# CONTEXT

# 2

## Overview

This section of the Plan outlines the conditions and trends affecting the community at the time the Plan was prepared.

*"If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it."*

**Abraham Lincoln**

**Demographics**

**Housing**

**Economy**

**Land Use**

**Buildout Potential**

**Fiscal Considerations**

**Borough of Stonington**

Unless specified, all demographic and housing figures include the Borough.

**Population Growth**

| Year | Population |
|---|---|
| 1774 | 5,412 |
| 1782 | 5,245 |
| 1800 | 5,437 |
| 1810 | 3,043 |
| 1820 | 3,056 |
| 1830 | 3,401 |
| 1840 | 3,898 |
| 1850 | 5,431 |
| 1860 | 5,827 |
| 1870 | 6,313 |
| 1880 | 7,355 |
| 1890 | 7,184 |
| 1900 | 8,540 |
| 1910 | 9,154 |
| 1920 | 10,236 |
| 1930 | 11,025 |
| 1940 | 11,002 |
| 1950 | 11,801 |
| 1960 | 13,696 |
| 1970 | 15,940 |
| 1980 | 16,220 |
| 1990 | 16,919 |
| 2000 | 17,906 |
| 2010 | (18,893) |
| 2020 | (19,880) |

1774 – 2000 Census, Projections in italics based on a simple extrapolation of past growth.

**Household Sizes**

| | Town | State |
|---|---|---|
| 1980 | 2.67 | 2.76 |
| 1990 | 2.40 | 2.59 |
| 2000 | 2.31 | 2.53 |

# A Growing and Changing Population

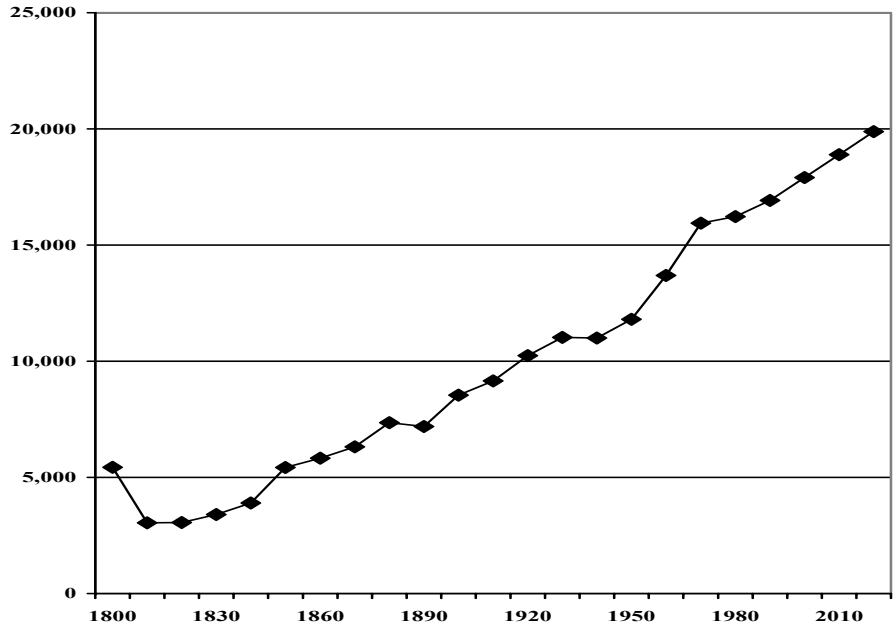
**Stonington is Growing Faster Than the State or County …**

According to the Census Bureau, Stonington had a population of 17,906 in the year 2000 and grew by 987 people (about six percent) during the 1990s. This rate of growth was greater than that for the State (about 4 percent) or the County (about 2 percent).

**Population Growth is Projected to Continue …**

As can be seen from the following chart, the population of Stonington has been growing since the early 1800s and this growth is projected to continue to increase over the next 20 years.

**Population Change (1800-2020)**



## Age Composition is Also Changing …

While overall population growth is important, changes in age composition may actually have more far reaching implications both in terms of future housing choices and community service demands.

With people living longer and healthier lives, the older age groups will be more stable in the future. At the same time, the 'baby boom' (people born between 1946 and 1964) will enter these older age groups during the next 20 years. By the year 2020, adults aged 55 and over will comprise almost 35 percent of the total population of Stonington, up from only 22 percent in 1970.

**Stonington Age Composition (1970 to 2020)**

| | Actual | | | | Projections | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ages** | **1970** | **1980** | **1990** | **2000** | **2010** | **2020** |
| **0-4** | 1,454 | 859 | 1,011 | 993 | 1,086 | 1,393 |
| **5-19** | 4,252 | 3,782 | 2,806 | 3,173 | 4,294 | 4,205 |
| **20-34** | 3,072 | 3,637 | 3,847 | 2,776 | 2,576 | 3,521 |
| **35 -54** | 3,635 | 3,707 | 4,689 | 5,826 | 4,998 | 3,885 |
| **55-64** | 1,717 | 1,978 | 1,812 | 2,013 | 2,656 | 2,875 |
| **65 +** | 1,810 | 2,257 | 2,754 | 3,125 | 3,283 | 4,001 |
| **Total** | **15,940** | **16,220** | **16,919** | **17,906** | **18,893** | **19,880** |

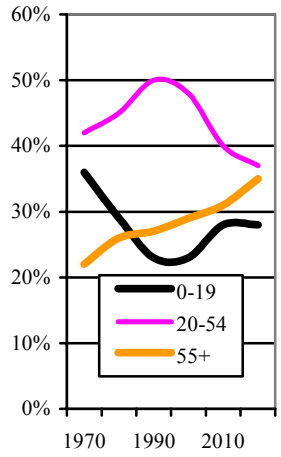
1970 - 2000 Census, Projections by Planimetrics (2003)

The following table depicts the various life-stages of Stonington residents that will each have specific needs during the next twenty years.

**Life-cycle Needs**

| Description | Age Range | Needs | Projection to 2020 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Infants** | 0 to 4 | • Child Care<br>• Recreation programs | **Higher by 2020** |
| **School-Age** | 5 to 19 | • School facilities<br>• Recreation facilities<br>• Recreation programs | **Higher by 2020** |
| **Young Adults** | 20 to 34 | • Rental housing<br>• Starter homes<br>• Social destinations | **Higher by 2020** |
| **Middle Age** | 35 to 54 | • Family programs<br>• Trade-up homes | **Much Lower by 2020** |
| **Mature Adults** | 55 to 65 | • Smaller homes<br>• Second homes | **Higher by 2020** |
| **Retirement Age** | 65 and over | • Tax relief<br>• Housing options<br>• Elderly programs | **Higher by 2020** |

**Age Composition**




**2000 Age Comparison**

| | Town | State |
|---|---|---|
| **0 - 4** | 6% | 7% |
| **5 - 19** | 18% | 21% |
| **20 - 34** | 16% | 19% |
| **35 - 54** | 33% | 31% |
| **55 - 64** | 11% | 9% |
| **65+** | 17% | 13% |

Source: 2000 Census

**2000 Median Age**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Stonington** | **41.7** |
| Waterford | 41.7 |
| N. Stonington | 39.6 |
| East Lyme | 39.0 |
| Westerly, RI | 38.9 |
| Salem | 37.1 |
| Ledyard | 37.1 |
| Groton | 32.5 |
| **County** | **37.0** |
| **State** | **37.4** |

Source: 2000 Census and CT. DECD

**Borough of Stonington**

Unless specified, all demographic and housing figures include the Borough.

**Housing Growth**

| Year | Units |
|---|---|
| **1980** | 6,482 |
| **1990** | 7,923 |
| **2000** | 8,591 |

Source: 1980-2000 Census

**Median Home Value 2000**

| | |
|---|---|
| Groton | $135,500 |
| Ledyard | $138,000 |
| Westerly, RI | $149,900 |
| Waterford | $150,400 |
| N. Stonington | $152,500 |
| **Stonington** | **$154,000** |
| East Lyme | $163,300 |
| Salem | $178,600 |
| **County** | **$142,200** |
| **State** | **$169,900** |

Source: 2000 Census and CT. DECD

**Affordable Housing**

| | |
|---|---|
| **State** | 11% |
| **Stonington** | 4% |

Source: CT-DECD

**Housing Tenure**

| | Town | State |
|---|---|---|
| **Owner Occupied** | 63% | 63% |
| **Renter Occupied** | 26% | 31% |
| **For Rent or Sale** | 4% | 4% |
| **Occasional Use** | 6% | 2% |

Source: 2000 Census

# Changing Housing Conditions

## Housing Growth is Expected to Continue …

According to the Census Bureau, 668 housing units were added to Stonington's housing stock during the 1990s (about an eight percent increase).

With a population growth of 987 people and addition of 668 units, each new unit housed about 1.5 new residents. If this trend were to continue, the anticipated population growth over the next 20 years could result in a demand for about 1,300 new housing units.

## Stonington's Housing Stock is Getting Less Diverse …

Stonington has a fairly diverse housing stock with about one-third of all housing units in Town being non-single-family housing. This is a reflection of its older, densely populated villages combined with more recent suburban development.

However, during the past ten years, 699 new single-family housing units were built (according to Census data), 64 new multi-family units were built, and about 95 other housing units were eliminated, for a net gain of 668 housing units.

**2000 Housing Mix**
(ranked by percent one-unit detached)

| | 1-Unit Detached | 1-Unit Attached | 2-4 Units | 5+ Units | Mobile Home |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| North Stonington | 92% | 1% | 2% | 0% | 5% |
| Waterford | 85% | 3% | 5% | 6% | 1% |
| Ledyard | 85% | 2% | 6% | 3% | 4% |
| East Lyme | 82% | 4% | 6% | 8% | 0% |
| Salem | 76% | 1% | 4% | 4% | 1% |
| **Stonington** | **68%** | **3%** | **19%** | **7%** | **3%** |
| Westerly, RI | 64% | 3% | 24% | 8% | 0% |
| Groton | 49% | 11% | 15% | 21% | 3% |
| **State** | **59%** | **5%** | **18%** | **17%** | **1%** |
| **County** | **64%** | **4%** | **16%** | **13%** | **3%** |

Source: 2000 Census

## Housing Is Less Affordable Than In Other Areas …

At $154,000, the median home price in Stonington is higher than any town in the immediate area and higher than the median for New London County. Despite this, Stonington's median house price is below the state median, making the Town affordable by statewide standards.

While Stonington certainly has housing that is affordable, an affordable mortgage or rent alone does not constitute an "affordable" housing unit by State standards (assisted housing, CHFA financed, or sale price restricted by deed). Stonington is below both the state and regional averages with four percent of its housing units qualifying as affordable. Since the Legislature adopted Section 8-30g in the late 1980s, no qualifying affordable housing has been constructed in Stonington (see Page 78).

# Changing Economic Conditions

**The Regional Economy Is Changing …**

During the past 20 years, there have been some major structural shifts in the economy of southeast Connecticut. With the end of the 'Cold War', defense industries in the region reduced employment. At the same time, casinos established on Native American land holdings have replaced many of those skilled manufacturing jobs with lower-paying service jobs. Recently, the expansion of a major pharmaceutical research and development facility has brought new economic activity to the region.

While there was some economic 'spillover' from defense industries, there has been limited economic growth in the region from the development of casinos. While the number of visitors to the region has grown, this has not always resulted in increased activity at the Mystic Seaport or Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration or at local retail or hospitality venues.

**Exit 90 of Interstate 95 in Mystic**

**Income of Residents is Strong …**

Stonington's per capita income ($29,653) is the highest among neighboring towns as well as higher than both the county and the state averages.

On the other hand, Stonington's median household income ($52,437) is more in keeping with state and regional averages due to smaller average household sizes in Stonington.

**Employment Growth**

| | |
|---|---|
| **1970s** | 12.6% |
| **1980s** | 16.7% |
| **1990s** | 14.9% |

Source: CT Labor Dept

**1999 Household Income**

| | |
|---|---|
| Salem | $68,750 |
| East Lyme | $66,539 |
| Ledyard | $62,647 |
| N. Stonington | $57,887 |
| Waterford | $56,047 |
| **Stonington** | **$52,437** |
| Groton | $46,154 |
| Westerly, RI | $44,613 |
| **County** | **$50,646** |
| **State** | **$53,935** |

Source: 2000 Census

**1999 Per Capita Income**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Stonington** | **$29,653** |
| East Lyme | $28,765 |
| Salem | $27,288 |
| Waterford | $26,807 |
| N. Stonington | $25,815 |
| Ledyard | $24,953 |
| Westerly, RI | $24,092 |
| Groton | $23,995 |
| **County** | **$24,678** |
| **State** | **$28,766** |

Source: 2000 Census

**Definitions**

**Developed Land** - land that has buildings, structures, or improvements used for a particular economic or social purpose (such as residential or institutional)

**Committed Land** - land that is used for a particular economic or social purpose (including open space)

**Vacant Land** - land that is not developed or committed

**Underutilized Land** – developed or committed land that is underdeveloped based on the density or uses permitted by zoning.

**Dedicated Open Space** - land or development rights owned by the Federal government, the State, the Town, land trusts, or conservation organizations intended to remain for open space purposes.

**Managed Open Space** - land owned by fish and game clubs, cemeteries, recreational clubs, and other organizations which is used for other purposes but provides open space benefits.

# A Growing and Changing Town …

Stonington contains approximately 39 square miles (about 24,780 acres) of land area. Research conducted as part of the planning process found that approximately 60 percent of all the land area in Stonington is presently developed or committed to different uses.

Of the land that is developed or committed, about 42 percent (6,300 acres) is developed with residential uses and about 25 percent (5,700 acres) is committed to open space uses.

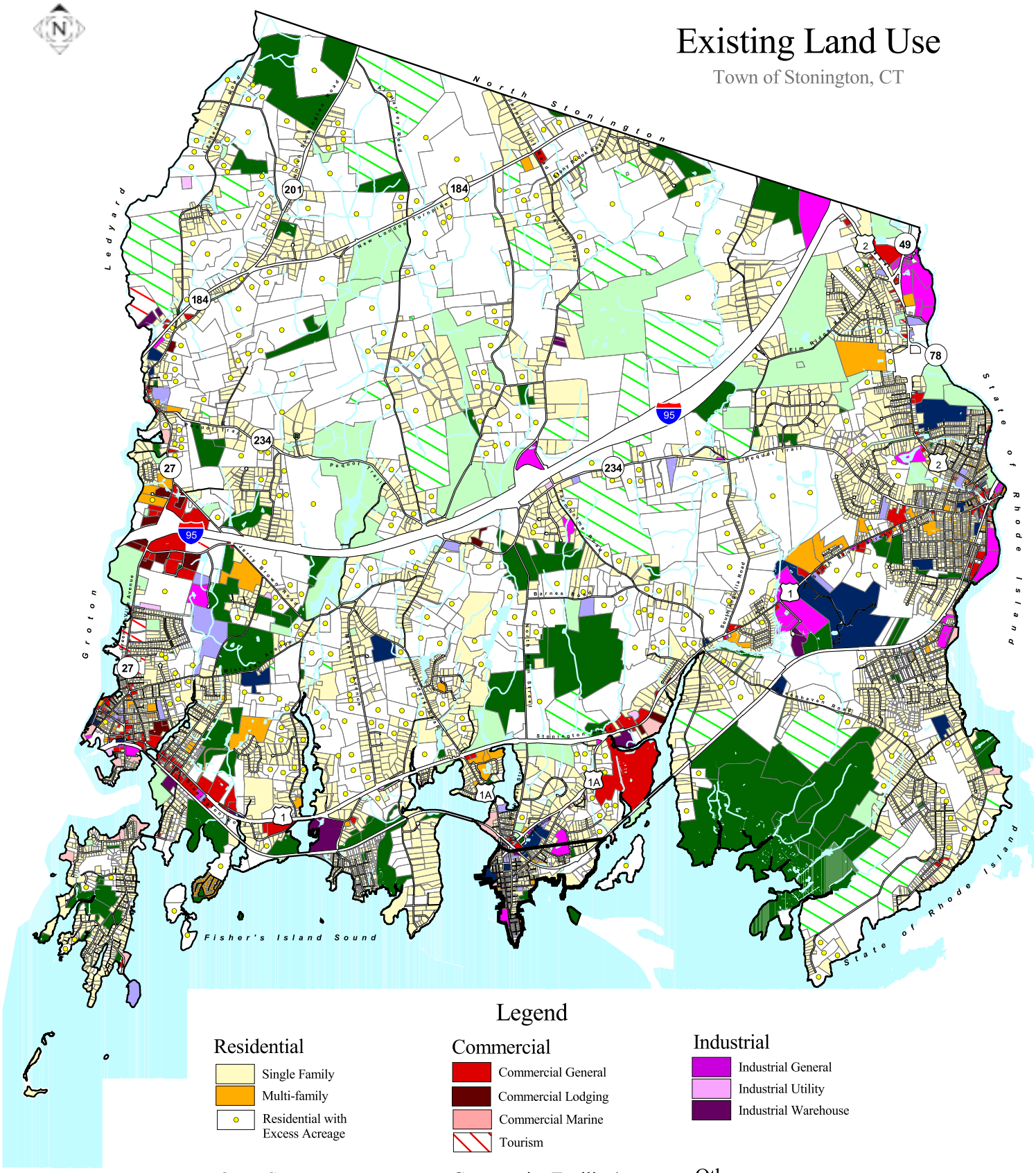
**2001 Stonington Land Use**

| Use | Acres | Percent of Developed Land | Percent of Total Land |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Residential** | **6,294** | **42%** | **25%** |
| Single Family | 5,963 | | |
| Multi-Family | 331 | | |
| **Commercial** | **632** | **4%** | **3%** |
| Retail / Service | 310 | | |
| Tourism | 96 | | |
| Office | 46 | | |
| Lodging | 67 | | |
| Marine | 72 | | |
| Auto | 41 | | |
| **Industrial** | **394** | **3%** | **2%** |
| Industrial | 296 | | |
| Warehouse | 76 | | |
| Utility | 22 | | |
| **Agriculture** | **1,818** | **12%** | **7%** |
| **Open Space** | **3,753** | **25%** | **15%** |
| Dedicated Open Space | 2,134 | | **9%** |
| Managed Open Space | 1,618 | | **7%** |
| **Institutional** | **463** | **3%** | **2%** |
| **Transportation** | **1,621** | **11%** | **7%** |
| **Developed / Committed** | **14,975** | **100%** | **60%** |
| **Vacant / Underutilized** | **9,804** | | **40%** |
| **Total Land Area** | **24,779** | | **100%** |

Planimetrics (Totals may not add due to rounding). Land use information from Stonington with field updates by Planimetrics.

# Existing Land Use

Town of Stonington, CT




Planimetrics

## With Room To Grow…

With over 10,400 acres or 40 percent of the Town consisting of vacant or underutilized land, there is considerable potential for additional development in Stonington. The map on the facing page shows the location of vacant or underutilized land zoned for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes.

Based on the present regulations, future development may occur on properties that are currently vacant, have land area for future development, or may be redeveloped.

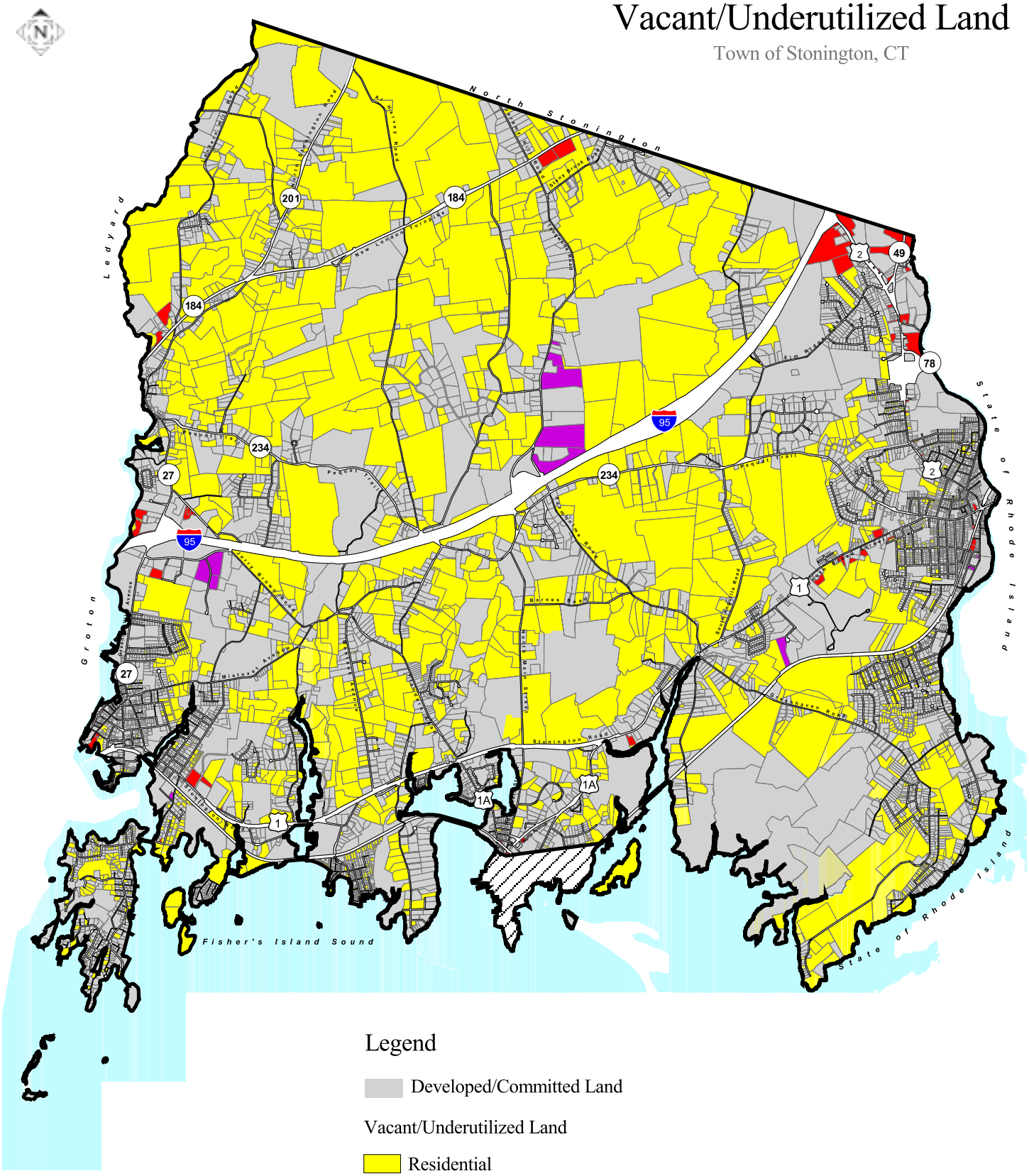
Subtracting the approximately 390 acres of vacant commercial and industrial land leaves approximately 10,000 acres of vacant or underutilized residential land remaining to be developed. After factoring in such variables as zoning, open space set-asides, road acreage, and natural constraints, that acreage could yield approximately 3,530 additional housing units. Adding this number to the Town's existing housing stock results in approximately 12,100 housing units at full build-out.

By multiplying the potential number of dwelling units by Stonington's average household size, there is the potential for over 28,000 residents at full build-out: an increase of approximately 10,100 residents. This represents a hypothetical 56 percent increase over the 2000 population with potentially significant impacts on community services and quality of life.

There is no telling when or if this potential will ever be reached. Many of the conservation and development strategies contained in this Plan have the potential to alter these figures significantly by protecting important resources, preserving more open space and guiding more appropriate development patterns.

# Vacant/Underutilized Land

Town of Stonington, CT


North Stonington
Ledyard
Groton
State of Rhode Island
Fisher's Island Sound
Pequot Trail
Stonington Road
Mistuxet Avenue
Barnes Road
Elm Ridge Road
Gardiner Road
Cashaven Road
Starting Road
Pleasant Street
Water Street
Wheeler Road
Wintechog Road
Hillcrest Road
Hoxie Road
Lantern Road
Cove Road
Cedar Hill Road
Stony Brook Road
Dodge Road
Mitchell Road
Lake Road
Cutler Road
Cedar Hill

| Zone | Minimum Square Feet |
|---|---|
| GBR-130 | 130,000 |
| RC-120 | 120,000 |
| RR-80 | 80,000 |
| RA-40 | 40,000 |
| RA-20 | 20,000 |
| RA-15 | 15,000 |
| RM-20 | 20,000 |
| RM-15 | 15,000 |
| RH-10 | 10,000 |
| DB-5 | 5,000 |
| CS-5 | 5,000 |
| LS-5 | 5,000 |
| GC-60 | 60,000 |
| TC-80 | 80,000 |
| HI | 200,000 |
| M-1 | 80,000 |
| MC-80 | 80,000 |

**Builder's Acre**

Stonington's Zoning Regulations utilize a concept known as a builder's acre. A conventional acre of land is equal to 43,560 square feet. For simplicity sake, a builder's acre rounds down to 40,000 square feet, thus the RA-40 zone is a one-acre zone while the RH-10 zone is a quarter-acre zone.

# Zoned for Residential Growth…

Stonington has nine residential zoning districts, ranging from the high-density RH-10 zone with 10,000 square-foot minimum lots (approximately 1/4 acre) to the very-low-density GBR-130 zone with 130,000 square-foot minimum lots (approximately three acres). Residentially zoned land accounts for almost 93 percent of the land area of Stonington.

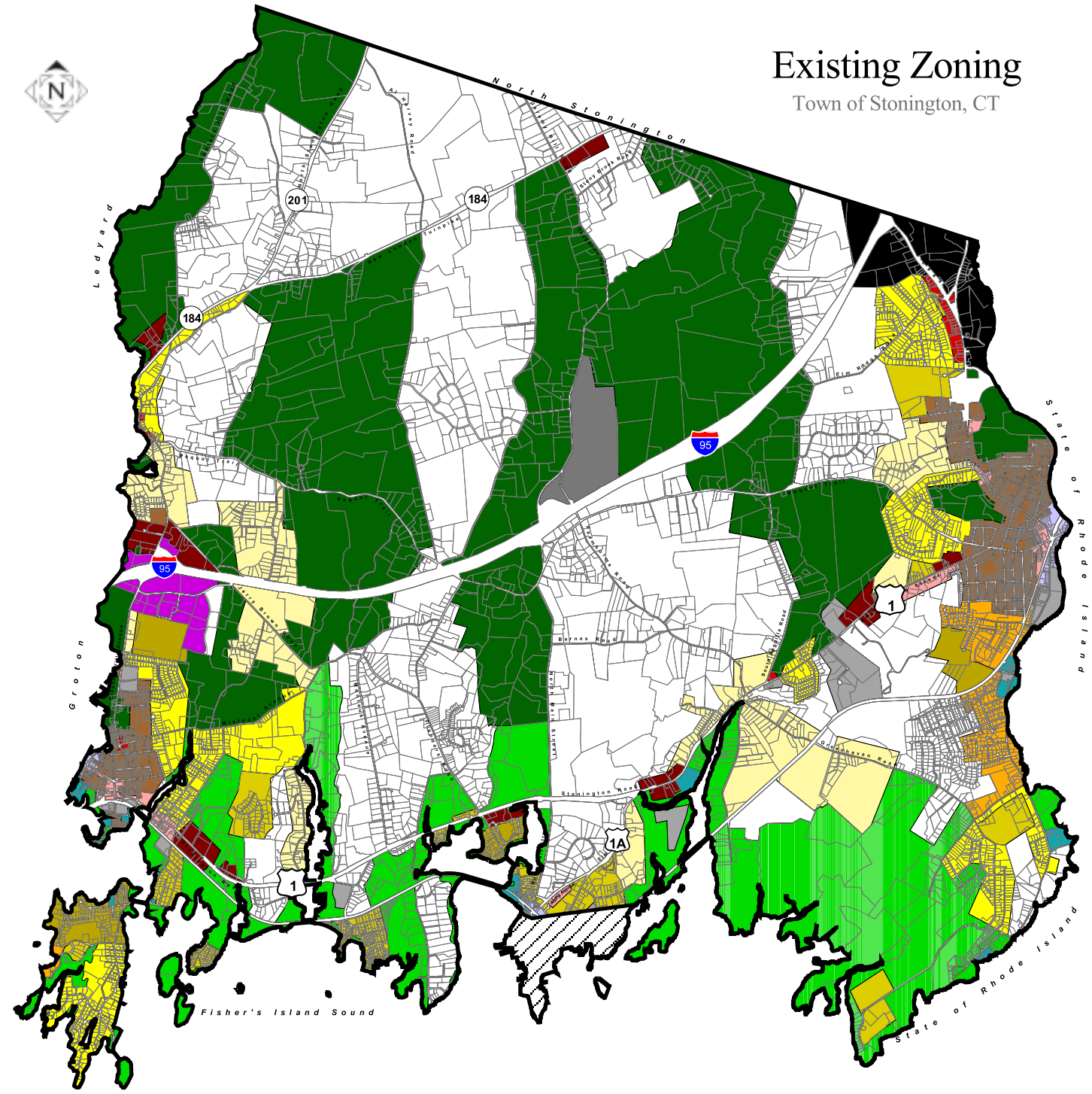
Commercial development is generally limited to seven commercial districts ranging in size from the three 5,000 square-foot minimum lot size DB-5, CS-5 and LS-5 zones to the 200,000 square-foot Highway Interchange (HI) zone that actually allows a mix of commercial and light-industrial uses.

In addition to the HI zone, industrial development is permitted in three industrial districts that range in minimum size and intensity from the 80,000 square-foot M-1 and MC-80 zones to the 130,000 square-foot LI-130 Zone. Industrial and commercial land makes up six percent of the land area of Stonington, with the Stonington Borough making up the difference at one percent of the total land area.

**New Luxury Home**

# Existing Zoning

Town of Stonington, CT


N
North Stonington
Ledyard
Groton
State of Rhode Island
Fisher's Island Sound
184
201
95
1
1A
Barnes Road
Stonington Road
Elm Road
Pequot Trail
Mystic Road
Wheeler Avenue
Liberty Street
Water Street
Pawcatuck Avenue
Greenhaven Road
Cutler Road
Cutler Avenue
Stony Brook Road
Stony Brook Road
Airport Road
Mystic Road
Mystic Road
Mystic

**Per Capita Expenditures**

| | |
|---|---|
| Waterford | $3,075 |
| N. Stonington | $2,673 |
| Salem | $2,567 |
| Ledyard | $2,337 |
| East Lyme | $2,272 |
| Groton | $2,270 |
| **Stonington** | **$2,218** |
| **State** | **$2,444** |

CT Policy & Economic Council 2000-2001

**Per Capita Property Taxes**

| | |
|---|---|
| Waterford | $2,742 |
| **Stonington** | **$1,773** |
| N. Stonington | $1,695 |
| East Lyme | $1,435 |
| Salem | $1,505 |
| Ledyard | $1,298 |
| Groton | $1,076 |
| **State** | **$1,612** |

CT Policy & Economic Council –2000-2001

**Per Capita State Aid**

| | |
|---|---|
| Salem | $887 |
| N. Stonington | $864 |
| Groton | $863 |
| East Lyme | $496 |
| **Stonington** | **$233** |
| Ledyard | $136 |
| Waterford | $110 |
| **State** | **$1,612** |

CT Policy & Economic Council –2000-2001

**Equalized Net Grand List**

ENGL estimates the market value of property in every town across the state for a given year, adjusting for varying revaluation dates.

# Fiscal Overview

## Expenditures And Revenues Are Changing …

On a per capita basis, Stonington spends at about the state average with the exception of public works and other expenditures which are higher than the state average. Education accounts for more than half of local expenditures at 58 percent or nearly 24 million dollars. These figures are for basic illustrative purposes only, as the fire districts and the Borough are separate taxing entities that are not reported here.

**2000 - 2001 Per Capita Expenditures Distribution**

| | Stonington | | Connecticut | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Education | $1,278 | 58% | $1,386 | 57% |
| Police | $154 | 7% | $162 | 7% |
| Fire | $1 | 0% | $93 | 4% |
| Debt Service | $187 | 8% | $181 | 7% |
| Public Works | $291 | 13% | $191 | 8% |
| Other Expenditures | $307 | 14% | $431 | 18% |
| **Total** | **$2,218** | **100%** | **$2,444** | **100%** |

Source: Connecticut Policy & Economic Council Note: Fire Districts and the Borough tax separately and are not reported by CPEC

Since Stonington receives less state-aid than the state average, it relies more heavily on property taxes to generate most of its revenue. In the future, it is possible that state-aid will decline and local reliance on property taxes will increase.

**2000 - 2001 Per Capita Revenue**

| | Stonington | | Connecticut | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Current Taxes | $1,773 | 80% | $1,612 | 69% |
| State Aid | $233 | 11% | $627 | 27% |
| Surplus | $16 | 1% | $39 | 2% |
| Other | $197 | 9% | $166 | 7% |
| **Total** | **$2,218** | **100%** | **$2,345** | **100%** |

Source: Connecticut Policy & Economic Council

## Tax Base

Stonington has a strong tax base and ranks 39th out of 169 Connecticut towns in terms of the property value per capita. In addition, about 25 percent of the local tax base consists of business property and Stonington ranks 54th out of 169 Connecticut towns.

**Tax Base Comparison**
(Ranked by 1999 per capita ENGL)

| | Per Capita ENGL | State Rank | | Percent Business | State Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Waterford | $266,576 | 6 | Waterford | 73% | 1 |
| **Stonington** | **$134,782** | **39** | Groton | 51% | 3 |
| East Lyme | $97,220 | 68 | **Stonington** | **25%** | **54** |
| No. Stonington | $91,588 | 80 | No. Stonington | 15% | 102 |
| Salem | $91,218 | 82 | Ledyard | 15% | 107 |
| Groton | $88,459 | 86 | East Lyme | 12% | 116 |
| Ledyard | $70,412 | 126 | Salem | 10% | 124 |
| **State** | **$96,546** | | **State** | **26%** | |

Source: Connecticut Policy & Economic Council