

# GUIDING APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT

## Overview

Portland is a desirable community and growth is expected to continue. How this growth is managed will have a significant impact on Portland community character and the quality of life for its residents.

*Portland seeks to guide development in ways that will address community needs and contribute to our character and quality of life.*

## Business Development



## Housing



## Town Center



## L. Promote Economic Development

Economic development is important to Portland in order to make jobs available for workers, offer goods and services to residents and visitors, and support a strong tax base to help fund local services.

Portland, recognizing that it has many unique resources, has determined to pursue an economic strategy that will continue to protect its valuable resources while taking important steps towards economic renewal.

***Continue to encourage and promote appropriate economic development.***

Business Development



## L.1. Support Existing Businesses

Portland has a number of existing businesses that already contribute to the community. These uses should be supported and encouraged to thrive.

This can be encouraged by:

- Maintaining relationships with local businesses and business organizations in order to understand issues and opportunities
- Identifying a Town staff-person or agency to be the “ambassadors” if local businesses have issues to be considered
- Maintaining a directory of local businesses
- Highlighting local businesses so that residents and other businesses are familiar with them
- Encouraging residents to “buy local”
- Continuing to allow appropriate home-based businesses

### Policies

1. Continue and enhance effort to support local businesses and encourage them to thrive.
2. Establish and maintain relationships with local businesses and business organizations in order to understand issues and opportunities
3. Identify a Town staff-person or agency to be the “ambassadors” if local businesses have issues to be considered
4. Encourage residents to “buy local.”
5. Continue to allow for appropriate home-based businesses.

### Action Items

6. Establish and maintain a directory of local businesses.
7. Continue programs to highlight local businesses so that residents and other businesses are familiar with them.

**L.2. Address Business Zones, Locations And Uses**

Having appropriate zoning regulations in place which encourage or allow compatible development is important in terms of supporting existing businesses and providing opportunities for new businesses.

**Strategies for the Industrial Zone (at the foot of the Arrigoni Bridge) and the Planned Industrial zone (at the intersection of Route 17 and Route 66) are discussed in the Priority Areas section of the POCD (page 27).**

**Routes 17 and 66**



**Routes 17 and 66**

Due to the limited number of bridges over the Connecticut River, Route 66 is a major traffic route carrying between 16,000 and 30,000 vehicles per day through Portland. Over the years, a strip development pattern has emerged along some sections of the roadway.

The POCD recommends that the Planning and Zoning Commission review the zoning and design guidelines for this area in order to improve development appearance and function. Encouraging access management (shared driveways, interconnected parking areas, etc.) and better landscaping will improve site design. Building design, signage and lighting guidelines will also help improve the appearance of this corridor.

Designating several specific areas for commercial development rather than allowing it along the entire length of Route 66 should be considered. In terms of uses, activities that would not be appropriate in a pedestrian-friendly village area (such as drive-through windows for banks and fast-food restaurants) could be allowed along Route 66.

## **Big Box Retail**

The prospect of “big box” retail development creates a conundrum for Portland.

On the one hand, a major new addition to the Grand List is a welcome event. The tax revenue generated by the proposed use will help support local programs and services and offer the prospect of tax relief. Depending on the nature of the store, the goods and services offered may expand local offerings and may be at lower prices.

On the other hand, such uses also have impacts that should be considered. There are only so many retail dollars to be spent and new stores only reallocate existing spending – they do not result in people spending more than they do already. In other words, if the new location captures dollars being spent at other stores in Portland, it is not a net benefit to the community. If the new location captures dollars from shoppers in other communities and brings them to Portland and there are new sales attracted to existing stores, it may benefit the community.

The design of such uses affects the appearance and character of the community. Such uses attract significant traffic and this affects the operation of nearby roadways.

Due to the desire to strengthen and enhance the Town Center and prevent the loss of Portland owned and operated businesses, this Plan recommends that “big box” retail establishments be carefully evaluated before being permitted.

<b>Policies</b>
1. Establish and maintain regulations which encourage or allow compatible development.
2. Carefully evaluate the impacts of “big box” retail establishments since such uses may harm efforts to strengthen and enhance the Town Center and may contribute to the loss of Portland owned and operated businesses.
<b>Action Items</b>
3. Review zoning designations and regulations for the land along Route 66

**Example Of Big Box Retail**

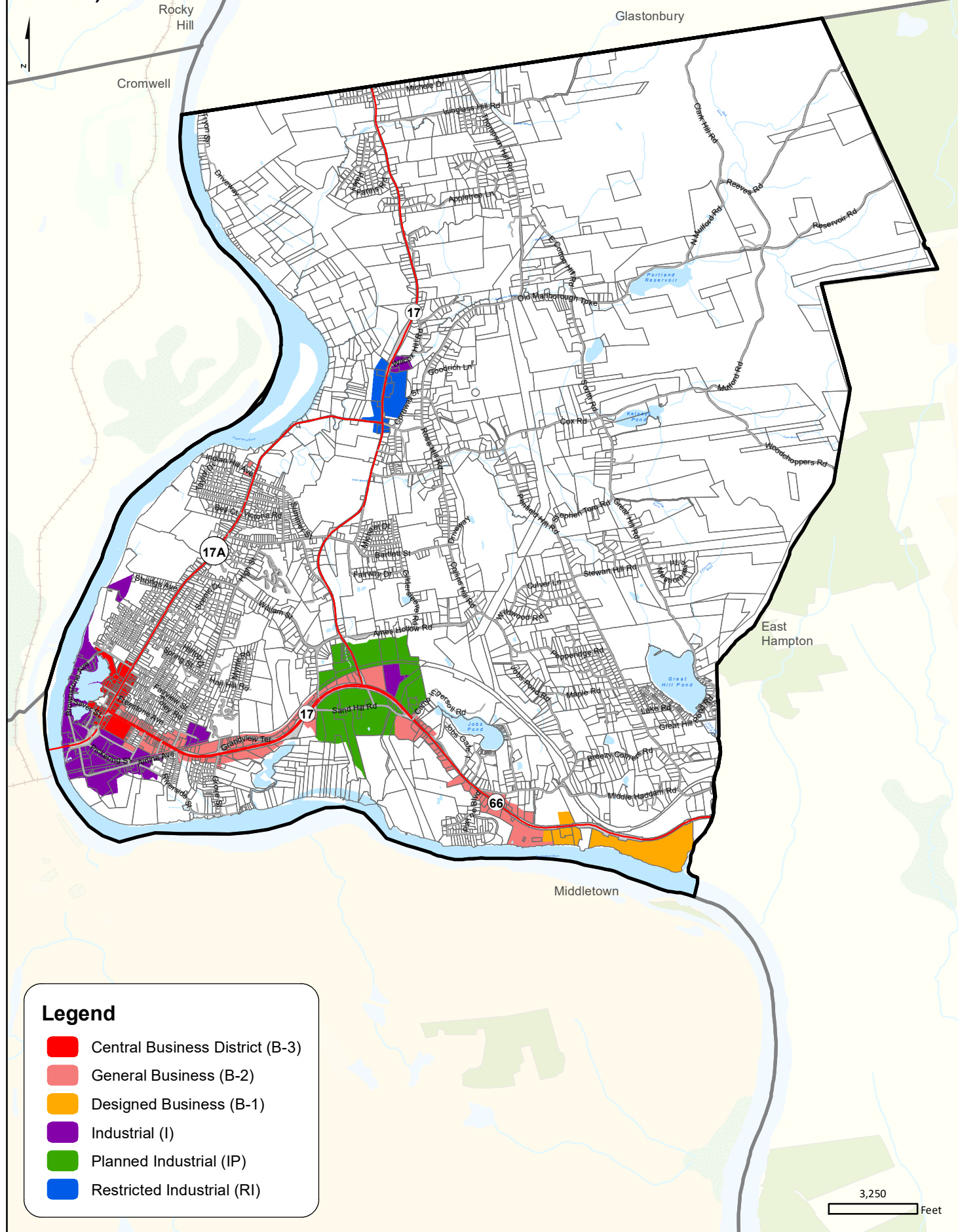


**Example Of Big Box Retail**



# Business Development

Portland, CT



## Legend

- Central Business District (B-3)
- General Business (B-2)
- Designed Business (B-1)
- Industrial (I)
- Planned Industrial (IP)
- Restricted Industrial (RI)

3,250 Feet

**L.3. Attract New Economic Development**

Portland should also promote new economic development in Portland that is compatible with the overall character of, and vision for, the community.

Within the Town Center, it will make sense to attract uses that support the vision for a vibrant, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly area. This could include small shops, small offices, restaurants, outdoor dining, and similar uses. Residential apartments could be located on upper floors to address housing needs and extend the activity level in the Center to more times of the day and days of the week. Opportunities for hospitality and tourist amenities are examples of businesses that build on current resources and amenities and should be pursued. Developing motels, bed and breakfast lodging houses, and inns are considered an integral component of the Town Center revitalization program.

In other areas of Portland, businesses will be attracted by the strategic location, available buildings or sites, market opportunities, available labor force, or other factors.

Economic development may also include uses other than business or industry. Institutional housing for the growing population of older people provides an opportunity for economic development since the tax revenue generated exceeds the cost of municipal services provided. This may include nursing homes, medical services, and elder care as well as age-targeted housing.

Tourism destinations and events (such as the Brownstone Discovery and Exploration Park and St. Clements Castle) provide opportunities to attract economic development as well.

Policies
1. Promote new economic development that is compatible with the overall character of, and vision for, Portland.
2. Consider promoting other forms of economic development such as hospitality, lodging, age-related housing and tourism.
Action Items
3. Identify historic, recreational, and sporting attractions for the Town through signage and markers.

**Industrial Use**



**Business Use**



**L.4. Support Economic Development Efforts**

Communities across the state and the nation are all seeking additional economic development for the same reasons as Portland. For Portland to be competitive in attracting new uses and activities, it has to be ready to support economic development opportunities that arise.

Some strategies to support economic development include:

- Maintaining an Economic Development Commission to advocate on behalf of economic development opportunities
- Maintaining economic development staff within the Town
- Maintaining tax incentives for businesses that build new buildings in Portland
- Simplifying the land use approval process when and where possible

Policies
1. Support economic development opportunities that arise.
2. Maintain an Economic Development Commission to advocate on behalf of economic development opportunities.
3. Maintain and consider expanding economic development staffing / functionality within the Town.
4. Promote the availability of tax incentives for businesses that choose to build new buildings in Portland
5. Simplify the land use approval process when and where possible.
Action Items
6. Implement actions to support economic development efforts.

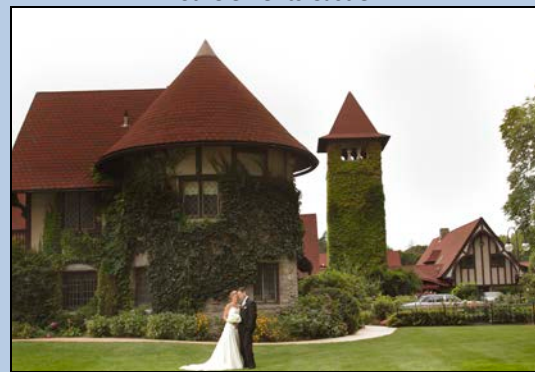
**CASE STUDY – St. Clements Castle**

Saint Clements Castle is a special events facility located along the Connecticut River in Portland. The facility is known throughout the northeast as a venue for weddings and other special events.

Originally built at the end of the 1800s as a private home, it has been converted to a special event facility and is a memorable place for the thousands of people who come there every year.

As a major attraction, it can help support and grow the local economy.

**St. Clements Castle**



**Connecticut River View**



## M. Guide Residential Development

Guiding residential development is an important consideration in the POCD since most land in Portland is zoned and used for residential development.

***Guide future residential development to protect important resources, reduce environmental impacts, manage fiscal impacts, and promote housing diversity.***

Residential Home



Residential Home



## M.1. Protect Existing Neighborhoods

Some of Portland's greatest assets can be found in its residential neighborhoods. Protecting the character and environment of these residential areas is one of the objectives of the POCD.

### Policies

1. Protect the character and integrity of residential neighborhoods.

### Action Items

2. Implement actions to protect existing neighborhoods.

Town Center Neighborhood



Rural Neighborhood





## M.2. Encourage Conservation Subdivisions

Section 9.2 of the Zoning Regulations allows for “conservation subdivision” design where a development is allowed to occur with more flexibility provided:

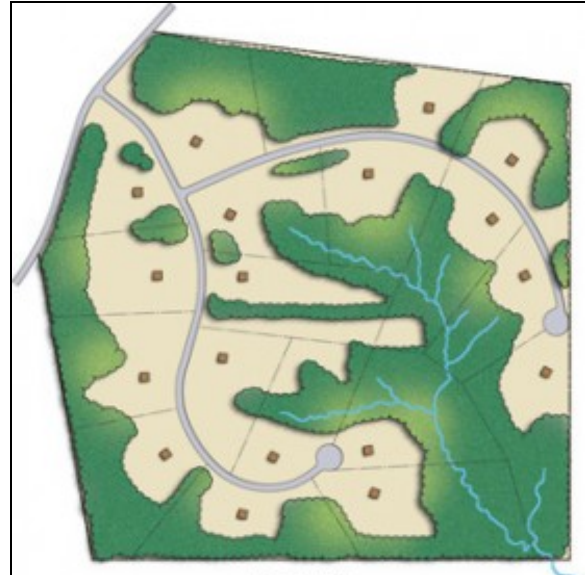
- More open space is preserved (at least 30 percent of the parcel),
- No more lots are created than would occur in a basic subdivision.

Portland may wish to consider requiring that conservation subdivisions be the “default” approach and that conventional subdivisions require a special permit.

Such subdivisions enable development while ensuring that more open space is preserved and that important resources can be protected.

Policies
1. Continue to encourage the use of conservation subdivisions.
Action Items
2. Consider requiring that conservation subdivisions be the “default” approach in outlying areas of Portland and that conventional subdivisions require a special permit.

**Conventional Subdivision  
(18 Lots With No Open Space  
And All Land In Lot Areas)**



**Conservation Subdivision  
(18 Lots With Extensive Public Open Space  
And All Lots adjacent To Open Space)**



### M.3. Manage Multi-Family Conversions

In areas in and near the Town Center, some of the once-stately houses were converted to multiple family residential units without careful regard to the impacts on the character or function of the area.

The Town has now adopted regulations (Section 9.3 of the Zoning Regulations) allowing such conversions under specific conditions intended to address:

- The number of units
- Number / location of parking spaces
- Utility requirements

These provisions should be reviewed to ensure their purpose is being achieved.

Impacts which result from conversions which predated these regulations (such as parking) may need to be addressed through local ordinance or other means.

Policies
1. Continue to manage the conversion buildings to multi-family uses within the Town Center.
Action Items
2. Review Section 9.3 of the Zoning Regulations to ensure the intended purpose is being achieved.
3. Adopt an ordinance to prohibit parking in the front yard on key streets unless approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Multi-Family Conversion

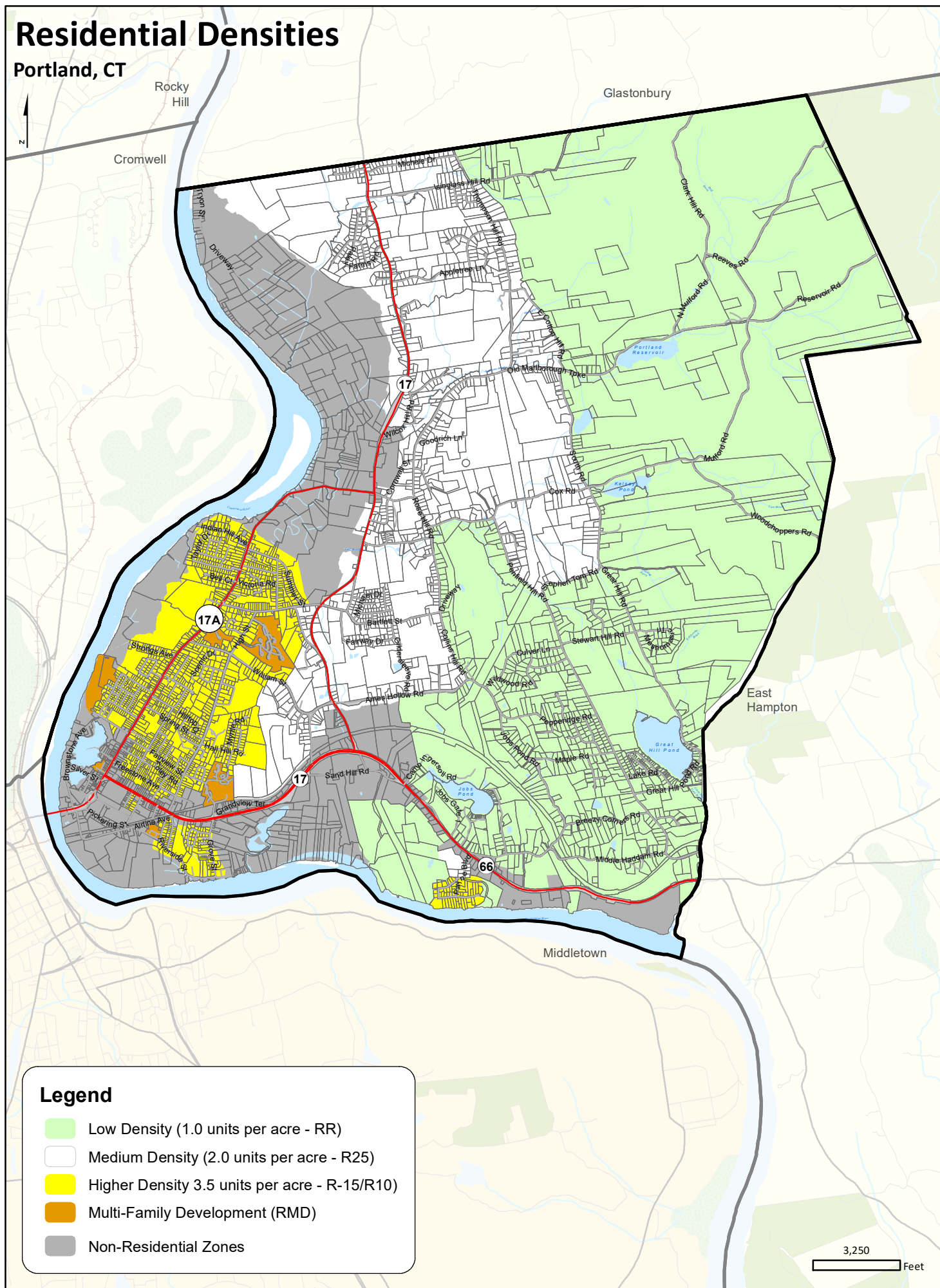


On-Street Parking



# Residential Densities

Portland, CT



#### M.4. Address Housing Needs

There are two housing needs that should be considered in Portland:

- Housing units suitable for an aging population, and
- Housing for moderate-income households and first-time buyers.

It is anticipated that these housing needs can best be accommodated in the Town Center due to the existing density of development availability of water and sewer infrastructure, availability of transit, walking distance to a variety of amenities, and other locational considerations. Such developments may be appropriate in other areas of the community as well.

##### Housing For An Aging Population

As Portland’s age composition changes and as the number of households comprised of older residents increases, experience in other communities suggests that there will be increasing interest in alternative forms of housing.

In the future, Portland should consider ways to provide for some housing diversity (condominiums, apartments, congregate care, etc.) designed to meet the needs and desires of older residents. There may also be increased interest in accessory apartments (allowed by Section 9.1 of the Zoning Regulations) and housing for income-limited elderly households.

For those people who choose to remain in their existing home, Portland might anticipate increased demand for elderly programs such as meals-on-wheels, dial-a-ride, and other services which allow these residents to maintain their relative independence.

There may also be increased interest and demand for elderly tax relief programs for age- and income-eligible residents.

##### Housing for a Diversity of Incomes

Portland may also have a need during the planning period for housing for moderate-income households and first-time homebuyers.

Some communities have addressed this need by the following types of programs:

- Developing affordable units
- Requiring all new residential developments to address housing affordability by creating units or paying a fee (“inclusionary zoning”)
- Charging an affordable housing fee as part of any zoning permit
- Establishing a “housing fund”
- Establishing an “incentive housing zone” as authorized by CGS Section 8-13m
- Working with Habitat for Humanity, churches or other organizations to construct small-scale projects

Portland may wish to consider similar approaches or other approaches.

Policies
1. Recognize the need for housing options for an aging population.
2. Recognize the need for housing options for a diversity of incomes.
3. Monitor the availability of adequate housing options for seniors.
Action Items
4. Explore ways to diversify Portland’s housing portfolio.