safe and adequate" water supply and ISDS. The business district in Adamsville supports light retail and office uses, while the district at Sakonnet Point is largely marine-related businesses, a restaurant and residential uses. The Commons business zone includes light retail and office, government and institutional, and recreational uses.
- **Industrial (I) District** - There is one industrial zone in the Town, located on the Tiverton Town boundary, north of Tompkins Lane, west of Long Highway and east of Pachet Brook Road. Most of this zone is currently developed for residential use, with single family homes on two acre+/- lots. The remaining undeveloped area in the zone is largely wetland. Neither public sewer or water is available in this zone, and access is limited. No industrial uses have been identified within other zoning districts in the Town.

The ordinance will need significant modification and amendment to meet the requirements of the State Zoning Enabling Legislation. Existing elements which should be examined for their ability to adequately address present-day zoning concerns include the following:

- Definitions list - expand and revise;
- Re-evaluate the permitted and special exception uses within each district;
- Nonconforming uses - expand and revise;
- Off-street parking and loading requirements - expand and revise, in accordance with revised uses;
- Substandard lots of record - review the combination of two or more substandard lots to form one parcel if necessary to assure compliance with provisions of the zoning ordinance;
- Performance standards - review. Consider adding standards pertaining to storage of materials, supplies and equipment, erosion control, dish antennae, electrical interference, wind energy conversion systems, landscaping;
- Signs - expand and revise;
- Supplementary Regulations and Exceptions - expand and revise.

New sections which should be considered include the following:

- Site plan review procedure for non-subdivision residential developments, and all commercial, institutional and industrial development
- Cluster development overlay ordinance.
- Explanation of the duties of the Planning Board, particularly in relation to the site plan review procedures.
- Specific new districts which are recommended in other elements of this plan, eg., Scenic overlay district, natural resource protection overlay zone.

### **2.1.c Land Use Consistency with Current Zoning**

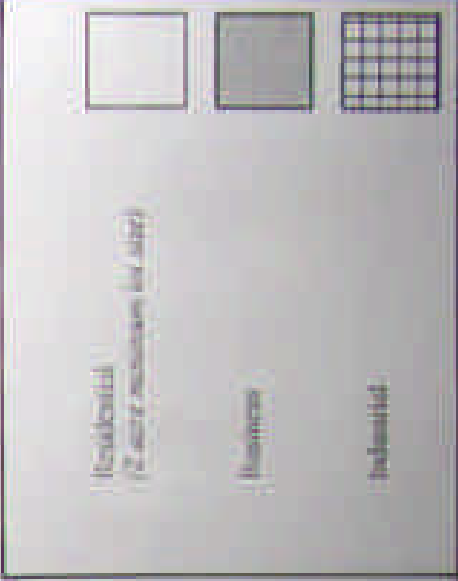
Land use in Little Compton is generally consistent with existing zoning, with minor exceptions such as backyard automobile repair businesses or other small businesses in the residential zone.

### **2.2 Buildout Analysis**

The buildout (land capability) analysis is a theoretical study which determines the amount of development possible in a given area based on different zoning scenarios and combinations of environmental constraints. This analysis is based on previous studies including the environmental constraints analysis, the existing land use study and the community profile.



Scale: Not To Scale



Source: Town of Little Compton, 1993  
 Town of Little Compton, Rhode Island  
**Comprehensive Plan**  
 April 2003 by Associates, Inc.

Existing Zoning Districts  
 Figure 2-2

Little Compton has a limited carrying capacity for development. Theoretically that capacity is reached when every buildable parcel of land is subdivided so that it satisfies the minimum zoning requirements and is built. It is possible for Little Compton to reach this theoretical capacity, although unlikely because of the nature of the community. Some buildable land can be expected to remain in farm use or as open space preserved for its aesthetic or environmental value.

Through the use of historical building records, it is possible to estimate when Little Compton will reach its buildout capacity. For example, if it is determined that buildout will be reached with the addition of 2,510 housing units and an average of 33 permits for new residences were issued per year in the last decade, it is estimated buildout may be attained in approximately 76 years.<sup>5</sup> Factors such as the economy, technological advances and environmental regulations will affect the development rate, and no amount of historical analysis provides an incontestable depiction of the future development rate.

In any decade in the future there are likely to be peaks and valleys in the economy. The 1980's and 90's are a good example of how swings in the economy affect the rate at which development occurs. The recessionary economy of the early 1980's saw a sharp decline in residential development, while the mid-eighties, characterized as a boom economy, saw a surge in residential building rates. The residential building rate in Little Compton for the second half of the 1980's was double that of the first half of the decade. Currently, the rate has slowed.

The buildout analysis considers existing land use, undeveloped land, developable land, number of housing units permitted by current zoning, and the environmental capability of the land to support development. Based upon the acreage of available, developable land, the number of housing units or commercial or industrial space which could potentially develop in the Town is estimated.

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<sup>5</sup> Based on Little Compton Buildout Scenario No. 1. See Table 2-3.

### 2.2.a Assumptions

The analysis is based upon a series of assumptions, as follows:

1. Land not currently used for residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, public/semi-public, institutional or dedicated open space purposes, was defined as undeveloped, developable land.
2. The 100 foot buffer area maintained by the Newport Water Supply Company around the Watson Reservoir is considered undevelopable.
3. Agricultural land is considered undeveloped land.
4. To determine development potential of the undeveloped land described in Assumption 1, environmental conditions were considered, including inland wetlands, steep slopes, soils with limited development capability, and flood hazard areas.
5. Residential property may fully develop in all residential zones, although inadequate access, water supply and property ownership patterns may exist to prevent this.
6. Current household size (persons per owner-occupied dwelling unit) is 2.65 persons per the 1990 Census of Population. For the purposes of this analysis, a persons per unit figure is used, as shown on Table 2-2. The range of 1.62 to 1.80 persons per unit is used to provide the estimated population generated per new dwelling unit.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 2-2**  
**Recent Housing Trends and Persons Per Unit**

		Total Housing	Persons Per
Year	Population	Units	Unit
1970	2,385	1,329	1.79
1980	3,085	1,694	1.82
1990	3,339	1,850	1.80
1990*	3,339	2,061	1.62

\* Total Units as per 1991 Revaluation. U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1970, 1980, 1990.

7. Minimum lot sizes required by the existing zoning ordinance were used in determining the potential number of housing units. These are as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> Persons per unit were used in these calculations rather than household size figures to accommodate the seasonal/rental unit population impact.



Zoning District	Lot Area (Sq. Feet)
Residential	87,120
Business	87,120
Industrial	87,120

Source: Little Compton Zoning Regulations, Rev. Ord. Supp. 1/88.

8. Nonconforming lots of record are lots created prior to the enactment of the zoning ordinance, which can legally be developed by the owner irregardless of zoning restrictions.

Lots with less than the minimum two acres required by existing zoning are considered in this analysis. Many of these nonconforming lots are the side or rear yards of developed lots, and may not ever be used as a house lot. However, they are considered to have development potential.

Some nonconforming lots have less than 5,000 square feet of area, with very limited development potential. Siting a house, a water supply well, and a septic system on substandard lot of this size would be very difficult. Despite the size limitations these lots are considered developable in this analysis.

## 2.2.b Analysis Methodology

The buildout analysis involves the following steps:

1. *Environmental constraint mapping including soils, wetlands, steep slopes and flood hazard zones* - A constraints map was compiled using various data sources. Three categories of constraint were defined: severe, high and moderate.

Severely Constrained Areas - Areas identified as wetlands by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are considered severely constrained for development. The Service defines wetlands as "lands transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water. For purposes of this classification wetlands must have one or more of the following three attributes: 1) at least periodically, the land supports predominantly hydrophytes; 2) the substrate is predominantly undrained hydric soil; and 3) the substrate is nonsoil and is saturated with water or covered by shallow water at some time during the growing season of each year."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, Page 5.

U.S. Soil Conservation Service maps are used to identify soil groups which are severely constrained for building development. Soils which have a seasonal high water table at or near the surface all year or, from late fall through midsummer ( primarily Aa, Ma, and Mc types), and soils which are subject to tidal flooding (Mk soil) were considered severely constrained for development. Generally, use of on-site septic systems is not feasible without extensive filling in areas where these soil types are prevalent.

**Highly Constrained Areas** - Areas considered highly constrained for development include soils which have a seasonally high water table. These soils (primarily Se soils) have water tables which are near the surface from late fall through spring, and or have slow or very slow permeability. The high constraint soils also include beach areas (Ba soils) which are subject to severe erosion during storms. Large areas which have slopes in excess of 15 percent were also considered to be highly constrained for development purposes. Areas subject to flooding from a 100 year storm event are also included in the high constraint category.

**Moderately Constrained Areas** - All other land areas not included in the above categories, and areas subject to flooding from a 500 year storm event are included in the moderately constrained category, and are considered fully developable.

2. *Mapping developed and undeveloped land* - An existing land use map was developed through a detailed, parcel by parcel survey using aerial photography and tax assessor parcel maps. Developed land includes un-subdividable parcels currently used for residential, commercial, recreational, institutional or other active land use. Undeveloped land includes the vacant portion of subdividable parcels minus the minimum lot size requirement, unprotected agricultural land, and unprotected open space and all other undeveloped land.
3. *Measurement of developable land* - The acreage of undeveloped, environmentally constrained land is determined by computer-assisted measurement from a 1"=1,000' base map. The acreage of developed and environmentally constrained land is subtracted from the known acreage of the Town yielding the acreage of developable land in Little Compton.

4. *Measurement of vacant developable land by zoning districts* - Vacant developable land within each zoning district is measured from a 1"=1,000' base map.
5. *Subtraction of a percentage for roads and infrastructure* - In order to estimate future development potential, a factor must be subtracted to account for land that would be used for roads, service easements and municipal uses, as well as nonconforming lots and thus would not be available for development. A factor of 15 percent was used, based on past experience.
6. *Calculation of the number of dwelling units* - Once total developable land is calculated, the number of dwelling units is determined. This is based upon the minimum lot requirements as specified by the zoning regulations. Vacant nonconforming lots of record with less than 2 acres were added to the total number of units in the buildout. A percentage of these lots were eliminated because of environmental constraints. The percentages of lots with high and severe constraints were assumed to be the same as the percentage of all undeveloped areas with constraints.
7. *Calculation of square feet of commercial and industrial space* - This is determined in the same manner as residential land, taking into account minimum lot size.
8. *Calculation of potential buildout population* - The buildout population is calculated based on the total number of new dwelling units that can potentially be built. This number is multiplied by the Town's average household size to give the total saturation or buildout population. The additional number of dwellings and population is then added to the 1990 figures. This can be used to estimate the need for future facilities, services and infrastructure.
9. *Annual development rates* - Rates for residential uses are based on recent residential building permit trends. Table 2-3 shows an average of 32.6 dwellings per year were built in Little Compton in the 1980's.

Table 2-4 shows the anticipated development rate through the year 2020. It is assumed that the rate of development will decrease through the next 20-30 years, largely because the amount of developable land is limited and local land use regulations

**Table 2-3**  
**New Housing Units Constructed in Little Compton, 1980-89**

Year	New Units	Year	New Units
1980	16	1985	37
1981	14	1986	59
1982	27	1987	50
1983	30	1988	40
1984	32	1989	21
<b>Total</b>			<b>326</b>
<b>Annual Average</b>			<b>32.6</b>

Source: Town of Little Compton.

further limit the intensity of development. The development rate of the 1980's is used as a base for determining the future rate. Predicting this rate 20 years into the future is difficult, and the actual rate may vary considerably from that which is forecasted.

**Table 2-4**  
**Anticipated Future Development Rate**

Years	Actual/Anticipated No. of Units Built	% of Average Units Built Per Five Years in 1980's
1985-1990	163	100%
1990-1995	147	90%
1995-2000	125	77%
2000-2005	100	61%
2005-2010	75	46%
2010-2015	52	32%
2015-2020	34	21%

Source: Projections based upon Town 1980's building records

Swings in the economy, technology, and environmental regulation will ultimately affect future development. The reduced development rate reflects past population trends, and a decreasing rate of population growth, and a decline in building activity due to the scarcity of developable land.

**2.2.c Buildout Scenarios**

Two buildout scenarios were developed to explore alternate development climates. The scenarios are based upon a certain percentage of marginal land being built. Buildout scenario number 1 is based on historical evidence which shows that approximately eight percent of the land considered having high constraints for development has been developed. Scenario number 2 considers potential greater development pressure which would force 15 percent of high constraint land into development

**Buildout Scenario 1-** In this scenario, buildout is limited by existing zoning and soil constraints with eight percent of the areas in the high constraint category considered developable. As the Town has developed, approximately eight percent of land which is considered to have high constraints for building has been developed. It is therefore assumed in Scenario 1 that eight percent of the land in the high constraint category will be developed. Table 2-5 shows the potential new dwelling units, and a future population range based on alternative 1990 housing totals and persons/unit figures.

**Table 2-5  
 Anticipated Future Dwelling Units and Population - Buildout Scenario 1**

Year	Dwelling units	Estimated Pop.	Percent Change
		(1.62 persons/unit)	
1990	2 061 (1)	3,339	--
2000	2,333	3,779	13.1
2010	2,507	4,061	7.5
2020	2,593	4,200	3.4
Remaining Additional	1,980	3,200	
Buildout Total	4,570	7,400	-
		(1.80 persons/unit)	
1990	1,850 (2)	3,339	--
2000	2,122	3,820	13.1
2010	2,296	4,133	7.5
2020	2,382	4,288	3.4
Remaining Additional	1,980	3,564	-
Buildout Total	4,360	7,850	-

Notes: (1) Per 1991 revaluation findings.  
 (2) - Per the U.S. Census, 1990.

Under Scenario 1, it is estimated that Little Compton could accommodate 2,500+/- additional dwelling units (see Table 2-6). At buildout there would be between 4,360 and 4,570 units, and population may range from 7,400 to 7,850 people. By the year 2020 approximately 21 percent of the new dwelling units may be built.

Approximately four acres of developable commercial land is available. It can be anticipated that this will develop on an irregular basis, as has been the case in the past. Most of the Town's industrially zoned land has been developed for residential uses. It is not likely that the remaining industrial land will be used for its intended purpose because the Town's sole industrial zone has been largely developed with residential uses, and much of the the remainder is wetland.

**Table 2-6  
Buildout Analysis Scenario No. 1**

TOTAL AREA	Notes	Residential Zone (Acres)	% of Total	Business Zone (Acres)	% of Total
Total Acres	1	13,648	100.0	90	100.0
Developed Acres	2	3,287	24.1	71	78.9
Undeveloped Acres	3	10,361	75.9	19	21.1
<b>UNDEVELOPED LAND</b>					
		Residential Zone (Acres)	% of Undeveloped	Business Zone (Acres)	% of Undeveloped
Undeveloped Area with High Constraints	4	2,719	26.2	12	63.2
Developable Area with High Constraints	5	218	2.1	0	0.0
Undeveloped Area with Severe Constraints	6	2,610	25.2	3	15.8
Undeveloped Area with No Constraints	7	5,250	50.7	4	21.1
15% Design Factor for Roads, etc.	8	787	7.6	0	0.0
Total Developable Area	9	4,462	43.1	0	0.0
Potential Housing Units	10	2,231		0	0.0
<b>UNDEVELOPED NONCONFORMING LOTS</b>					
		Lots	% of Total Lots		
Vacant Nonconforming Lots Less Than 2 Acres	11	549	100.0		
Nonconforming Lots with High Constraints	12	144	26.2		
Developable Nonconforming Lots with High Constraints	13	12	2.1		
Nonconforming Lots with Severe Constraints	14	138	25.2		
Nonconforming Lots with No Constraints	15	278	50.7		
Potential Housing Units	16	278			
<b>POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL HOUSING UNITS</b>					
Total Potential Housing Units	17	2,509			

- Notes: 1 - Digitized measurement from 1"=800' base map. Does not include inland waters.  
2 - Digitized measurement from 1"=800' land use map. Includes residential, commercial, institutional, roads, utilities, dedicated recreation and open space.  
3 - Row 1 minus Row 2.  
4 - Digitized measurement from 1"=800' environmental constraints map.  
5 - Historically, 8 percent of the areas considered as having high constraints have been developed. The remainder is considered undevelopable.  
6 - Digitized measurement from 1"=800' environmental constraints map.  
7 - Row 3 minus Rows 5 and 6.  
8 - Design factor to accommodate area used up by roads, utilities, easements etc. Applied to Row 7.  
9 - Net developable land, Row 7 minus Row 8.  
10 - Row 9 divided by 2 (minimum lot size = 2 acres).  
11 - Lots with tax code "13", vacant residential having less than two acres. Approximately 315 acres total from 1989 Assessor's records.  
12 - Percentage of lots with constraints is assumed to be the same percentage as undeveloped areas with constraints, i.e., 27.1 percent.  
13 - Historically, 8 percent of the areas considered as having high constraints have been developed. The remainder is considered undevelopable.  
14 - Percentage of lots with constraints is assumed to be the same percentage as undeveloped areas with constraints, i.e., 2.1 percent.  
15 - Row 11 minus Rows 13 and 14.  
16 - Assume one unit per nonconforming lot.  
17 - Total potential housing units on conforming and nonconforming lots.

**Table 2-7**  
**Buildout Analysis Scenario No. 2**

<b>TOTAL AREA</b>	Notes	Residential Zone (Acres)	% of Total	Business Zone (Acres)	% of Total
Total Acres	1	13,648	100.0	90	100.0
Developed Acres	2	3,287	24.1	71	78.9
Undeveloped Acres	3	10,361	75.9	19	21.1
<b>UNDEVELOPED LAND</b>					
		Residential Zone (Acres)	% of Undeveloped	Business Zone (Acres)	% of Undeveloped
Undeveloped Area with High Constraints	4	2,719	26.2	12	63.2
Developable Area with High Constraints	5	408	3.9	0	0.0
Undeveloped Area with Severe Constraints	6	2,610	25.2	3	15.8
Undeveloped Area with No Constraints	7	5,440	52.5	4	21.1
15% Design Factor for Roads, etc.	8	816	7.9	0	0.0
Total Developable Area	9	4,624	44.6	0	0.0
Potential Housing Units	10	2,312		0	0.0
<b>UNDEVELOPED NONCONFORMING LOTS</b>					
		Lots	% of Total Lots		
Vacant Nonconforming Lots Less Than 2 Acres	11	549	100.0		
Nonconforming Lots with High Constraints	12	144	26.2		
Developable Nonconforming Lots with High Constraints	13	21	3.9		
Nonconforming Lots with Severe Constraints	14	138	25.2		
Nonconforming Lots with No Constraints	15	288	52.5		
Potential Housing Units	16	288			
<b>POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL HOUSING UNITS</b>					
Total Potential Housing Units	17	2,600			

Notes:

- 1 - Digitized measurement from 1"=800' base map. Does not include island waters.
- 2 - Digitized measurement from 1"=800' land use map. Includes residential, commercial, institutional, roads, utilities, dedicated recreation and open space.
- 3 - Row 1 minus Row 2.
- 4 - Digitized measurement from 1"=800' environmental constraints map.
- 5 - Assumes that development pressure caused by the scarcity of developable land will result in more marginal land being developed. Fifteen (15) percent of the areas considered as having high constraints are considered developable. The remainder is considered undevelopable.
- 6 - Digitized measurement from 1"=800' environmental constraints map.
- 7 - Row 3 minus Rows 5 and 6.
- 8 - Design factor to accommodate area used up by roads, utilities, easements etc. Applied to Row 7.
- 9 - Net developable land, Row 7 minus Row 8.
- 10 - Row 9 divided by 2 (minimum lot size = 2 acres).
- 11 - Lots with tax code "13", vacant residential having less than two acres. Approximately 315 acres total from 1989 Assessor's records.
- 12 - Percentage of lots with constraints is assumed to be the same percentage as undeveloped areas with constraints, i.e., 27.1 percent.
- 13 - Fifteen (15) percent of the lots considered as having high constraints are considered developable. The remainder is considered undevelopable.
- 14 - Percentage of lots with constraints is assumed to be the same percentage as undeveloped areas with constraints, i.e., 2.1 percent.
- 15 - Row 11 minus Rows 13 and 14.
- 16 - Assume one unit per nonconforming lot.
- 17 - Total potential housing units on conforming and nonconforming lots.

## Buildout Scenario 2

Scenario 2 assumes 15 percent of the areas in the high constraint category to be developable some time in the future (see Table 2-7). This is based on the assumption that the amount of developed land found in areas considered highly constrained for development will increase due to development pressure caused by the scarcity of prime development land in the latter years of the buildout. More desirable parcels will presumably be developed before marginal land because it is typically less time consuming and less costly. As these parcels become scarce, developers will begin to develop property with marginal development potential despite the added cost.

Table 2-8  
Anticipated Future Dwelling Units and Population  
Buildout Scenario 2

Year	Dwelling units	Estimated Pop.	Percent Change
		(1.62 persons/unit)	
1990	2,061 (1)	3,339	--
2000	2,333	3,779	13.1
2010	2,507	4,061	7.5
2020	2,593	4,200	3.4
Remaining Additional	2,068	3,350	
Buildout Total	4,660	7,550	--
		(1.80 persons/unit)	
1990	1,850 (2)	3,339	--
2000	2,122	3,820	13.1
2010	2,296	4,133	7.5
2020	2,382	4,288	3.4
Remaining Additional	2,068	3,722	
Buildout Total	4,450	8,010	--

Notes: (1) Per 1991 revaluation findings.

(2) - Per the U.S. Census, 1990

Source: Projections based upon Town's 1991 revaluation and 1990 Census data.

Based on the assumptions carried in Scenario 2, it is estimated that the Town of Little Compton could accommodate 2,600 additional dwelling units, 90+/- more units than in Scenario 1 (see Table 2-8). At buildout there would be 4,450 to 4,660 units and between 7,550 and 8,010 people, a 2.0 percent increase over Scenario 1.

### 2.2.d Summary of Buildout Analysis

The Town of Little Compton may anticipate ultimately providing services and facilities for more than double its existing population.



This has ramifications in a number of areas. First, there will be additional demands placed upon the Town's primary finite natural resource: land. When buildout is reached, under the above scenarios, approximately 60 percent of the Town's land area will be developed, compared to the current 24 percent.

Other resources will be tested, particularly the water resource. While groundwater is a replenishing resource, a one time contamination may ruin part of Town's drinking water source for decades. Maintaining the balance between land development and protection of the Town's sole existing drinking water source is paramount.

Other services and facilities will require expansion and/or improvement, including roads and streets, recreational facilities, Town administrative services, schools and libraries and others. A total ultimate population of under 10,000 will not transpose Little Compton into an urban community, but it will have definite impact upon the current way of life.

### **2.3 Land Use Goals and Recommendations**

Orderly development ensures that suitable land will be available for development to serve future generations, and land better suited to remain open space for purposes which may include groundwater protection, landscape preservation, wildlife conservation, or other health, safety and welfare purposes will remain undeveloped.

It is anticipated that over the next decade, another 270 +/- houses occupying at a minimum 540 acres, and 500 +/- people will reside in Little Compton. The challenge is to properly site these units so that the character of the community is preserved.

The following goals and recommendations should be implemented to ensure preservation of Little Compton's existing character, and to provide for appropriate development.

#### **2.3.a Goals**

- A. Ensure clean, safe drinking water for present and future, without town water or sewer.
- B. Preserve and enhance open space. Preserve air, water, and land quality.
- C. Preserve wetlands and wildlife habitat.
- D. Preserve and enhance rural and agricultural areas.
- E. Preserve and enhance the traditional visual appearance of the town.
- F. Preserve and provide access to coastal areas.
- G. Provide reasonable housing opportunities for all segments of the town's population.
- H. Preserve historic land resources.
- I. Preserve and enhance land for outdoor recreation opportunities.
- J. Promote fair tax policies which support the above goals.

## **2.3.b Recommendations**

### **Groundwater Quality**

2. 1. a Seriously consider creating a Groundwater Protection Board to deal specifically and effectively with drinking water quality and sources of supply.
  - a) Funded adequately and enabled to procure professional staff and services.
- 2.1 .b Groundwater Protection Board powers and responsibilities.
  1. Develop an overall master plan that addresses protection strategies for the town's groundwater, soil fertility and wetland purification, etc.
  2. Assume responsibility for implementing the hydro-geological study (refer to Action 5.2);
  3. Assume administration of the proposed Wastewater Management District, if established (refer to Action 5.4);
  4. Develop and propose such groundwater protection ordinances as may be needed; and,
  5. Maintain an ongoing public information program, including annual reports to the Town Council.
- 2.2 If need is demonstrated, establish a wastewater management district starting in critical areas that would:
  - a) Establish a well-testing program with voluntary monitoring program;
  - b) Identify and map septic systems and wells;
  - c) Identify and map "critical environmental resource areas (CERAs)" and create overlay zones to ensure strict groundwater protection.
  - d) Establish a cycle of inspection and if necessary and appropriate, pump out schedule for septic systems.
- 2.3 Continue to pursue regulatory program based on State enabling legislation for existing underground storage tanks that are exempt from State regulations.
- 2.4 Study the adoption of State guidelines for road salt use as in the Scituate Reservoir Watershed for the Watson Reservoir Watershed.
- 2.5 Recommend investigation of the Town's total sustainable groundwater yield.

### **Groundwater Quantity**

- 2.6 Prepare a comprehensive plan of wetland protection to protect the Town's wetlands for the recharge of groundwater supplies.
- 2.7 Town ordinances should be reviewed and amended to encourage shared use of private drives, and to promote porous surfacing materials (crushed stone, shell etc.) for suitable specific applications. Suitable drainage plans for porous roads should also be contained within the new ordinance.

- 2.8 Encourage low water use appliances and practices.
- 2.9 Educate residents of the dangers of saltwater intrusion to water wells.
- 2.10 Study the need to develop, and if necessary, institute a system of drainage permits.

### **Wetlands**

- 2.11 Amend existing subdivision ordinance to require all subdivisions (in designated wetland areas as per the Town wetlands map/Town soils map per Action 2.7) submit to a wetlands determination by the State and/or qualified private biologist.
- 2.12 Initiate the process of having wetlands within the Town mapped at a scale compatible with the Town Plat Maps.
- 2.13 Study State standards for wetland setbacks and alternate standards that have been adopted by other communities.
- 2.14 Adopt a comprehensive plan to protect Little Compton's wetlands.

### **Agriculture and Open Space**

- 2.15 Continue to support the efforts of the Little Compton Agricultural Conservancy Trust (LCACT) to preserve town farm land and open space.
- 2.16 Study and if appropriate, develop a more effective/flexible Farm, Forest and Open Space property tax program in cooperation with the State.
- 2.17 Develop a financial study comparing residential land versus agricultural/open space land in Little Compton showing property tax income versus town service expenditures.
- 2.18 Establish a new zoning district or overlay district for open space purposes. This district would cover contiguous parcels that are owned by the Town, State, the Little Compton Agricultural Conservancy Trust (LCACT), Audubon Society, Sakonnet Preservation Association or other similar conservation group.

### **Historic Resources**

- 2.18 Initiate an active program to protect historic resources throughout town with special emphasis on particular areas such as the Commons.
- 2.19 Consider establishing a Little Compton Historic Preservation Advisory Board which would specifically address scenic character, historical and archaeological resources and architectural integrity.
- 2.20 Consider establishing an Historic District Commission as an outgrowth of the Historic Preservation Advisory Board specifically to address historical design integrity within the Commons, Adamsville and other potential historic structures, sites and districts.

- 2.21 Prepare and distribute a handbook to inform residents and potential builders of the historic trends and events which combined to create the "sense of place" and the "townscape".
- 2.22 Consider creating an Historic Marker Program to help identify and promote the numerous historic sites and buildings throughout town.
- 2.23 Study the wisdom of initiating a special permit process for the demolition of any building which is a) within a National Register Historic District; b) individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places; or c) in whole or part 50 years or more old.

### **Preservation of Traditional Appearance**

- 2.24 Maintain the Town's existing zoning ordinance minimum requirement of one single family dwelling unit per two acres of land.
- 2.25 Prepare a cluster zoning ordinance to encourage future subdivision to be developed in a more visually attractive manner. If a cluster zoning ordinance is deemed feasible or advisable, the ordinance would originate with the Planning Board and be forwarded to the Town Council for consideration.
- 2.26 Study the legal position and if practical adopt a substandard lot ordinance requiring the consolidation of substandard lots when two or more adjacent lots are owned by the same individual and contain hydric soils.
- 2.27 Study the desirability and the legal situation concerning the creation of a scenic zoning ordinance, and if practical adopt such an ordinance, relating to the following areas:
  - Intersections and street corners.
  - Approaches to villages.
  - Water views and other scenic views.
- 2.28 Encourage visual setbacks for construction along public roads and off-road development whenever possible.
- 2.29 Review the current sign ordinance, compare with other progressive rural communities and modify the regulations to better meet the Town's scenic quality preservation objectives.
- 2.30 Encourage installation of underground utilities in all future developments.
- 2.31 Rezone the existing industrial zone on the Tiverton Town boundary, north of Tompkins Lane, west of Long Highway and east of Pachet Brook Road, pending review of the Land Use Committee. Considering that most of this zone is currently developed for residential use, and the remaining undeveloped area in the zone is largely wetland, it would be appropriately rezoned for residential uses.

- 2.32 Consider designating the business zone at Sakonnet Point as a commercial waterfront zone which would support shore-oriented businesses, pending review of the Land Use Committee.
- 2.33 Revise Town ordinances to accommodate the changing needs of farm operations.
- 2.34 Initiate a study of the Town's residential zoning with the intent to test the potential benefits and costs of establishing two to three zoning classifications, i.e., coastal residential, general residential and rural residential.
- 2.35 Establish a new zoning district or overlay district for open space purposes.

### **Recreation**

- 2.35 Prepare and implement a comprehensive management plan for each town recreation area, natural area, and right-of-way.
- 2.36 Make special efforts to expand existing recreational areas by acquiring adjacent properties whenever available.
- 2.37 Explore establishment of a town-wide system of bike paths.
- 2.38 Consider/study the use of "micro-parking" (five cars or less) as a way to access certain natural areas and rights-of-way.
- 2.39 Maintain and enforce existing public rights-of-way available to Town residents.

### **Tax Policies**

- 2.40 Conduct a study of the Town's tax policies relating to farm, forest and open space property.

## **2.4 Future Land Use Plan Map**

The planned future land use of the Town of Little Compton is illustrated on Figure 2-3. This map is a graphic representation of the Town's goals and policies relating to land use, natural and cultural resources, open space preservation and recreation, economic development, housing, and community services and facilities.

Essentially this map follows the existing zoning pattern of the Town, with the following changes:

1. Elimination of the industrial zone in the north central part of the Town. Rezone this area for residential land use, and rezone small portion on north western side of Long Highway for business use.
2. Establish a new zoning district or overlay district for open space purposes. The new district would include certain properties owned by the following entities, in accordance with procedures set forth below:
  - a) Town of Little Compton
  - b) State of Rhode Island

- c) Little Compton Agricultural Conservancy Trust
- d) Audubon Society
- e) Sakonnet Preservation Association
- f) Nature Conservancy
- g) Little Compton Scouts
- h) Rhode Island Scouts
- i) Other Public Agency or Private Conservation Organization

The following conditions for establishing the new district are required. All conditions must prevail:

- a) The land must be in fee simple ownership by the entity noted above. If the entity noted above owns development rights on a given parcel, which remains in private ownership, such parcel does not qualify for inclusion in the district.
- b) The entity must give its permission for inclusion in the new zoning district in writing to the Town Council.
- c) Any areas for consideration in the new zoning district must comprise not less than ten (10) acres. This is to prevent against any unnecessary spot zoning.

**OTHER CONDITIONS, WHICH MAY NOT BE APPARENT AT THIS TIME (JUNE, 2001), MAY BE USED TO EXPAND THE NEW OPEN SPACE DISTRICT, PROVIDED THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL SHALL MAKE FINDINGS THAT SUCH CONDITIONS ARE WARRANTED AND ARE IN KEEPING WITH THE REST OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.**





The following procedure must be used for establishing the new zoning district:

- a) Parcels that tentatively qualify for inclusion in the district are depicted on Figure 2-3. The lots are also listed by plat, lot, ownership and acreage.
  - b) The Town Council will contact all property owners affected in writing to inform them of a pending action by the Town to rezone their land into an open space district or overlay district.
  - c) The property owners will also be informed as to the nature and content of the proposed open space district or overlay district, as noted below.
  - d) After receiving written affirmation or objection from the property owners, a final map and list of parcels will be prepared for consideration in the zoning amendment.
3. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to attain and maintain consistency with this Comprehensive Plan and Figure 2-3, Future Land Use Map.
  4. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to implement the 2004 update of the Housing Element, and specifically, the affordable housing actions recommended therein.



**LEGEND**

**Future Land Use Categories**

-  Business
-  Open Space
-  Residential/Agricultural
-  Ponds

The information depicted on this map is for general planning purposes only. It may not be adequate for legal boundary definition or regulatory interpretation.

Figure 2-3

Town of Little Compton, Rhode Island  
**FUTURE LAND USE MAP**

Overlay zones identified for implementation in the plan are not shown on this map.

SCALE 1:38,000



0 100 200 300 Feet