

## **PUBLIC NOTICE: INVITATION OF COMMENTS**

Pursuant to *Section 45-22.2-9(c)(2) of the General Laws of Rhode Island*, the Division of Statewide Planning hereby invites comments from the public, regional and state agencies, contiguous municipalities, and other interested parties regarding the local comprehensive plan document listed below.

**Town of Foster, Rhode Island  
Comprehensive Plan: 2022-2042  
ID#: FOS-CP-23**

*Posted April 12, 2023*

This Comprehensive Plan is currently under review by the State to ensure “consistency with the goals and intent established in the [Comprehensive Planning Act] and in the State Guide Plan.” The comment period shall extend for thirty days from the posted date. All comments should reference the **document title and identifier number**, and should be submitted to:

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# Draft - COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOSTER, RHODE ISLAND – 2022-2042



August 2022

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOSTER, RHODE ISLAND 2022-2042

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AOS	= Artist Open Studios
CAST	= Citizens and Students Together
CERT	= Certified Emergency Response Team
CHAS	= Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy
DHS	= Foster Department of Human Services
DPW	= Foster Department of Public Works
EDAC	= Foster Economic Development Advisory Commission
EMT	= Emergency Medical Technicians
FLT	= Foster Land Trust
FPS	= Foster Preservation Society
HUD	= U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
LMI	= Low- and Moderate-Income
MRF	= Materials Recycling Facility
NRHP	= National Register of Historic Places
OWTS	= onsite wastewater treatment systems
PTG	= Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School Parent Teacher Group
RIDEM	= Rhode Island -Department of Environmental Management
RIDLT	= Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training
RIDOT	= Rhode Island Rhode Island Department of Transportation
RIEMA	= Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency
RIHCC	= Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission
RIHPHC	= Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission
RIPTA	= Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
RISCA	= Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
RISPP	= Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program
SAMP	= Special Area Management Plan
SMCT	= Swamp Meadow Community Theatre
WAP	= State Wildlife Action Plan



## INTRODUCTION

*“Foster is rich in resources; historic houses, farmsteads, roads and mill ruins, and in the natural beauty of its setting; brooks, waterfalls, woods, swamps, and the plant and animal life they shelter. All of these resources are fragile, and most of them are non-renewable. All of them are threatened by development.*

*The Town’s rugged topography, generally poor soil, and small-scale streams, coupled with its isolated location twenty (20) miles west of Providence, have largely determined its historical and physical development, delaying the initial colonial settlement until about 1704 and town incorporation until 1781 and contributing to a period of decline and out migration which lasted from the late 1820s until the early 1950s. The location of the Town within easy automobile commuting distance to Providence and major employment centers has brought significant development pressure in the last decade.*

*The face of Foster’s landscape has changed dramatically in the last two hundred years. Originally covered with hardwood forests, Foster, by the early nineteenth century was almost totally cleared, a result of both agricultural endeavors and forest processing industries. Today much of the land has reverted to forest, and only the seemingly endless stone walls leading away from the roads, numerous scrub-grown cellar holes, and old photographs showing hayfields instead of trees indicate the extent of the change.*

*These hamlets and villages were linked to each other by a series of roads which turned and jogged around natural features; wetlands, rock outcroppings and farmer’s fields. Many of these roads have resisted modern straightening and about a third of them remain one lane wide and still unpaved; others are a minimal two lanes wide. Most are lined with stone walls and edged either by open fields or, more often, by fern – and wild flower – filled woods. They exist in relation to the land much as they did when first laid out in the last half of the eighteenth century (1700s).”*

– Foster, Rhode Island: Statewide Historical Preservation Report P-F-1 (1982)

## FOSTER TODAY

Though the pace of development has quickened in recent decades, change in the Town of Foster has occurred at a much slower pace than the rest of the county and state. This alone accounts for the richness and importance of Foster’s sense of place. It is not hard to view the entire town as an important and unique cultural landscape which retains the image and feel of an earlier time. This description is meaningful in that it is these qualities which Foster residents value more than others.

## PUBLIC SURVEY

Change then, did not occur until recently. This alone, accounts for the richness and importance of Foster’s sense of place. It is not hard to view the entire town as an important and unique cultural landscape which retains the image and feel of an earlier time of rural tranquility and quietness. This description is meaningful in that it is these qualities which Foster residents value more than others.

As in the prior developments of the Comprehensive Plan a survey was sent out to Foster residents. Two hundred and forty-nine (249) citizens participated in the 2012 Survey that is part of the history and tradition of our town. The survey was reviewed and prepared by the Planning Board, town employees and volunteers as an important part of our Comprehensive Plan’s development.

The following is a summary of the community’s responses to the nineteen questions included in the survey.

1. Less than 2% (two percent) of the residents of Foster rent;
2. Most Foster residents moved here with the last forty (40) years;
3. We are mostly parents and a couple of kids;
4. We proudly identify with the historical communities we live in;
5. All of us like having a piece of land here in the country where people leave us alone;
6. That's why we plan to spend at least seven (7) years to a lifetime here;
7. We support education and the arts and dislike government, taxes, development and traffic;
8. The only reason we would move is if we can retire to a warmer climate or can't afford our property;
9. We fear the loss of freedom generated by land ownership;
10. Foster residents consider farmland and wildlife most important; and farmland, wildlife and open space as our most threatened commodities;
11. We feel that Foster leadership should encourage moderate, managed growth;
12. Successful businesses in Foster should serve as a model for developing businesses;
13. Foster residents want Foster leadership to follow the comprehensive plan;
14. Most everyone likes the new General Business / Mixed Use zoning along Route 6;
15. We view ourselves as a rural community, sustained by volunteers and connected by dirt roads;
16. There is an aggressive interest in alternative energy as long as it is regulated and serves the best interests of the community;
17. We are generally pleased with our qualities of life; and
18. We would like to see road and bridge improvement.

Another Survey was conducted in the Spring of 2022 which received over 400 completed responses. That survey was prepared by the Planning Board and distributed online. The results of that survey does not conflict with the summary of responses found in the 2012 survey. Additionally, the 2022 survey has provided the following overarching values:

1. Foster residents value the rural character of the Town;
2. Specifically residents value a variety of aspects of rural character;
  - a. Natural darkness, quiet, clean air, clean water, cottage industry business, stone walls, scenic roads, wildlife, historic settings, and farmland;
3. Controlled and moderate development should be encouraged;
4. Residents value their high rated Town services;

## COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING IN FOSTER

The first Comprehensive Plan for the town was created in 1964 and was succeeded by the second Comprehensive Plan, which was completed in 1982. With the passage of the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act of 1989, however, the comprehensive planning process became more significant. The third Comprehensive Plan was completed in 1991 with the help of The Newport Collaborative, Inc., Vanasse Hangen Bristlin; Pare Engineering Corporation; Burk Ketcham and Associates; and Mount Vernon Associates. The 1991 Town Council, Planning Board and a Citizens Advisory Committee were all involved in the development of the 1991 plan. The fourth Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2003 and completed by the Planning Board with consultation from the Conservation Commission, Foster Preservation Society, the Public Works Director, other town boards and officials, and interested citizens. In both 2004 and 2006, this plan was amended when the Town Council approved, and then merged the Foster Affordable Housing Plan into the Comprehensive Plan's Housing and Neighborhoods element.

This current Comprehensive Plan is different from previous Comprehensive Plans as this Comprehensive Plan was developed and written to meet the statewide requirements listed in the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act (R.I.G.L. 45-22.2, et seq.) instituted in 2011 and 2012. Some of the changes the state instituted include a longer planning horizon of twenty (20) years –and the requirement that goals, objectives, policies and action items are reviewed every ten (10) years; however, the town always has an option to update its plan on a more frequent basis.

## **STATUS OF PREVIOUS GOALS**

Looking back to previous plans, one can see that the Town of Foster has managed to fulfill many of the major goals that were laid out. Between 1991 and 2003, various land use innovations called for in the 1991 plan were accomplished; most notable was the implementation of the Residential Compound Zoning Ordinance in February 1998. Some action items prior to the 2003 Comprehensive Plan included, but were not limited to, the construction of the South Foster Fire Station and the renovation of the Department of Public Works (DPW) garage.

The success of this current plan and all prior plans lies with the various members of the Town Council and Planning Board, the Town Planner, and many volunteers. Residents have utilized the various boards and organizations to keep the sense of place of Foster. This has been done while maintaining adherence to sound development practices, allowing for the potential of value-added agricultural homesteads and accompanying support services. The following is a status update on these goals.

### **Planning Official (Town Planner)**

In November 2006, local voters approved the position of Planning Official (Town Planner) to be included in the Town Charter. Under the Charter, the position's responsibilities include maintenance of the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, the Subdivision Ordinance, the Five-Year Highway Plan, short- and long-range planning, and such other duties as may be prescribed by the state or town. Shortly thereafter (May 2007), the community voted to bring the position to full time status. During the economic downturn in the late 2000s and early 2010s however, the Town Council voted to limit the number of hours the Town Planner may work to 20 per week. It was eventually increased to 24 hours per week. As of July 2021 the Town Planner position was re-instated to full-time, 35 hours a week.

### **Route 6 Rezoning**

Parcels along Danielson Pike (Route 6) were rezoned in September 2009 to a nodal type planned commercial development district after four years of research by the Planning Board which included town-wide input from multiple organizations, taxpayers and property owners. The purpose behind this change was to enhance community-oriented businesses in a compatible area rather than develop strip malls or large scale retail places. The Highway Commercial Zone was largely succeeded by a new General Business/Mixed Use Zoning District. General Business Mixed Use allows usage of the total parcel in question and allows a combination of businesses and residential uses on one parcel.

### **Conservation Development**

The Planning Board has worked to create conservation development for both Subdivision Regulations and the Zoning Ordinance. This will allow for defensible incentives to stabilize future growth, work within the frameworks of Affordable Housing Plans, statewide and local, while continuing keeping the environmentally sensitive lands of the town in their natural state.

### **Subdivision Regulations and Zoning Ordinances**

The Planning Board must bring subdivision regulations and zoning ordinances into compliance with this plan. Recently, there has been a widening in allowed uses related to small cottage type industries. The

hope is that as these small businesses are established and developed, they will enhance the independence of individual homesteads while strengthening the historical community hamlets that presently exist.

### **Economic Development Advisory Commission (EDAC)**

When the EDAC was first created, the intent was to make this commission a strong force for change in the business development structure. As a volunteer board, however, it has been difficult for the EDAC to act in such a capacity. All of their responsibilities have now been assigned to the Planning Official (Town Planner) due in part to the networking capabilities of this position and the need to have someone limit the town's liability.

### **Foster Land Trust**

The Foster Land Trust (FLT) has been very active over the past years, resulting in over 900 acres now under various management plans, its direct supervision, or collaborative plans with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), the Nature Conservancy, or the Audubon Society. A major emphasis has been on growing the Rhode Island Greenway area. Several volunteer groups work with the Foster Land Trust to maintain the North-South Trail, equestrian paths, and hiking trails for passive recreation. Many of the areas have significant environmental values and will be protected into the future.

### **Emergency Shelter**

The town installed a generator in Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School to allow students to shelter in place during times of turbulent weather. With the installation of the generator, the town was also able to certify the school as a Red Cross Emergency Shelter.

### **Affordable Housing**

Foster and the local community still must work towards the goal of providing affordable, quality housing for low and moderate income (LMI) families and individuals. While plans have been previously developed for the construction of a second deed-restricted affordable housing development, the purchase of the proposed site has not been completed.

### **Department of Human Services**

While working towards affordable housing, the town also serves its LMI and senior populations through its Department of Human Services (DHS). This department runs a food bank and provides emergency housing and heating assistance to residents in need, among other services. Portions of these programs were funded through Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs) which Foster, as a non-entitlement community, may apply for to the state. The Town of Foster continues to consider this funding a primary and important source to assist the community. DHS programs are currently funded through donations and other grants.

### **Libraries**

Following a vote in October 2007, the previously independent Foster Public Library and Tyler Free Library merged as the Libraries of Foster. In the decade that has passed, the organization has been seeking a central location to better combine the two libraries' resources and services. This project is supported by the community. The Library has identified land along Route 6, Danielson Pike, that may serve as a multi-purpose site for the inclusion of a new library as well as possible accessory businesses such as a coffee shop. The Library is working cooperatively with a local developer to obtain and draft plans have been completed. The next step is to receive site plan approval before proceeding with any funding and construction approval. It may be that location is not feasible the library will be considering and evaluating other sites in town.

### **Youth Athletic Field**

An athletic field aimed at providing recreation opportunities specifically for children and teenagers has been designed as a multi-phase project while the site for the field has been designated. Approval of the Green Economy Bond by the state electorate in 2016 has ensured funding will be allocated to the project for its establishment. The first phase began in 2017.

### **Police Department (FPD)**

The local police force increased by two officers (from eight to ten) in December 2013 while the Police Station has received upgrades to improve its energy efficiency. A building committee has also awarded a bid for the drafting of plans to construct a new police station. In recent years, the department has been successful in acquiring excess property from the United States Department of Defense (DOD) made available through the 1033 program (also known as the Law Enforcement Support Office [LESO] program). This program allows Foster's Police Department to apply for equipment, including machinery and vehicles, to assist in its public safety operations. When a piece of equipment surpasses its useful life for law enforcement activity (it is expected that the useful life of all equipment will be at least one year from the date of acquisition), it is possible to transfer the apparatus or material to the Department of Public Works.

The Town has partnered with the South Foster Fire Department to obtain a parcel of land on Route 6 which will serve as the future site of the Police Department and possibly other municipal functions. The town voted to approve a bond for construction of the police station at a Financial Town Meeting in 2021.

### **Department of Public Works (DPW)**

Facilities for the Department of Public Works (DPW), most notably its garage, have been updated through renovations. A salt shed has also been constructed to allow for better clearing of roadways during winter weather events for bicyclists and motor vehicle operators. As noted above, DPW has also recently received some equipment from the Police Department that is no longer needed for law enforcement.

Though Foster has come a long way since the writing of its first Comprehensive Plan, there is still much that needs to be completed. This plan provides a road map to where Foster should be in 2041.

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

For all aspects of Foster's future, from its services and facilities to its growing economy and particularly its natural resources, it is important to understand the characteristics of the people who will live, work and visit here over the next two decades. Estimating how the population is projected to grow and change is critically important to the decisions that will be made to ensure water supply, wastewater, food, energy, recreation, housing and health and safety meet the needs of the community. This chapter provides necessary understanding by presenting and analyzing historic data and anticipated future conditions.

### **Current Conditions**

The United States Bureau of the Census is responsible for identifying the official population of the United States on a decennial basis (conducted during years ending in '0'). As of 2010, the population for Foster was 4,606. This was a notable increase from 2000 and a reverse of the negative growth between 1990 and 2000 which had interrupted several decades of increasing population. Even while returning to growth, however, Foster remained the third least-populated community in Rhode Island and the least populated in Providence County – a stark contrast to the state capital located just 20 miles east.

In addition to basic counts, the US Census also collects information on social and socioeconomic demographics as well as housing, finances, and labor-related data. While the 2010 Census and future censuses will no longer (at this time) collect the same level of information as the 2000 Census and previous censuses, the American Community Survey (ACS) provides unofficial estimates on much of this through a timelier publishing schedule than once every ten years.

### Age

The median age of residents in 2010 was 44.8 years. This was several years older than Rhode Island's median age of 39.4 (as well as Foster's own median age in 2000) and was like other rural towns including Exeter and neighboring Glocester. The table below presents Foster's population by age in groups commonly used to represent different generations.

**Table 1: Age Groups, 2000 to 2019<sup>1</sup>**

	2000	2010	2015-2019
Under 18 years	1,105	986	1,012
18 to 34 years	621	649	766
35 to 49 years	1,294	1,172	846
50 to 64 years	807	1,208	1,190
65 to 84 years	391	516	815
85 years and over	56	75	84
Total	4,274	4,606	4,713

Looking at the official counts (2000 and 2010) of these age groups, this table may present the reason for the community's median aging. The population aged 50 years and over increased by 545 residents, with nearly one out of every four of these residents being between 50 and 64 years, while the population aged 49 years and under fell by 213. The 18 to 34 years' age group was an outlier in this general trend however, growing slightly since at least the new millennium. American Community Survey (ACS) estimates for the period 2015-2019 indicated little change in overall population, a loss in population aged 35 to 49 years, and a gain in the population aged 65 to 84 years. Although the 2020 Census has been completed, information specific to Foster is not expected to be available until later in 2021 and in 2022.

### Race, Sex and Ethnicity

Foster was one of only six communities in the state with a majority male population as of the 2010 Census (50.43 percent), though the difference between the female and male populations was insignificant at less than one percent. Previously, in 2000, the female population held a slight majority of 50.09 percent. After 2010, as the ACS for the 2015-2019 period estimated the female population as 50.84 percent of the total.

<sup>1</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2010 Census, and 2015-2019 ACS

The combined non-white population identifying as a single race showed limited growth, in contrast to the female population, increasing from 1.38 percent of the total population in 2000 to 2.22 percent in 2010 (Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander was the only single race to decrease in number over the decade). The Hispanic/Latino population also experienced minor growth and retained its status as the largest single minority among any race or ethnicity at 1.26 percent. Out of these demographics, the male, female, American Indian and Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander populations closely reflected the demographic profile of Rhode Island. The Black or African American, Asian, some other single race and Hispanic or Latino populations were comparably smaller components of total population in Foster than in the state however.

### **Household Characteristics**

Households are a basic and important component of any city or town, serving as a foundation which society is structured and built on. Defined as the number of housing units with one or more occupants, the number of households is always equivalent to the number of occupied housing units in a place. Foster had 1,707 households at the time of the 2010 Census, of which 1,302 (76.27 percent) were families and 405 (23.73 percent) were nonfamilies. The average household size was 2.68 persons and 99.50 percent of the local population resided in a household (meaning, conversely, 23 people lived outside of a family or nonfamily).

### ***Families and Nonfamilies***

Households are identified as families when they contain at least two people related to one another by adoption, birth or marriage. The 2010 Census included three sub-family categories: husband-wife families, female householder with no husband present and male householder with no wife present. A large majority of families in Foster (84.02 percent) were husband-wife families while a minority (38.79 percent) included children under 18 years old. The average family size was 3.05 persons. Households with only one occupant or no occupants related to any other occupants by adoption, birth or marriage are nonfamilies. More than three out of every four nonfamilies in Foster (78.77 percent) consisted of residents living alone.

### **Employment and Income**

The economic recession which occurred in the later 2000s had a particularly strong and extended impact on Rhode Island and its municipalities. The following figure shows the shifts in industry employment which occurred among civilian workers aged 16 years and over from Foster between 2014 and 2019, as estimated by the ACS.

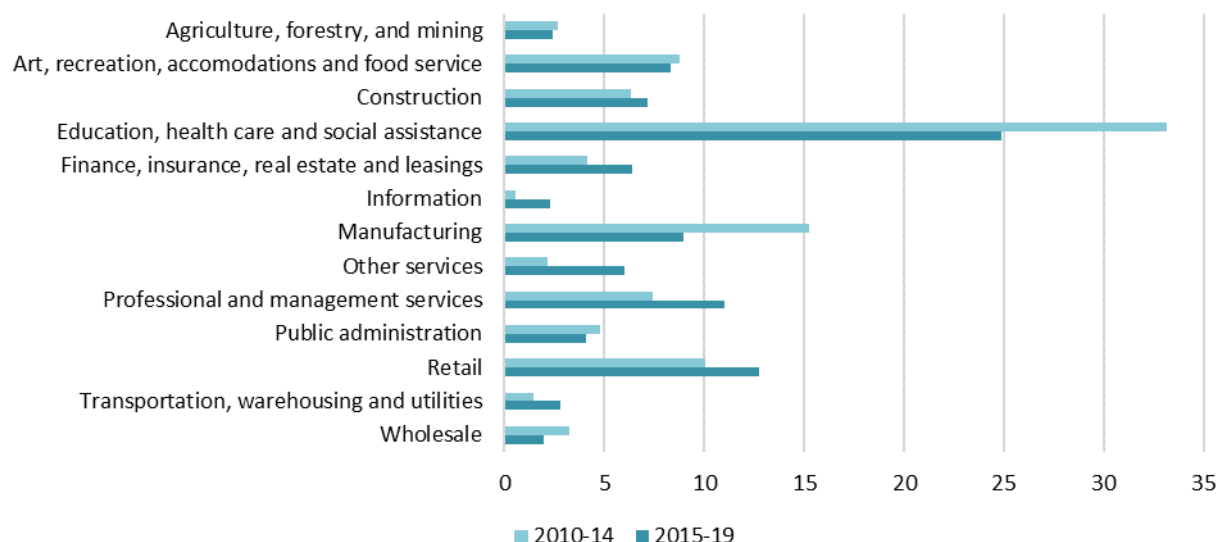
**Figure 1: Percentage of Workers in Each Industry<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup> Source: 2010-2014 and 2015-2019 ACS



## Town of Foster, RI Comprehensive Plan



The ACS 2019 5-year estimate of total workers living in Foster is 2,647. Between the two five year periods, there was an estimated increase of 104 workers. Because the ACS data are estimates based on a relatively small sample size for Foster, the margin of error is relatively high for some of these estimates. Nonetheless, the “education, health care and social assistance” sector remains the largest employment sector for Foster residents, accounting for about 25% of employment (665 jobs). Retail and professional / management services each account for over 10% of Foster resident employment. Employment of Foster residents in other employment sectors appears relatively diverse and stable.

For 2015-2019, the ACS estimated the annual median household income (MHI) for Foster as \$89,844 (2019 inflation adjusted value) placing it among the highest MHIs in both Providence County and Rhode Island. Households making \$75,000 or more in 2010-2014 were about 54 percent of all households at that time while households making \$75,000 or more in 2015-2019 were about 58 percent of all households. For comparison, wages and benefits for private sector workers in the Northeast increased by about 17 percent between January 2014 and December 2019 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Cost Index).

## Population Projections

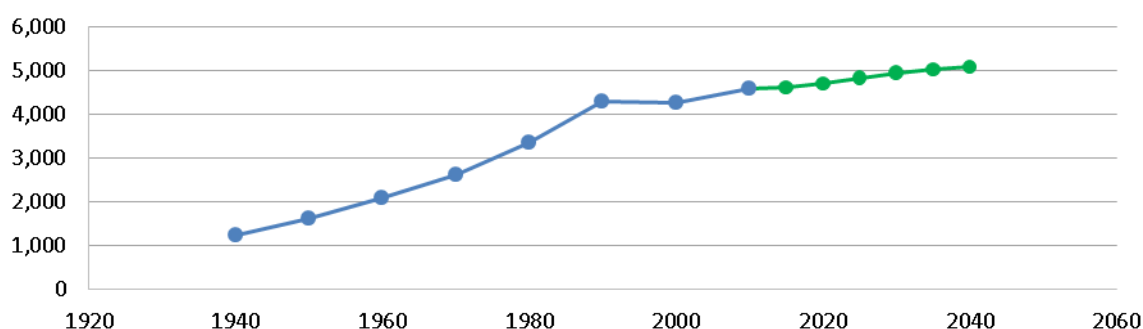
### *Projections, 2015-2040*

As noted previously, the population of Foster was officially 4,606 in 2010. Although another official count was conducted in 2020, the US Census Bureau has not released the data for Foster at this time. provided more recent numbers for the population. An official Census estimate for 2015 was 4,698.

In 2013, the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program (RISPP) prepared population projections for all 39 municipalities in addition to demographic projections at the state level. In comparison to the official Census estimate, RISPP projected Foster’s population to be 4,632 in 2015, slightly more conservative than the Census estimate but also conducted two years previously. Further projections by RISPP were made at five-year intervals out to 2040, three years beyond the timeframe of this plan’s focus. In 2040, the population was projected to be 5,101. Figure 2 presents an overview of Foster’s historical (blue) and projected (green) population growth over a century stretching from 1940 to 2040.



Figure 2: Foster Population Growth<sup>3</sup>



The net addition of 495 people expected in Foster from 2010 to 2040 will be the smallest increase (10.75 percent) of any thirty-year period since at least 1940-1970. The 1980-2010 growth rate was 36.68 percent and the 1940-1970 growth rate was 112.29 percent. While it is highly unlikely RISPP's projections will perfectly match future official counts, they reliably present trends expected in the coming years. Preliminary 2020 Census data for RI show a slightly higher total population than projected.

### Population Changes, 2015-2040

In its future population modeling, RISPP found migration to be the predominant factor in statewide population change. A total of 23,247 migrants will enter Rhode Island at some time between 2015 and 2040. Many will choose to reside here permanently, expanding the state's social diversity but not reversing the contemporary trend of aging in the 2020s and early 2030s. Asian and Hispanic/Latino populations, which commonly have larger family sizes than the white population, will lead this migratory growth as well as growth among other traditional minority groups. These changes will be reflected in every city's and town's future populations, including Foster. Considering the town was projected to have a net increase of only about 500 residents between 2010 and 2040, however (Providence, in comparison, was projected to have a net increase of more than twenty-five times that), it is not expected that local demographics will change considerably.

### Age

In considering the effects of migration, this plan also reviewed geographic mobility and found Foster to be a generally sedentary community. Residents living in the same home one year ago amounted to 93.62 percent of Foster's population over the age of one, which was very close to estimates for other rural communities including Exeter, neighboring Glocester and Little Compton. Looking beyond a one-year timeframe, 55.92 percent of householders were estimated to have moved into their current home prior to 2000 while less than 10 percent had moved since the start of the 2010s. It may also be of interest to point out that geographic mobility was consistent among all age groups, including the population aged 18 to 34 years (of which 91.45 percent had continued to stay in town from one year prior). Notably, this age group also made up more than a third (36.95 percent) of the new residents who did move to Foster from outside the town. This was a greater portion than even the total of new residents aged 45 years and over (29.49 percent).

From the same source, however, Foster was also estimated to have a notably low fertility rate. Based on the number of births in the past 12 months, the 2010-2014 ACS estimated there were only 20 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 50 years old. This was the seventh lowest rate in the state and the lowest in the county (both ranks were shared with the Town of Smithfield). While the small influx of young adults

<sup>3</sup> Sources: US Census Bureau and Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program

had some negating effect on current age structure, this is temporary. The youngest of 2014's 18 to 34 years old population will be 39 years old in 2037 while many will have surpassed 50 years old. In the same year, well over half of the 2010 population (61.05 percent) will have reached 65 years old. Among them, at least 931 persons will have also surpassed the life expectancy of the average Rhode Islander in 2013-2014, 79.9 years.

### *Assessment of Projected Conditions*

Recognizing and understanding Foster's residents is critical to assessing all the areas of planning encompassed in the subsequent chapters of this plan. From the historical and projected trends in the local population, the Town of Foster is growing at a more manageable rate than it has in past decades. While a notable portion of this is contributable to younger generations, the senior population continues to grow.

### *Changes in Households*

Because Foster has an aging population, the number of resident retirees is likely to increase and the number of households occupied by elderly residents on fixed incomes is also likely to increase. This can be expected to increase demand for elderly and low income tax relief as more and more people qualify for existing tax relief programs. It may also lead to an increase in single person households as one or the other members of a two-family household either relocates to assisted living arrangements or passes away, leaving the property with only one occupant. More than overall population growth, shifts in household size and composition shape housing demand. A change in the age and income of householders affects housing demand.

## NATURAL RESOURCES, CONSERVATION, AND RECREATION

- ❖ INTRODUCTION
- ❖ EXISTING CONDITIONS
- ❖ NATURAL RESOURCE ASSESSMENT
- ❖ OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
- ❖ GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Foster's natural resources consist of surface and groundwater, wetlands, woodland, and shallow bedrock. These resources provide scenic and recreational space and a variety of plant and animal habitat. Foster's woodlands and wetlands protect the headwaters of four distinct drainage basins, ensuring abundant clean water supplies for both the Town of Foster and communities supplied by the Thames, Pawtuxet, Quinebaug, and Scituate Reservoir watersheds. The latter of these is especially important as it serves as the primary water supply for over 530,000 residents in the state. This chapter identifies the natural resources of Foster, describes the issues faced in protecting them, and the town's existing and planned goals and policies.

Forests and farms are essential to the rural character of Foster. Foster is blessed with a cacophony of sounds produced by activities related to forestry and farming, hunting and the native animal inhabitants. There is very little other auditory pollution. The town's precious natural resources provide the context for this country quiet and therefore it is important to protect this distinct environmental quality. Foster's quality environment is also largely free of light pollution. Foster has one of the best dark sky environments in the northeastern United States, allowing excellent astronomical observation. For this reason, Jerimoth Hill – Rhode Island's highest natural point (812 feet) – has been used by Brown University as an area for astronomical observation. As dark skies are relatively rare in the state and southern New England, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management successfully acquired the property in autumn 2014 for future protection. Brown University will continue to be allowed use of a portion of Jerimoth Hill for astronomical studies until at least 2065.

### Relationship to Other Chapters

Foster's natural resources are essential to economic development opportunities for the community. The primary natural resource-based economic activity for Foster is agriculture. This Comprehensive Plan considers natural resource based economic activity in the Growing Economy chapter is feasible and desired, and incorporates this priority economy in the Land Use chapter.

Fresh water is another natural resource which is a priority of this plan in terms of its availability and quality. Foster's continued efforts to preserve the community's natural resources are necessary for the long-term sustainability of a potable water supply; the natural systems within the town, as might be expected, are all related and connected. Natural resource preservation is discussed in this chapter as it applies to conserving areas that will support water quality and water supply goals.

The protection of natural resources from natural hazards is an essential component of this Comprehensive Plan. In Natural Hazards chapter, this plan describes the potential effects of natural hazards on Foster's natural resources and the way Foster is planning for these eventual changes.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Natural Resources

Foster's natural resource strengths consist of its agricultural land, water resources, forests, wildlife habitat, open space, and scenic views, as well as low noise pollution and dark skies. Many of these resources benefit from their location within the Scituate Reservoir watershed where there are constraints which allow protection from potentially destructive impacts resulting from development. Strong local support, as identified in the survey of 2012, is also beneficial to protecting natural resources.

At the same time, however, natural resources lying outside the Scituate Reservoir watershed can be adversely impacted by new construction and related activities. Foster is a small town with limited finances and municipal staff available for countering development pressures. At the same time, the maintenance and protection of at least one natural resource – the water quality of the Scituate Reservoir – is imposing a financial burden on Foster residents due to the Providence Water Supply Board's reluctance to pay adequate taxes on watershed land.

Presently and soon, Foster can craft conservation and industrial development zoning to preserve large contiguous tracts of land for open space and wildlife habitat protection and to provide maximum protection for its remaining natural resources. Until such regulations are drafted and adopted however, the local natural environment remains susceptible to development and poor land use practices. Invasive and overpopulating species will remain constant threats to our natural resources as well.

### *Rare Species and Key Habitat Areas*

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) most recently revised the state's Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) in 2015 with assistance from the University of Rhode Island (URI) and The Nature Conservancy. In its revision, fourteen of the state's 36 key habitats were identified as being present in Foster:

- Agricultural lands
- Deciduous forested swamp
- Freshwater emergent marsh
- Inland pond and river shore
- Lake
- Mixed oak/pitch pine forest
- Mixed oak/white pine forest
- Northern hardwood forest
- Northern peatlands
- Oak forest
- River
- Ruderal grassland/shrubland
- Seeps, springs and vernal ponds
- Shrub swamp/wet meadow

These habitats together supported over 200 rare species statewide, including 55 bird, 16 fish, 13 herpetofauna, 98 invertebrate, 11 mammal and 12 plant species. The RI Natural Heritage Program compiled a list of rare species and exemplary natural communities in Foster, with the location of occurrences noted. The following were listed as rare species habitat areas of particular interest within Foster:

- The area surrounding Hemlock Brook (primarily a well-developed, mixed hemlock-deciduous forest) provides critical habitat for several rare species of birds in Rhode Island. Threats include logging and development of adjacent uplands. Protection of this forest-wetlands system is strongly urged.
- The subterranean spring system throughout the Jerimoth Hill area supports rare herpetofauna. Although The Nature Conservancy has initiated protection efforts through their program of private areas registry, further development and diversion of water are still threats.
- Parker Woodland, owned by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, supports several rare species. The expansion of this preserve through the protection of adjacent parcels would enhance its viability by buffering outside disturbances as well as increasing the topographic, microclimatic and floristic diversity.
- The mixed deciduous woodland just west of Round Hill, interspersed with small intermittent streams and seeps, supports a variety of rare flora. Development of this area is the most prevalent threat.

The Wildlife Action Plan identifies seven small areas considered to be of very high value due to the threatened or endangered species observed but these have little regulatory protection. These areas should be targeted for conservation.

### *Areas of High Scenic Value*

Fourteen areas in town were catalogued in the Rhode Island Landscape Inventory (1990) by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM). These areas are considered distinctive or noteworthy on a statewide rating. In addition, the Foster Conservation Commission and other citizens have noted areas of high scenic value and interest which they have determined reinforce the identity of the town. These areas include those which may not have been catalogued by RIDEM staff but are known by local residents and property owners.

### *Natural Boiling Springs*

This one acre aquatic site, undisclosed by request of the property owner, is a habitat area of unusual significance to a fauna community. Unlike in most springs, these waters appear to surface from underneath rather than from the side. This causes sand on the bottom to continuously turn over and tends to maintain the water temperature at an almost constant level year round. As a result, trout can be seen throughout the year. While there are no human-made structures in close proximity and the site is undisturbed, there is also open exposure to possible damage. Additional information on this site can be obtained from the Audubon Society of Rhode Island.

### *Honey Pot Swamp*

This area of about 30 acres is actually a thick sphagnum mat bog surrounded by swamp areas and traversed by several trails. The central sphagnum mat is the most interesting feature as it supports a good growth of native black spruce trees. Some of these have reached considerable size and reproduction appears healthy. Pitch pine, a species normally found in dry, desert-like conditions, is also thriving here. The area is a habitat for a diversity of wildlife as well. A portion of its western edge has been filled by one of its owners to create pastureland for cattle, indicating that this area should be protected.

### *Uncommon Vegetation*

A ten-acre site consists of a young forest of mixed hardwoods. The forest floor is the site of an unusual variety of herbaceous plants not commonly found in Rhode Island. Plants such as hepatica and perfoliate bellwort are here along with many other species indicative of a rich habitat. Many boulders,

undoubtedly of glacial origin, make walking in the area difficult and perhaps contribute to the environmental conditions that allow the growth of these unusual species. The trees are mostly of black and yellow birch, beech, and dogwood – trees usually found in mesic conditions. This area shows promise of developing into a prime biological community if left undisturbed for several more years.

#### Hemlock Swamp

The 100 acre Hemlock Swamp, named for an extensive stand of hemlock trees existing along both sides of Hemlock Brook, also contains a very old stand of red pines. The area extends north from Foster Center (once called Hemlock) along the brook for a considerable distance. The forest is quite dense in spots and a wide variety of herbaceous plants are found in this rich area. Although it is not far from residential areas and Foster Center, it still retains a remote and pristine nature. The area is known to have otter and other wildlife along the brook. To the east of Hemlock Swamp, beyond a hill and behind a cemetery, is a red pine plantation that is purportedly the oldest stand in Rhode Island. Some of the specimens are of considerable size and show reproduction. This area as a whole is an important forest and wetland community.

#### Isthmus Road

This scenic gravel road traverses the ledge of a reservoir and offers scenic vistas of ledges and covers along the water. The road is surrounded by an attractive landscape encompassing an area of about 500 acres; forests, small coves, high ledge outcrops and inlets of the Westconnaug Reservoir can all be seen. An additional feature along this road is the localized growth of balsam fir seedlings. Several of these, uncommon for this area, have been seen along the road. The area is noted for its wildlife, which includes plentiful population of minks and otters. No portion of the road should be improved and only minimum development, if any, should take place along Isthmus Road.

#### Gabbro Outcrop

This five acre open farmland site contains an unusual gabbro outcrop in the middle of an old field visually interesting due to rapid decaying and weathering that is resulting in much of the material being broken down into smaller pieces. Fringed gentian and other unusual plants grow near the outcrop. A dedicated effort should be made to protect this area's rural quality.

#### Native American Settlement

This large Native American rock shelter is under one of the largest glacial boulders in the state. Several found artifacts indicate the area was used as a camping site or other temporary shelter. The site is in the state-owned Ponagansett Fishing Area.

#### Shagbark Hickory Trees

Although not a pure stand, this 25-acre forest is dominated by shagbark hickory trees, generally uncommon in the state. Some have reached considerable size. The area is divided by Ponagansett Road and both halves are owned by the Providence Water Supply Board. This makes the area relatively safe from potentially negative environmental impacts.

#### Ostrich Fern

This one acre site possesses a stand of ostrich fern and is one, of no more than four, such sites in Rhode Island.

#### Hemlock Road

Hemlock Road is an undeveloped and unpaved road crossing between Foster and neighboring Scituate, Rhode Island. Most the road is on land owned by the Providence Water Supply Board and passes by

coves and an inlet of the Barden Reservoir. It is also one of only two sites in Rhode Island where a unique species of rattlesnake plantain is found. The town does not seek to pave the roadway.

#### **Tulip Trees**

This 30 acre site is reported to have previously been the location of several species of rare and unusual plants. While much of this original vegetation is no longer found here, a section of this area does have a large forest dominated by tulip trees in healthy condition which makes it the most extensive tulip tree site within Rhode Island. For this reason, and the apparent loss of previously existing rare vegetation, its future protection is merited.

#### **Paine Brook**

A five-acre forest and portion of Paine Brook is a scenic, significant and unusual land/water interface with hemlocks. Paine Brook is a small tributary or feeder brook which eventually joins larger waters to empty into the Barden Reservoir. Paine Brook is situated north of Route 6. It is a very scenic section with hemlock and white pine bordering the stream.

#### **Water Resources**

Two-thirds of Foster drains to the Scituate Reservoir, a regional public water supply. Both inside and outside the reservoir's watershed are valuable streams and rivers that are important to the town's scenic qualities and natural habitats. All residents rely on groundwater for potable water. Many of these water resources are connected; all can be threatened by inappropriate development or poorly designed or maintained septic systems. Although the water quality in the town is generally good, there have been localized problem areas (groundwater contamination) and indications of potential problems (apparent degradation of ponds). Federal, State, and local agencies regulate many of the resources and constraints. However, current regulations, including local regulations, should be improved to provide better protection of the natural resources. Federal and State regulations may not always be applied or enforced consistently. Many of the town's current regulations do not apply to frontage development or do not focus on protecting specific resources.

#### **Natural Resources and Natural Resource Areas**

##### **Bedrock Outcrops**

Bedrock outcrops and shallow bedrock are found throughout the town. Bedrock outcrop soil complexes were mapped together with the steep slope soil units. Outcrops pose moderate constraints, potentially interfering with septic system function, building and road construction, and use of land for crops. However, while not appropriate for dense development, such sites can be developed with proper engineering and review.

##### **Steep Slopes**

Steep slopes occur throughout the town, many associated with shallow bedrock and outcrops. Most steep slopes are between 15 and 30 percent slope, and a few small areas exceed 30 percent. Steep slopes represent a moderate constraint to development, posing potential problems of erosion and improper septic system function. Careful site design and review can minimize threats to resources. Where steep slopes occur near streams, they represent the highest risks of sedimentation into aquatic habitats.

##### **Soils**

The Soil Conservation Service has defined five groups of soil constraints for use by Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS). Group A represents a relatively low level of constraint, possibly including stony soils, or soils with slow or rapid permeability. Group B includes soils with a water table



from 18 to 42 inches from the surface, containing areas where the water table is high. Group C includes steep slopes and rocky soils. Group D includes hydric soils, where the water table is at or near the ground surface for a significant period during each year. Group E designates dumps, beaches, and other unusual features.

- Group A soils present relatively little constraint and make up 33 percent of the town area. These generally occur in the northeastern one third of Foster (within the Scituate Reservoir watershed) and the southwestern corner.
- Group B soils make up approximately 34 percent of the town area, occurring along Howard and Cucumber Hills and extensively in western Foster. These soils present moderate constraints. The possibility of a high water table indicates a greater potential for groundwater pollution from improperly designed or poorly functioning septic systems. In addition, these soils may contain federally regulated wetlands. Again, such areas may be developed with careful engineering and town review.
- Group C soils occur in 12 percent of the town and are discussed above under steep slopes and rocky soils. They occur on Oak Hill and south of the hill, between Cucumber and Howard Hills, and south of the Westconnaug Reservoir.
- Group D soils occur as narrow bands along streams and in identified wetlands. Comprising approximately 18 percent of the town area, they represent a high level of constraint. Hydric soils generally indicate the presence of regulated wetlands. Structures, including septic systems, are generally not permitted in such soils.

### Forests

Over 80 percent of the Town of Foster is currently forested, in part due to much of Foster's agricultural land reverting back to woodland over the past 50 years. An extensive acreage of forested land is actively managed by the Providence Water Supply Board as watershed protection for the Scituate Reservoir water supply. Other forested lands in the southeastern and northern areas of the town are owned and managed by conservation groups (including the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, The Nature Conservancy, and the Foster Land Trust) for wildlife and habitat preservation and passive recreation. Several private local landowners are also managing their forested land as tree farms for wildlife and habitat preservation, passive recreation, and economic potential.

### Wetlands

The National Wetlands Inventory and the USDA Soil Conservation Service mapping (Group D soils) were used to identify the general location of wetlands. These are considered areas of high constraints to development and high ecologic importance because of their value for habitat, groundwater recharge, and surface water storage and filtration. They are generally regulated by state and federal agencies. Most wetlands in the town are associated with the stream systems and floodplains. Especially diverse or unusual wetland complexes were identified from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory maps and highlighted as being of very high importance. These areas occur along the Moosup River and Hemlock Brook and south of the Barden Reservoir and include marshes and scrub shrub or evergreen wetlands.

### Floodplains

Floodplains generally occur in narrow bands near streams and rivers, with some isolated or larger floodplains identified in wetlands. Floodplains represent high constraint to development due to the risks of septic system failure, water pollution, and erosion. They serve an important role in limiting downstream flooding during storm events. Floodplains occur along the Ponagansett River, Hemlock Brook, West Meadow Brook, and the Moosup River and its tributaries.



### Surface Water

The Scituate Reservoir Watershed and its two feeder reservoirs – the Barden and Westconnaug reservoirs – dominate much of Foster. The Scituate Reservoir watershed roughly occupies the eastern two thirds of the town.

The other drainage systems in Foster are the Moosup River/Quanduck Brook (draining to the Thames River in Connecticut), Killingly Pond (draining to the Quinnebaug River in Connecticut) and the Flat River Reservoir system (draining to the Pawtuxet River). According to reports by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), the streams flowing into the Scituate Reservoir meet Class A standards but are threatened by pollution from development. The Moosup River system is considered a highly valuable pristine system. State and federal regulations help to protect the quality of surface waters and the Scituate Reservoir is further protected by the Providence Water Supply Board's ownership of land next to the reservoir.

### Groundwater

The town relies entirely on wells for its drinking water and does not have any groundwater resources as defined and mapped by RIDEM that have a high potential to be significant public drinking supply sources. However, the town does have outwash deposits that may yield a source of drinking water for small-scale public systems. Rhode Island has not mapped any significant aquifers in Foster. Limited outwash deposits generally occur in major river valleys. They are well suited to supply or recharge public water, as water moves quite freely through these deposits, but they are also easily polluted. A large deposit underlies and surrounds the Barden and Westconnaug reservoirs, Paine Brook, and Foster Center. Other relatively large outwash deposits are in southwestern Foster and the Moosup River Valley. The town also contains several public wells (those serving 25 or more residents or 15 or more people per day). The state's Rules and Regulations for Groundwater Quality requires protection areas to be centered on each public well, with a radius ranging from 1,750 to 3,133 feet depending on the pumping rate. The wellhead protection zones and outwash deposits are considered high constraints. Their use or potential use as public water supplies should be protected with strict performance standards or other land use controls.

### Agricultural Lands and Soils

Soil surveys of Rhode Island are conducted by the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service and the state Division of Planning to identify prime farmlands and other soils of statewide significance. Prime farmlands are those soils which have features most suitable for farming while other soils of statewide significance are generally those which are nearly prime farmland and produce high yields under acceptable conditions or are designated for agricultural production by state law. Clusters of agricultural soils of prime or statewide importance occur in the Moosup River Valley and along Winsor and Hemlock brooks. They represent approximately 12 percent of the town's area. Many of Foster's active farms occur on important agricultural soils. Most of the farms are currently accessory uses on residential lots.

### Conservation Areas

Although the majority of undeveloped land within Foster is under private ownership, including some valuable scenic and natural areas, many properties are protected from future development. These include:

- Town-owned properties, including Green Acres (currently closed due to pollution from nearby agriculture), section 6(f) (developed for recreational use with federal Land and Water Conservation funds) and properties owned by Foster Land Trust.
- Audubon Society of Rhode Island properties, including Parker Woodland

- Properties registered with the state and town under the Farm, Forest and Open Space Act
- State-owned properties, including Shippee Pond and Ponagansett River areas
- Providence Water Supply Board properties

### *Foster Land Trust*

The Foster Land Trust (FLT) is established by the Town Charter with the authority to acquire, hold, and manage real property and interest therein (including development rights) situated in the town for protecting, managing, and preserving natural areas, forest land, farm land, aquifer recharge areas, rivers, streams, and swamps. FLT currently protects more than 900 acres in areas throughout town.

Table 2: Inventory of Foster Land Trust Properties<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Source: Foster Land Trust March 2021

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Name	Address	Plat	Lot(s)	Acreage
Maurie Dunbar Acres	Cucumber Hill Road	001	022B	17.37
Briggs	Moosup Valley Road	002	027	8.1
Tikkanen	49 Kennedy Road	004	020	44.8
Martins	Kennedy Road	004	023B	8.0
Walker	South Killingly Road	008	001	20.8
Gen. Albert E. Chagnon	South Killingly Road	008	002	18.0
Delvecchio	Tom Woods Road	010	029A	10.3
Delvecchio	Tom Woods Road	010	029B	88.68
Grass	Shippee Schoolhouse Road	013	005 A	84.9
Newsome, James	East Killingly Road	013	014D	9.16
Sainio	Shippee Schoolhouse Road and Tom Woods Road	013	065	74.8
Schneider	Tom Woods Road	013	066	157.7
Sainio/Lepaoja	18 Shippee Schoolhouse Road	013	068	5.0
Lapolla	Shippee Schoolhouse Road	013	070	118.0
Spencer-West	Paine Road	014	015	12.5
Spencer	Old Danielson Pike	015	001	158.0
Hopkins	Danielson Pike	015	048	25.0
Hayfield Management Area	Winsor Road	017	039B	109.14

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<b>Total Acres, Fee Simple Ownership</b>				<b>954</b>
Merriman	Howard Hill Road & Briggs Road	005	046A, B & D	40.0 (easement only)

Key properties under FLT's ownership are Spencer, Hayfield, and Hopkins:

- Spencer: perhaps the most well-known FLT property, it includes more than 150 acres on the north side of Old Danielson Pike with a small parking area and entrance west of pole 64. The property was donated to FLT in 1999 by Marjorie T. Spencer and her family in memory of Dr. Robert Spencer.
- Hayfield: the property includes over 100 acres on the west side of Winsor Road. The frontage runs from its northeast corner, opposite pole 54 where the entrance is located, to its southeast corner at the stone wall near pole 43. The land was acquired through a deed transfer from The Nature Conservancy in 2001. Three trails have been recently established. Parking is available on and off street parking is available.
- Hopkins: the property includes 25 acres accessible via an entrance at the Hopkins Mill Cemetery parking area on Rams Tail Road. The property was secured in late 2008 with assistance from The Nature Conservancy, Champlin Foundations, and RIDEM grant funding. A half mile trail leads to the old McLaughlin bridge, at the confluence of the Dolly Cole Brook and the Ponagansett River, which is currently a beaver dam.

The Ponagansett River Corridor Greenway (also referred to as the North-South Trail) acquired land from the Tom Woods Road Preserve as part of this state greenway parcel. The Greenway is composed of property held by the Nature Conservancy, Audubon, and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) and presently includes about 600 acres.

Ponagansett River Corridor Greenway/The North -South Trail on Tom Wood Road passes through four Land Trust properties:

1. Sainio: acquired in 2006 with assistance from The Nature Conservancy, The Champlin Foundations, the Doris Duke Foundation, and a DEM Greenways grant, this property includes 77 acres and is located on the northeast corner of Tom Wood Road and Shippee Schoolhouse Road. It is part of the North Foster Greenway.
2. Schneider: Another large holding, the Schneider property, includes 158 acres on the north side of Tom Wood Road that is also part of the North Foster Greenway. The land was acquired in 2004 with assistance from The Nature Conservancy, Champlin Foundations, the Doris Duke Foundation, and a DEM Greenways grant.
3. LaPolla: the 101.8 acre property was acquired in 2007 and abuts the Schneider and Sainio properties. It is also part of the North Foster Greenway.
4. Delvecchio: The 75 acre parcel was acquired via a deed transfer from The Nature Conservancy

The natural resources of the town are also used for outdoor recreation. Foster residents and visitors enjoy nature through hunting and fishing, boating, swimming, bird watching, hiking, snowmobiling and cross country skiing in natural areas. Natural resources are a priority for conservation, because of their recreational values and because these forms of recreation enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors.

## *Conservation Regulations*

### **Current Regulations and Programs**

Federal, state, and local agencies have regulations which cover many of these resources and should be improved to provide better, more consistent protection and enforcement. While this may be difficult at the federal and state levels, many of the town's current regulations do not focus on protecting specific resources.

### **Federal and State Regulations and Programs**

Many of the inventoried natural resources are regulated in part by federal and/or state agencies, including wetlands, floodplains, and water quality. FEMA requires municipalities to regulate development in floodplains according to FEMA standards so property owners may qualify for flood insurance. The state's septic system requirements address soil limitations, slope, depth to water table, and distance to wells and its wellhead protection program requires protection areas to be designated around public wells.

Federal and state regulations are a basis for protecting natural resources but their regulations may not be consistently applied or enforced by agencies. At the same time, these regulations may also not always be adequate to protect sensitive natural resources from the impacts of development. RIDEM has the authority to prevent the alteration of a wetland but cannot prevent land use impacts within the watershed from having an impact on the water quality and wildlife of the wetland. In many communities, there is an over reliance on federal and state regulatory programs to protect resources that should or must be protected at the local level. The 1991 adoption by the Rhode Island General Assembly of the Zoning Enabling Act explicitly granted communities the authority to protect certain natural resources that would have been questionable or not possible to regulate through zoning in the past. Efforts to protect natural resources through zoning restrictions have been subject to challenges by the RI Builders Association who have promoted state legislation to exempt development from mandatory wetlands setbacks, require that slopes not be omitted from density calculations, and require onerous notification procedures for any zone changes potentially affecting development density.

### **Municipal Regulations and Programs**

The town's zoning and subdivision regulations currently require minimum size lots and specified setbacks from lot lines and streams. While the density of development that these regulations dictate is appropriately based upon the "carrying capacity" of the land, there is a need for additional alternate development patterns which would enhance environmental protection. Existing subdivision regulations require delineation of wetlands, watercourses, natural habitats, slopes, and site suitability for septic systems.

Foster has a commercial/industrial site review process which includes requirements on runoff, erosion control, delineation of wetlands and floodplains, site suitability for septic systems, and protection of water quality and habitats.

Foster has an erosion and sedimentation control ordinance which applies to multiple residence developments and any land clearings over five acres. Oversize agricultural/residential lots and wetland lots receive a discount on property taxes.

More specific zoning guidelines are needed that address specific natural resource concerns.

Currently Foster has noise control regulations that restrict noise to within an owner's property boundaries during certain hours of the day. Foster allows shooting ranges in AR zones, but does not permit gun stores.

There is no lighting ordinance although the Planning Board includes evaluation of impacts of lighting in the development plan review process.

## ***RECREATION***

### ***Recreation in Open Spaces***

Resulting from their abundance in the community, natural resources are commonly relied on for outdoor recreation. Our residents enjoy local opportunities to hunt, fish, boat, swim, bird watch, hike, snowmobile, cross country ski, and snowshoe at locations throughout the town. Natural resources are a priority for conservation, because of their recreational values and because these forms of recreation enhance the quality of life for residents.

### ***Other Recreation Programs***

The Town of Foster's Recreation Department is comprised of a director who works with a volunteer Recreation Committee to advocate for recreational and community activities for all residents, such as youth athletics. Fun and educational activities to enhance the quality of life for children and families living in Foster include or have included:

- Supporting and funding organized, non-profit sports programs for children
- Maintaining the Woody Lowden recreational facility, which includes basketball courts, a football/soccer field, a walking/running track, the Mike Polouski Baseball Field, and indoor activities
- Co-hosting an "Easter in the Valley" egg hunt
- Hosting an annual Halloween Dance at Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School, the St. Patrick's Day winter celebration, cookie swaps, summer movie nights, swimming at the YMCA, skating at the Smithfield Ice Rink, adult volleyball games, bus trips, community yard sales, and the little farmers play area at the Foster Old Home Days
- Offering courses in numerous areas including yoga, zumba, floral arranging, and others
- Supporting the Young at Heart seniors and the Summer Concert series

All these events have been sponsored by the Recreation Committee in partnership with groups and organizations including the Libraries of Foster, the Old Home Days Committee, and the Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School Parent Teacher Group (PTG). Sport activities including soccer, T-ball, baseball, basketball and volleyball are also sponsored by the Recreation Committee.

The Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School's grounds offer a playground, walking trails and indoor Volleyball.

Other activities and events taking place in town are held by many non-public organizations, such as:

- Boy Scout Troop 101
- Cub Scout Pack 101
- Girl Scouts and Brownies
- National FFA Organization membership and activities available through Foster-Glocester Regional School District
- 4-H Club held at the Moosup Valley Grange

- Young at Heart program

Trips to different events and sites provided by the Recreation Committee are open to all Foster residents.

### North South Trail

The North-South Trail is a scenic hiking trail connecting Rhode Island's coastline in Charlestown to the state line with Massachusetts in Burrillville and crossing through the Town of Foster. The trail is about 80 miles in length and is directly connected to the 95-mile-long Midstate Trail in Massachusetts. By this extension, the North-South Trail also connects to the 21 mile Wapack Trail in New Hampshire. Along with hiking, there are also opportunities to bike, birdwatch, cross country ski, and hunt on the trail. Camp sites can also be found along the trail.

### Recreational Resources

The Town of Foster presents the following assessment of its recreational resources based as a means of identifying current resources, the existing need for these resources, and possible future demand for additional resources.

Publicly-owned parks and other outdoor recreational areas, publicly operated indoor recreational sites such as schools and community centers and privately-owned parks and other outdoor recreational areas are significant in meeting Foster's recreational needs. Important recreational properties in Foster are included in the following table.

**Table 3: Recreational Resources**

Recreational Resource	Uses	Ownership	Municipally Owned and Managed	Acreage
Jeremoth Hill	Hiking, Scenic View	Public	--	2
Shippee Sawmill Pond	Fishing	Public	--	3
Hopkins Mill Pond	Fishing	Public	--	23
Isaac Paine School	Playground, Basketball	Public	Yes	16
Philips Youth Athletic Fields	Baseball, walking path	Public	Yes	7
Borders Farm	Agricultural preservation, hiking, community garden	Public / Private	--	198.41
Foster Town House Field	Fairgrounds	Public	Yes	5
Foster Country Club	Golf	Private	--	180

## Town of Foster, RI Comprehensive Plan

Woody Lowden Rec Center	Recreational Center, Basketball, Baseball. Soccer, playground	Public	Yes	11
Green Acres	Fishing, canoeing, walking path	Public	Yes	8
Dyer Woods Campground (nudist)	Camping	Private	--	200
Ginny B Campground	Camping	Private	--	115
Highland Rod and Gun Club	Firearms, hunting	Private	--	62
Thornton Beagle Club	Hunting	Private	--	56.3
Cranston Fish and Game	Hunting, Fishing	Private	--	100
Parker Woodland Audubon	Hiking	Nonprofit	--	279
Pine Tree Gun Club	Firearms	Private	--	22
Ponaganset Fishing	Fishing	Public	--	70
Ponaganset High School*	Baseball, Soccer, Football, Track and Field, Tennis, Lacrosse	Public	Yes (school operated)	8
Vasa Park Campgrounds	Camping	Private	--	40
Whippoorwill Campground	Camping	Private	--	35

*\*Ponaganset High School, although located just over the border in Glocester, is counted as part of Foster's Recreational Resources, because of the shared regional Foster-Glocester School system which provides such resources to Foster Residents and paid for in part by Foster tax dollars.*

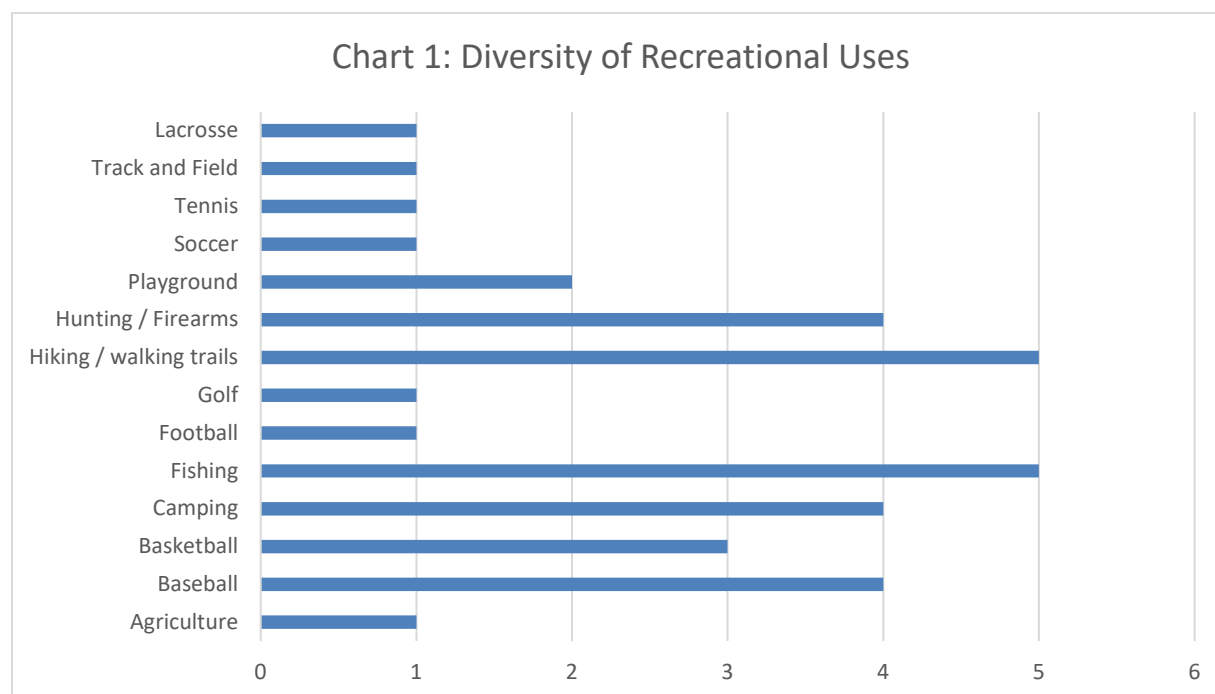
Foster has a total of 1,440.71 acres of recreational land use. That total includes public land owned by the state, the town, and the Foster Land Trust. The sum also includes privately owned land such as campgrounds and gun clubs. The town manages a total of 35 acres as indicated by the table above, which only equates to approximately 2.4% of the total recreational land.

The total land area dedicated to privately owned recreational land is 1,018.71 acres. That total accounts for approximately, 70.22% of all recreational land. The Total area of publicly owned recreational land is 145 acres (not including RI Audubon) which equates to approximately 9.95% of the total land. The Rhode Island Audubon Society is a nonprofit organization and owns a total of 279 acres dedicated as the Parker Woodland Wildlife Refuge. The Parker Woodland Wildlife Refuge is accessed through Coventry, Rhode Island and has several additional contiguous acres located in Coventry. Parker Woodland Wildlife Refuge accounts for the remaining 19.23% of recreational land.



### Assessing Recreational Needs

Chart 1, describes the diversity of Recreational Uses available to the town. Comparing all uses available, Hiking and Walking trails (5), Fishing (5), Camping (4), Baseball fields (4), and Hunting and Firearms (4) are the highest number of represented uses. The lowest number of represented uses are track and Field (1), Agriculture (1), Golf (1), Tennis courts (1), Soccer (1), Football (1), Lacrosse (1) and Playgrounds (2).



### Suitability of Current and Future Needs

The regional Ponaganset High School which serves the communities of both Glocester and Foster is located just over the border in Glocester. While Track and Field has only 1 location at the high school that is a use that is typically only utilized and associated with High School Athletics and does not require more than one per high school. The same is usually true for Lacrosse. Additionally, though tennis is noted as having 1 location for that use, Ponaganset high school has a total of 6 courts. During the Spring of 2021, there has been increased demand for softball fields, and the local high school has at times played on the Youth Athletics Fields, which is a town owned park facility.

Per the Director of Recreation, who manages non-school activity sports, there has been no shortage of space available to provide for the needs and demands of the town's organized sports. As noted with the example above if field space is taken up at the High School, the new Philips Youth Athletic Fields has recently provided the additional space needed.

Per the School Superintendent, there is a lack of field space for to serve middle school sports for tennis, soccer and softball. Those team will regularly use the High School fields. The only organized sport in which the town does not have dedicated recreation space in Foster or Glocester is ice hockey. The High School Ice Hockey team travels to Burrillville to get ice time for practices and exhibitions. There is also no pool located in the high school, but at this time the high school does not offer a competitive or club level swim team.

Foster shares a large portion of its sports programs with neighboring towns. Families typically decide which neighboring town sport to play when there are multiple options available. Below is a list of all the organized sports in Foster:

- Tritown Football
- Scituate Foster Little
- league
- Gloucester little league
- Scituate girls softball
- BGYSA recreation soccer
- Scituate youth soccer
- PGBA - girls
- PBA - boys
- Basketball is Foster Gloucester league

The town's recreational resources provides for adequate use and space for all the above mentioned leagues.

As noted in the Demographics chapter, Foster's median age of residents in 2010 was 44.8 years, while the number of residents under 18 years old shrank from 2000 to 2010, and as measured for the 2019 ACS. Additionally, the projected population does not predict Foster will exceed 5,000 residents until 2040. That's only a difference of approximately 500 residents over the next 20 years. That's roughly 25 additional new residents to Foster every year for 20 years.

The data available suggests that although the population may increase somewhat over time there is likely to not be an increased demand for school athletics given the decreasing school-aged population. Additionally, if the trend towards an older aging population continues, then there may become an increased demand for other types of recreational services for seniors and adult leagues.

### *Access to Recreation*

Foster is defined by its large tracks of open space and forest as opportunities for recreation while providing some amenities to residents for more active use recreation. Generally, the open space resources that are most prevalent in town is large deciduous forested areas. Much of that and is privately owned.

Although there are certain areas defined more specifically within town such as Foster Center, Hopkins Mills and Moosup Valley, Foster is not typically characterized by distinct, walkable, interconnected neighborhoods. Residents are accustomed and expected to drive to destinations. Instead, assessing access to a variety of recreation opportunities needs to be evaluated based on the Town's needs rather than physical location. See section above "Assessing Recreational Needs.

Foster does not have any sidewalks or bike lanes along any road in town nor any bike racks at any of its facilities. Pedestrians, dog walkers and joggers often travel in the street and share space with vehicles and bikes. The gravel and dirt roads in town are conducive to low-speeds and shared use. The paved roads in town are narrow and would be classified mostly as rural local roads, per the US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration.

The town has one traffic light located at the intersection of Route 6 and Route 94. There is a Yellow “Yield” light at the intersection of Route 6 and Cucumber Hill Road at the Connecticut Boarder. Given the network and rural character of the existing road infrastructure in Foster, it is expected that most people will travel by car to any and all recreational activities. The town does provide for adequate parking at each facility and there is currently no excess demand for parking.

Regarding alternative access beyond car use, there are five (5) recreational assets that intersect or are immediately adjacent to the North-South Trail including Green Acres, Foster Country Club, Dyer Woods Campground, Borders farm and Little Rhody Vasa Park. That is an example of how those resources may be accessed by alternative means.

Route 6, Danielson Pike, serves as the town’s main corridor and is the only area which specifically provides for a mix of uses, incorporating both business and residential, defined by the General Business Mixed Use Zoning District. There are a few recreational resources that are accessible and in close proximity to Route 6, those include Little Rhody Vasa Park, Pine Tree Gun Club, Youth Athletic Fields, Captain Isaac Paine School, Hopkins Mill Pond and Ram Tail trail. Route 6, although classified as a mixed use corridor, it is throughway that is defined as a state numbered highway which caters to uses that are demand larger tracks of land and/or highway traffic such as solar farms, car dealerships, motels and gas stations. However, Shady Acres Diner along Route 6 does provide a playground for families who may be dining. Otherwise, recreational uses intended to serve a neighborhood are not necessarily conducive to highway traffic.

#### *Distribution of Recreational Resources throughout Town*

Regarding the distribution of recreational resources throughout the town, Foster has an abundance of dedicated Open Space as well as recreational assets that are well distributed throughout town. From the Parker Woodland Wildlife Refuge as the southerly municipal border to Jerimoth Hill at the Northwesterly corner of town, Foster has a multitude of options for either passive or active recreation. For active recreation the town includes the Woody Lowden Recreation Center, which includes Baseball, Soccer, Football and a community center, then north to Ponaganset High School which provides for a large portion of the organized sports.

Closer to the geographic center of the town, Foster has recently begun development and completed the first phase of the Philips Youth Athletic Fields, located on Foster Center Road. The Athletic fields currently have a baseball/softball field, walking trail and associated parking. The second phase will include tennis courts, basketball courts, a football/soccer field, and extension of the existing walking trails.

The only playgrounds noted in the town are located at the Captain Isaac Paine School and the Woody Lowden Rec Center. The Paine School is located toward the center of the town closer to Route 6, while Woody Lowden is located near the Southerly boundary of the town. There are other privately owned playgrounds such as one located at Shady Acres Restaurant on Route 6.

With the exception of the resources that are located at the town’s two regional schools, which are meant to be utilized by the students and visiting athletes, there are no resources in town that are specifically intended to serve an immediate neighborhood. All resources are generally open to the public at large and intended to serve the entire community, even neighboring municipalities. There are no sidewalks or dedicated bike lanes within Foster.

#### *Improving Access*

The Foster Land Trust owns many acres of open space throughout the town, some of which contain trail heads and fishing holes. While the Foster Land Trust provides signage on its properties and maps online which show the location of designated parking, much of the town's trails and passive recreational areas may be under-utilized due to lack of parking, or parking signage in the field.

Though some properties such as the Hopkins Mill Pond and Maurice Dunbar acres provide a formal parking area, much of the Trust's parking access is to park alongside the roadway. Given this, it is unknown if there is overflow parking for any of the passive recreational areas. However, all of the town's formal active recreation areas provide adequate formal parking areas which are easily identifiable.

The Land trust recently obtained grant funding to help with improvements at its Maurice Dunbar Acres location. The funding will assist the Trust with improving the parking lot currently at the site. This will improve access to the site and allow for more residents to enjoy the Land Trust's property.

### *Natural Hazards*

Most of the Recreational Resources are located outside of the 100 year flood zone. Of the mapped resources, the only uses that are within the flood zone are ones that are reliant upon water to support its main activity such as Hopkins Mill Pond, Shippee Mill Pond and Green Acres. Of course much of the existing recreational resources are susceptible to standard inclement weather such as heavy rains, damaging winds and hail, especially where there is infrastructure in place. Baseball fields are especially susceptible to erosion from heavy rains as infields can be washed away requiring remediation to restore the field.

### *Potential Expansion of Recreational Facilities*

Foster does not have a significant cluster of higher density housing in any portion of the town. The minimum lot size requirements is 4.57 acres with a frontage of 300 feet. This provides for very low dense residential use across over 90% of the town's land.

The most highly dense area in Town is the vicinity around Foster Center because of the location of Hemlock Village Senior Housing which is also within a ¼ mile of a 5-unit multifamily. Foster Center is already home to other resources such as the library, the Police Station, Town Hall, The Old Town House and the Foster Town House Field. This is potentially a good location for active recreational use such as a playground given its current function as a small village and municipal center.

However, the Library is currently evaluating a potential relocation to a property along Route 6, and the Town was approved for funding to construct a new Police Station at the intersection of Route 6 and Route 94. Given the current use of Foster Center and the potential new uses along Route 6 it would be prudent to evaluate potential expansion of recreational resources on or in the vicinity of Route 6 near the a potential site for the new library, or any near any new site the library chooses for relocation as well as in Foster Center to accompany the existing uses.

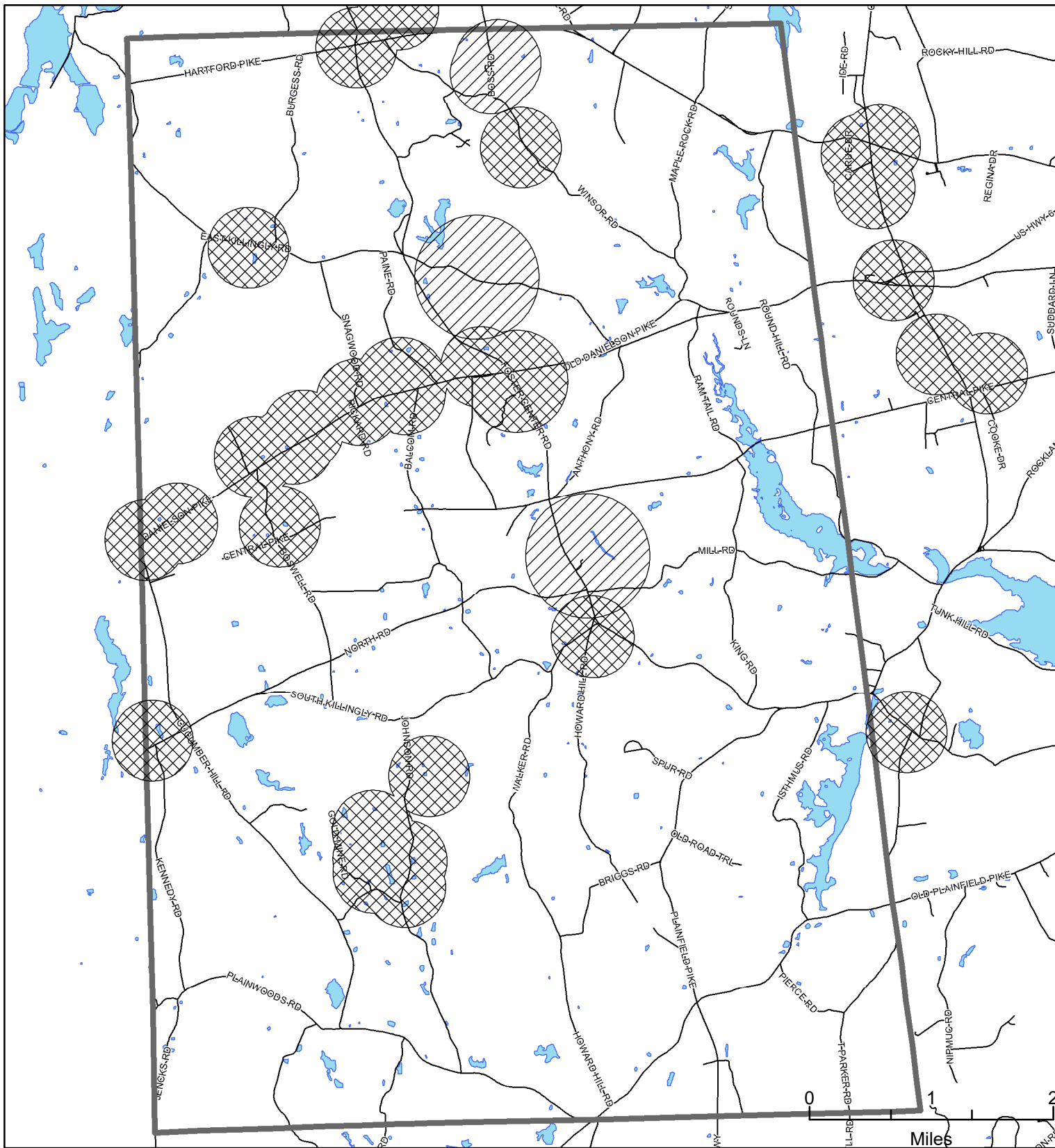
The largest demand for new expanded facilities will likely come from the schools if there is a surge in students in the coming years. Current data does not support that as a likely scenario given the reduction in school aged residents. However, as discussed before, there could be an increased demand for passive recreation for an aging population. If so, the town should consider Foster Center a priority site for expansion of facilities that cater to that need, given its proximity to Hemlock Village.

***Natural Resource Areas Maps***









Foster's natural resources were extensively mapped for the first and second comprehensive plans (Environmental Inventory and Overlay Analysis). Additional features and elements have been added as part of the mapping conducted by the Scituate Reservoir Greenspace and Water Protection Strategy in 2007, and based on work conducted as part of this Comprehensive Plan.

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**Figure 3: Map 1: Aquifers and Wellheads**



## Aquifers and Wellheads

- |  |   |   |                      |
|--|---|---|----------------------|
|  | Non-community Wellhead Protection Areas |  | Foster Town Boundary |
|  | Community Wellhead Protection Areas     |  | Roads                |
|  | Groundwater Recharge Areas (none)       |  | Lakes & Ponds        |
|  | Sole Source Aquifers (none)             |   |                      |
|  | Groundwater Reservoirs (none)           |   |                      |

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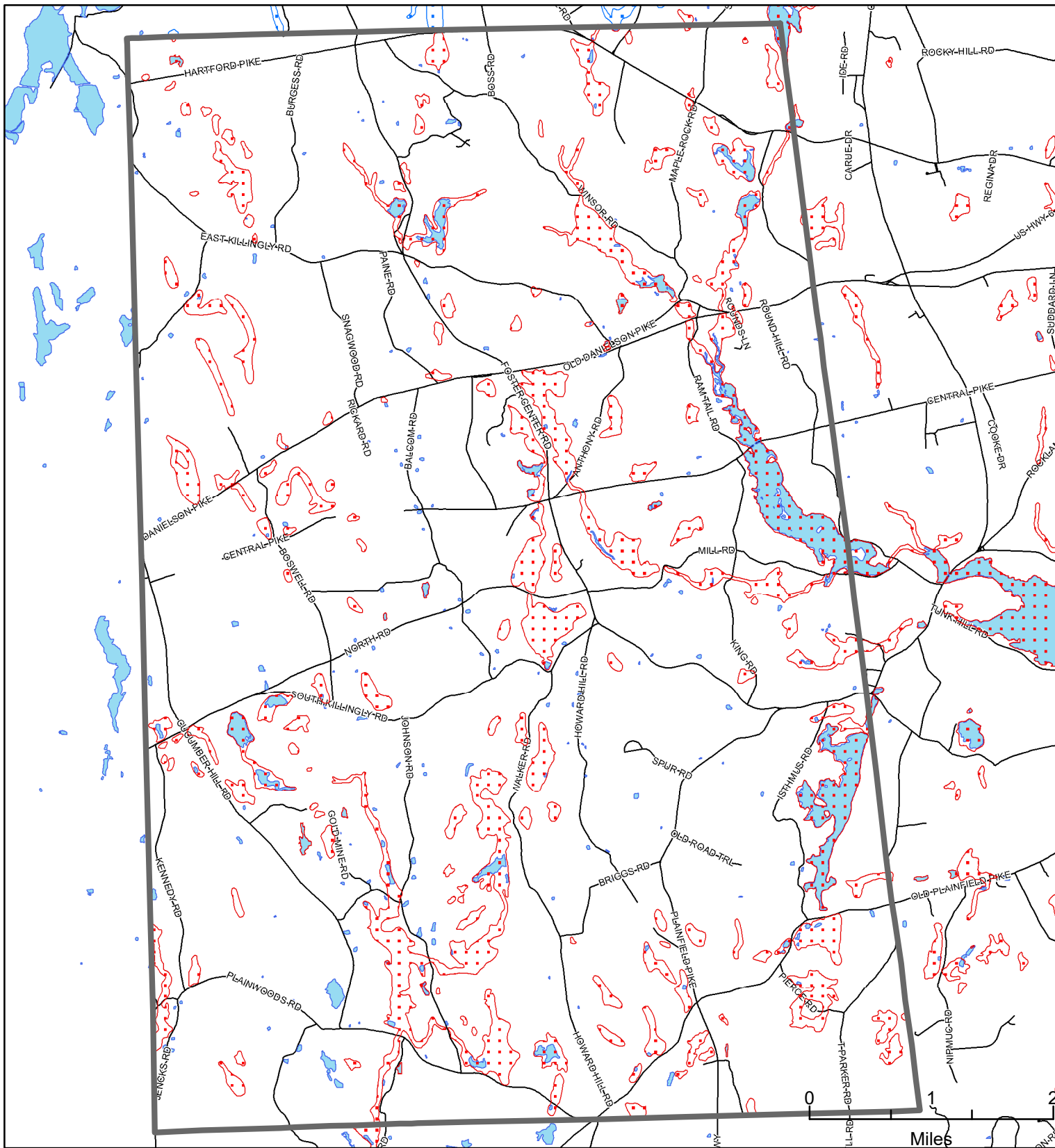


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Figure 4: Map 2: Floodplains




## Natural Resources


 Foster Town Boundary

 Lakes & Ponds

## Floodplains

 1-Percent Annual Chance Flood

 0.2-Percent Annual Chance Flood

 Roads

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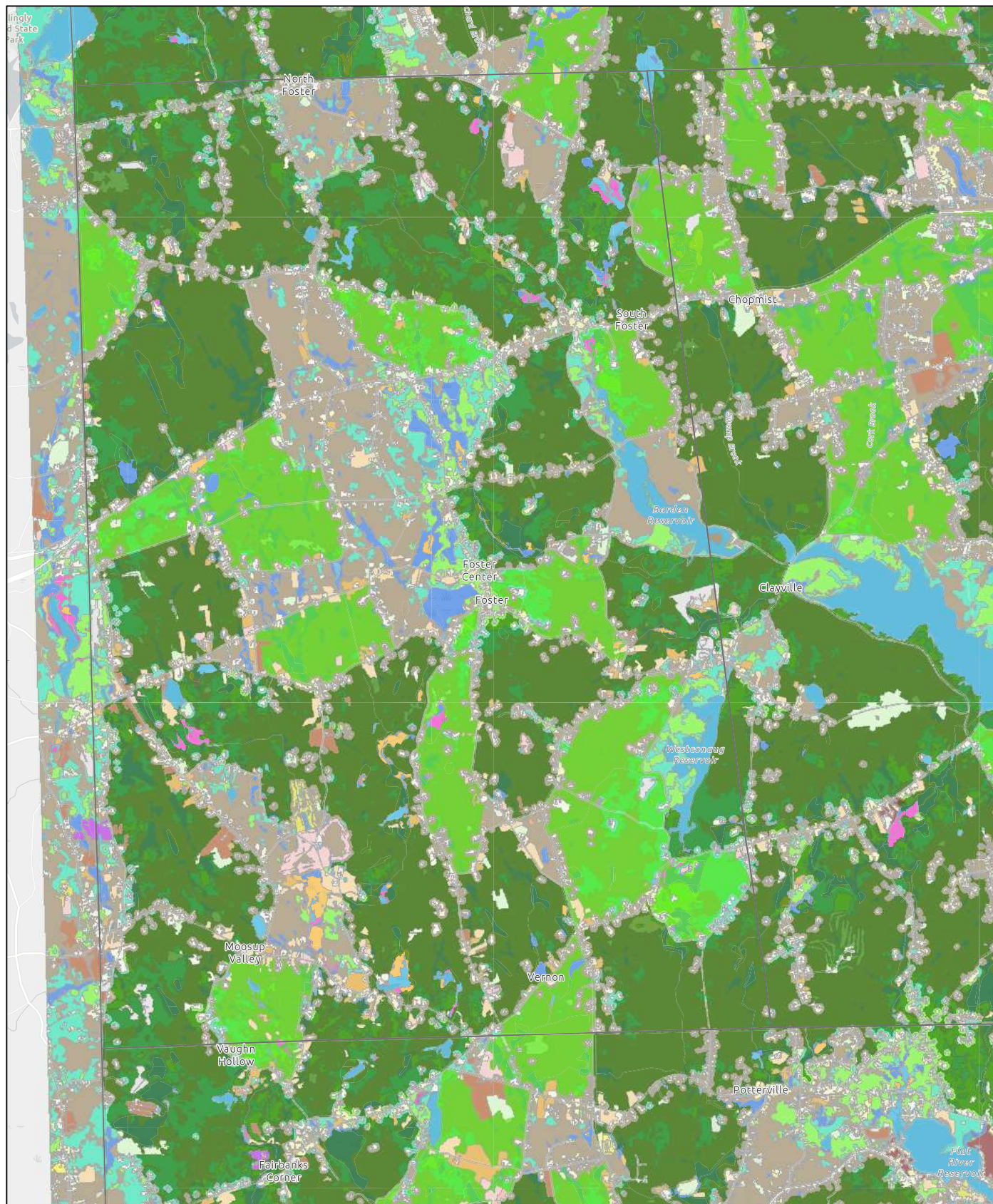
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Figure 5: Map 3: Forested Areas



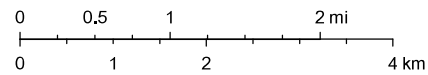
# Forested Areas



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- |  |                              |                          |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| RI Municipal Boundaries                        | Commercial/Residential Mixed | Hayfields                |
| Unfragmented Forest Blocks (500 acres or more) | Cropland                     | Hemlock/Hardwood Forest  |
| Unfragmented Forest Blocks (250)               | Developed Recreation         | High Density Residential |
| <b>Ecological Communities</b>                  | Emergent Marsh               | Impervious               |
| Cemeteries                                     | Extractive Industry          | Industrial               |
| Coastal Grassland                              | Floodplain Forests           | Inland Sand Barren       |
| Commercial                                     | Forested Swamp               |                          |
| Commercial/Industrial Mixed                    | Fresh Water                  |                          |

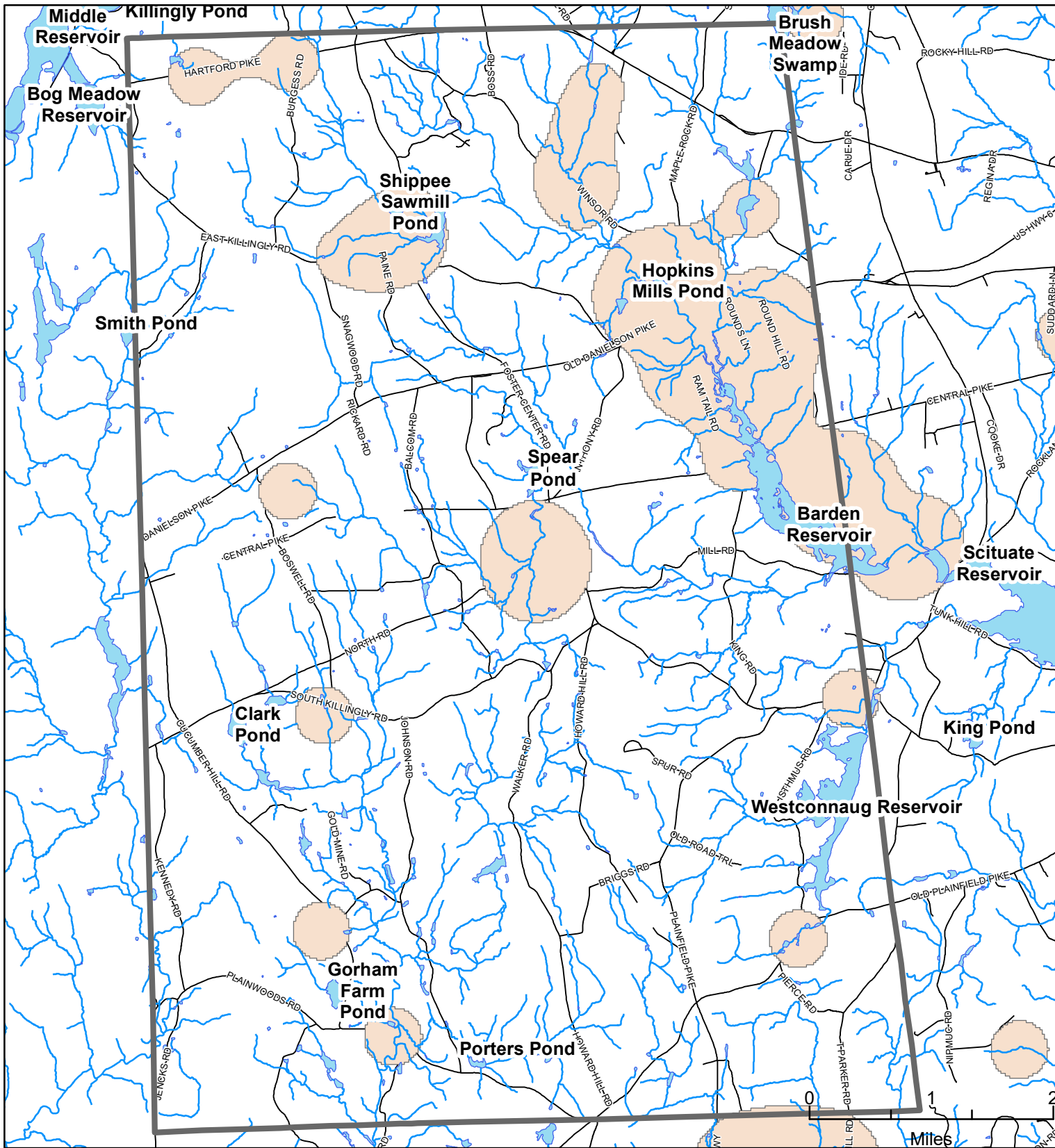
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

RIDEM, USDA RIDEM, RhodeMap; RIGIS: RIDEM, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/ NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA

Figure 6: Map 4: Natural heritage





## Natural Resources

-  Foster Town Boundary
-  Lakes & Ponds
-  Streams & Rivers
-  Natural Heritage
-  Roads

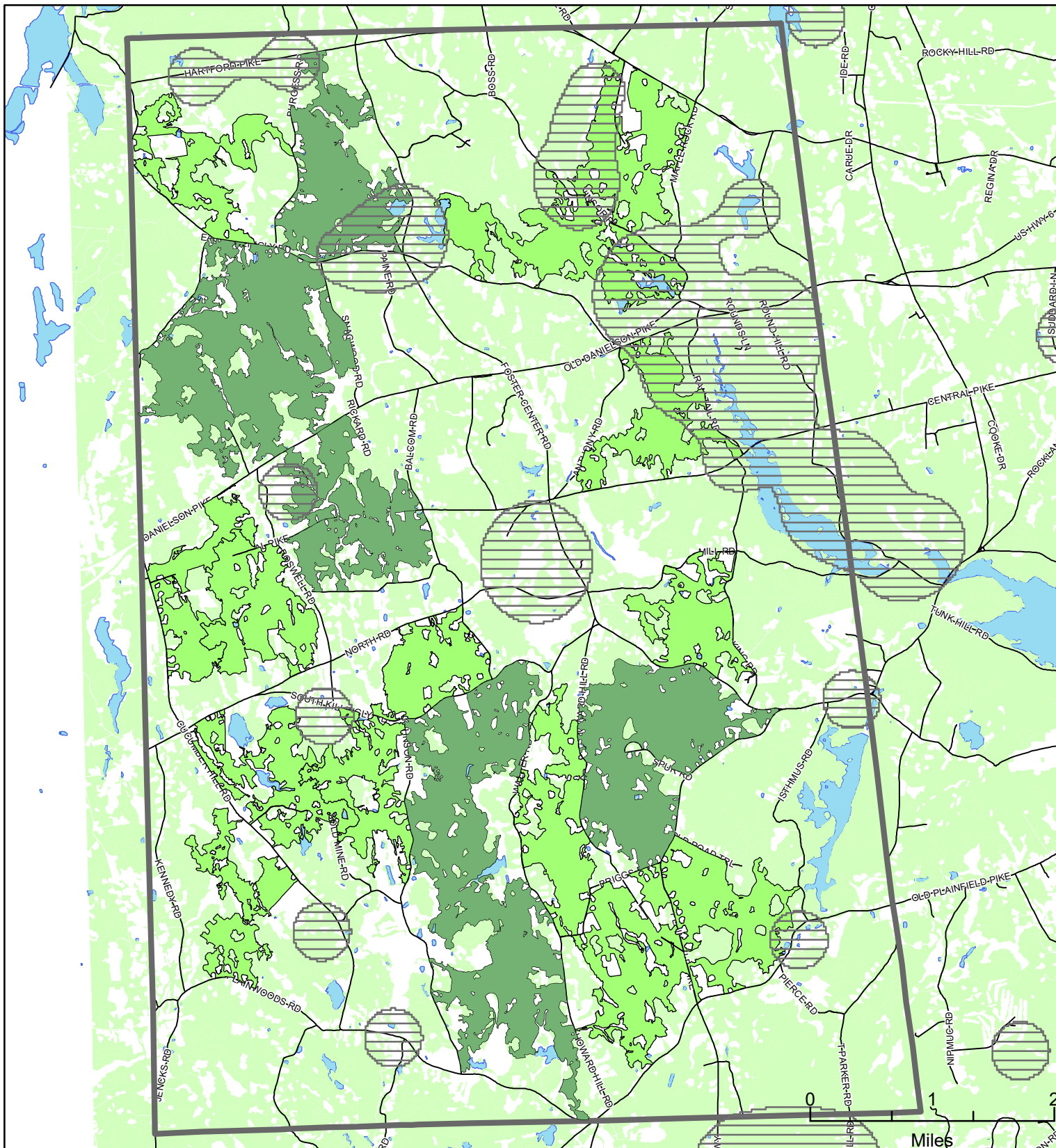
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**RIGIS**



Figure 7: Map 5: Unfragmented Forest



## Forested Areas

-  Natural Heritage
-  Unfragmented Forest - Min. 500 Acres
-  Unfragmented Forest - Min. 250 Acres
-  Foster Town Boundary
-  Roads
-  Forested Areas

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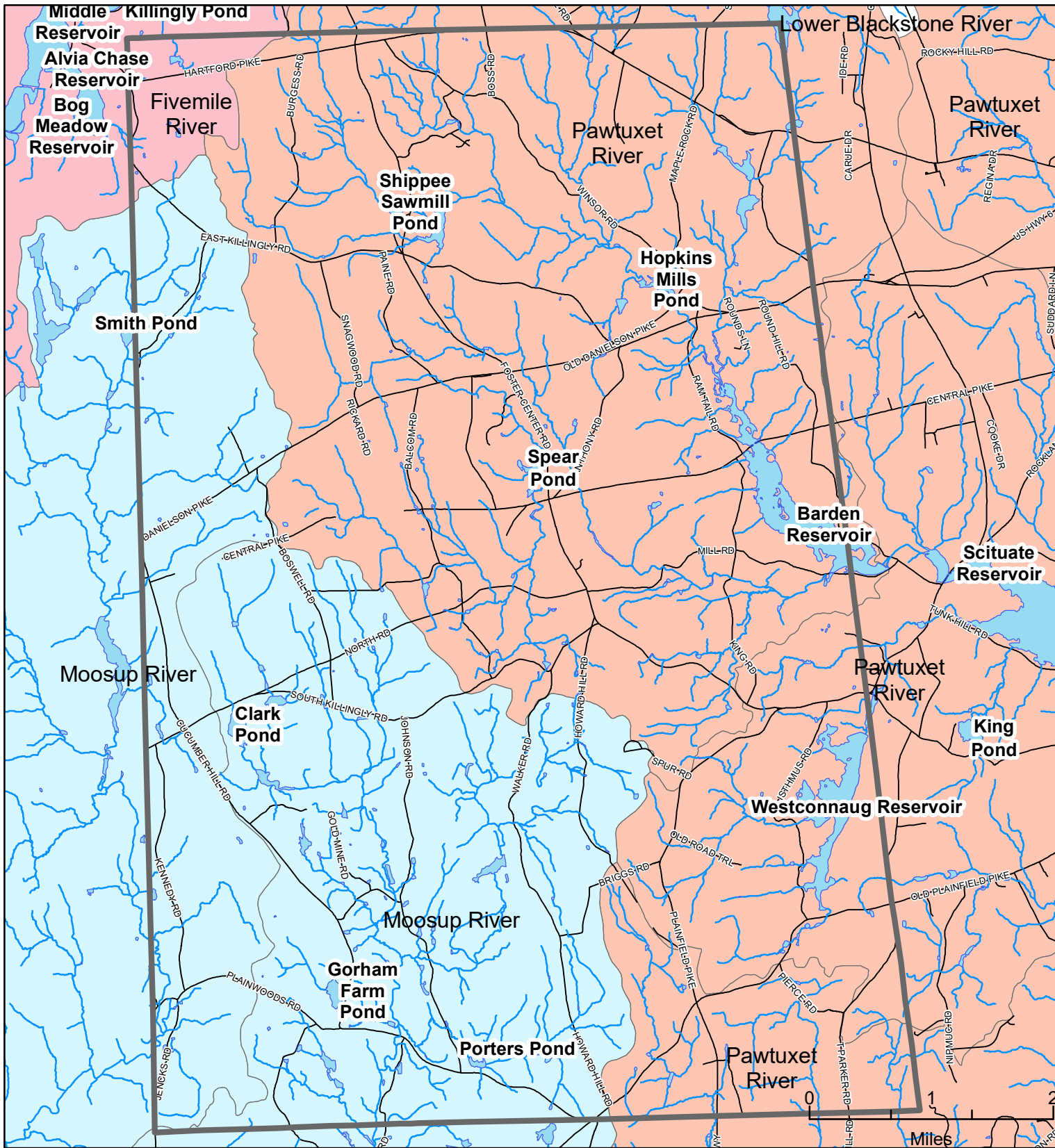


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









Figure 8: Map 6: Watershed



## Natural Resources

	Foster Town Boundary	<b>Watershed</b>	
	Lakes & Ponds		Fivemile River
	Streams & Rivers		Moosup River
	Roads		Pawtuxet River

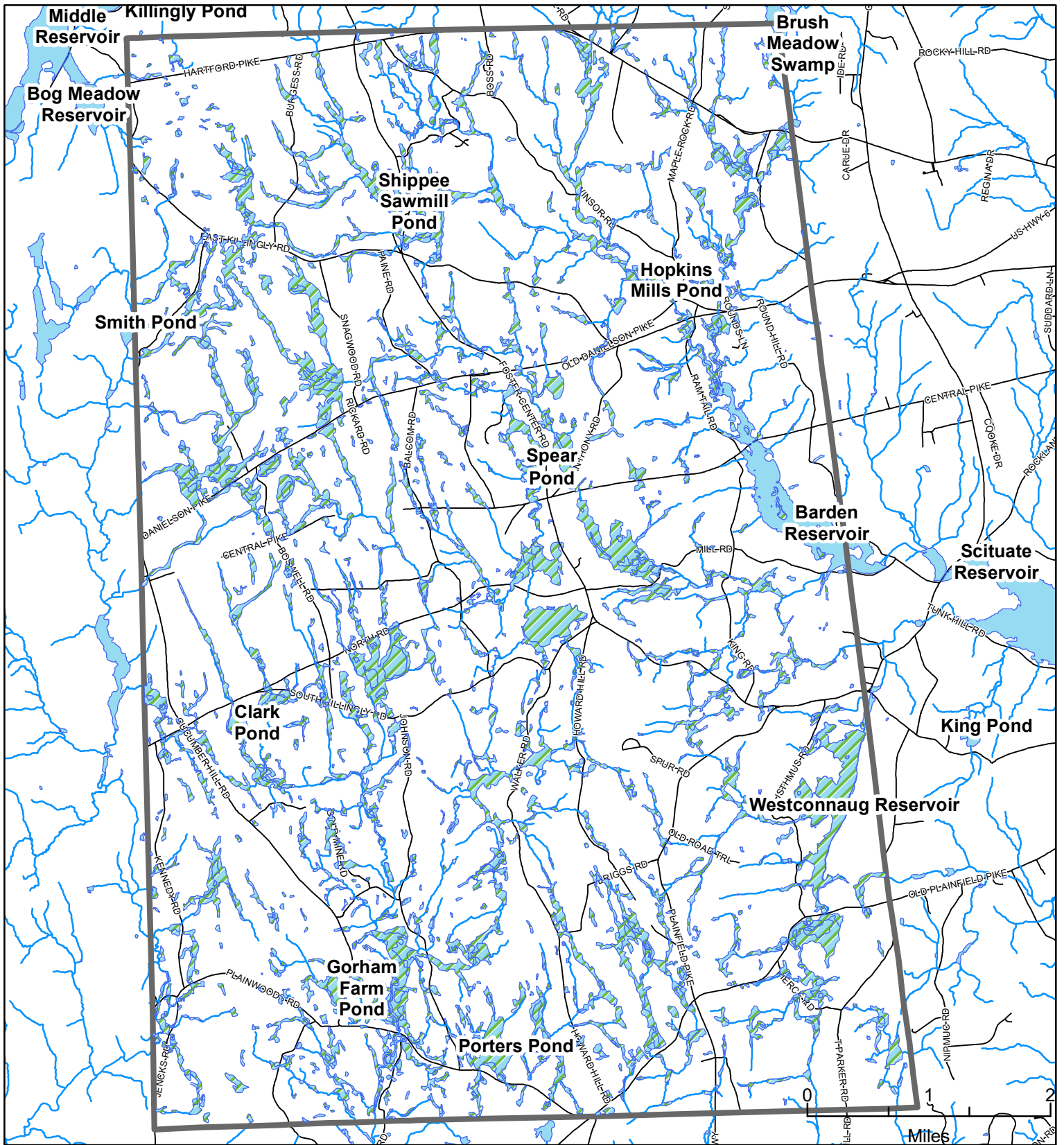
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**RIGIS**



Figure 9: Map 7: Wetlands



## Natural Resources

-  Wetlands
-  Roads
-  Foster Town Boundary
-  Lakes & Ponds
-  Streams & Rivers

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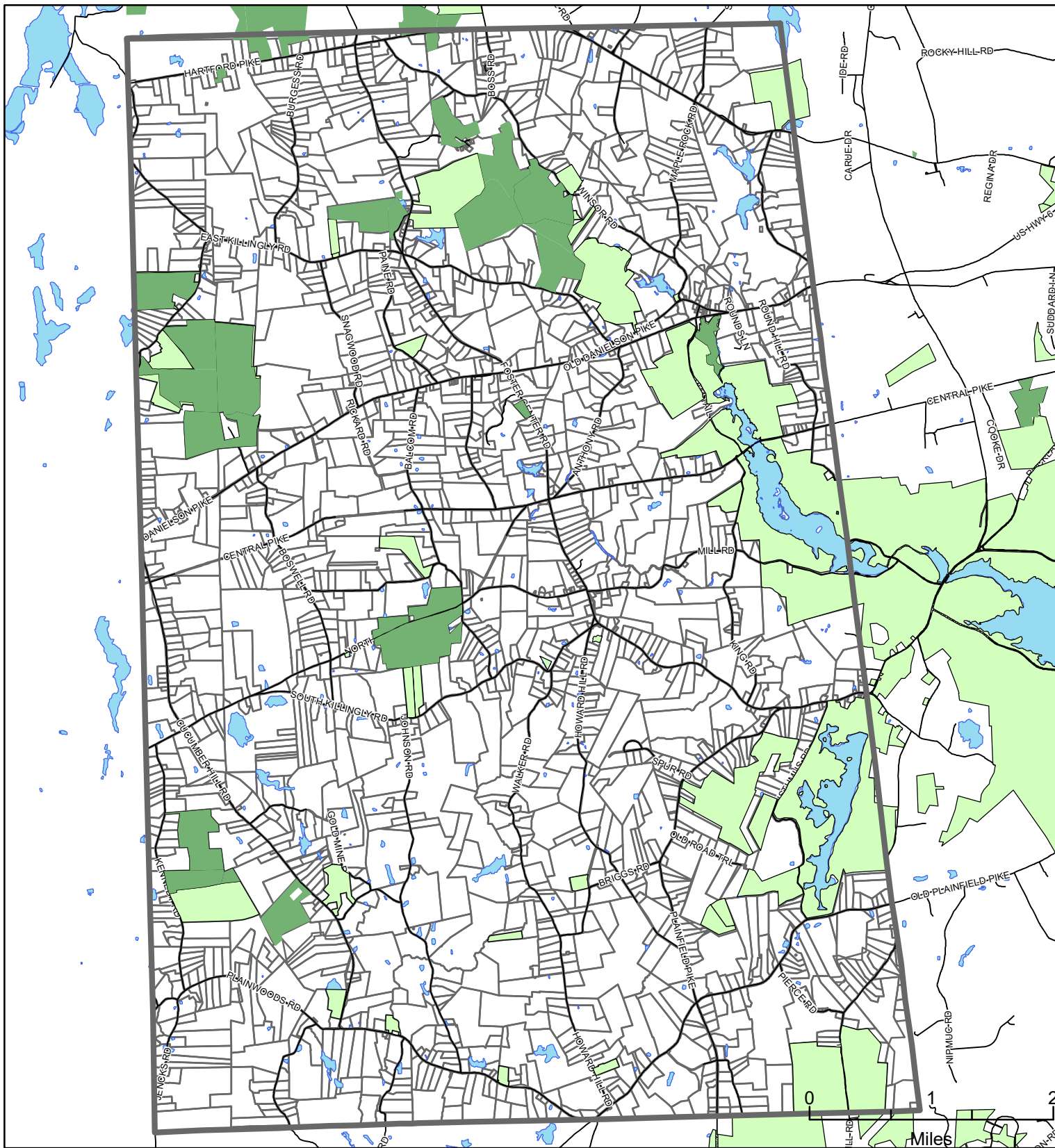


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Figure 10: Map 8: Conservation Areas





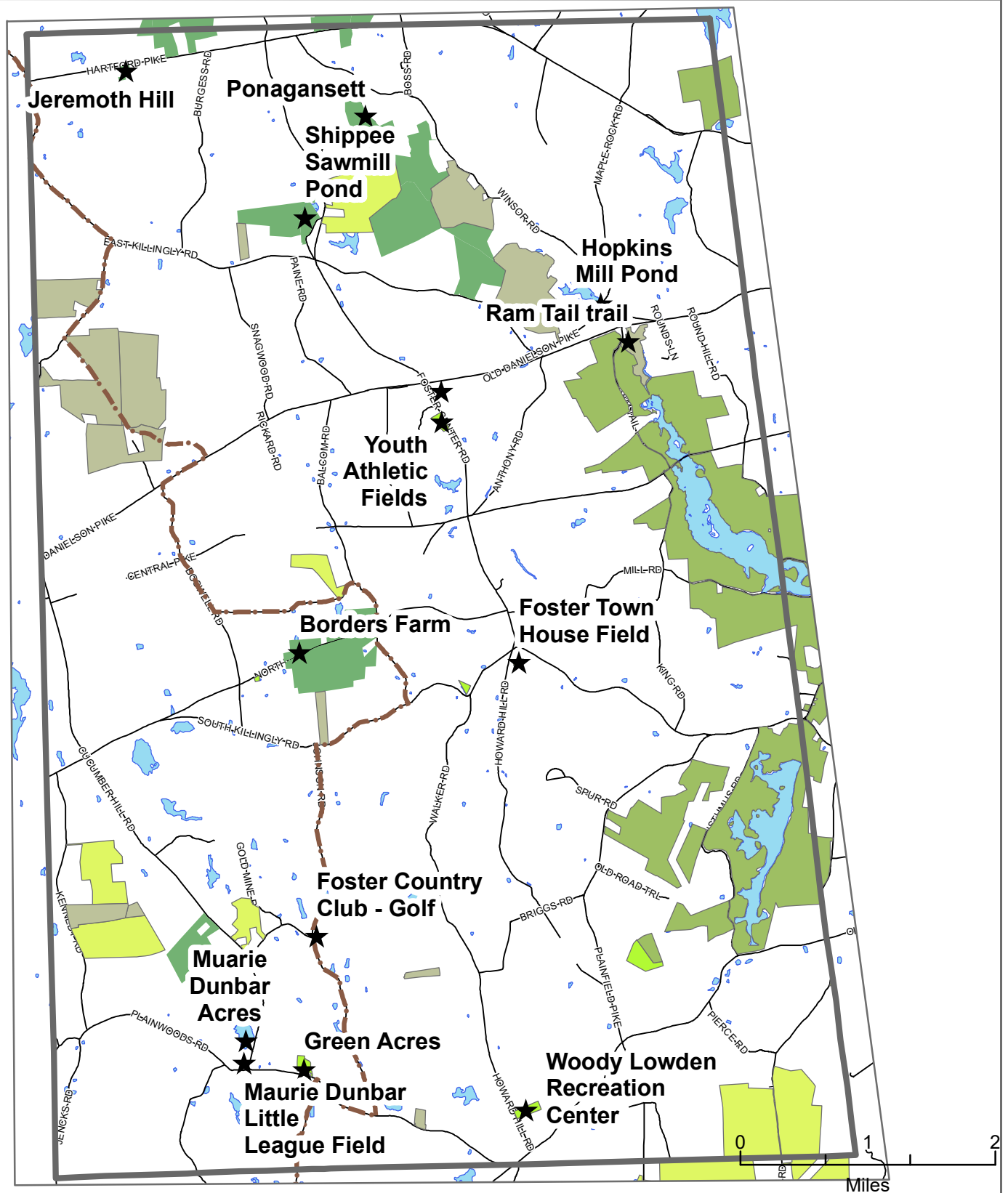
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**RIGIS**



Figure 11: Map 9: Recreational Resources




## Conservation Areas

 Foster Town Boundary


 Recreation Locations

 North South Trail


## Conservation

 Audubon Society of Rhode Island

 Foster Land Trust

 Providence Water Supply Board

 Town of Foster

 State Conservation

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**RIGIS**





## NATURAL RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

The Town of Foster presents the following assessment of its natural resources based as a means of conserving the community's significant natural resources in perpetuity and minimizing the negative impacts of development on the land, water, plants and animals that sustain and enhance the environment.

### Statewide and Local Issues

The Town of Foster supports State goals and policies that are appropriate to the community's visions and goals. This includes the second goal of Land Use 2025: Rhode Island's State Land Use Policies:

"A statewide network of greenspaces and greenways that protects and preserves the environment, wildlife habitats, natural resources, scenic landscapes, provides recreation, and shapes urban growth."

Foster, like Rhode Island, wants to protect critical natural resources – especially those described above. The town is supportive of linking conservation and recreation properties to ensure that they provide contiguous, uninterrupted forest cover and/or characters that protect habitat and provide for wildlife migration. Foster also wants to maintain high quality woodland and forest properties to protect the water supply, protect wetlands and floodplains, produce forest products, and ensure habitat quality.

Further, Foster wants to provide a diverse and well-balanced system of public indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. Foster will manage public lands to ensure that residents and visitors can both make passive recreational use of conservation and recreation properties for outdoor activities that enhance public health and well-being.

### Water Resource Protection

A specific concern is the need to protect the town's water resources. Two-thirds of Foster is within the watershed of the Scituate Reservoir, a vital regional public water supply. Both inside and outside the reservoir's watershed are valuable streams and rivers that are important to the town's scenic qualities and natural habitats. All residents rely on groundwater for potable water. These water resources are connected; all can be threatened by inappropriate development, poorly managed storm water runoff, erosion and sedimentation, or poorly designed or maintained septic systems. Although the water quality in the town is generally good, there have been localized problem areas where groundwater contamination has impacted local wells, and some instances where sediment runoff and excessive nutrient enrichment have impacted surface water bodies.

### Agricultural Land

Loss of agricultural land to residential development and by cessation of farming and reversion to forest land has long been an issue of concern in Foster as most local dairy farms ceased operation. Recent data suggest a reversal of this trend in both areas. First, due to economic conditions, the rate of development has stalled in Foster and conversion of farmland to development has not been manifested recently. A return to robust growth, however has the potential to affect farmland in the future. Second, local agriculture is experiencing rapid growth in Rhode Island and locally. Regulatory changes such as the RI Right to Farm Act, agricultural incentive programs of RIDEM, and changing market conditions such as Community Supported Agriculture, Farm-share, Farm to Table, Farmer's Markets, Rhody Fresh and the Local Food movement have led to recent growth in Rhode Island agriculture. Currently operating farms in Foster, according to Farm fresh Rhode Island ([www.farmfresh.org](http://www.farmfresh.org)) are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Operating Farms in Foster<sup>5</sup>

Farm	Products Grown, Raised	Distribution
<b>Amber Valley Ridge Farm</b>	Vegetables, Herbs, Spreads, and Fiber	
<b>AMCC Cattle Co.</b>	Meat	Delivery, Pickup, Farmers Markets, Farm Stand
<b>Babbling Brook Farm</b>	Dogs - Labrador	Pickup
<b>Bear Tree Farm</b>	Organic Certified Hay, and Vegetables	Pickup
<b>Bellucci Farms</b>	Pork	Pickup, Pig Roasts
<b>Borders Farm</b>	Meat, Grains, and Feeds	Foodbank Garden to Local Food Bank
<b>Briggs Farm</b>	Meat, Grains, and Feeds	Pickup
<b>Cornerstone Farm</b>	Grains and Feeds	Wholesale
<b>Cucumber Hill Farm</b>	Vegetables, Meat, Grains, Feeds, and Breeding Stock	Farm Stand, PYO
<b>Del Farm</b>	Greenhouse	Wholesale
<b>Eat Me Acres Farm</b>	Meat, Grains, and Feeds	Pickup
<b>Foster Family Farm</b>	Vegetables, and Family Fun	Wholesale
<b>Foster Farm</b>	Grains and Feeds	Wholesale
<b>Ghost Flower Farm</b>	Fruit, Vegetables, Herbs, Honey, Maple, Dairy and Eggs, Specialty, and Baked Goods (chemical free)	CSA, Etsy
<b>Griffiths And Sons Farm</b>	Meat	
<b>Hattie's Country Store</b>	Fruit, Vegetables, Herbs, Wood, Nursery and Flowers, Specialty, and Pet Food (chemical free)	Pickup, Restaurants
<b>Hill Farm</b>	Fruit, Dairy, Eggs, Meat, Pet Food, and Breeding Stock	Delivery, Pickup, Restaurants, Schools, Wholesale
<b>Howard Hill Farm &amp; Greenhouses</b>	Nursery and Flowers	
<b>Jardins Gardens</b>	Honey + Maple, Dairy + Eggs, Meat, Wood (some organic)	Farm Stand
<b>Little Rhody Farms</b>	Dairy and Eggs	Market Mobile online, Restaurants
<b>Locust Leaf Farm</b>	Dairy, Eggs, and Meat (chemical free)	Pickup, Farm Stand
<b>Maple Dell Farm</b>	Vegetables, Herbs, Honey, Maple, Meat, Nursery, Flowers, and Breeding Stock	CSA, Restaurants
<b>Misty-Willow Farm</b>	Vegetables, Meat, Grains and Feeds	Wholesale

<sup>5</sup> Source: Farm Fresh RI, 2021

<b>Natural Designs</b>	Honey, Maple, Dairy, Eggs, Nursery , Flowers, and Fiber (CF)	Farm Stand
<b>Nickle Creek Vineyard</b>	Fruit, Wine, Liquor, and Family Fun	Delivery, Pickup, Wholesale
<b>North Road Tree Farm</b>	Vegetables, Dairy, Eggs, Nursery Flowers, and Specialty (Chemical Free)	Delivery, Farm Stand
<b>On The Lane Farm</b>	Honey and Maple	Farmers Markets
<b>Rambone Dairy Farm</b>	Dairy and Eggs	Wholesale
<b>Ross Orchard (Paine Farm)</b>	Meat	Wholesale
<b>Round Hill Ranch</b>	Livestock, Meat, Eggs, Beef, Poultry, Pork, Specialty	Pickup,
<b>Sassafras Bandits Permaculture Farm</b>	Permaculture Crops	Farmers Markets
<b>Shoe String Farm</b>	Dairy, Eggs, Grains, and Feeds	Wholesale
<b>The White Cottage Farm</b>	Fruit, Vegetables, Herbs, Dairy, Eggs, Nursery, Flowers, Spreads, Specialty, Pet Food, and Fiber	Delivery, Pickup
<b>Wasilewski Hog Farm</b>	Meat	Wholesale

The local increase in agriculture bodes well for the town being able to preserve agricultural land, but rising land values continue to pose a concern for the future of agriculture in Foster. According to the US Department of Agriculture, the average value of an acre of farmland in Rhode Island was \$16,000 in 2020, the highest in the country. Rising land values continue to pose a threat to the operation of local farms and a barrier to the start-up of new agricultural operations.

### *Degrading Natural Resources*

Threats from future residential, commercial or industrial development include degradation of water supply and water quality, increased light and sound pollution, loss of open space and increased habitat destruction. In addition, Foster may be considered for siting of solar or other renewable energy projects, because of the town's elevation and existing open space. Care should be taken to ensure that any such projects do not jeopardize any of Foster's natural resources. Responsible development will provide the best protection for these resources. "Green Energy" as it is referred to, although aims to alleviate our national dependence on fossil fuels can still have an impact locally to ecosystems, the natural environment, as well as quality of life for surrounding property owners. However, the town's priority is to address certain existing conditions that threaten to degrade the town's natural resources.

### *Pollution Sources*

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) has identified potential sources of groundwater pollution, including the former Nike site, the former town dump on Salisbury Road, a former industrial site in Scituate, and several surface impoundments in western Foster. Other potential pollution sources include:

- Land uses that store or generate toxic material, such as junkyards. There is one junkyard near the Barden Reservoir.
- Agricultural uses where erosion or animal waste runoff is not controlled.

- Any future dense residential or commercial development posing a pollution risk from septic systems or surface runoff from rooftops, roads, and parking areas.

### *Gravelling and Quarrying Operations*

These are potential uses of Foster's natural bedrock and soil resources. Such operations present a potential for groundwater and surface water pollution, alteration of runoff patterns, sediment runoff, and noise and air pollution. While State and local regulations exist, these need to be periodically updated and consistently enforced.

### *Deer Infestation*

The uncontrolled growth of Rhode Island's deer population represents an increasing threat to Foster's forest land. Heavy deer browsing reduces the regeneration of trees, wildflowers and other native plants and increases invasive plant and tick populations, which results in the spreading of tick-borne diseases. Deer are over abundant in much of the United States due to a lack of natural predators, an increase in human altered, fragmented landscapes, and changing social values about hunting. In areas where landscaping provides excellent forage for deer but hunting is not allowed, growth of the herd is unimpeded. Damage to farms and gardens can be severe. Overgrazing by deer degrades habitats, impacts wildlife sharing the same forest layer, reduces forest diversity, and contributes to proliferation of invasive species. Automobile collisions with deer are also a problem. Overcrowding and travel in search of mates, food and territory, cause deer to cross roadways, bringing them in conflict with automobiles and threatening public safety, particularly at dawn and dusk when visibility is poor.

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Priorities for Conservation of Natural Resources**

Foster residents place a high priority on conserving its natural resources as they form the foundation of the rural aspect of the town and its way of life. These resources consist of agricultural land, water resources, forests, wildlife habitat, open space and scenic views, as well as country quiet and dark skies. Since the inclusion of a large portion of Foster lying within the Scituate Reservoir watershed, there are constraints to development which help protect natural resources from the impacts of development.

Conservation efforts should be focused on minimizing adverse impacts of future land development, including:

- Maintenance of high quality watersheds to preserve adequate and clean water supplies for town residents and other communities,
- Preservation and reclamation of land for agricultural use.
- Preservation of contiguous open space for wildlife habitat and passive recreation, and

The following issues concerning environmental regulations were raised by local citizens:

- The rights of property owners need to be protected.
- Environmental controls must be strengthened.
- The town's small staff and boards must be able to enforce the regulations.

Natural resources are fragile and development can easily have adverse environmental impacts on those resources. Foster is a small town with few financial resources and limited municipal staff available to adequately protect natural resources, leaving them open to adverse impacts from development and poor land use practices. Environmental factors such as invasive species and overpopulated species also threaten the health of our natural habitats. The requirement to maintain and protect water quality of

the town and of the Scituate Reservoir imposes a financial burden on the town's residents as well, particularly in light of the Providence Water Supply Board's reluctance to pay adequate taxes on watershed land.

At the same time, Foster has taken major land use regulatory steps to protect the water supply by adopting land use density provisions that enable suitable building areas to be found on residential lots, many of which are characterized by an abundance of wetland, hydric or high water table soils, steep slopes or other unbuildable environmental conditions. Looking forward, Foster can preserve large contiguous tracts of land for open space and wildlife habitat protection. The town must also revise and update its zoning ordinance to include more extensive considerations for conservation zoning, new best practices and adherence to Land Use 2025 guidelines.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

GOALS:		
<b>NRCR</b>	G1	Protect and preserve environmental resources of the town
<b>NRCR</b>	G2	Allow for responsible and reasonable development, consistent with environmental protection
<b>NRCR</b>	G3	Ensure that the objectives, policies, and action items regarding open space and recreation complement each other.
<b>NRCR</b>	G4	Protect the unique recreational, environmental and cultural resources of the community, including the historic resources, landscape and scenic features, diverse habitats, rivers, lakes, ponds, wetlands, floodplains, forests, groundwater resources, agricultural soils, community facilities and open spaces are protected from the potential adverse effects of future growth and development to ensure that these resources continue to enhance the quality of life in Foster for residents and visitors alike.
<b>NRCR</b>	G5	Encourage and educate Foster's citizens to participate in active recreation programs.
<b>NRCR</b>	G6	Provide state of the art facilities for recreation for all of Foster's residents
<b>NRCR</b>	G7	Ensure equal access to all recreational facilities
<b>NRCR</b>	G8	Meet the changing demands of the town as it grows
OBJECTIVES:		
<b>NRCR</b>	O1	Protect water quality, scenic quality, wildlife habitat, and open space through conservation oriented planning, zoning, land development regulation, and public policy.
<b>NRCR</b>	O2	Develop Policies to promote responsible use of resources
<b>NRCR</b>	O3	The preservation of conservation and open space areas for passive recreational use, and to provide public access to those areas while protecting sensitive resources located on those properties.
<b>NRCR</b>	O4	The creation of vibrant, multiple-use areas that are sensitive to the environment, inter- connected, accessible, safe, and aesthetically pleasing and integrated into the existing land use patterns.
<b>NRCR</b>	O5	The acquisition of land for open space and conservation to maintain the rural character of the community.
<b>NRCR</b>	O6	The maintenance of the right of public access to publicly owned and controlled open space and to all important public natural and cultural resources for all citizens; and the protection of all current and historic rights-of-way which ensure this needed access.
<b>NRCR</b>	O7	The establishment of a proper balance between outdoor and indoor recreational facilities for all residents, of all age groups, physical capabilities and economic standings.
<b>NRCR</b>	O8	The creation and maintenance of a coordinated effort between the school and recreation departments to maintain and expand existing recreational facilities and to acquire and develop new recreational facilities.
<b>NRCR</b>	O9	The citizens are made aware of various recreational programs and opportunities and are encouraged to offer input and insight to the town's recreational programs and policies.
POLICIES:		

## Town of Foster, RI Comprehensive Plan

<b>NRCR</b>	P1	Develop conservation zoning to incorporate siting and design standards based on environmental consideration of each lot.
<b>NRCR</b>	P2	Develop a policy for a manufacturing/industrial zone that protects the environment.
<b>NRCR</b>	P3	Support taxation policies to preserve forestry agricultural and open space land use
<b>NRCR</b>	P4	Promote acquisition of Land or Development Rights for vulnerable and highly valued natural resource areas.
<b>NRCR</b>	P5	To plan for recreation, conservation and open space within a comprehensive approach considering development trends and the demands of the community.
<b>NRCR</b>	P6	To promote a sound and continuous capital improvement program to efficiently allocate funds for orderly acquisition and development of recreation facilities and open space resources according to the priority needs of the town.
<b>NRCR</b>	P7	To continue to require open space dedications and / or fees in-lieu-of land dedication in all residential developments.
<b>NRCR</b>	P8	To endeavor to create open space systems and corridors which protect complete ecological units, provide buffers and character to the built environment and provide passive recreational and open space opportunities close to developed areas.
<b>NRCR</b>	P9	To encourage Land Trust activities to save and manage open space through donation and other acquisition methods.
<b>NRCR</b>	P10	To ensure that the needs and recreational interests for all residents, of all age groups, physical capabilities, and economic standing in all areas of the state, are considered fully in developing town recreational facility plans.
<b>NRCR</b>	P11	To coordinate the town's provision of recreational facilities and programs with local groups and / or organizations as well as State and Federal agencies to prevent and avoid duplication of services, efforts and costs.
<b>NRCR</b>	P12	To continue to seek such funding as available from State and Federal agencies, such as grants etc. in order to meet the future needs of the community regarding the maintenance of existing recreational sites, as well as acquiring future sites and development thereof into recreational facilities.
<b>NRCR</b>	P13	The Planning Board and Town Council will work with newly proposed developments to identify areas that may be dedicated for open space and recreation with regard to existing facilities or existing open space in the vicinity;
<b>NRCR</b>	P14	Provide a range of recreational use options for a growing, aging population
<b>ACTIONS:</b>		
<b>NRCR</b>	A1	Revise specific regulations for conservation zoning to protect agricultural land, water resources forests and wildlife habitat, open space and scenic views, natural topography of land, and other valuable natural resources including country quiet and dark skies
<b>NRCR</b>	A2	Revise regulations for MI zoning to protect all of the above
<b>NRCR</b>	A3	Set up agreements with Scituate, Glocester and Coventry, RI and Plainfield and Killingly, CT to protect common surface and groundwater resources.
<b>NRCR</b>	A4	Maintain Land Trust as the key town agency in the program of coordinating land or development rights acquisitions.
<b>NRCR</b>	A5	Acquire development rights to large contiguous parcels funded in part by private donations and State open space bond issue funds. Enhance other incentives to

## Town of Foster, RI Comprehensive Plan

		preserve these parcels as open space (e.g. tax incentives) or include penalties for conversion.
<b>NRCR</b>	A6	Promote Foster as a whole as a Greenway.
<b>NRCR</b>	A7	Pursue available grant funding through such State, Federal and Private Foundation sources that will allow the town to move forward with its Open-Space and Recreation objectives and goals.
<b>NRCR</b>	A8	Identify all unique areas of conservation concern, including unique habitats and formations, and scenic areas.
<b>NRCR</b>	A9	Develop / Update a list of priority areas critical for preservation with direct assistance from the Conservation Commission and the Land Trust. (Areas designated or listed in the Comprehensive Plan should form the base for this inventory.)
<b>NRCR</b>	A10	Determine the future recreational needs of the community – taking into consideration all residents of the community.
<b>NRCR</b>	A11	Expand existing recreational sites owned by the town if feasible.
<b>NRCR</b>	A12	Continue the development of the Foster Center Road athletic field complex.
<b>NRCR</b>	A13	Locate areas within the Foster community for future recreation facilities.
<b>NRCR</b>	A14	Research Dark Sky friendly regulations and consider recommending for adoption into the Zoning Ordinance and development regulations
<b>NRCR</b>	A15	Conduct traffic counts, head counts, at local facilities to keep track of the demand for each facility.
<b>NRCR</b>	A16	Allocate resources and funding to improve facilities that are deemed priority and high trafficked
<b>NRCR</b>	A17	Improve signage and wayfinding to create sense of place and generate greater ease of access
<b>NRCR</b>	A18	Promote local recreational resources to generate regional interest in the expanse network of open space that Foster offers
<b>NRCR</b>	A19	Implement a bike rack system town wide for priority uses that are deemed most appropriate for bike access
<b>NRCR</b>	A20	Provide Recreational Resources that should accompany Town Hall and the Library, either in Foster Center or on Route 6.
<b>NRCR</b>	A21	Provide uses in demand for passive and active recreation that serve the elderly population near Foster Center or other suitable location
<b>NRCR</b>	A22	Monitor demand for the different sites and facilities throughout town and identify highest trafficked areas and priority sites to dedicate funding for upgrades and expansion
<b>NRCR</b>	A23	Create a dedicated Bike Lane through the town's local, paved roads, which are wide enough to accommodate such a use;
<b>NRCR</b>	A24	Allocate resources and funding, or partner with the Foster Land Trust to purchase parcels of land to provide pathways and connectivity to existing recreational uses and open space
<b>NRCR</b>	A25	The Town Council, Conservation Commission, Director of Recreation, Director of Public Works, and School Superintendent to work collaboratively to identify areas for expansion of recreational resources and the need for additional resources



## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

- ❖ INTRODUCTION
- ❖ CURRENT CONDITIONS
- ❖ PROJECTED CONDITIONS
- ❖ ASSESSMENT OF PROJECTED CONDITIONS
- ❖ GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

The recorded history of present-day Foster stretches back to the Archaic period (6,000 to 500 BCE) and it is likely the land was used for game hunting and temporary camping as early as 8,300 BCE. Changes in climate and advances in technology through succeeding centuries allowed the Native American population to grow and transition from small hunter-gatherer groups to largely permanently-settled tribes. The Narragansett tribe was the dominant power in the area before the chartering of Rhode Island (1663) and continued to be so until its defeat in King Philip's War (1675-1676). The conflict culminated with the spreading of European-originated diseases which significantly decreased the Narragansett population and the size of other local tribes, such as the Nipmuc who controlled the western half of present-day Foster.

Colonial settlement west from Providence's town center occurred steadily through the seventeenth century and the first building in Foster was constructed in the early 1700s. The continued growth in the outlands population was responded to in 1731 with the establishment of three towns from Providence's original land – Glocester, Scituate, and Smithfield. The Town of Foster was incorporated out of Scituate half a century later, during the Revolutionary period. Local development continued into the nineteenth century and peaked in 1820, at which time the country's industrialization and territorial expansions west stunted Foster's economy and population until the 1960s.

It is not hard to view the entire town as an important and unique cultural landscape which retains the image and feel of an earlier time of rural tranquility and quietness. Although prosaic, this description is meaningful as these qualities are highly valued by Foster residents and often cited as a main reason for relocating to the community.

### CURRENT CONDITIONS

#### Active Preservation

The historical and cultural resources of Foster which have accumulated over succeeding decades receive support and protection from several involved entities:

- Town of Foster
- Foster Preservation Society (FPS)
- Libraries of Foster
- Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission (RIHCC)
- Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC)
- Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (RISCA)
- Foster Land Trust
- Border's Farm and Museum, LLC

### **Resource Studies**

Foster has undergone at least three studies of its historical and cultural resources. Two were conducted by RIHPHC and one was conducted by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM). Each of these projects is discussed below:

- ***Foster, Rhode Island, Statewide Historical Preservation Report P-F-1 (June 1982)*** – RIHPHC began the survey of Foster’s historic resources in 1969 as part of alternative alignment studies for the proposed, but never completed, Interstate 84 project through western Rhode Island. This corridor study included only the area through which the highway was planned to pass. Supplemental survey work was undertaken in 1973 and significantly expanded in 1976 as part of RIHPHC’s effort to prepare inventories of historical resources for each city and town in the state. Report P-F-1 described the historical development of the town and lists recommendations for the preservation of these resources. Printed copies are available for reading at Foster’s Town Hall and its local libraries. A digital copy is available for download on the RIHPHC website ([http://www.preservation.ri.gov/pdfs\\_zips\\_downloads/survey\\_pdfs/foster.pdf](http://www.preservation.ri.gov/pdfs_zips_downloads/survey_pdfs/foster.pdf)). The state survey was initiated to identify resources worthy of preservation efforts and many of these have since been listed on the National Register of Historic Places (discussed in this chapter).
- ***Scituate Reservoir Greenspace and Water Protection Strategy (2007)*** – RIDEM contracted with Dobson Associates, Ltd., Landscape Architects & Planners, to conduct a broad study of the Scituate Reservoir Watershed’s assets, including its cultural resources and cultural priorities within each of the watershed’s communities. The study was conducted through a series of stakeholder meetings in each town within the watershed with the purpose to develop a region-wide knowledge and plan to promote suitable growth and preservation. The end result was a series of maps outlining various aspects each community felt was important for the well-being of the community and its residents.
- ***Historic Barns of Foster, Rhode Island (2010)*** – RIHPHC funded this study as part of a regional pilot program to determine the feasibility of completing a statewide survey on historical barns throughout Rhode Island. Like the intent of the statewide historical survey, this survey is meant to help preserve both the historical and cultural heritage of Rhode Island farmlands. In addition to RIHPHC, numerous residents volunteered to search out and photograph the various barns throughout Foster. Historic Barns is available through the RIHPHC and the Planning Department.

### **Local Interest and Programs**

Foster Preservation Society is the primary organization involved in historic preservation locally and an active collaborator with both the town and the state. Examples of this include its involvement in supporting RIHPHC’s nominations of historic places to the National Register of Historic Places and compiling a video related to the Historic Barns survey available for purchase. The group also works independently to provide educational lectures at area libraries and schools. FPS also houses a large collection of several hundred historical documents, genealogical records, photographs, postcards and tax lists at its office in the historic Meeting House. In more recent years, the digital recording of interviews with local residents has also begun as an additional resource for future generations.

### **Nationally Registered Historic Places**

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the United States’ official inventory of places to be preserved due to their historical significance in one or more areas. The register was established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. It affords a limited form of protection for buildings, objects, sites and structures from potentially damaging federally-funded projects and programs through a review process as well as eligibility for certain tax credit benefits for certified rehabilitations. It also establishes eligibility for federal grants-in-aid for rehabilitation and restoration work. As of 2016, the NRHP (as well

as the Rhode Island Register of Historic Places which offers similar protections and benefits as the NRHP at the state level) recognizes over 700 places in Rhode Island, including four historic districts, three buildings, one farm and a prehistoric archaeological site in Foster:

- **Foster Center Historic District (listed May 11, 1974)** – The Foster Center Historic District is centered on the intersection of Foster Center Road, Howard Hill Road and South Killingly Road. Contributing buildings, sites, and structures include: the Arnold Farm Barn (c. 1830), Baptist Parsonage (c. 1882), Benjamin Eddy Building (1904), Dr. Mowry Arnold House (c. 1800), Ely Aylsworth House (c. 1780; currently used as the police station), Foster Center Baptist Church (1882), Foster Center Public Library-Hemlock School (before 1847) Foster Town Jail (c. 1910 [moved]), Foster Town Pound (1732), Hopkins House (c. 1800), Job Randall’s Blacksmith Shop (c. 1901), Town House (1796; currently used as the FPS office), Thomas Hammond House (1756) and Welcome Rood Tavern (c. 1780 [main section c. 1820]). The district has been identified for its architecture as well as its roles in agriculture, commerce, education, industry, politics and religion. The Winsor Blacksmith Shop is a contributing resource within Foster Center constructed in 1870. It was relocated from its original site on Winsor Road to its present location adjacent to the Town House in 1994 following its donation to FPS in 1993 (both occurring after Foster Center’s historic district designation). Efforts to restore the building and the artifacts within were recognized by RIHPHC in 1995 and demonstrations of the blacksmith trade take place at the shop several times throughout the year.
- **Hopkins Mills Historic District (listed May 10, 1984)** – The Hopkins Mills Historic District is located along Old Danielson Pike between Danielson Pike (Route 6) and Ram Tail Road. Contributing buildings, sites and structures include: the Barnet Hopkins House (c. 1810), Bennett Holden House/South Foster Post Office (c. 1770 and c. 1810), Cooke House (1905), Curtis Hall (c. 1830, c. 1850 and later), Curtis House (c. 1885), Cyrus Arnold House (c. 1845), Dolly Cole House (c. 1865), Ezekial Hopkins-William Potter House (c. 1720 and later), Henry Davis House (possibly c. 1850), Henry Davis Store/Hopkins Store (c. 1842), Hopkins Mills Cemetery (RI Historical Cemetery 45), Hopkins Mills Pond Site (c. 1723-1960), Hopkins Mills Schoolhouse (c. 1820), John Fenner Hopkins Farm (c. 1910), L. Rounds House (c. 1865), Nathaniel Stone House (1823), Ponagansett Grange No. 54 (c. 1928), Ralph Tucker House (c. 1910), Potter House (c. 1845 and c. 1920), South Foster Union Chapel/Hopkins Mills Union Church (1869-1871), a barn (c. 1870 and c. 1920) and a second barn (possibly c. 1890). The district is identified for its architecture and roles in agriculture, commerce, religion and transportation.
- **Moosup Valley Historic District (listed May 11, 1988)** – Moosup Valley Historic District is a small agricultural area centered on a hamlet containing community facilities. It is located along Cucumber Hill Road, Harrington Road, Johnson Road and Moosup Valley Road. Over 100 contributing resources (the largest number among any historic districts in Foster), including 42 buildings, 60 structures, 18 sites and one object ranging in date from c. 1704 to 1938, are located within its boundaries. The district is identified for its architecture as well as its agricultural, commercial, exploration/settlement and transportation roles.
- **Clayville Historic District (listed December 29, 1988)** – Clayville Historic District is a small crossroads mill village lying partially in Foster and neighboring Scituate along Cole Avenue, Field Hill Road, Plainfield Pike and Pleasant Lane. Over 100 contributing resources, including 48 buildings, 60 structures, and one site date from c. 1720 to 1925, are located within its boundaries. The Clayville Christian Church (1867-1871) and its cemetery are the most prominent of these in the portion lying in Foster. The district is identified for its architecture as well as its agricultural, exploration/settlement and industrial roles.

- **Captain George Dorrance House (listed March 16, 1972)** – The Dorrance House, located on its original site on Jencks Road, is a 2.5 story, two room gable roof house with a rear lean-to containing three additional rooms. The original house dates to c. 1720 and the lean-to dates to c. 1750. Nearly all the home's exterior and interior appears the same presently as it did in the mid-eighteenth century. It has been identified as historically significant for its architecture and has been preserved in excellent condition.
- **Mount Vernon Tavern (listed May 8, 1974)** – The Mount Vernon Tavern, located on its original site on Plainfield Pike nearby the intersection with Howard Hill Road, is also known as the Bank House Tavern and is a 2.5 story, gable roof clapboard house with a 1.5 story ell. The home dates to c. 1760 (though a portion of the home demolished in the late nineteenth century likely dated back to c. 1740) has been previously used as a private residence and a tavern while the ell, added in the early nineteenth century, was used as a general store and post office. It has been identified as historically significant for its architecture and commercial and communications roles and has been preserved in good condition.
- **Mt. Hygeia/Solomon Drown House (listed August 12, 1977)** – Mt. Hygeia, located on Mt. Hygeia Road, is a 2.5 story, gable roof clapboard house built in 1808. It also includes a one story ell added in the mid-nineteenth century. Among several outbuildings previously on the property, one still stands at the foot of the driveway which was used as a waiting place for mail and grocery deliveries. The house and gardens were opened as a museum in the early twentieth century which closed in 1941. A succeeding owner then reconstructed a small barn on the property in the mid-twentieth century. Mt. Hygeia is identified as historically significant for its architecture and landscape architecture and its roles in agriculture, literature, science and medicine.
- **Borders Farm (listed July 29, 2009)** – Borders Farm, also known as the George Phillips House, is a small historic area consisting of two contributing resources - Phillips Farm at 31 North Road and the Allen Hill Farm at 41 North Road. Along with one non-contributing resource, the farm contains nearly 200 acres of open field and woodland including land for tilling, hay and pasture. It has been identified for its agricultural significance dating from 1840 to 1959.
- **Breezy Hill Site (RI-957) (listed September 28, 1985)** – The Breezy Hill site is an archaeological site containing Native American artifacts. Its address is restricted by the National Park Service (NPS).

### *Additional Places of Significance*

In addition to the more than 250 buildings, sites and structures listed individually or as a contributing resource to a historic district, Foster includes many more places of historical significance not included on the NRHP. The following list is comprised of properties which the Town of Foster is aware of and is not a complete inventory of all places of historical significance:

- **Abram Walker Farm** – the farm is located on South Killingly Road and consists of a traditional center-chimney house (c. 1780) accompanied by several outbuildings including sheds, a well house and a shingle barn.
- **A. Bennett House** – 1849, North Road
- **Beriah Collins House** – c. 1760 and 1790, Old Plainfield Pike
- **Burgess Farm** – c.1820, Burgess Road
- **Captain John Randall House** – before 1784 and c. 1920, Kennedy Road
- **Colegrove-Hammond House/Thomas Hammond's Tavern** – c. 1755 et seq., South Killingly Road
- **Daniel Colwell House** – c. 1755-1772, Theodore Foster Drive
- **Deacon Daniel Hopkins House** – c. 1810, Balcom Road

- **Dick Wall's House**
- **Ernie Ross Farm**
- **Ezekiel Hopkins-William Potter House** – c. 1720 et seq., Old Danielson Pike
- **Ezekiel Hopkins, Jr. House** – c. 1820 and 1840, Burgess Road
- **Former Oak Tree Tavern** – c.1875, 1910 and 1974, Foster Center Road
- **Henry Davis House** – c.1865, Old Danielson Pike
- **Jacob Phillips/James Manchester Wright House** – c. 1770 and 1820, Foster Center Road
- **Jencks School House** – the one story, one room school house (c. 1647) located near the intersection of Foster Center Road and Victory Highway was in use as recently as 1952. It was converted into a private residence in the 1970s and now includes a one-story addition.
- **John T. Randall Wheelwright Shop** – c. 1800 et seq., Howard Hill Road
- **Lyon Farm** – c. 1895, Howard Hill Road
- **Woodland Meeting House/ Maple Glen Tavern/G. Simmons House** – c. 1760, East Killingly Road
- **Mt. Hygeia School House** – the one story, one room school house (c. 1840) located on Hartford Pike was in use as recently as 1952. It is the only one of seven remaining school houses in the town which is un-remodeled.
- **Nathaniel Stone House** – c. 1823, Old Danielson Pike
- **Nehemiah Angell Barn** – the barn (c. 1790) was donated to FPS in 2016 and was used to hold agricultural tools and shelter animals (the original animal stalls remain). It may also have been used to store a wagon and small sleigh. Sill rotting and its resulting settling over time has occurred due to water infiltration of the barn's foundation.
- **North Foster Free Will Baptist Church** – c. 1848, East Killingly Road
- **Paine Bennett Farm**
- **Peleg Aylsworth Gristmill/Sawmill site** – c. 1797
- **Phillips-Wright House** – c. 1765, Foster Center Road
- **Simmons Braid Mill** – c. 1905-1960, Old Danielson Pike
- **"Stone House"** – before 1806, 1815 and 1974, Danielson Pike
- **William Harrington Farm** – the historic dairy farm is located at the intersection of Cucumber Hill Road and Harrington Road and consists of 1.5 story, gable roof house (c. 1858) with a 1.5 story ell and a large shingle barn (c. 1917). Unlike many historic farms, the house and barn are under separate ownership. The barn has previously been endangered by potential demolition in the later 2000s but remains standing as of 2016.
- **Winsor House** – c. 1720 and 1740, Winsor Road
- **World War II Airplane Spotter's Hut** – c. 1942, Victory Highway
- **W. H. Collins Bobbin Mill** – c.1865, Old Plainfield Pike
- **Dolly Cole Bridge** – c. 1923, Old Danielson Pike
- **Plainfield Pike** – the colonial era Plainfield Pike, which generally aligns with the present Plainfield Pike except where Old Plainfield Pike still exists, was used by the French Expeditionary Force travelling from Providence to Yorktown, Virginia in support of the colonies during the American Revolutionary War. Today, it is part of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route (W3R), a National Historic Trail.
- **Swamp Meadow Covered Bridge** – although the existing bridge was rebuilt in 1994, after its predecessor, dedicated one year earlier, was burned by vandals, it is an adaptation of a townne lattice truss covered bridge, used in the early nineteenth century and was built by volunteers using locally sourced oak and pine. The bridge is the only covered bridge on a public roadway (Central Pike) in Rhode Island.

### *Cemeteries*

Cemeteries are valuable resources to a better understanding of social traditions observed in Foster over the past centuries. RIHCC has identified 159 historical cemeteries throughout Foster. Of these, 158 of were confirmed to stand alone while one (Cemetery FR104) may be a duplicate of another (Cemetery FR127). Overall, these cemeteries together hold more than 8,100 burials. Stone markers indicate 1760 as the earliest year of recorded deaths.

Beginning in 2011, FPS has conducted a survey of historical cemeteries meant to provide an update to the last survey conducted by RIHCC. Among the results to date, over 300 inscriptions previously recorded have been identified as duplications or are now illegible while more than 400 not previously recorded have now been documented. Cemetery FR094 has also been identified as being part of Cemetery FR093. The survey also identified where cemeteries lacked clear signage and is working to update all historical cemetery signs to allow them greater visibility.

### *Stone Walls*

As described in RIHPHC's survey of Foster, early growth in the local agriculture and forestry industries resulted in the cutting down of much of the town's hardwood forests by the mid nineteenth century. The increase of farmable land supported an increase in both the number of properties available for purchase and the size of the properties. Stone walls were used to delineate the boundaries between properties as well as the boundaries between different agricultural activities.

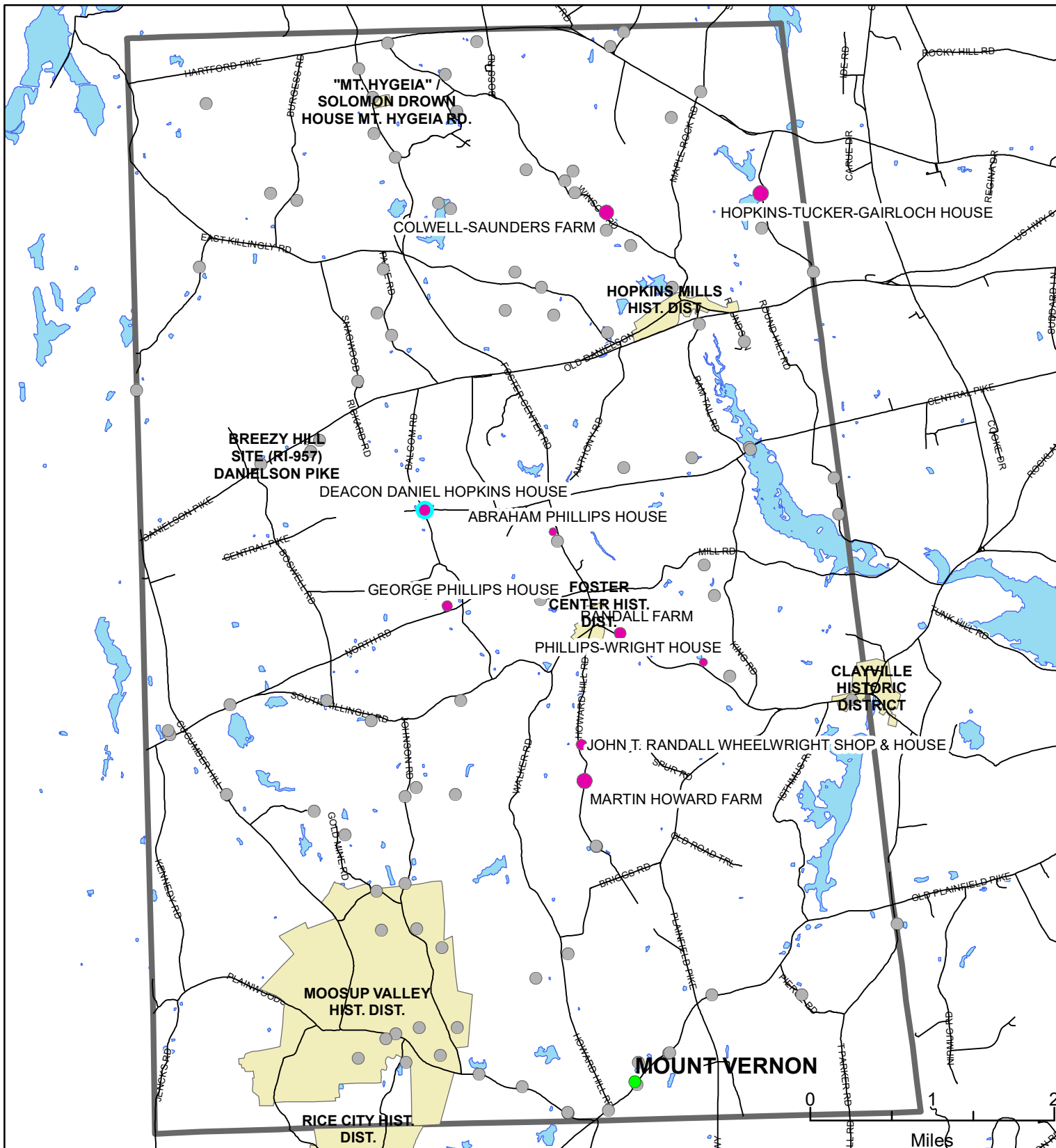
Over time, these historic resources have become an increasingly common target of theft due to their agricultural and rural symbolism. The State of Rhode Island's Leona Kelley Act (Rhode Island General Law [RIGL] §11-41-32) supports legal action against any person found guilty of removing a stone wall without permission of its owner to protect these structures. In January 2016, the town amended its Zoning Ordinance to provide four general provisions to ensure any proposed alterations, relocations, excavations, dismantling or demolition of stone walls are identified in planning processes. Additional guidelines to protect other stone walls are also outlined.

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Figure 12: Map of Historic Resources







## Historic Resources Map

- Historic Sites
- Historic Cemeteries
- Historic Site Candidates
- Historic Districts
- Foster Town Boundary
- Lakes & Ponds
- Roads

This map is not the product of a Professional Land Survey. It was created by the Town of Foster for general reference, informational, planning and guidance use, and is not a legally authoritative source as to location of natural or manmade features. Proper interpretation of this map may require the assistance of appropriate professional services. The Town of Foster makes no warranty, express or implied, related to the spatial accuracy, reliability, completeness, or currentness of this map.



**RIGIS**



## Cultural Activities

### *Events and Recognitions*

The Town of Foster observes all state and federal holidays and parades are held in the community for Memorial Day (last Monday in May) and Veterans Day (November 11). Many of its residents, as well as visitors from neighboring towns, also attend Old Home Days held annually in late July. Established as Old Home Day in 1904 to raise funds for the preservation of the Baptist Meeting House (later used as and now called the Town House), the celebration has expanded over the decades in both its size and time length. A community dinner is still held on Friday evening with food prepared using the original recipes from 1904.

During Old Home Days, the Town of Foster has also honored select residents with Citizen of the Year Awards for their dedication and service to the municipality. Services Awards have also been given by the town for residents' work in the community. The oldest resident of Foster is also given the honorary title Holder of the Boston Post Cane.

Foster's Boston Post Cane is an ornamental cane first bestowed upon its oldest resident in 1909 from the Boston Post. The gift was part of a campaign by the newspaper company which distributed canes to the oldest residents of cities and towns throughout New England in the early twentieth century. It deteriorated and increased in rarity over the century and was ultimately acquired by the town in 2007. Efforts to restore the cane have been successful and, though it has been retired for use, it is publicly displayed in Town Hall.

Several properties in Foster are said to be haunted and ghost touring is a popular local pastime, particularly in October leading up to Halloween. The "Grange Hall Ghost", an apparition of a workman with a shovel, is said to appear in front of the Moosup Valley Grange Hall at night, walk past the cemetery, and/or sit or stand on the nearby bridge. The grave of Dolly Cole, "the Witch of Foster" is said to be visited by a mysterious lady in white. The ruins of the Ram Tail Mill are said to be haunted by the spirit of caretaker Peleg Walker who reportedly hung himself from the bell rope during the Mill's heyday. The Mill ruins have become a local mecca for ghost hunters from within and outside the state. Whatever the merits of any specific claim to haunting, the concept of haunted places is a part of Foster culture, visiting local haunts is a form of recreation, and investigating paranormal claims in Foster is a mainstay for paranormal hobbyists and entertainers.

### *Arts*

The **Libraries of Foster**, whose services are discussed in detail in the Chapter on Community Services and Facilities, provide several opportunities for residents to engage in various cultural activities. Recent programs have included afterschool filmmaking for students and cooking classes for adults inspired by local farmers' markets.

The **Foster-Glocester School District** provides students opportunities to study and engage in various visual and performing arts including animation, ceramics, drawing, musical instruments, photography, and singing.

**Swamp Meadow Community Theatre (SMCT)** was established in fall 2002 by a young resident with support from numerous volunteers and the now-defunct FosteringArts. Since 2003, SMCT has put on nearly 50 productions and begun the SMCT Creative Studio which seeks to produce animation and cartoons, podcasts, radio plays and short films (SMCT intends to host a regionally juried short film festival in the future). It has been the recipient of funding by another local organization - Citizens and

Students Together (CAST). CAST has also been a sponsor of Summer Shakespeare, two outdoor performances of William Shakespeare's plays performed annually by Trinity Repertory Theatre.

**Artist Open Studios (AOS)** is a collective of eleven artists in northwestern Rhode Island who demonstrate several artistic mediums to the public in their creative spaces – barns. Many of the artists involved have been active for several decades and their works have been showcased in galleries and museums throughout New England.

## PROJECTED CONDITIONS

### Anticipated Accomplishments

Historical resources require continued maintenance to ensure they remain in a condition which allows for their future use, visitation and contribution to Foster's rural character. As of 2016, the community can expect several projects and actions to be done by or continued into 2039:

- **Nehemiah Angell Barn** – donated by the Town of Foster to FPS in 2016, applications for funding the barn's needed restoration were ongoing as of that same year. It is expected that work will be successfully completed once financial support is received. A grant for the stabilization of the barn structure was granted in 2016 by the RI Historic Preservation Society; the barn has since been stabilized and granted a Certificate of Occupancy. There is currently a sleigh and miscellaneous tools that are housed within the barn, that are for preservation purposed and not utilized.
- **Abrams Walker Farm** – the Walker House was previously listed on FPS' Most Endangered Properties list due to its deteriorating condition for several years. The property was since acquired by a private owner who has confirmed an interest in preserving the home. It is no longer listed among the FPS' Most Endangered Properties, because the current owner has maintained in a manner that it is no longer a concern or preservation at this time;
- **Historical cemeteries** – signage will be installed at all historical cemeteries to ensure their locations are identifiable and protected
  - The preservation society has GPS marked all known historical cemeteries within town and cataloged all names within the cemeteries. All information can be found on RIGIS;
- **Historical collections** – FPS, in an ongoing effort, will continue to enlarge its collection of artifacts, documents, recorded interviews and other materials pertaining to local history; All of the recordings that have been completed and uploaded onto a cloud account with Microsoft owned and occupied by The Preservation Society; The next step is to find a permanent location which can be accessed by the public;

The strength of tradition in the community also indicates the continuation of and involvement in its cultural resources for years to come, including Old Home Days, local parades, and artistic programs in its libraries and schools. As indicated by employment data from the past several years (see chapter on the Growing Economy for more information), the arts, entertainment and recreation industry is also slowly expanding locally.

### Future Challenges

Presently, there are three buildings which the Foster Preservation Society identifies as being most at-risk of permanent loss in the future:

- **Mt. Hygeia School House** –as noted previously, this eighteenth-century school house is the only one which has remained unaltered since its construction. The building, now privately owned and used for storage, has experienced deterioration including the loss of its windows' glass panes.
- **Mt. Hygeia/Solomon Drown House** – the NRHP-listed building has experienced notable deterioration since its last major restoration effort (the installation of new clapboarding and roofing) was completed in the 1990s
- **South Foster Union Chapel** – the one-story building, constructed in the late Greek Revival style for use as a non-denominational place of religious worship, is owned by the South Foster Union Chapel Society. A grant obtained by the Chapel Society previously supported the installation of a new roof but additional needed work cannot be performed due to a lack of funding. This limitation in resources is also coming at time of declining membership in the Chapel Society.

While not among the Most Endangered Properties, there are several other places whose future conditions are of concern to FPS:

- **Ely Aylsworth House** – the current police station, a contributing resource to the Foster Center Historic District, presented numerous concerns when assessed by a fire marshal prior to the Police Department's occupation.
- **Fuller Farm**
- **Halsworth House**
- **John Harrington Cave**
- **Rambone Dairy Farm**
- **Simmons Barn**
- **Stan Winsor House**
- **Thomas Brayton House**
- **Town House**
  - Application to Champlain Grant for improvements to the ceiling paint (chipping), windows, paint exterior.
- **Tyler Free Library** – the library's children's collection is currently located in the Moosup Valley School House (1811), which was the original building on the library's current site. The original library building (1900) was relocated to the school house's site on Moosup Valley Road in the 1960s, at which time an addition was constructed to join the two. As of 2016, Libraries of Foster (which also operates Foster Public Library on Howard Hill Road) is seeking property to build a new library.
- **Welcome Rood Tavern**
- **William Cowell Farm**

General threats to historical resources throughout town include negligence of property (either voluntary or involuntary) by their owners, the subdivision of properties resulting in buildings and structures being subjugated to new regulations and the needs of historical resources competing with the needs of the reservoir system and the various agencies and departments of the municipal, state and federal governments. As examples, two historical bridges – the Anthony Road Bridge and the Hopkins Mills Bridge – were taken down by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) in spring 2013 and winter 2014, respectively.

## ASSESSMENT OF PROJECTED CONDITIONS

### Community Value

A primary factor in promoting preservation of community resources, both natural and cultural, is a sense of stewardship. This philosophy entails viewing property not as a commodity, but as a non-renewable resource which needs to be protected for future enjoyment. Historic buildings are particularly appropriate for stewardship roles in that they have existed for many years prior to their present ownership and are physical records of the heritage of the town, which is a possession of not any one individual but of the community and its residents.

The single most important attribute of Foster is its scenic quality and integrity. The historic and cultural resources in each of the listed historic districts derive their significance not as individual buildings or structures, but as a whole. The cultural landscape is significant as the identity of Foster, and it provides a sense of place which is distinct to the residents of the community. Concerns regarding development continue to be expressed by people in the community, especially development which has occurred since the 1990s.

In 1990, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) published a statewide inventory of the state's most scenic areas entitled "The Rhode Island Landscape Inventory." The inventory included rural farmsteads, small urban mill villages, town commons and ubiquitous agricultural lands bounded by stone walls. These features are all present in Foster. The town concurs with RIDEM that "the scenic or aesthetic value of the traditional landscape lies in its unique scenic resources. People tend to appreciate landscapes which define where they live and make their 'home' or their part of the country special and identifiable from other areas." This sense of place becomes lost when new development is not sensitive to the character and integrity of local conditions, both environmental and built. Much of the town's historic built environment remains intact, due in part to many restorations or rehabilitations over the years. Simultaneously, however, alterations to many of Foster's historic homes have taken place impacting their ability to more tangibly contribute to the town's history and character. Other structures have been abandoned, while some fields have been overgrown or returned to woodland.

While a listing on the NRHP regulates the federal and state agency activities and funding that may affect the integrity of those resources included, there is no local protection in the town's regulations against the alteration or demolition of historic buildings and structures. To date, there have been no large scale commercial or residential developments which have radically altered the relationship of historic buildings and farms to the landscape, but current zoning regulations do not restrict this from happening.

Arguably the most serious threat to retaining the historical identity of the town is the introduction of development which mirrors the commercial and residential patterns and designs which have urbanized other communities in the state over the past decades. The qualities of urban and suburban development do not complement the historic development or rural character which defines the Town of Foster. The local character has been the culmination of scattered historic farms, forests, fields, streams, and small clusters of buildings and structures reflecting hamlets.

While zoning regulations require revisions to better support the town's retention of its history, the character of scattered farms in the landscape is further enhanced by the small setback many of these buildings have from Foster's rural roads due to the ordinance. Many farmhouses and barns are actually set straddling Foster's roads. The current zoning setback requirements will not allow this pattern to be continued without a dimensional variance or deviations however; hence new houses are built with

greater setbacks on frontage lots. Fortunately, many of these new houses have been built with a buffer between house and road filled by trees and other vegetation, essentially screening these homes and allowing the scenic landscapes along roadways to remain largely undisrupted.

As is pointed out in the Land Use chapter, Foster was mostly zoned for a uniform 200,000 square foot minimum lot size pattern of residential development with the supposition that the rural character of the town can be preserved with such regulation. The assessment of this, however, found this dimensional regulation to allow sprawling uniform development along Foster's roads. Likewise, the process for subdividing made new development patterns in rear portions of larger lots alien to the development taking place before such regulations were established.

### **Economic Value**

Many previous studies of various communities throughout the country (and beyond its borders), have demonstrated that retaining and enhancing historic resources and scenic areas produce a stabilizing effect upon local economies and tax revenue. These resources attract reinvestment in a community and instill in residents a real sense of place which reinforces their desire to stay in the community and contribute to its well-being. Historic resources have been used as economic development tools in many rural New England towns and villages. Models exist for this use in the Connecticut River Valley and throughout the State of Vermont, where resources have been preserved as they are (as opposed to museums), and a strong local economy has developed. Growing in a managed and sensitive way will retain opportunities for town residents and provide a future for the tax base improved from the present.

### **Overlay Zoning**

Historic overlay district zoning may be one tool to explore which will provide a reasonable mechanism to allow new additions, alterations and construction in Foster's historic districts without jeopardizing their integrity and character. Such a district would only address the exterior appearance of buildings and structures within distinctive geographic boundaries. The use of the property would remain dictated by the zoning district in which it is located. With this overlay district in place, a body of these overlay districts' residents would be appointed by the town to evaluate the compatibility and affect of exterior alterations to structures within the overlay district's bounds. A certificate of appropriateness would be needed from the body before a building permit for construction could be issued by the Building Official. To ensure the role of such a body is checked, enabling legislation for historic district zoning by the state has safeguarded property owners from arbitrary and unreasonable demands from such bodies. A set of standards and design guidelines for compatible alterations must be adopted and closely adhered to by each body so that members' individual aesthetic preferences do not factor into whether a proposed alteration is approved or denied.

### **Guide and Management Plans**

In addition to or in conjunction with Historic District Zoning, the development of individual management or conservation plans may be another tool for historic preservation. Patterned after planning for the preservation of unique and critical natural resources, this tool is also known as special area management planning. The development of special area management plans (SAMPs) for Foster Center, Clayville, Hopkins Mills and Moosup Valley should include a rigorous inventory and analysis of historic resources, land use and environmental features within each place. Management strategies should also be included through the active participation of village residents. These strategies could then be adopted by the town for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan and future implementation.

A specific guide plan for managing these resources is an important tool to use for their preservation. The 1982 RIHPHC survey contained the town's first Historic Preservation Plan. While many of the

recommendations included in the survey have been implemented, many concerns relating to historic preservation are still relevant and require the town's attention nearly 30 years later. These include:

- Changing land use patterns can quickly alter the character of Foster unless careful and timely consideration is given to how, where, and why development changes will occur.
- The overall environment, both natural and built, is important due to its present ability to evoke the past and to mirror and preserve physical evidence of early nineteenth century agrarian and small town New England, the bulk of which of which is being lost throughout the region.
- By including historical resources in the 1991 Comprehensive Plan and subsequent revisions (including this 2019 update), it is possible to include the preservation of Foster's heritage as an integral component with managing growth and the future development of the town, managing the preservation of environmental features and, open space, and integrating compatible opportunities for economic development.
- Many items under Planning for the Built Environment in the 1982 "Foster, Rhode Island, Statewide Historical Preservation Report P-F-1" have not been fully accomplished as of 2018.
- Archeological sites have the potential to yield information obtainable in no other way. This is particularly true in the case of prehistoric sites which are the only record we have of the pre-written human era. Once disturbed archeological sites, historic and prehistoric, lose most if not all of their information value because artifacts can only be fully understood and former lifeways researched in context. It is for this reason that owners and others who find an archeological site are encouraged to avoid disturbing it and to consult with the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission. The Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission can advise on the potential importance of the site, the possibility of listing it on the State or National Registered Historic Lists, and the tax benefits which may be available to an owner in return for granting a preservation easement.
- The Foster Preservation Society could act as a catalyst for restoration by assembling a collection of restoration reference material in the town libraries and by referring owners to the statewide Consultant Services Bureau of the Providence Preservation Society or to the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission.
- A program to maintain and record information in the town's many cemeteries could be developed in conjunction with the state's cemetery program, Rhode Island Graves Registration Program, Division of Veterans Affairs.
- Barns and outbuildings are Foster's most endangered species. They are an all too often overlooked and important part of the town's rural character and are especially vulnerable because maintenance costs and property taxes make them seem a luxury to preserve. Today in Foster only a handful of properties survive which can properly be termed historic farm complexes. The continuing loss of outbuildings alter irrevocably the present appearance and past record of the community. The preservation could be encouraged by:
  - A local consultant service giving basic advice on preventing buildings from falling into irreversible dereliction (mainly keeping a good roof on);
  - A change in tax policy to encourage their preservation by positive tax incentive or partial tax abatement;
  - Relocation or careful re-use when the only alternative is demolition or slow decay.
- Another endangered building type is the one-room schoolhouse. Foster had eighteen schools in operation throughout the last half of the nineteenth century. Of a present total of seven schoolhouses, two are used for libraries, at Foster Center and Moosup Valley, and four are residences. Only Mount Hygeia Schoolhouse has not been recycled for other uses and remains in relatively unaltered condition. Some plan for its continued preservation should be developed.

- Town ordinances could be enacted to protect selected dirt roads, which are important parts of Foster's landscape. The ordinance might protect designated sections of dirt roads from widening, straightening, or unnecessary culverting or paving. The additional cost of maintaining dirt roads under modern usage conditions might make this infeasible, but it should be given some consideration on aesthetic and historical grounds. Sections of Round Hill, Maple Rock, Tucker Hollow, Salisbury, North, and Winsor Roads, especially where stone culverts or plank bridges still exist, might be considered for such protection.
- Commercial development should be controlled and shaped through zoning and other forms of town regulation. Clear definition and regulation of design for commercial areas can prevent what has already happened along much of Route 6: the evolution of a strung-out, disorganized, and unsightly development which may be economically damaging to individual businesses and is already visually damaging to the town. Many people traveling through Foster know the town only by the appearance of Route 6, a relatively ugly face for a town with so much natural and man-made beauty. Re-examination of the areas currently zoned commercial may be in order as a first step. The whole length of Route 6 should not be susceptible to business development nor should the as yet almost untouched length of Route 101 be indiscriminately given over to commercial concerns.
- If the proposal to build Interstate Route 84 is revived or if Route 6 is upgraded to Interstate status, with an interchange in Foster, special measures should be taken to limit and control the service facilities and fast food stands which inevitably mushroom in such locations, Zoning regulations and design review would be vital here.
- Relocate the town highway department facilities currently behind the Aylsworth House.
- Continue the re-use of existing historic structures wherever possible.
- Establish a specific group, a Friends of the Foster Town House, to ensure that a program for the maintenance and use of this local landmark is developed.
- Local historic district zoning should be considered as a means of regulation new development and alternation of existing buildings within the town's historic hamlets and other specifically designated areas. Clayville (both the Foster and Scituate sections), Hopkins Mills, Foster Center, Moosup Valley, and sections of Paine Road, Winsor Road and Plain Woods Road might benefit from such designation. Of such zoning were it to be adopted, it should include provisions for individual historic structures or complexes as well as for historic districts.
- Owners interested in conserving specific built or natural aspects of their properties should be encouraged to make use of preservation easements. Such easements are the most effective means available to ensure retention of buildings and/or valued natural features.
- The preservation of materials, which provide a better understanding of Foster's history, could be ensured by:
  - Establishing procedures whereby town records including building permits and plans no longer needed by their respective agencies are preserved. In the past irreplaceable documents have been lost through routine house-cleaning projects;
  - Encouraging individuals to donate old letters, scrapbooks, photographs, architectural drawings, and other pertinent papers to an appropriate archive, such as the Rhode Island Historical Society;
  - Setting up a local museum where artifacts of local historical significance could be stored and displayed.
- The National Register program of Foster should be expanded.

Managing historic and scenic resources protection is a significant and integral component of this plan. A primary vehicle for town guidance, and regulation of change to the cultural landscape of Foster, is the



Farmland-Rural Conservation Overlay District, which includes areas of primary historic and scenic value for protection. In addition to this district, the town will consider future historic district zoning for protection of village character as well as significant individual resources. Development of a Conservation Zoning Ordinance is needed to prevent “suburbanization” in new development, by varying setback regulations and building placement in accordance with the particular property and its scenic and cultural features. Educational and cultural heritage activities, many conducted by the Foster Preservation Society and by land trusts including the Foster Land Trust, are encouraged and supported. Economic development will be guided by sensitivity to the town’s historic resources and scenic qualities.

Zoning and Subdivision Regulations – Zoning setback and height regulations have an influence upon the preservation of historic resources. Subdivision regulations which are insensitive to historic properties and contain requirements for the standardization to suburban development patterns have a profound influence on the preservation of the character of historic farms, including farmhouses, farm buildings and their settings. Both zoning and subdivision regulations can be modified to allow for greater flexibility – allowing for change that is in tune with the existing character of the area. Conservation Zoning which provides variable lot requirements, and flexible zoning standards, are tools that provide opportunities for new development which does not adversely affect the integrity of historical areas. In addition, site plan review is a technique by which review boards and agencies can evaluate specific locations of buildings, parking areas, circulation roads, landscaping, and buffer areas to mitigate impact.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

GOALS		
HCR	G1	Maintain and enhance the quality of life in Foster for residents and visitors by preserving and protecting the integrity of the historic, cultural, and scenic sites, structures, districts, cemeteries, and landscapes, which provide Foster with its historical, cultural, and scenic identity
OBJECTIVES:		
HCR	O1	Integrate preservation and protection by diminishing the potential adverse effects of future growth and development
HCR	O2	Recognize the contribution of historic resources and landscape to the character of the town in all community commissions and agencies
POLICIES:		
HCR	P1	Incorporate historic, cultural and scenic preservation into overall planning and development considerations, particularly economic development activities and the approval of new development projects near historic, cultural or scenic resources
HCR	P2	Encourage the ongoing programs of the Foster Preservation Society
HCR	P3	Encourage the preservation of privately owned historic buildings, cultural sites, and scenic areas
HCR	P4	Support the role of the arts in the cultural experience of residents and visitors, including collaborative efforts with other public agencies and private institutions
ACTIONS:		
HCR	A1	Establish a Historic District Commission to oversee issues regarding protection, and future of development of the town’s Historic Districts: the villages of Clayville, Hopkins Mills, Foster Center, and Moosup Valley

## Town of Foster, RI Comprehensive Plan

<b>HCR</b>	A2	Develop special area management (SAM) plans for the historic villages, including but not limited to Foster Center, Clayville, Moosup Valley and Hopkins Mills; providing for the preservation and enhancement of each village's unique identity and character
<b>HCR</b>	A3	Develop a rating system as a component of the performance standards for new developments in historically and visually significant areas
<b>HCR</b>	A4	Evaluate new planned development and subdivision development regarding impacts to our historic buildings, cultural, and scenic areas
<b>HCR</b>	A5	Work with the Foster Preservation Society to design and distribute interpretive brochures of Foster's cultural landscape
<b>HCR</b>	A6	Work with the Foster Preservation Society to develop a design guidelines manual for renovations to historic properties, and work with the Society to distribute the manual to local property owners
<b>HCR</b>	A7	Seek funding to update the Historical Barns Inventory
<b>HCR</b>	A8	Continue preservation and protection of all town-owned historic, cultural, and scenic sites from adverse effects of on-going development
<b>HCR</b>	A9	Encourage the continuation of community-wide celebrations such as Foster Old Home Days
<b>HCR</b>	A10	Encourage the continuation of support for the arts including cultural and community activities such as Swamp Meadow Community Theatre
<b>HCR</b>	A11	Work with the Foster Land Trust on the acquisition of historic, cultural and scenic easements as a way to preserve historic, cultural and scenic resources
<b>HCR</b>	A12	Work with the Blackstone Heritage Corridor, Inc. and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, as well as neighboring communities to establish a regional approach to historic, cultural and scenic asset protection and promotion
<b>HCR</b>	A13	Publicize the scenic road loops which connect with the scenic routes of neighboring towns
<b>HCR</b>	A14	Review and update the town's sign ordinance to include standards for cottage industry signs, commercial and industrial signs and signage within our historic districts / hamlets.
<b>HCR</b>	A15	Complete the scenic road loops which connect with the scenic routes of neighboring towns.
<b>HCR</b>	A16	Implement the recommendations contained in the 1982 RI Historic Preservation Commission Survey including the following: a) Map archaeological sites as constraints to development and apply criteria for their consideration in any new development projects which would be located on them or in close proximity to them; b) Maintain and continuously update a collection of restoration reference material in the town libraries or at the Planning Office for use of the community with the aid of the Foster Preservation Society; c) Continue efforts to record information concerning Foster's historic resources, farms, mills and cemeteries.
<b>HCR</b>	A17	Implement conservation zoning so as to balance new development with the preservation of historic and scenic resources.
<b>HCR</b>	A18	Enact protective ordinances for stone walls and trees within the road R-O-W.
<b>HCR</b>	A19	Establish standards for town improvements such as pavement, width and drainage which will not adversely affect scenic road character.



## COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

- ❖ INTRODUCTION
- ❖ EXISTING CONDITIONS
- ❖ ASSESSMENTS OF COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES
- ❖ GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Being a small rural community, Foster does not (and cannot) provide the same level of services found in more urban communities. It is a simple fact of rural living that public water and sewers are just not available. These functions are provided by nature. Residents of the Town of Foster rely on natural resources to provide potable water and transmit and purify wastewater. Water supply and wastewater management facilities are the responsibilities of private homeowners. Long-time residents of Foster are self-reliant and accustomed to the mutual assistance of rural living.

The Town of Foster is not located within the Urban Services Boundary identified in Land Use 2025. New development may bring residents from more metropolitan areas of the state, and from out of state, who seek the same type of services found in more urban communities. Yet in Foster, options for new development and the density of development are limited and constrained by the suitability of sites for wells and onsite waste water treatment systems (OWTS). New and ongoing construction projects are required to comply with RIDEM's current permitting and regulations for the location, installation, and standards for the OWTS. Foster is particularly sensitive to the need for proper setbacks in relation to wetlands, streams and watershed lands that impact the local environment, as Foster contains the headwaters for the Scituate Reservoir. The Scituate Reservoir provides the potable water for over 60 percent of the State of Rhode Island, though it does not provide water for the town's residents.

The town provides community services and facilities that are responsive to the needs of residents while sustaining Foster's rural character, beauty, and natural resources and preserving the town's cultural legacies of self-reliance and neighborly assistance.

This chapter contains the current inventory of the existing physical infrastructure and the services provided to the community, a discussion of the future needs of the community, and assesses whether those needs can be met by existing services and facilities. Going through this analysis will allow the municipality to determine what steps should be taken to meet the future needs and demands of the community. This chapter also describes steps required to increase energy efficiency and the development of energy infrastructure.

### Relationship to Other Chapters

While public works and emergency service facilities are described and assessed in this chapter, recreational facilities and water supply are discussed in the chapter on Natural Resources, Conservation, and Recreation. The Historical and Cultural Resources chapter discusses the library system as a 'cultural resource' and services and facilities related to transportation (road maintenance and improvement) are discussed in the Transportation Network chapter. Foster's storm water management system is linked to its roadway system, and is discussed in detail in the Transportation Network chapter. Development of measures to make infrastructure more resilient are included in the Natural Hazards chapter.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### **Municipal Administration**

Foster, as part of the Town of Providence, was founded in 1636 and incorporated as its own municipality on August 24, 1781. The town operates under a Home Rule Charter adopted in 1976 that provides for a Town Council form of government with a five-member Council. Each Town Council member is elected at-large for a term of two years. The council is led by a Town Council President, who is elected by the Town Council members. Per the Town Charter, the Town Council President “shall be recognized as the head of the town government.” The Town Council President works closely with the Town Clerk, who is also an elected official. The Town Clerk is the Director of the Department of Administration and oversees administration of Town Hall.

The Town Council is supported and advised by various boards and commissions, members of which are volunteers and are appointed by the Town Council at different intervals. These boards and commissions include the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Review, Board of Canvassers, Recreation Committee, Personnel Board, and the Juvenile Hearing Board.

Finally, there are several appointed officials and department heads who manage specific departments and activities within the town. They include the Treasurer/Finance Director, Tax Assessor, Tax Collector, Police Chief, Director of Public Works, Town Planner, Building and Zoning Official, and the Human Services Director. All these, except for the Police Chief, have offices within the Town Hall. The support staffs for the various departments are also housed in Town Hall.

### **Town Hall**

Constructed around 1990, the Town Hall is located at 181 Howard Hill Road and houses all administrative offices of the municipality. The maintenance of this building is part of the responsibility of the Department of Public Works. Although the Town Hall is recently constructed, its location and design provide a perfect complement to the neighboring and historic Foster Town House. Despite its recent vintage, the facility needs remodeling and improvements. Improvements such as replacements for leaking windows, a fire escape for the second floor, an elevator to provide ADA accessibility, and finish work on the second floor to make that space useable are currently under consideration.

### **Foster Town House**

Constructed around 1796, the Foster Town House is located across the parking lot from Town Hall. The Foster Town House is the oldest meeting house in Rhode Island that has been in continuous use since its construction. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the office of the Foster Preservation Society is in the basement of the building. The Town House is still used for many Town Council meetings, various board meetings, Old Home Days events, and other town-sponsored activities. Ongoing maintenance and repairs are necessary to preserve this important community landmark.

### **Benjamin Eddy Building**

Located at 6 South Killingly Road, this building at one time served as the Foster Town Hall with small half-walls designating the spaces for the Town Clerk and Town Finance Director. After the construction of the current Town Hall, the half walls were removed and the building became a public meeting room. The town recently completed some energy related upgrades to the building which included installation of new energy efficient windows, replacement of the furnace, and new energy efficient lighting.

At present, the community is well served by these buildings. The only plan for the buildings is regular maintenance and pertinent upgrades, to keep them functioning efficiently. The town should upgrade its

equipment and software and focus on expanding the availability of municipal services on the internet, including making land evidence records available online.

## **Public Safety and Emergency Management**

### ***Police Department***

When the Foster Police Department is at full complement, it consists of one Police Chief, nine full time police officers, four full-time and two part-time dispatchers, and one part-time animal control officer. The town recently increased its number of officers by two. Before the increase in officers, there was only a single police officer on duty during most shifts. If assistance is needed, it is typically requested from neighboring police departments in Glocester or Scituate. On average, there are approximately 13,000 to 15,000 calls for service received and 200 to 250 arrests made per year. In addition to typical police calls related to crime and public disorder, many calls are service-oriented non-emergency situations reflective of small town life. Officers also provide volunteer community service.

Personnel issues present some of the department's biggest challenges. With the small number of officers, it is difficult to cover medical and vacation leaves, twice weekly court appearances, collection of evidence, follow-up investigations, training requirements and supervision needs. Additionally, it appears that Foster often serves as a de facto training ground for other police departments as officers often serve within the department before seeking out employment in larger communities.

The Animal Control Officer responds to problems with domestic animals and wildlife within the town. The town pays a fee to utilize animal shelters in neighboring towns for stray pets. Since much of the town is forested, encounters between people and animals such as raccoons, foxes, turkeys, coyotes, deer and bears remain an ever-present issue. Encounters with wildlife bring public health concerns including the transmission of rabies and Lyme disease, potential injury to residents. They may also potentially injure their livestock and pets as well as the wild animals themselves. The Animal Control Officer works to balance the safety of the town's residents, their pets, and livestock with the interest in preserving and protecting native wildlife.

The Police Department operates 14 motor vehicles. Vehicle upgrades have been managed through lease agreements financed through the town's capital budget. The Police Department uses the historic Aylsworth House, located on Howard Hill Road, as its headquarters. This re-use of a historic home creates some unique challenges. The building itself is a 200-year-old wooden structure. While it was remodeled to accommodate the Police Department, it currently meets the bare minimums to function for that purpose. The building needs substantial repairs, has limited space for records storage, and is not handicapped accessible. The building has just one holding cell. In the past, the town has received grants to fund remodeling of the Aylsworth House. Over the past few years, the windows have been replaced for greater energy efficiency and the furnace was recently replaced.

The town now needs to decide whether to undertake the extensive repairs and remodeling necessary to make the structure better suit its present purpose, or whether to look for other accommodations for the Police Department. Some of the issues that will need to be considered include what type of rooms and space does the police department need? Is it possible to make the department or the building it is housed in more user-friendly and more secure at the same time? Can the Emergency Operations Center continue to be feasibly located within the Police Department or does it need to be relocated elsewhere? Studies of these issues are in progress as the town makes plans to update police facilities.

Current legal requirements and safety factors, including handicapped access, make an updated or new building necessary for the Police Department soon. Upgrades to keep the Police Department functioning efficiently and effectively are also under evaluation as part of the program for new Police facilities.

### *Fire Protection and Ambulance Corps*

There are three (3) volunteer fire departments that serve the Town of Foster. All are private non-profit organizations that operate cooperatively but independently. The South Foster Volunteer Fire Company (District 1), located at 7 Mt. Hygeia Road, is the most northerly located and has the newest fire station. The Moosup Valley Volunteer Fire Company (District 2), located at 55 Moosup Valley Road, is the most southern of the three. The Foster Center Volunteer Fire Company (District 3), located at 86 Foster Center Road, is the most centrally located and its station is considered part of the municipal government campus. All of the fire companies are manned by dedicated volunteers, many of whom have served for several years. Recruiting new volunteers remains a significant challenge for the fire companies. Other issues they face include: the cost of training new volunteers, ensuring all current volunteers are up to date in their training, ensuring that all volunteers are outfitted with appropriate safety equipment, and the availability of firefighters during weekday hours. Most volunteers have full time jobs with their place of work outside of town.

The Foster Ambulance Corps is located at 22 Mt. Hygeia Road and is also an independent non-profit entity. It operates with three full-time, one part time staff member, and approximately 50 volunteers. About half of volunteers are trained Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). One paid staff person is generally on duty at any given time, and volunteer EMTs are available for all shifts. Additional volunteers provide fund-raising, computer skills, equipment maintenance, and other support services. The Ambulance Corps works cooperatively with all three volunteer fire companies.

There is also an Engineering Board that consists of representatives from the fire companies and the Foster Ambulance Corps. One purpose of the Engineering Board is to coordinate requests for capital improvement funds for all four entities. The Engineering Board also looks for other opportunities for cooperative efforts between them.

The town provides each fire company and the Ambulance Corps with a stipend or donation on an annual basis. The amount of the stipend or donation is set at the annual Financial Town Meeting in May. Requests for replacement and repair of equipment for the Fire Companies and the Ambulance Corps are incorporated into the annual capital budget, but fiscal pressures result in equipment being retained beyond normal service life and thus requiring continual repair to remain in use. The buildings used by the fire companies and the Ambulance Corps are all privately owned and maintained by the respective entities that occupy them. The town should consider the possible consolidation of the fire companies to alleviate some of the financial pressure on equipment maintenance and replacements, and better train and manage volunteers.

### *Emergency Management Agency*

As with the fire companies and Ambulance Corps, volunteers from within the community serve as staff for the local Emergency Management Agency. The EMA Director receives a stipend and the Assistant Director is a volunteer. Both are appointed by the incoming Town Council every two years.

At one time, there was a volunteer shelter team put in place. However, recent discussions have centered on the shelter team transitioning to a Certified Emergency Response Team (CERT) which will allow volunteers the opportunity to work only within a shelter and not respond to emergencies. The local EMA can receive certain state and federal funds but has historically received most funds as grants.



In light of this, and because the EMA has no paid staff, the financial responsibility of the town is minimized.

Like other emergency response personnel in Foster, EMA personnel must be able to respond quickly and efficiently and their equipment must be able to move along with them. At present, the local EMA owns a trailer large enough to contain and transport their emergency response equipment and small enough to be towed by a large pick-up truck or a sports utility vehicle. The trailer was obtained through a grant and can be housed at various locations throughout the community. Its usual location is at the ambulance barn.

There is no building within the Foster community dedicated to the Emergency Management Agency. At present, the Emergency Operations Center is connected to the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) via the internet and is in the dispatch area of the police station because the police department is the only emergency service within the community with paid full-time staff monitoring the communication system 24 hours a day. The Emergency Operations Center, known as the WEB-EOC, is intended to function as a central location for coordinating the efforts of all the town's emergency response personnel (including paid and volunteer workers) when responding to a town-wide or statewide emergency. Given the structural challenges facing the police station as previously noted, however, there are serious concerns about the ability of a group of emergency directors to respond effectively to an emergency from within the dispatch area of the police station. This is another reason why the town needs to update or relocate the police station. Any new building to house the Police Department should include space to also house the Emergency Operations Center.

### **Department of Public Works**

The Department of Public Works (DPW) consists of one full-time director and six full-time employees, one of whom serves as a mechanic. DPW oversees all maintenance and grounds work for town-owned buildings, maintenance work for all public non-state roads and bridges (which, by extension, includes the stormwater system), and maintenance work for all town-owned vehicles.

The DPW has adopted a five-year plan to guide the maintenance of roads and bridges within the town. Because of fiscal constraints, repairs to transportation infrastructure have been forced to be the minimum necessary to maintain public safety. No upgrades to existing gravel roads are anticipated in the near future. The DPW recently engaged the services of Beta Group, Inc. to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the all town roads and bridges for the purposes of creating a 5-year plan that will create the template for future 5-year plans to draw from and update accordingly.

At present, the DPW fleet of vehicles consists of eight trucks, one backhoe, one bucket tractor, two graders (though only one is fully functional), three tractors (though only two are functional), one sweeper, one pickup truck, one military surplus truck, one brush truck (though now used as the mechanic's response truck, one trailer, and one chipper. While the number of vehicles and type of equipment is appropriate for a department of this size, the age and condition of the vehicles is sub-standard. Many pieces of equipment will require replacement soon.

The DPW facility located at 181 Howard Hill Road includes a garage with four open bays, a paint shop, recycling collection sites, covered salt and sand storage bays, and storage tanks for gas, diesel, and fuel oil bought in bulk. The garage is heated by a unit that utilizes recycled motor oil.

Storm water runoff from local roads is controlled by the natural environment through swales at the sides of the roads which are expected to be maintained by the DPW (RIDOT maintains state roads).

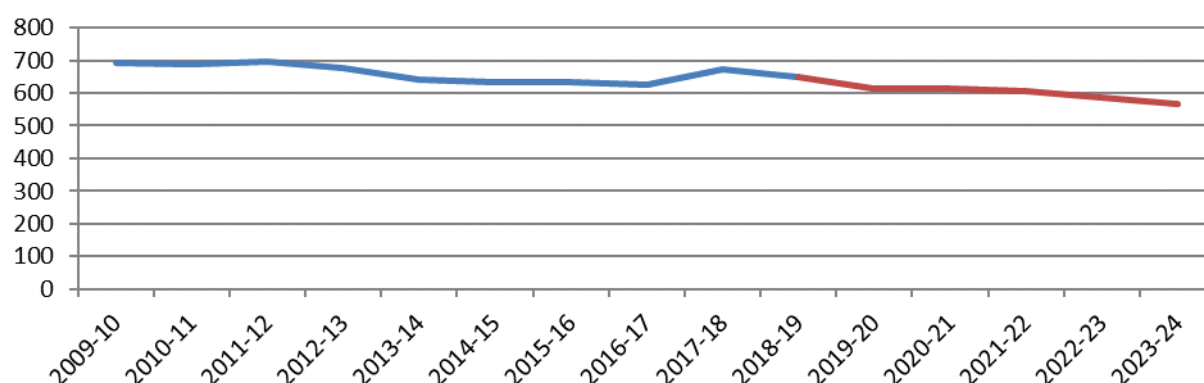


Budget constraints require roadways to be prioritized and this is discussed further in the chapter on Transportation Network.

## School Systems

At present, public education in Foster is somewhat unique in that its elementary and secondary education is split into separate school districts – Foster School District and Foster-Glocester Regional School District. As of the 2018-2019 school year, the elementary student population was 271 and the secondary student population was 377 (not including Foster students enrolled in charter schools or private schools). Student population has reflected the youth population and experienced decline over the past decade while projections indicate the present will continue. This is shown below:

Figure 13: Student Population Growth, School Years 2009-10 to 2023-24<sup>6</sup>



### Foster School District

Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School, centrally located at 160 Foster Center Road, is the sole facility of the Foster School District and serves Foster residents eligible for enrollment in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and first through fifth grades. The staff of the elementary school consists of a part-time superintendent, a full-time principal, approximately two administrative staff, two maintenance staff, one healthcare professional, nine teaching assistants, approximately twenty-three teachers and approximately two specialists.

In January 2011, a heavy snowstorm caused significant damage to the elementary school resulting in closure for the remainder of the school year to allow repairs. Students and staff were temporarily relocated to space available at West Glocester Elementary School and Ponaganset Middle School. The Paine School reopened on schedule. Full day kindergarten was initiated for the 2012-13 school year.

### Foster-Glocester Regional School District

The Foster-Glocester Regional School District is one of two regional school districts in Rhode Island and serves students from the towns of Foster and Glocester through a middle school and high school. Its administrative and fiscal responsibilities are governed by the Foster-Glocester Regional School Committee. Students residing in Foster comprised about 30 percent of the district's student population.

The previous Comprehensive Plan had noted concerns of overcrowding at the time of its adoption (180 students beyond capacity between the two schools) and the expectation of a growing student population. An initiative by the Foster-Glocester Regional School Committee of a \$46 million bond issue

<sup>6</sup> Source: Town of Foster Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, Financial Year 2019

was approved by voters and, along with additional state funds, enabled the construction of a new Ponaganset Middle School and major renovations to Ponaganset High School and the former middle school. The project addressed the concern identified at the time and was accomplished with integrating design elements widely recognized as being better suited to each school's respective education functions.

For the foreseeable future, school crowding is no longer anticipated to be a problem and both schools meet Department of Education requirements. Looking ahead, expansion of the regional school district in Foster is also not likely for at least the near future. An initiative to transfer control of the Paine School to the regional school district was rejected by voters. The result indicated the town was interested in retaining local control of the school. As education evolves in its curriculum, requirements, demographics and funding, the town may want to reconsider regionalization and investigate cooperative arrangements with other school districts in the area.

Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School October 2020 enrollment was 208 students for the 2020 - 2021 school year, compared with 239 enrolled in October 2019 and 272 enrolled in October 2018. Enrollment by grade in October 2020 ranged from 28 to 39 in kindergarten through fifth grade, with six enrolled in pre-kindergarten. Enrollment at Ponaganset Middle School and Ponaganset High School in October 2020 was 1,383 students, compared to 1,355 in October 2019 and 1,306 in October 2018. Individual enrollment in each grade (sixth to twelfth) ranged from 135 to 259 students. Overall, enrollment in Foster is projected by the Rhode Island Department of Primary and Secondary Education (RIDE) to be relatively stable for the next several years (RIDE Demographic Summary Report, June 2017). RIDE's 2017 projections anticipated a 2020 - 2021 enrollment at Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School of 264, and an enrollment in 2025 - 2026 of 267. Projections for the Foster Glocester regional district, in contrast, anticipated a 2020 -2021 enrollment of 1,224 students, and a 2025 -2026 enrollment of 1,198 students.

According to RIDE, Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School has a maximum capacity of 450 students. Its 2020 - 2021 student enrollment of 208 meant the school was operating at about 46% capacity. Ponaganset Middle School has a rated maximum capacity of 1,156 students and a 2020 – 2021 enrollment of 445 (38% capacity) while the high school has a maximum capacity of 1,100 and a 2020 – 2021 enrollment of 935 (85% capacity). Therefore, although specific allocations of space to suit program needs will still be expected in the future, both school districts have sufficient capacity within their schools for the foreseeable future. At present, there are no privately owned educational facilities or institutions of higher education located within Foster.

### Human Services

The Town of Foster establishes a Department of Human Services (DHS) that is open to the public approximately 20 hours per week to serve low-moderate income (LMI) residents, the elderly and the handicapped needing assistance with food, clothing, heating, and access to various state and federal programs. The local DHS also assists in times of need, such as when a resident becomes homeless due to a house fire.

The Department of Humans Services is in the basement of Town Hall. The most recent improvement to the department's workspace was the installation of its own source of heat and its own handicapped accessible bathroom facilities. Department equipment includes refrigerators and freezers and similar appliances. They are often items donated by residents.

The most prominently identified needs of elderly and handicapped residents are means of transportation to and from their homes to medical appointments, the Scituate Senior Center (which

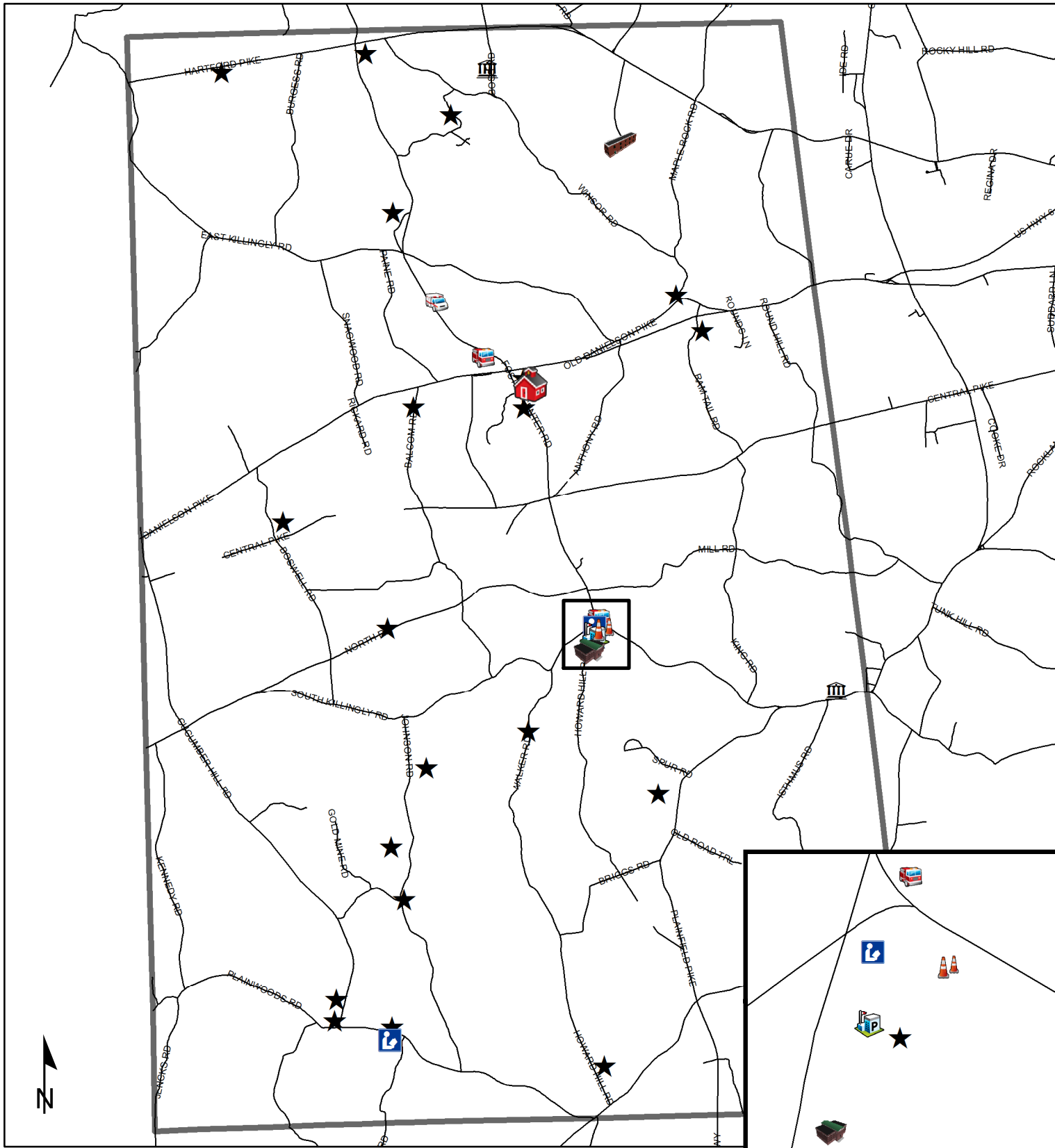
offers meals on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays) and local events such as those by the local social group Young at Heart. No public transit services operate in Foster and private transportation, such as taxis, are limited and are likely too expensive for the population the local DHS focuses on. Thus, elderly and handicapped residents often contact the department to arrange transportation. At present, there is a small group of volunteer drivers who fulfill this need. Foster's DHS would like to accommodate those in need by soliciting the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority to expand its Ride Program into the community. The Town of Foster should also consider the purchase of its own vehicle and provision of a driver to meet transportation needs.

### **Solid Waste Disposal**

Foster provides weekly solid waste pickup for residential units which is hauled to the Central Landfill for disposal; the former municipal dump on Salisbury Road remains closed and in private ownership. The trash collection is provided by a private contractor that is awarded the work by the town on an annual basis. The contractor also picks up recyclable materials on alternating weeks with residential unit occupants responsible for separating solid waste and recyclables. The destination of these recyclables is the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF). In addition, grant funding has enabled centralized bins, or pods, for electronic equipment, mattresses, scrap metal, and other bulky items. Residents may drop-off motor oil, mattresses, and e-waste (electronic products nearing the end of their useful life) at DPW or directly at the Central Landfill. Construction, demolition and wood waste (such as pallets) and tires must be taken directly to the Central Landfill and household hazardous waste must be taken to the eco-depot by appointment only. The town benefits fiscally through reimbursement from the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) for recycled materials that are diverted from the waste stream and through reduction in tipping fees for solid waste disposal.

According to RIRRC data, Foster's average household disposed of 1.01 tons of solid waste in 2015. The town's overall recycling rate has steadily improved from 21.7% in 2011 to 23.8% in 2014. The material recovery facility (MRF) recycling rate in 2015 was 24.9 percent. The total recycling rate (bin recyclables, leaf and yard waste, clothing, and metals) was 25.4 percent and the overall rate of diversion of waste from the landfill (all wastes) was 26.4 percent. To increase the rate of recycling, a "no bin, no barrel" policy was implemented. The reasoning behind this policy is to get more residents of Foster to recycle. Foster has a goal to meet or exceed a 35 percent recycling rate, and a 50 percent diversion rate for solid waste. Foster also encourages residents to dispose of leaf and yard waste by composting and using the resulting organic compost products for gardening and local landscaping.

Figure 14: Map of Community Facilities



## Community Facilities Map

### Use



Nike Site



Fire Department



Ambulance Company



DPW



Library



Middle School



Police Station



State Facility



Town Hall



Recreation Locations

This map is not the product of a Professional Land Survey. It was created by the Town of Foster for general reference, informational, planning and guidance use, and is not a legally authoritative source as to location of natural or manmade features. Proper interpretation of this map may require the assistance of appropriate professional services. The Town of Foster makes no warranty, express or implied, related to the spatial accuracy, reliability, completeness, or currentness of this map.

## ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

- Continually evaluate and implement best practices in educational curricula, teaching, and administration.
- Monitor changes in student demographics to ensure appropriate classroom space and educational services at all levels.
- Maintain cooperative administrative structure and active participation in Foster/Glocester Regional School System and Northwest RI Collaborative.
- Maintain buildings, athletic fields, repair/ replace playground facilities and equipment, and provide adequate educational equipment and furnishings.
- Determine and implement upgrade of shared administrative offices through rehabilitation of wastewater, heating and building facilities at current site (intermediate time frame).
- Evaluate, plan, and implement the expansion of office space within the existing administrative offices to allow for increased employment for town services;
- High quality public education.
- Safe and adequate facilities for students, staff, and visitors. Acquisition and financing of suitable land for the community for services including but not limited to school administration offices and school recreation.
- Provide an excellent, locally responsive public education.

### Energy

Foster has several initiatives underway to increase energy generation from renewable sources in the community and to reduce energy consumption. In 2015, the town had an energy audit done for the Town Hall building by Thielsh Engineering. The audit recommended \$11,690 of improvements which, with utility incentives, would cost the town \$9,980. Those improvements would save 3.7 kW or 10,189 kWh, equivalent to \$1,895 annually in energy costs. They would reduce maintenance costs by \$500 annually and therefore have a payback period of 4.2 years. Resulting reduction in carbon emissions would be 9,781 lbs, NOx reduction 2.5 lbs. and SO2 reduction 0.3 pounds annually. Plans are underway to implement the audit recommendations.

In 2015, the town also adopted an amendment to the zoning ordinance expressly permitting small solar installations and allowing larger solar energy facilities in all Zones by special permit. It should be noted that Foster currently has very limited capacity to host new systems. National Grid notes every location in Foster as currently having a 0.3 or less MegaWatt hosting capacity<sup>7</sup>. This will severely limit the ability for large-scale energy generation of any kind.

Many Foster residents heat their homes with wood. It has been estimated that up to 80% of Foster residents burn wood as a primary or supplemental heating source. Burning locally grown wood for home heating reduces demand for petrochemicals and reduces net carbon emissions that may affect climate, compared to heating with oil or gas. Properly managed, wood may be a carbon neutral fuel overall because trees take up atmospheric carbon when growing which is then released when burned. Compared to the carbon emissions associated with heating oil extraction, refinement, transportation, combustion and conversion for home heating, burning wood from local sources in a modern, efficient wood stove poses far less impact overall. Selective cutting on a managed woodlot also may help to

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<sup>7</sup> Information accessed and up to date as of June 30, 2022 at <https://ngrid.apps.nationalgrid.com/NGSysDataPortal/RI/index.html>

maintain local biodiversity. Woodcutting is also an important part of Foster's history and culture, and it continues to contribute to Foster's agricultural – forestry economy.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

GOALS:		
CSF	G1	To promote orderly maintenance, growth and consolidation of existing and proposed public and private services and facilities consistent with community needs, resources and character.
OBJECTIVES:		
CSF	O1	Safe and adequate public protection vehicles and equipment, including police, fire and rescue apparatus.
CSF	O2	Acquisition and financing of suitable land for community for services including but not limited to relocation of the Police Department.
CSF	O3	Well-trained and equipped police, fire and rescue personnel, paid and volunteer.
CSF	O4	An informed citizenry that actively helps to prevent and mitigate emergency situations.
CSF	O5	Safe and adequate supplies of drinking water for town residents and watersheds end-users.
CSF	O6	Efficient and effective response to environmental hazards, civic emergencies, and other threats requiring immediate action.
CSF	O7	Safe and adequate roads and bridges for residents, businesses and through traffic.
CSF	O8	Clean and healthy environment for town residents, wildlife and natural vegetation and protection of watersheds.
CSF	O9	Improved rates of recycling and waste diversion.
CSF	O10	Sustainable and environmentally sound consumption and production of energy which meets consumer needs.
CSF	O11	Ongoing access to and use of Town House, Eddy Building, libraries and other historic buildings; and public access to Jerimoth Hill, land in the public trust, and local sites of natural and cultural interest.
CSF	O12	Ready citizen access to public officials and services (relocated from original table position).
CSF	O13	Safe and appropriate disposition of areas of town associated with former NIKE missile site.
CSF	O14	Enhanced public recreational facilities and activities
CSF	O15	Acquisition and financing of suitable land for community for services including but not limited to town offices and recreation
CSF	O16	High quality public education
CSF	O17	Safe and adequate facilities for students, staff and visitors.
CSF	O18	Acquisition and financing of suitable land for community for services including but not limited to school administration offices and school recreation.
CSF	O19	Assist in meeting basic needs of town residents for food, clothing, shelter, and transportation
CSF	O20	Provide essential transportation for seniors and other eligible residents.
CSF	O21	Provide energy assistance to eligible residents.
POLICIES:		
CSF	P1	Promote public safety and protection of environmental resources in potentially hazardous situations.



## Town of Foster, RI Comprehensive Plan

<b>CSF</b>	P2	Ensure adequate bridge and road quality while protecting environmental quality and rural character.
<b>CSF</b>	P3	Ensure the protection of water supply and environmental quality through safe management of wastewater, storm water and solid waste.
<b>CSF</b>	P4	Ensure consumers' needs for energy are balanced with environmental concerns. (note – this policy relocated from recycling and waste diversion objective)
<b>CSF</b>	P5	Protect and maintain historic buildings, cultural sites, and natural landmarks.
<b>CSF</b>	P6	Responsibly manage potential risks and appropriate public use of land and buildings
<b>CSF</b>	P7	Provide local opportunities for citizens of all ages to participate in wholesome recreation (relocated from original table position).
<b>CSF</b>	P8	Provide an excellent, locally responsive public education.
<b>CSF</b>	P9	Provide needed assistance to eligible town residents to preserve health, welfare and quality of life.
<b>ACTIONS:</b>		
<b>CSF</b>	A1	Update and implement a realistic schedule of repairing and/or replacing needed public service vehicles and equipment such as police, fire and rescue apparatus; improve efficiency and upgrade specialization among the private fire and rescue organizations; coordinate allocation of capital funds through the Engineering Board.
<b>CSF</b>	A2	Evaluate and plan for relocation of police department to more efficient and up-to-date facility by 2022.
<b>CSF</b>	A3	Develop and implement regular training schedules for police, fire and rescue personnel; encourage coordination of volunteer recruitment and retention among fire and rescue organizations; develop non-financial incentives to encourage police officers and fire and rescue volunteers to remain in their positions.
<b>CSF</b>	A4	Provide training, information and guidelines for the public concerning proper use and maintenance of wood stoves, first responder skills, safe storage of firearms, proper driveway access for emergency vehicles, safe forest management, healthy water and septic systems, and other safety issues.
<b>CSF</b>	A5	Conduct regular joint training with other municipalities, State and Federal entities related to the town's Emergency Operations Plan, Emergency Management Agency, and Scituate Reservoir Hazardous Material Spill Contingency Plan; and participate in other emergency management activities.
<b>CSF</b>	A6	Update and implement an ongoing five year plan for road and bridge maintenance.
<b>CSF</b>	A7	Determine the viability of maintaining existing gravel roads, and investigate "greener" alternatives to asphalt surfaces.
<b>CSF</b>	A8	Promote the installation and maintenance of rain barrels, rain gardens, native species propagation, and other water conservation measures.
<b>CSF</b>	A9	Perform annual inspections of all town above-ground and underground storage tanks (AST's and UST's) to verify tank integrity, as required by State law.
<b>CSF</b>	A10	Ensure town ordinances, zoning and subdivision regulations meet or exceed current standards for setbacks for protection of watersheds, wells, septic systems, and wetlands; incorporate updated standards for water run-off, water supply and wastewater disposal into requirements for community development.
<b>CSF</b>	A11	Actively coordinate with Providence Water Supply Board and local communities to uphold Scituate Reservoir Hazardous Material Spill Contingency Plan.

# Town of Foster, RI Comprehensive Plan

<b>CSF</b>	A12	Actively seek compensation through the Providence Water Supply Board for the community's active work in conserving the State's water quality.
<b>CSF</b>	A13	Promote recycling efforts through public education and improved availability of transfer station facilities and recycling tools, including but not limited to specialty item disposal, consumer information, recycling bins, and composters.
<b>CSF</b>	A14	Work with the RIRRC to identify ways that Foster residents contribute to source reduction and waste diversion (such as "green" consumer habits, composting, and avoidance of yard waste) and additional means of improving overall diversion rates to 50%.
<b>CSF</b>	A15	Develop appropriate zoning and permitting regulations for the siting and operation of residential and commercial scale energy production (such solar, geothermal or water power).
<b>CSF</b>	A16	Maintain buildings in accordance with preservation standards and as funds permit.
<b>CSF</b>	A17	Support the work of the Preservation Society, Land Trust, Conservation Commission, Historical Society, and other local public and private agencies dedicated to preservation of and public access to natural and cultural sites.
<b>CSF</b>	A18	Ensure availability to town officials, information, and services. (relocated from original table position).
<b>CSF</b>	A19	Maintain ongoing communications with Army Corps of Engineers, RI State Police, DEM, Abbey Lane residents, Foster-Glocester Regional School System and any other appropriate entity to develop and implement plans for new wellwater and wastewater systems, asbestos abatement / demolition of deteriorating buildings, and/or relocation of functions associated with site; work with ACE to identify and remediate sources of contamination at the site, as necessary. (relocated from original table position).
<b>CSF</b>	A20	Develop youth athletic fields and facilities; support and enhance senior programs; promote town-based activities. (relocated from original table position).
<b>CSF</b>	A21	Continually evaluate and implement best practices in educational curricula, teaching, and administration
<b>CSF</b>	A22	Monitor changes in student demographics to ensure appropriate classroom space and educational services at all levels.
<b>CSF</b>	A23	Maintain cooperative administrative structure and active participation in Foster/Glocester Regional School System.
<b>CSF</b>	A24	Maintain buildings, athletic fields, repair/replace playground facilities and equipment, and provide adequate educational equipment and furnishings.
<b>CSF</b>	A25	Determine and implement upgrade of shared administrative offices through rehabilitation of wastewater, heating and building facilities at current site (intermediate time frame).
<b>CSF</b>	A26	Evaluate and plan for relocation of administrative offices to more suitable and up-to-date facility by 2026.
<b>CSF</b>	A27	Collect and distribute food, clothing, household items, gift cards, school supplies and other basics secured through private donations and State and local social service agencies.
<b>CSF</b>	A28	Department of Human Services with assistance from other departments Provide emergency food and clothing based on apparent need.

Town of Foster, RI Comprehensive Plan

<b>CSF</b>	A29	Evaluate eligibility of clients seeking ongoing assistance, and assist in applying for programs, including federal and state aid programs, energy programs, property tax relief, job search, budgeting, elder affairs, transportation, and others.
<b>CSF</b>	A30	Act as liaison and referral to private, State and Federal social service providers.
<b>CSF</b>	A31	Secure funding for purchase/lease/share of vehicle and funding for driver.
<b>CSF</b>	A32	Secure funding to enable providing energy assistance to eligible residents.
<b>CSF</b>	A33	CDBG Grants
<b>CSF</b>	A34	Pursue opportunities to secure solar energy owned or leased by the Town at the Nike Site and any other appropriately located Town owned properties.

## NATURAL HAZARDS

- ❖ INTRODUCTION
- ❖ EXISTING CONDITIONS
- ❖ RISK PRIORITIZATION
- ❖ GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Natural hazards have the potential to impact the natural resources, built environment, property, and people of Foster. The goal of this section is to create a safer community by identifying natural hazards and encouraging planning to reduce or eliminate the threats they pose to life and property.

#### Relationship to the Hazard Mitigation Plan

In 2018 the Foster Town Council approved and adapted its Hazard Mitigation Plan prepared by VHB. The plan was a product of the Foster Hazard Mitigation Plan Committee which was led by successive Town planners, Cheryl Maynard and Jennifer Siciliano (respectively), and guidance and expertise provided by VHB. The 2018 plan replaced the former 2005 Hazard Mitigation plan.

The purpose of a local hazard mitigation plan is to identify hazards and vulnerabilities as well as assets and capabilities within the town. Then to “identify policies and actions that can be implemented over the long term to reduce risk and future losses.” While the purposes of the Hazard Mitigation plan and the Comprehensive Plan overlap some, the local comprehensive plan is used to guide development and infrastructure decisions at the municipal level. Therefore, discussions of natural hazards and climate change impacts within a comprehensive plan must take a more holistic view and should align land use, transportation, infrastructure and other goals and policies with natural hazards considerations.

The comprehensive plan should consider different aspects of natural hazards and climate change than what is typically found in a local hazard mitigation plan. As you’ll see throughout this chapter, there are some areas not discussed and there are some areas where additional discussion is warranted.

However, comprehensive plans and hazard mitigation plans can benefit each other. The information contained within the hazard mitigation plan can serve as the basis for addressing natural hazards in the comprehensive plan while the comprehensive plan can reinforce the strategies detailed within the hazard mitigation plan.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Town of Foster lies in Providence County, Rhode Island, within the northeastern climate region. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) data from 1981-2010 shows that Providence County averages 52.56 inches of precipitation per year, including an average annual snowfall of 46.65 inches. NOAA records also indicate that the average annual temperature for Providence County is 49.2 degrees Fahrenheit. Foster has no coastline, but several streams, ponds, wetlands and dams exist within the town.

#### Flooding

Foster contains A and X Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood zones. Flood zones are generally associated with the major rivers within the town and their tributaries. Parts of the floodplain that are developed are at particular risk from flooding.

The town's oldest developments were located close to rivers for access to water power and at low elevation, where they are vulnerable to flooding. Some residences were also developed prior to the adoption of restrictions on construction in floodplains and are also vulnerable.

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)'s Dam Safety Program has inventoried dams which are listed in Table 6 lists these dams. Two of these, Hemlock Brook #349 and the Westconaug Brook Dam #163 are classified as high hazard dams. The Moosup River Dam #546 is identified as a Significant Hazard Dam. All other dams listed are low hazard dams.

The town cooperates with RIDEM and FEMA to prepare for and respond to flooding events. To mitigate adverse impacts of flooding, the town restricts development within floodplains. Older developments, particularly those that relied on water power, were in floodplain areas and are therefore especially vulnerable to flood impacts. The town's policy is that all development and redevelopment projects in floodplains must be designed to reduce the potential for flooding, reduce the frequency of damage resulting from flooding events, and reduce the cost of flood damage to the maximum practical extent.

Table 5: Dams and Hazard Classifications<sup>8</sup>

River / Stream	Dam Name	State ID #	Hazard Classification
Dolly Cole Brook	Brush Meadow Pond	355	Low
Dolly (Cole) Brook	Lily Pond	356	Low
Dolly Cole Brook	Cranston Fish and Game A. Pond	358	Low
Dolly Cole Brook – T	Hopkins Axe Factory Pond	357	Low
Hemlock Brook	Spear Pond	349	High
Hemlock Brook	Gorham Farm Pond	507	Low
Hemlock Brook	Salisbury Road Pond	641	Low
Moosup River	Clark Pond	642	Low
Moosup River – T	Manton Sportsmen's Club Pond	453	Low
Moosup River – T	Harrington Farm Pond	489	Low
Moosup River – T	Porter Pond	564	Low
Moosup River – T	North Road Pond	640	Low
Moosup River – T	Moosup Valley Pond	690	Low

<sup>8</sup> Source: RI DEM 2018 Dam Safety Annual Report

Note: 'T' designates a tributary

River / Stream	Dam Name	State ID #	Hazard Classification
Moosup River – T	Johnson Road Pond	691	Low
Moosup River – T	Foster Country Club	692	Low
Moosup River – T	Gorham, N. Farm Pond	526	<b>Significant</b>
Paine Brook	Hutchinson Pond	348	Low
Paine Brook – T	Spencer Farm Pond #1	502	Low
Ponagansett River	Hopkins Mill Pond	180	Low
Ponagansett River – T	Spencer Farm Pond #2	518	Low
Quaduck Brook –T	Knowles Farm Pond	459	Low
Quaduck Brook –T	Cucumber Hill Road	639	Low
Shippee Brook	Young’s Pond	347	Low
Turkey Meadow Brook	Hebert Farm Pond	522	Low
West Meadow Brook – T	Bassett Farm Pond	478	Low
Westconnaug Brook	Westconnaug Reservoir	163	<b>High</b>
Wilbur Hollow Brook – T	Hawkins Farm Pond	516	Low

There are three classifications of dams used by RIDEM to identify their risk to communities. Dams which present no probable loss of human life and low economic losses are recognized as low hazard. Significant hazard dams are those which do not present a probable loss of human life if they fail or mis-operate, like low hazard dams, but they may cause major economic losses, disruptions of lifeline facilities, or impact other concerns detrimental to the public’s health, safety or welfare. Examples of major economic loss include the washing out of a state or federal highway or two or more municipal roads, a loss of vehicular access to residences, or damage to a several structures. Dams posing the most significant threat upon failure or mis-operation – probable loss of human life – are classified as high hazard.

### Hurricanes and Tornadoes

Although Foster is not a coastal community, hurricanes still pose hazards due to high winds and heavy rainfall. High winds can be particularly damaging to trees, utility lines, and structures. Wind-borne debris presents a hazard to health and safety as well as to property. Heavy rainfall associated with hurricanes can cause flood hazards like those described above. Though relatively rare, tornadoes can occur in the area and cause damage due to high winds and wind-borne debris.

Hurricanes affect Foster almost every year and often cause heavy rainfall, localized flooding and high winds which bring down trees, block roadways and damage power lines. In 2012, Superstorm Sandy left almost half of the population without electricity. It was several days before power could be fully restored. One year prior, Hurricane Irene brought heavy rain and wind gusting up to 71 miles per hour. It caused widespread flooding and numerous power outages. In 2010, Hurricane Earl brought even more rain, although not as much wind.

Most of the electrical and communications transmission facilities in Foster are above ground on poles, where they are particularly vulnerable to storm damage. To minimize damages, Foster encourages citizens to make storm preparations when hurricane conditions threaten. Foster cooperates with state officials and with neighboring towns to warn citizens of impending storms, prepare for hurricanes, and respond to emergencies both during and after hurricanes.

### Winter Storms

Winter storms can result in heavy ice and snow accumulation, the weight of which can damage buildings, utility lines, and trees. In extreme cases, this accumulation can even cause buildings to collapse. Often, these storms are accompanied by high winds, which can create hazards much like those of hurricanes. Winter storms also pose a hazard because they often restrict or prevent travel along roadways. When snow and ice melts, flooding can be a problem. In particular, flooding can be made worse by ice jams, which block natural drainage and occur most often at constrictions along rivers.

The Blizzard of 1978 is perhaps the most memorable example of winter storm damage in Foster, but there have been more recent incidents as well. In 1993, a massive early spring storm sometimes referred to as the storm of the century brought 13 inches of snow to Foster most of the eastern seaboard to a standstill. The town typically experiences several significant winter storms each year.

The town prepares for winter storms by stockpiling sand and salt and securing personnel and equipment for snow removal. Road and parking surfaces are treated before winter storms and all major roads are kept clear during winter storms for safety and emergency response.

### Drought

Drought occurs when there is an extended period of consistently below-average rainfall. This can have negative effects on natural resources, such as vegetation, waterbodies, and wetlands. It can also negatively impact public and private drinking water supplies. Agricultural businesses, golf courses, private lawns, and town sports fields can be damaged by prolonged drought.

Drought has threatened Foster in recent years including 2016, when below normal rainfall for three successive months caused stream flows to drop near record lows. In April 2012 and in March 2011, the lack of winter precipitation threatened water supplies and severe drought appeared imminent. Fortunately, early summer rains alleviated both these drought conditions within the following few months, but recurrence of drought is inevitable.

To mitigate impacts of drought, the town takes an active role in the drought management process and coordinates municipal government efforts with the Providence Water Supply Board during stages of drought preparation, water conservation and water emergencies. The town has local ordinances to provide guidance and regulations to manage drought at the community level. Municipal officials enforce local regulations/restrictions and state emergency orders including watering restrictions as needed. The town also coordinates with the water providers, state officials and other municipalities to ensure that the drought and emergency preparedness and are incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.

### Extreme Temperatures

Extreme heat occurs when high atmospheric pressure moves into an area which inhibits winds and prevents cloud formation. Periods of extreme heat typically last two or more days and can have significant effects on human health. Heat stroke and hyperthermia caused by extreme high temperatures can result in death, particularly among the elderly and those infirmed. Heat waves can also be accompanied by or exacerbate droughts. Heat waves can also tax power systems as people run air conditioners which can overload power circuits causing brown outs and/or power failure.

A heat wave, meaning a period when daily maximum temperatures reach or exceed 90 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) for three days in a row, affected the town in July 2010. Surface temperatures approaching 100°F were experienced in Foster while many regional cities felt record-breaking temperatures. The State issued health advisories encouraging residents, especially those with greater health risk, to reduce activity and urging them to find air conditioned spaces wherever possible.

Extreme cold, often associated with winter storms, also presents a hazard to human health. Frostbite and hypothermia can occur if precautions are not taken to stay warm during periods of extreme cold. Outdoor workers and lower-income citizens without access to sufficient clothing or heating fuel are particularly at risk. Damage can also occur to roadways, building foundations and utility infrastructure due to frost heaving and frozen pipes.

The town experiences a few weeks of extreme cold in most winters and a few weeks of extreme heat in most summers and works each year to make information, heating assistance and related services available to the elderly and to persons in need during very hot and very cold weather. The town also maintains public buildings, such as the public libraries, that provide climate-controlled places for citizens during the day.

### Earthquakes

Earthquakes are relatively rare and of minor severity in Rhode Island, but have been known to occur. Typically they cause little to no damage, but can frighten citizens, rattle windows, and shift objects and furnishings. The most recent earthquake that could be felt in Foster was a magnitude 3.6 quake that occurred near Bliss Corner, Dartmouth, Massachusetts on November 8, 2020. Effects of the quake were felt throughout Southern New England.

### Climate Change

Research shows that climate change will have far-reaching impacts for Rhode Island. Some changes Foster should anticipate include:

- **Hotter, drier summers** – Increases in temperature and more frequent days above 100 degrees Fahrenheit can increase the risks of health problems such as heat stroke.
- **Warmer, more wet winters** – While snowfall may decrease, wetter winter storms can cause flooding and potentially damage structures, infrastructure, and dams.
- **Higher intensity storms** – Increased rainfall per storm can cause problems with flooding; intense electrical storms can damage utility lines and trees, cause fires, and pose a health risk; increased wind can damage trees, utility lines, and buildings and increase the damage done by wind-borne debris.
- **More frequent droughts** – As mentioned above, droughts have the potential to negatively impact natural resources, drinking water supplies, and land uses dependent upon healthy vegetation.





## RISK PRIORITIZATION

The following table lists the hazards described above and assigns a priority risk to each. Priority risks are subjective and local and these classifications are taken from the Foster Hazard Mitigation Plan.

**Table 6: Vulnerability to Flood-related Hazards**

Hazard	Frequency	Magnitude	Speed/Onset	Seasonal	Possible Effects	Rick Priority
Heavy Rains / Flash Floods	Highly Likely	Critical	12 – 24 hours	Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall	Flooding, Property Damage, Roads Closed, Dams Breached, Environmental Damage, Emergency Services Compromised, Power Outage	Medium
Dam Breaches	Possible	Critical	24 hours	Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall	Flooding, Property Damage, Emergency Services Compromised, Roads Closed, Environmental Damage, Power Outages	Medium

**Table 7: Vulnerability to Heat-related Hazards**

Hazard	Frequency	Magnitude	Speed/Onset	Seasonal	Possible Effects	Rick Priority
Drought	Likely	Critical	Weeks to months	Summer, Fall	Property Damage, Emergency Services Compromised, Roads Closed, Threatens Residential and	Medium

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Hazard	Frequency	Magnitude	Speed/Onset	Seasonal	Possible Effects	Rick Priority
					Commercial Occupancy, Environmental Damage, Power Outages	
Wildlife	Possible	Critical	Minimal	Summer, Fall	Property Damage, Possible Loss of Life, Environmental Damage, Power Outages, Compromised Emergency Services	Medium

Table 8: Vulnerability to Wind-Related Hazards

Hazard	Frequency	Magnitude	Speed/Onset	Seasonal	Possible Effects	Rick Priority
Hurricanes	Likely	Critical	24 + hours	June to November; most likely in August and September	Flooding, Downed Trees, Power Outages, Property Damage, Loss of Life, Environmental Damage	Medium
Microburst / Tornadoes	Likely	Critical	Minimal	June to November; most likely in August and September	Flooding, Downed Trees, Power Outages, Property Damage, Loss of Life	Medium

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Hazard	Frequency	Magnitude	Speed/Onset	Seasonal	Possible Effects	Rick Priority
Thunderstorms	Highly Likely	Critical	0 – 24 hours	Spring through Fall	Flooding, Downed Trees, Power Outages, Property Damage, Emergency Services Compromised	Medium
Hail	Likely	Critical	Minimal	Spring through Fall	Property Damage, Power Outages	Medium
Lightning	Likely	Critical	Minimal	Spring through Fall	Property Damage, Fire, Loss of Life, Downed Trees, Power Outages	Medium

Table 9: Vulnerability to Winter-related Hazards

Hazard	Frequency	Magnitude	Speed/Onset	Seasonal	Possible Effects	Rick Priority
Ice Storms	Likely	Limited	Minimal	Winter	Property Damage, Power Outages, Travel Hazards, Emergency Services Compromised, Downed Trees and Power Lines	Medium
Blizzards	Likely	Catastrophic	2 – 24 hours	Winter	Property Damage, Power Outages, Emergency	Medium

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Hazard	Frequency	Magnitude	Speed/Onset	Seasonal	Possible Effects	Rick Priority
					Services Compromised	
Extreme Cold	Likely	Catastrophic	24 hours	Winter		Medium
Nor'easter	Likely	Catastrophic	2 – 24 hours	Winter, Spring, Sumer, Fall	Property Damage, Adverse Impact on Residences, Power Outages, Frozen Pipes	Medium

Table 10: Vulnerability to Other Hazards

Hazard	Frequency	Magnitude	Speed/Onset	Seasonal	Possible Effects	Rick Priority
Earthquakes	Unlikely	Catastrophic	Minimal	Winter, Spring, Sumer, Fall	Property Damage, Loss of Life, Power Outages, Adverse Impacts on Transportation and Communications	Low

Table 11: Vulnerability of Critical Municipal Facilities

Name	Location	Purpose	Natural Hazard	Risk	Vulnerability
Town Hall	181 Howard Hill Road Southeast Quadrant	Municipal Government	Heavy Rains/Flash Floods, Wildfire, Hurricanes, Microburst/Tornadoes, Thunderstorms, Hail, Lightening, Ice Storms, Blizzards, Nor-Easter	Historic and Potential	Medium

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Name	Location	Purpose	Natural Hazard	Risk	Vulnerability
Town House	181 Howard Hill Road Southeast Quadrant	Municipal Government, Historical	Heavy Rains/Flash Floods, Wildfire, Hurricanes, Microburst/Tornadoes, Thunderstorms, Hail, Lightening, Ice Storms, Blizzards, Nor-Easter	Historic and Potential	High
Police Station	181 Howard Hill Road Southeast Quadrant	Emergency Services, Public Services	Heavy Rains/Flash Floods, Wildfire, Hurricanes, Microburst/Tornadoes, Thunderstorms, Hail, Lightening, Ice Storms, Blizzards, Nor-Easter	Historic and Potential	High
Department of Public Works	86 Foster Center Road Southeast Quadrant	Municipal Government, Public Services	Heavy Rains / Flash Floods, Wildfire, Hurricanes, Microburst/Tornadoes, Thunderstorms, Hail, Lightening, Ice Storms, Blizzards, Nor-Easter	Potential	Medium
Foster Center Fire Station	86 Foster Center Road Southeast Quadrant	Emergency Services	Heavy Rains / Flash Floods, Wildfire, Hurricanes, Microburst/Tornadoes, Thunderstorms, Hail, Lightening, Ice Storms, Blizzards, Nor-Easter	Potential	Medium
South Foster Station	Mt. Hygeia Road Northwest Quadrant	Emergency Services	Heavy Rains / Flash Floods, Wildfire, Hurricanes, Microburst/Tornadoes, Thunderstorms, Hail, Lightening, Ice Storms, Blizzards, Nor-Easter	Potential	Medium
Foster Ambulance Corps	Mt. Hygeia Road Northwest Quadrant	Emergency Services	Heavy Rains / Flash Floods, Wildfire, Hurricanes, Microburst/Tornadoes, Thunderstorms, Hail,	Potential	Medium

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Name	Location	Purpose	Natural Hazard	Risk	Vulnerability
			Lightening, Ice Storms, Blizzards, Nor-Easter		
Moosup Valley Fire Department	Moosup Valley Road Southeast Quadrant	Emergency Services	Heavy Rains / Flash Floods, Wildfire, Hurricanes, Microburst/Tornadoes, Thunderstorms, Hail, Lightening, Ice Storms, Blizzards, Nor-Easter	Potential	Medium
Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School	Foster Center Road Northeast Quadrant	Public Education, Community Gathering Place	Heavy Rains / Flash Floods, Wildfire, Hurricanes, Microburst/Tornadoes, Thunderstorms, Hail, Lightening, Ice Storms, Blizzards, Nor-Easter	Historic and Potential	Medium
Woody Lowden Recreation Center	Howard Hill Road Southeast Quadrant	Recreational, Community Gathering Place	Heavy Rains / Flash Floods, Wildfire, Hurricanes, Microburst/Tornadoes, Thunderstorms, Hail, Lightening, Ice Storms, Blizzards, Nor-Easter	Historic and Potential	Medium

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

GOALS:		
NH	G1	To minimize the social and economic loss or hardships incurred by Foster residents and business owners resulting from natural hazardous events.
OBJECTIVES:		
NH	O1	Educate Foster residents on how to prepare for natural hazards as it relates to their private residences, and their own health and safety.
NH	O2	Educate Foster business owners on how to prepare for natural hazards as it relates to their businesses, and their own health and safety.
NH	O3	Increase local, state and national responses to natural hazards within the Foster community.
NH	O4	Increase training of hired personnel and volunteers regarding proper response criteria to natural hazards. (Example: Training regarding NIMSCAST)
POLICIES:		
NH	P1	Discourage development in flood hazard areas; ensure development complies with requirements of National Flood Insurance Program per state and local law.
NH	P2	Work in conjunction with local, state and national organizations to increase both responses to natural hazards, and training of hired personnel and volunteers.
ACTIONS:		
NH	A1	To identify the types of natural hazards which have and can occur in the Foster community including but not limited to hurricanes, fires and winter storms etc.
NH	A2	To update and revise the Foster Local Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (Natural Hazard Plan), Emergency Operations Plan, the Continuity of Operations Planning, and the Foster MED Plan, with the assistance of the Rhode Island Emergency Management Services, and the Rhode Island Department of Health.
NH	A3	To continue the education of Incident Command Services for all hired personnel and volunteers.
NH	A4	To hold at least quarterly training programs for the Foster Shelter Team, to keep them up to date on statewide requirements.
NH	A5	To continue to update and revise the Foster five (5) year road plan.
NH	A6	To continue to update and revise the Foster Storm Water (Wastewater) Plan in accordance with state regulations.
NH	A7	To develop, update, revise or obtain emergency preparedness flyers (information) and pass them out to Foster residents.
NH	A8	Develop, update and revise emergency evacuation plans for the Foster community, including the Foster School system, Foster Residents, and provide routes (directions) to emergency community shelters.



## TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

- ❖ INTRODUCTION
- ❖ EXISTING CONDITIONS
- ❖ ASSESSMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION NETWORK
- ❖ OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
- ❖ GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

The Town of Foster recognizes that the movement of people throughout a community is a subject inextricably linked to community character. The transportation network of the town affects the ease of movement through Foster for residents, visitors, workers and emergency responders. An important function of the municipality is the provision of an adequate and safe transportation network. Locally, this consists of state and local roadways. Many are characteristic of the natural environment in which they exist, meaning they are unimproved, unpaved, narrow and meandering. Planning for transportation in this plan has considered the mobility needs of all community members – not only those who are operating automobiles – based on studies of the routes and modes of travel in Foster.

Important considerations for the town include scenic roads, emergency access, and long-term road maintenance. This chapter compiles information from the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), town officials, the Foster Police Department and site visits. State and municipal policies were determined from discussions with various officials. Including goals, policies and implementation actions for transportation within this plan provides Fosters' residents a long-range view of their transportation needs and aligns the town's transportation goals with goals and policies for other aspects of the community, such as land use, economic development, and housing.

### Relationship to Other Chapters

This chapter describes the network of streets that is the town's transportation network. Due to an absence of public transportation options within the town - no rail lines or Rhode Island Pubic Transit Authority (RIPTA) bus routes – as well as the prevalence of residential land uses and adopted zoning requirements, most residents are dependent on automobiles. Residents without access to motor vehicles likely experience many limitations.

In Natural Resources, Conservation, and Recreation chapter, this plan explores where access to natural resources for bikers, walkers, joggers, canoers and other active transportation options is desired. This chapter will explore design guidelines and siting requirements for buildings that preserve scenic roadways.

As a water rich community, Foster is particularly susceptible to storm water and ground water flooding. In this chapter, road maintenance and improvements are a focus. Roads that are designated for emergency evacuation or that will be significantly impacted by a natural hazard, such as flooding, are discussed in Natural Hazards chapter.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

The transportation network in Foster grew out of Providence merchants' commercial interests and the most common modes of travel at the time – by foot, horse or drawn carriage. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Providence investors began a series of investments in the construction of turnpikes. These early highways, constructed as private toll roads, were constructed to connect Providence to other cities to facilitate trade. In Foster, most of these turnpikes provide connections between Rhode Island and Connecticut. Hartford Pike, Danielson Pike, East Killingly Road, South Killingly

Road, and Plainfield Pike are all named for their original destinations. Central Pike, an exception to this rule, was named for its location in relation to the other highways across the town.

Local roads were built to connect these turnpikes as well as to provide access to the developing farms and villages of the community. These roads were most often named for a nearby geological feature (Mount Hygeia Road, Cucumber Hill Road), cultural landmark (Foster Center Road, Shippee Schoolhouse Road), or prominent family (Winsor Road, Paris Olney Hopkins Road).

### **Road Network**

Foster's transportation network today still consists of major highways running east-west through the town connected by local north/south roads. The major highways continue to provide access through the town to destinations such as Providence and the State of Connecticut while the local roads provide access to the farms, villages and neighborhoods that form the fabric of the community.

### **State Roads**

Foster is located approximately 12 miles from Interstate 295 in Rhode Island, and about 4 miles from Interstate 395 in Connecticut. Foster contains five numbered state routes. East-west routes are:

- Route 6 (Danielson Pike): a major connector between Interstate 295 in Rhode Island and Interstate 395 in Connecticut that includes the primary area of commercial development in the community
- Route 101 (Hartford Pike): branches off Route 6 in Scituate and joins Route 44, a major connector between Providence and Connecticut
- Route 14 (Plainfield Pike): provides Foster residents with the most direct route to urban centers in Johnston, Cranston and Providence
- Route 102 (Victory Highway): provides a north/south route which passes through Scituate to the east and through the rural areas of Coventry and West Greenwich to the south, connecting to Route I-95 in West Greenwich
- Route 94 (Foster Center Road/ Mount Hygeia Road): connects Route 102 and Route 6.

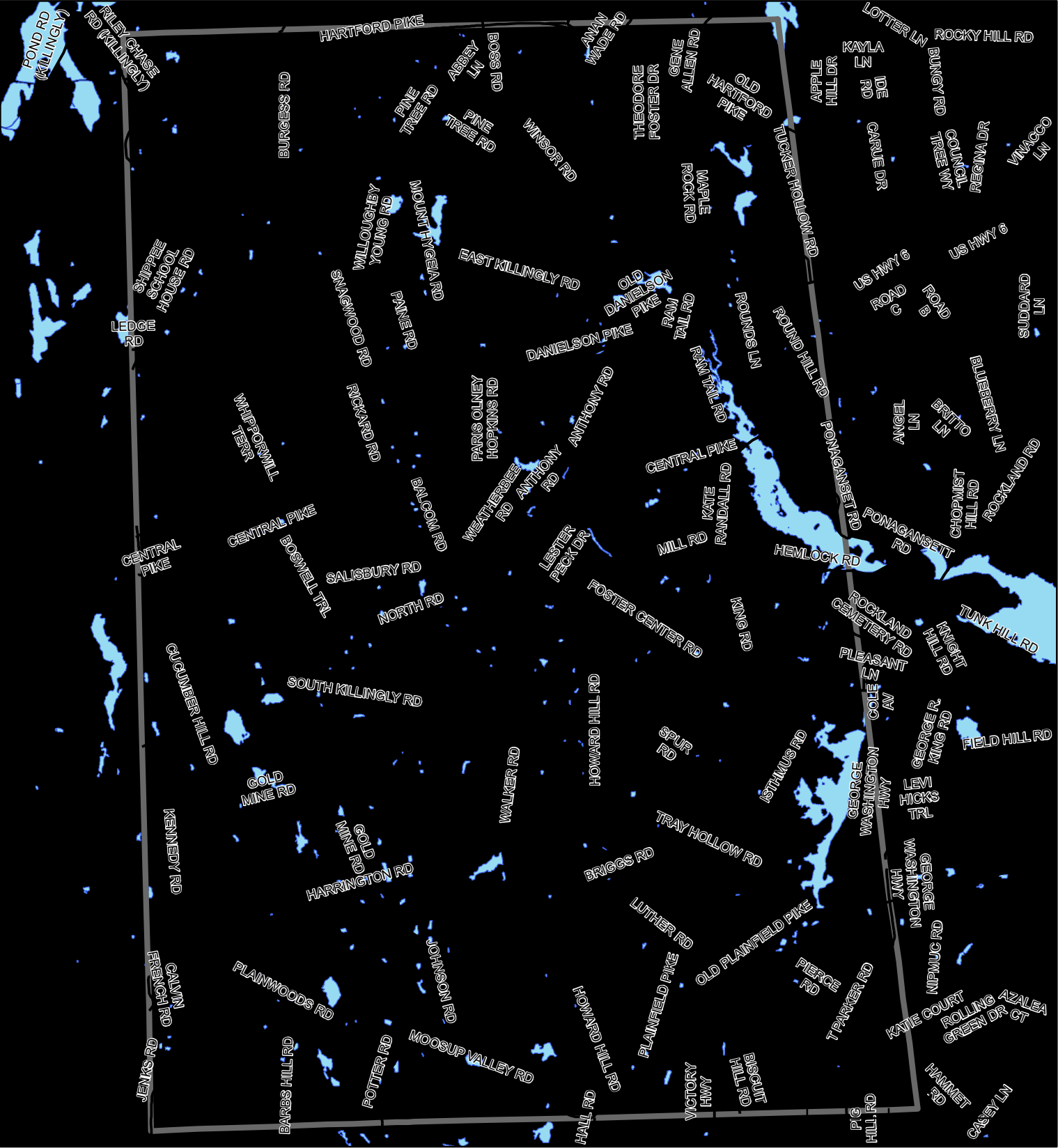
Other state roads are Central Pike (east of Foster Center Road Route 94), Cucumber Hill Road and Moosup Valley Road.

### **Town Roads**

The major municipal roadways are Howard Hill Road, Walker Road, Johnson Road, South Killingly Road, Kennedy Road, and East Killingly Road. These roads are relatively narrow and winding, which helps to keep automobile drivers travelling at safe speeds and helps protect the character of the community. Many minor local roads are unpaved. Unpaved roads require frequent repairs and maintenance of erosion control measures, but are an important part of the rural character. Tom Wood Road and portions of Tray Hollow Road, George Washington Highway, Luther Road, Howard Hill Road, Biscuit Hill Road, Weatherbee Road, Goldmine Road, Central Pike, and Rickard Road are all unimproved local public roadways.

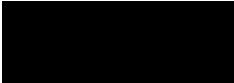
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Figure 15: Map Roads



Foster Roads Map

- Roads
- ▭ Foster Town Boundary
- ▭ Lakes & Ponds



This map is not the product of a Professional Land Survey. It was created by the Town of Foster for general reference, informational, planning and guidance use, and is not a legally authoritative source as to location of natural or manmade features. Proper interpretation of this map may require the assistance of appropriate professional services. The Town of Foster makes no warranty, express or implied, related to the spatial accuracy, reliability, completeness, or currentness of this map.

### Commuting Patterns

According to the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (RIDLT)'s Labor Market Information Unit, only about eight percent of Foster's residents worked in the town as of 2015. The remaining 92 percent worked outside of town.

Table 12: Commuting Patterns in Foster<sup>9</sup>

Where Foster's Residents Work			Where Workers in Foster Reside		
Location of Workplace	Residents	Percent	Location of Workplace	Workers	Percent
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>2,008</b>	<b>79.7%</b>	<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>90.6%</b>
Providence	363	14.4%	Foster	206	47.5%
Warwick	255	10.1%	Glocester	43	9.9%
Foster	206	8.2%	Cranston	23	5.3%
Cranston	138	5.5%	Providence	23	5.3%
Smithfield	124	4.9%	Burrillville	21	4.8%
Glocester	118	4.7%	Scituate	20	4.6%
Johnston	93	3.7%	Smithfield	16	3.7%
Coventry	90	3.6%	Woonsocket	12	2.8%
Lincoln	86	3.4%	Cumberland	10	2.3%
Woonsocket	80	3.2%	Central Falls	8	1.8%
E. Providence	61	2.4%	Pawtucket	7	1.6%
N. Providence	60	2.4%	Coventry	4	0.9%
E. Greenwich	50	2.0%	Others	0	-
Burrillville	47	1.9%			
Scituate	46	1.8%			
Pawtucket	32	1.3%			
S. Kingstown	30	1.2%			
Others	158	6.2%			
<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>4.8%</b>
Putnam	118	4.7%	Killingly	16	3.7%
Killingly	34	1.3%	Sterling	5	1.2%
Others	128	5.1%	Others	0	-
<b>Massachusetts</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>Massachusetts</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>4.6%</b>
North Attleborough	59	2.3%	Douglas	20	4.6%
Others	164	6.5%	Other	0	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,520</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>100%</b>

Most of those who commute out of Foster are employed in the Providence metropolitan area (employers located in Providence itself provide the largest single share of jobs for Foster residents at 14.4 percent) while smaller numbers are distributed throughout surrounding communities. Most (79.7%) work in Rhode Island while about 8.8% worked in Massachusetts and 11.1% in Connecticut. There were also about 434 people who worked in Foster in 2015. Of those, 206 or 47.5 percent also

<sup>9</sup> Source: RIDLT Labor Market Information Unit 2019, based on ACS 2011-2015 Estimates

lived in Foster. The remaining 52.5 percent commuted into Foster from surrounding communities. The highest percentage (9.9 percent) came from adjacent Glocester and urban centers such as Cranston (5.3 percent) and Providence (5.3 percent) with lower percentages from other surrounding communities. The American Community Survey estimates driving alone is the dominant means of commuting; the estimates show a slight decline over the past twenty years with an increase in carpooling. Public transportation, bicycling and walking all remain insignificant with respect to overall commuting.

### Storm Water Management

As a rural community, Foster does not have any significant municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4). Apart from state highways, where stormwater facilities are maintained by the state, drainage facilities associated with Foster's roads tend to consist only of cross culverts and occasional small one or two catch basin systems that do not pose a threat to water quality.

### Bridges

Foster contains 16 major bridges, seven of which are maintained by the state. Four bridges – Central Pike, Dolly Cole, Moosup Valley and Spears – are posted with weight limits and three – Hemlock, Hopkins Mill, and Hemlock Road – are closed. Recently, the bridges on Mill Road and Plain Woods Road were repaired after damage from flooding which occurred in spring 2010. Much of the repairs were funded through FEMA grants. The bridge on Winsor Road was repaired in 2014 using municipal funds. The Town of Foster should consider the option of repair and maintenance of town bridges to be done by the Department of Public Works.

### Traffic Controls

Foster's first and only traffic signal was installed in 2010 and is located at the intersection of Route 6 and Route 94. There are also flashing caution lights at the intersections of Route 94 and Route 101, Route 101 and Boss Road, and Route 6 and Cucumber Hill Road. Apart from these locations, the only traffic controls in Foster are stop signs at intersections and warning signs on narrow or sharply curving roads. Generally, RIDOT has worked with the town to minimize hazards once identified. Examples of this include installing stop signs and other warning signs, making road improvements to Route 6, limiting passing areas, and improving sight distances near the state line.

### Traffic Volumes

Traffic data available for Foster are very limited. The last major count of state roads in Foster was performed in 2015. The counts of those roadways included are summarized in the table below.

Table 13: Local Traffic Volumes, 2015<sup>10</sup>

Roadway	Vehicles per day
Route 6 (west of Route 94)	9,000
Route 101 (east of Route 94)	5,000
Route 101 (west of Route 94)	5,000
Route 94 (north of Route 6)	1,100

<sup>10</sup> Source: RIDOT

Route 6 is the most heavily traveled road, reflecting its role as a major east-west connector. Routes 101, 94 and 14 are also heavily traveled, reflecting both regional and cross town traffic. Traffic on all major roads has increased considerably over the past few years. The traffic counts also reflect patterns of residents traveling to their out of town jobs. The casinos in Connecticut have had a major impact on the traffic volume on Route 6.

### Accidents

Generally the relative number of accidents increases with the amount of travel on roads and the amount of traffic crossing roads. The highest number of accidents occurs along Route 6, especially at the intersections with Route 94, Boswell Trail, and Cucumber Hill road. Accidents also occur at several intersections along Routes 94 and 101.

### Public Transportation

Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority does not provide transit service to the Foster area. Foster residents provide their own transportation. The nearest bus connection is the 10X route available in Scituate at the Park-and-Ride off Chopmist Hill Road. The 10X bus provides express service to Kennedy Plaza in downtown Providence and connects to other modes there. RIPTA may one day provide service to Foster. Demand for a return of some form of transit service to Foster is likely to increase in the future due to an aging population with increasingly limited mobility. However, for the foreseeable future, low population density, limited demand, and budget limitations will continue to make public transit service impractical in Foster.

## ASSESSMENT OF FOSTER'S TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

### Statewide Issues

*"Give priority to preserving and managing the transportation system. Follow regularly scheduled programs of pavement and bridge management to prevent highway structures from premature deterioration, resulting in safety hazards and the need for more frequent and costly full rehabilitation or replacement."*

- *Transportation 2035, Policy H.2.a*

*"Strive for excellence in design of transportation projects to enhance safety, security, mobility, environmental stewardship, aesthetic quality, and community livability."*

- *Transportation 2035, Goal D, page 5-10*

*"Maintain and expand an integrated statewide network of on-road and off-road bicycle routes to provide a safe means of travel for commuting, recreation, and tourism in order to improve public health, and reduce auto congestion and dependency."*

- *Transportation 2035, Goal B, page 5-8*

### Road and Bridge Plan

The Foster Department of Public Works has established a five-year plan for maintaining and upgrading Foster's roads and bridges. The Planning Board and the DPW Director are responsible for reviewing and updating the plan annually. A new funding policy is being developed in a joint effort between the Foster Planning Board and the Foster Department of Public Works to repair Foster's roads and bridges.



### ***Unopened Roads***

The town contains several mapped (paper) roads that are not open for travel. The town cannot afford the high cost of improving and opening them without prior planning. There are no plans for improvement of these roads. The Town of Foster should evaluate and consider if it is practical to abandon some or all of these roads.

### **Rural Character of the Roads and Road Improvements**

An important part of Foster's rural character has been its road network. The town's small dispersed population has not required many major roads. As a result, many of Foster's roads remain unpaved and narrow. However, several factors may bring about a change in the character of the town's circulation network including unpaved roads requiring frequent maintenance, and a growing population will resulting in additional wear on the roads. Development in the town is closely linked to the road network. Commercial and residential development is most likely to occur on easily traveled roads, and with development, the roads may need to be improved to handle additional traffic. The town must balance the needs of an expanding population with the preservation of the town's rural character. The future improvements should reflect the land use plan. The scenic nature of the roads must be preserved as well.

### **Input into State Projects**

The town is extremely concerned that state projects be responsive to the community's goals to preserve its rural character and other needs. Specifically, the community (town officials and residents) should be included in developing and implementing the following:

- Route 101 upgrade
- Route 102 upgrade respecting the unique character of historic Clayville
- State maintenance or upgrade of roads and bridges in Foster; any maintenance or upgrading should preserve the rural character of the roads to the extent possible
- State decisions to turn state-maintained roads back to the town for maintenance
- Placement of traffic lights and other controls on state roads, especially at high hazard areas

### **Alternative Modes of Transportation**

Many alternative modes of transportation, such as walking and biking, were commonly relied on before the introduction of the automobile and are thus in keeping with the town's rural character. The town has also recognized the need to encourage the use of public transportation to jobs in Providence (as noted previously, the largest number of residents worked in the state's capital). Bicycle routes and walking paths are also under consideration as part of the scenic roads project.

There have been some trail system improvements since the 2003 Comprehensive Plan update, including work by the Foster Land Trust at the Spencer property and Tom Wood Road. There were also improvements to the North-South Trail system. This trail system would provide access to scenic and historic resources as well as infrastructure for an alternative mode of transportation. The trail system could incorporate important nearby destinations such as the villages of Scituate, Foster Center, Hopkins Mills, Clayville and Moosup Valley and recreational facilities. The North-South trail system is an example and could be used as a spine from which lateral routes through town could be designated. Establishment of these routes would also be an asset for promoting development of recreation and tourism-based small business opportunities.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Regional Opportunities

The town must plan for the future of its paved and unpaved roads to retain their rural character while ensuring that all roads are safe. Studies are needed to identify local trouble spots, particularly areas where drainage is a problem and streets flood in major storms. Once trouble spots have been identified, the town needs to develop a road and bridge plan to establish priorities, identify funding sources, and plan the improvements necessary to correct existing deficiencies.

Because adequate and safe circulation means more than vehicular use of roads, the town will explore alternative and recreational circulation systems such as hiking, biking and bridle trails, canoeing and cross country skiing trails. Public transportation will be encouraged where it is appropriate.

The following are specific policies for action:

- Implement and fund the Road and Bridge Improvement Plan for road upgrading and maintenance. This plan provides for the paving of certain important connector roads, allowing others to remain as unpaved rural and scenic roads. Ensure that scenic roads which form public linkage for the North-South trail system are upgraded in a sensitive fashion following design standards which retain their scenic integrity and allow an appropriate trail function as well as vehicular use.
- Reevaluate and update the Road and Bridge Improvement Plan and projections for funding every year along with a twenty-year funding outlook.
- Complete scenic Roads project including bicycling and walking paths.
- Designate scenic roads itemized in a historic/scenic inventory
- Nominate the most important of these roads for the State Scenic Road designation using the RIDOT criteria for such nominations, including scenic roads that are scheduled for state funded improvement projects.
- Policy - Scenic roads, both those nominated for state designation and those chosen for local listing, should be protected through improvement standards implemented at the local level and through a Farmland Rural Conservation Overlay Zoning District.
- Identify for long-term planning which roads will be used by low density residential growth, where rural road widths and pavement type should be maintained, and which roads shall become well-traveled connectors and be improved.
- Review the policy concerning private roads as public roads based upon the improvement of such roads to town standards prior to acceptance.
- Policy-Protect the rural qualities of roads, paved and unpaved. Design standards should be adopted for the roads and nearby development that preserve the rural character and provide safe travel.
- Policy-Rural character can be retained with design standards related to road safety, width, geometry, and drainage and roadside vegetation.
- Include traffic impacts in town review of subdivision and new large-scale development proposals including commercial and industrial projects. Expand the current Commercial Site Review process and extend the developer's responsibility for town road improvements should the expected traffic from new development adversely affect road conditions or safe traffic circulation.
- Coordinate with RIDOT design staff and discuss state projects in public forums with the Town Council, Planning Board, Conservation Commission and other town agencies on a regular basis.

- Town staff should work with RIDOT design staff on an ongoing basis and with state projects to ensure the needs of the town are met. Examples include Route 94, Route 102, and Route 6 improvements.
- Town staff should maintain an updated list of improvements on Federal aid roads (Transportation Improvement Program, (TIP) to respond to State request for projects. This list should be updated and compiled through an open public process including review by the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and Town Council.
- Town staff should track proposed (TIP) improvement projects to be sure that the projects are still appropriate at the time they receive funding for design.
- Establish and promote a privately and publicly developed trail system utilizing alternative routes (hiking/bridle trails) primarily along rural roads through Foster and connecting scenic areas, hamlets and neighboring communities. This trail system would provide access to scenic and historic resources as well as an alternative mode of transportation. Establishment of these routes would also be an asset for promoting development of recreation and tourism based small business opportunities.
- Manage Route 6 commercial development and other areas designated by the Economic Development Advisory Commission (EDAC), including curb cuts and the location and character of development.
- Improve signage and safety features on major through-routes within the town.
- Improve enforcement of traffic regulations on major through-routes within the town.
- Explore designation and funding for a Medevac Helicopter Pad.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

GOALS:		
TN	G1	Ensure that all roads are safe while retaining the rural character of all paved and unpaved roads, to the greatest extent possible.
TN	G2	Establish and promote a trail system utilizing alternative routes (hiking/bridle/bicycle trails) primarily along rural roads through Foster and connecting scenic areas, hamlets and neighboring communities.
TN	G3	Meet the diverse transportation needs of Foster residents, businesses and visitors equitably, including more public transportation options.
OBJECTIVES:		
TN	O1	Designate and nominate 5 scenic roads over the next 10 years.
TN	O2	Annually publish the 5-year Road Improvement Plan
TN	O3	Complete multi-use (hiking/bridle/bicycle) trail network.
TN	O4	Develop a town Road & Bridge Improvement Plan.
POLICIES:		
TN	P1	Scenic roads, both those nominated for State designation and those chosen for local listing, should be protected through improvement standards implemented at the local level and through a Conservation Zoning
TN	P2	Ensure that scenic roads which form public linkages for the North - South Trail System are upgraded in a sensitive fashion following design standards which retain their scenic integrity and allow an appropriate trail function as well as vehicle use.
TN	P3	Manage traffic patterns in areas designated for commercial development

## Town of Foster, RI Comprehensive Plan

<b>TN</b>	P4	Coordinate with RIDOT design staff and discuss state projects in public forums with the Town Council, Planning Board, Conservation Commission and other town agencies on a regular basis to ensure that the needs of the town are met. Examples include Route 94, Route 102 and Route 6 improvements.
<b>TN</b>	P5	Develop a funding plan to meet needs for road and bridge maintenance and improvements.
<b>TN</b>	P6	Rural character can be retained with design standards related to road safety, width, geometry, drainage and roadside vegetation.
<b>TN</b>	P7	Ensure the roads and bridges meet transportation needs during emergencies, including emergency response and evacuation.
<b>ACTIONS:</b>		
<b>TN</b>	A1	Update scenic roads itemized in the Historic/Scenic inventory and nominate the most important of these roads for State Scenic Road designation using the RIDOT criteria for such nominations, including scenic roads that are scheduled for State funded improvement projects.
<b>TN</b>	A2	Adopt design standards for roads that preserve the rural character and provide safe travel.
<b>TN</b>	A3	Include traffic impacts in town review of subdivision and new large scale development proposals including commercial and industrial projects. Expand the current Commercial Site Plan Review process and extend the developer's responsibility for town road improvements should he expected traffic from new development adversely affect road conditions or safe traffic circulation.
<b>TN</b>	A4	Town staff should maintain an updated list of improvements needed on Federal aid roads (Transportation Improvement Program, TIP) in order to be able to respond to State requests for projects. This list should be updated and compiled through an open public process including review by the Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Town Council.
<b>TN</b>	A5	Town staff should track proposed (TIP) improvement projects to be sure that the projects are still appropriate at the time they receive funding for design.
<b>TN</b>	A6	Improve signage and safety features on major through-routes within and through the town.
<b>TN</b>	A7	Improve enforcement of traffic regulations on major through-routes within and through the town.
<b>TN</b>	A8	Coordinate with landowners and interested stakeholders to create a network of bicycling and walking paths.
<b>TN</b>	A9	Town staff should coordinate bridge reconstruction with RIDOT to make sure that the reconstructed bridges are compatible with the town's rural character and its ability to maintain the bridges over time. The current wooden bridge program includes compatible design and should be encouraged.
<b>TN</b>	A10	Implement and fund a road and bridge Improvement plan for upgrades and maintenance. This plan would provide for the paving of important connector roads, allowing others to remain as unpaved rural and scenic roads.
<b>TN</b>	A11	Reevaluate and update the Road and Bridge Improvement Plan and projections for funding every 5 years.
<b>TN</b>	A12	Identify which roads will be used by low density residential growth, where rural road widths and pavement type should be maintained, and which roads should become well traveled connectors and be improved.



## GROWING ECONOMY

- ❖ INTRODUCTION
- ❖ EXISTING CONDITIONS
- ❖ PROJECTED CONDITIONS
- ❖ ASSESSMENT OF CONDITIONS
- ❖ GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Economic development in Foster has several meanings – greater employment opportunities, broadening of the local tax base, and community growth. This chapter seeks to describe Foster’s assets and disadvantages for economic development as well as the parameters for a proactive strategy to achieve seemingly elusive goals to meet local economic needs. As a rural community, Foster’s local economy has included various agricultural-based businesses (including wholesale and retail food production and distribution), an active cottage industry of self-employed craftsmen and professionals working from their homes, small retail, service and forestry businesses, commercial recycling and healthcare. Its local labor force however, exceeds the employment opportunity available from these industries and sectors.

Nearly all planning areas share direct connections with economic development – from maintaining natural resources through environmental stewardship to ensuring people can reliably travel to stores, appointments and workplaces from homes they can afford. Future land uses will play a critical role in the success of the community’s economic activities into the century.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

Like other communities in Rhode Island and the state itself, Foster was greatly impacted by the recession which took place in the late 2000s. Profits and job numbers fell and led to businesses closing their doors and workers moving away. At the same time, other workers with the same mentality (though in smaller numbers) came and the economic hardship motivated growth in new areas of the economy. In 2016, statistics indicate the economy is still sensitive and increasing in performance.

#### Employment

The 2010 Census reported Foster’s workers employed in the labor force totaled about 2,441. Educational, health, and social services workers totaled about a quarter (24.0 percent) of the employed labor force while construction (13.2 percent), and retail trade (10.7 percent) employed the second and third largest numbers of workers, respectively. Among the 2,215 workers 16 years and over, 215 (9.7 percent) were commuting to their place of work within 15 minutes while 707 (31.9 percent) had to travel for 45 minutes or more. More than four out of every five (87.1 percent) of these workers, plus those working from home, worked within the local metropolitan statistical area (MSA) which spanned nearly all of the state as well as several communities in southeastern Massachusetts.

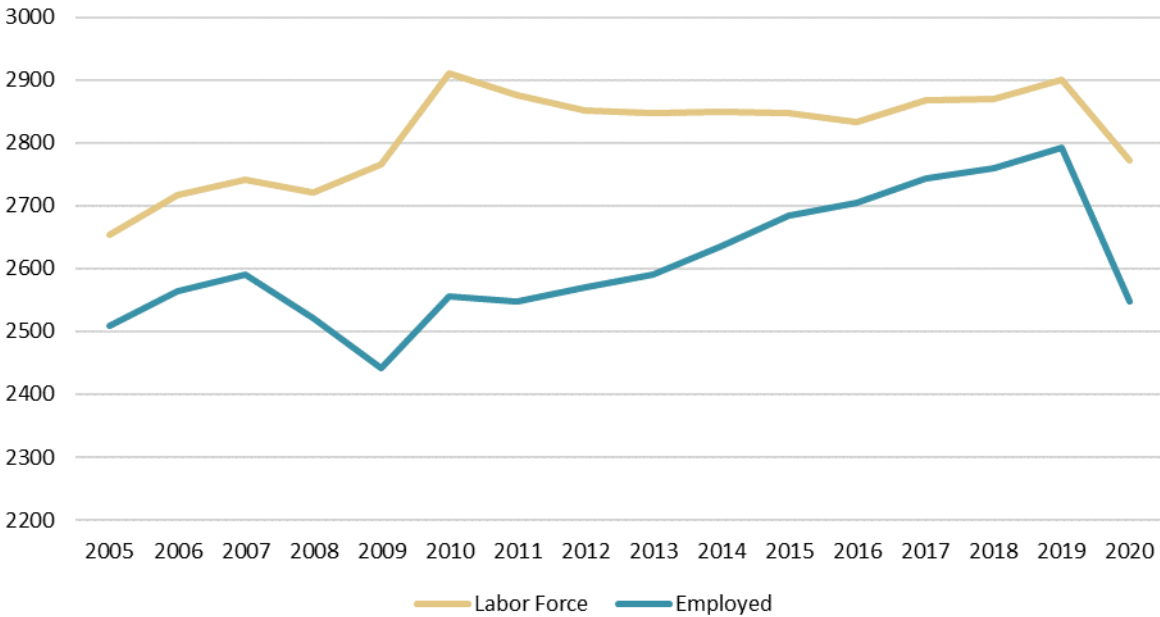
The statistics indicate that core industries for jobs continue to grow, and have remained dispersed throughout the region. Unemployment decreased steadily from 2009 – 2019, but increased significantly in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is demonstrated by seasonally unadjusted employment rates reported by the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (RIDLT) and shown in in the figure below:

Figure 16: Seasonally Unadjusted Labor Force and Employment, 2005-2020<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Source: RIDLT Local Area Unemployment Statistics, 2015-2020

## Town of Foster, RI Comprehensive Plan



### Significant Industries

#### Agriculture

The cultivation and production of crops and the raising of livestock have been important economic activities in Foster since at least the turn of the eighteenth century. From the 1790s to the 1820s, the significant development which took place in the town was due largely to the success of the agricultural sector. From the 1830s to the 1870s however, much of Foster's population emigrated from the town seeking new opportunities arising from the country's growing number of mills and westward expansion. While agriculture continued to be the occupation of most workers who remained in the labor force, technological advancements from industrialization and the rise of commercial farming in the west greatly impacted local operations. New crops and increased egg, milk, and poultry production were some of these results, as was economic diversification.

While the economic strength of agriculture declined in New England throughout the twentieth century, advocacy for and interest in food systems is supporting a new wave of business and activity throughout the state and region. Foster, as a community with a strong agricultural tradition, recognizes both the sector's synchrony with maintaining a rural character and its economic value. Adopting zoning regulations which encourage agricultural-based businesses and a robust food system to continue and grow in the twenty-first century is a fundamental action already taken by the town.

**Table 14: Agricultural Uses by Zoning District, 2016<sup>12</sup>**

Use	AR	NC	GBM	MI	R-SC	M
Raising animals for home use	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X
Raising a maximum of 35 animal on five acres or less (and five additional animals for each individual acres over five acres) for sale or for sale of animal products	✓	X	X	✓	X	X

<sup>12</sup> uses allowed by right (✓) or special use permit (S) or prohibited (X)

Raising animal exceeding the above for sale or for sale of animal products	S	X	X	S	X	X
Raising crops and forest products	✓	✓	S	✓	X	X
Commercial nursery structures	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Sale of produce raised on the premises	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Poultry farm with capacity for >10,000 birds	S	S	X	S	X	X
One 200 square foot (sf) wood building not less than 120 square feet not for the purpose of housing animals	S	S	S	S	X	S
Fruit and vegetable stand	S	✓	✓	✓	X	X

In 2015, the Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC) and the Rhode Island Agricultural Partnership identified 51 farms operating in Foster. This was the largest number among any city or town in the state, making up 21.4 percent of all farms in Providence County and 8.7 percent of all farms in Rhode Island. In further review, three of these farms were more recently identified as being out of operation while an additional 10 were identified by Farm Fresh Rhode Island (FarmFresh RI). While this updated total of 61 farms indicates the town's farm-friendly zoning requirements, perhaps more telling is that just over half of the 29 farms whose year of establishment could be found began operating no later than in 2000.

These operations range in activity from single-commodity enterprises to full-scale harvesting and distribution and represent the synergy required to provide consumers with healthful food products. The locavore movement has played an integral part in households' increasing demands for harvests from in-state and regional farmers while the state's (and its capital city's) growing national profile as a culinary destination is furthering the need for locally sourced ingredients among restaurants and other food servicers. Over 500 restaurants in Rhode Island, as well as in Connecticut and Massachusetts, reported purchasing ingredients from local farmers and producers to FarmFresh RI as of summer 2016.

Recognizing and responding to student interest in agriculture and career opportunities available in the industry, Ponaganset High School – the upper-secondary school in the Foster-Glocester School District – offers academic pathways – the programs of study for Plant Systems and Animal Systems include contextual and work-based learning as well as opportunities to participate in activities of the National FFA Organization ("FFA" formerly stood for Future Farmers of America).

### *Arts and the Cottage Industry*

Foster has a notable cottage industry broadly comprised of knitting, weaving, decorative woodworking, floral arranging and designing, handcrafting (including lotions, soaps and pottery) and painting. This is likely due in part to the community's rural setting and agricultural heritage. Self-reliance also appears to be a more common attribute among local workers. The 2010 Census and successive ACS estimates have indicated the number of self-employed workers as a percent of private wage and salary workers (7.1 percent in 2010 and an estimated 10.4 percent in 2016) is one of the highest in Rhode Island. Old Home Days, a three-day event in Foster held annually at the end of July, is one of the most popular occasions for local artists to showcase their work. Artist Open Studios is also held at several different participating art studios in Foster and neighboring Glocester and Scituate throughout the year with art pieces available for sale.



### *Fishing, Hunting and Recreation*

Sport and leisure is an important component in the local economy supported by those same factors mentioned in the section on the cottage industry above, as well as by the community's natural resources. A current inventory of recreation-based businesses includes a country club, a hunting camp, two campgrounds, and several private rod and gun clubs and gun shops. While not producing direct revenue, public accessibility to walking and hiking trails may have some impact on enlarging the customer bases for local businesses by attracting visitors from nearby communities.

### *Forestry*

While fields are widespread throughout town, most were created by the clearing of hardwood forest in the early colonial era and have been maintained through the centuries by grazing animals. While agriculture was predominant, the surplus lumber made available was the foundation for a robust forestry industry which also developed in town. At one point, Foster was home to more than three-quarters of all major sawmills in Rhode Island.

Today, there is one sawmill active in town. Though the industry has waned, forestry does continue to have a presence in Foster. Wood for heating fuel remains an important local commodity and many local operations rely on private individual labor and small-scale companies managing forests for forest products based on environmentally sound strategies and proper ecological management practices.

### *Health Care*

Health care has been the major industry of employment for Foster's labor force since at least 2000 and a limited number of medical professionals have practiced in the community. The town's first health services facility – WellOne Primary Medical and Dental Care – opened in 2009 and as of 2016 provides primary medical care, dental services (which had not been available in the town since at least 1989) and behavioral health services. A medical laboratory is also located onsite. Foster traditionally had a limited number of doctors each practicing within his or her own office; however, now with the health facility there are numerous doctors from various medical fields, and their assistants working in one central location.

### *Small Retail and Service Businesses*

State Routes 6 (Danielson Pike) and 101 (Hartford Pike) are used by more vehicles than any other segments of the local roadway network. This statistic has been a primary factor in the town's decisions to designate their abutting parcels as commercial zones. Commerce is broadly defined and existing commercial uses in Foster include retailing merchandise, fueling and servicing vehicles, preparing meals and snacks and providing lodging and other services.

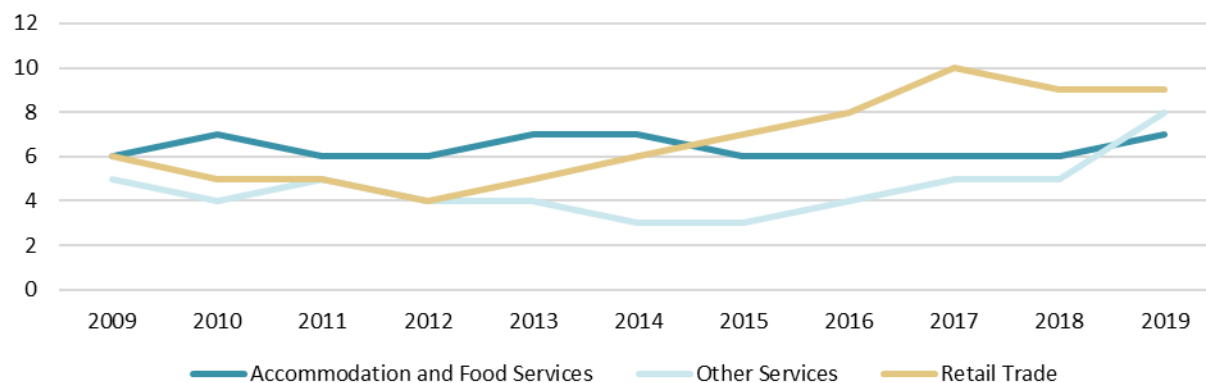
In 2007, when the state reached its peak number of employers just before the recession of the late 2000s began taking hold, the accommodation and food services industry had a more common physical presence in Foster (eight employers) than either other non-public administration services (five employers) or retail trade (three employers). When the number of employers finally surpassed the 2007 count in 2015 however, it indicated another of the economic downturn's impacts locally. The two services industries have both experienced slight decline while notable growth has occurred in retail.

**Figure 17: Employers in Foster by Select Industries, 2009-2019<sup>13</sup>**

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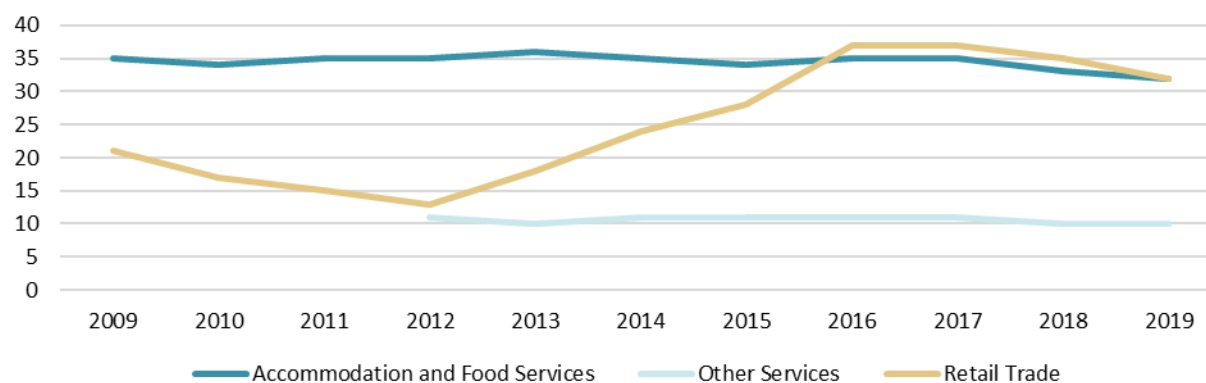
<sup>13</sup> Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, RIDLT

## Town of Foster, RI Comprehensive Plan



Similar trends also took place in the average employment of these industries. In 2007, the eight accommodation and food service employers had an average of 37 employees, more than three times the average number of employees among other service employers (11) and more than four times the average among retail trade employers (7). While employment decreased as the recession took hold (the gap occurring in other services from 2009 to 2012 is due to the average number of employees in 2010 and 2011 being too small to report), the retail trade has recorded significant growth since 2012, the same year in which the number of employers also grew.

Figure 18: Average Employment in Foster by Select Industries, 2009-2019<sup>14</sup>

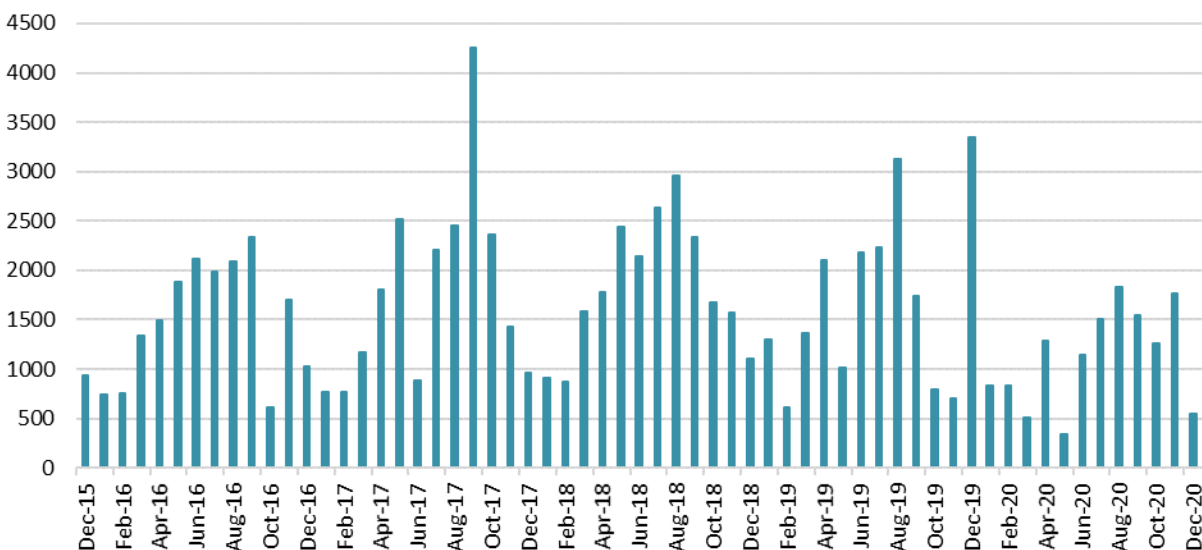


During the five-year period between May 2011 and May 2016, the state collected about \$78,850 in revenue from businesses levying the one percent meal and beverage tax. This was the lowest combined revenue of any city or town in the state. Looking at the figure below, there is a clearly correlation between tax revenue generated and the time of the year. January has consistently been the month of lowest revenue while the same can be said for winter among the four regional seasons. The highest revenue months have been May, September, and October.

Figure 19: One Percent Meal and Beverage State Tax Revenue, December 2015 - 2020<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, RIDLT

<sup>15</sup> Source: Rhode Island Department of Revenue



### Route 6 Rezoning Project

In September 2009, the town’s Planning Board presented a proposal to the Town Council to rezone parcels along Route 6 (Danielson Pike) with the intent to extinguish strip zoning (in this case, the term refers to the area between the public right-of-way [Danielson Pike] and a setback line running parallel to the right-of-way which was designated for commercial zone uses) which often divided parcels into separate agricultural/residential and commercial portions. This presented a burden on owners by only allowing commercial development to occur nearer to the pike or agricultural/residential development to occur further from the pike – preventing a parcel’s full development.

The Planning Board had been reviewing other commercial corridors since 2004 to draw comparisons with Route 6 and seek zoning which would reform the areas. It was concluded that pockets of commercial areas would be the most economically viable choice and the Board made the following determinations:

- All properties containing residential dwelling units or containing no development would be designated as Agricultural/Residential
- All properties containing commercial businesses would be designated as General Business Mixed Use, which would allow more than one use on the parcel to limit a potential demand for subdivisions and curb cuts

The Planning Board’s leadership in encouraging overall site design considerations in future commercial development through the rezoning project was recognized by the state chapter of the American Planning Board in 2010 with an award for “Outstanding Plan Implementation.”

### Redevelopment

The Turnquist Lumber site at 180 Hartford Pike is the only manufacturing/industrially-zoned area in Foster. The large business on the property was purchased as a location for a recycling operation. There is also presently a second building located on the site that the current owners have expressed intent to open as a small, freestanding business. There has also been a proposal to reconstruct an additional building on the location to establish smaller, community-oriented businesses. To the west of the Turnquist Lumber site is a structure which was previously used a two-unit residence with a small

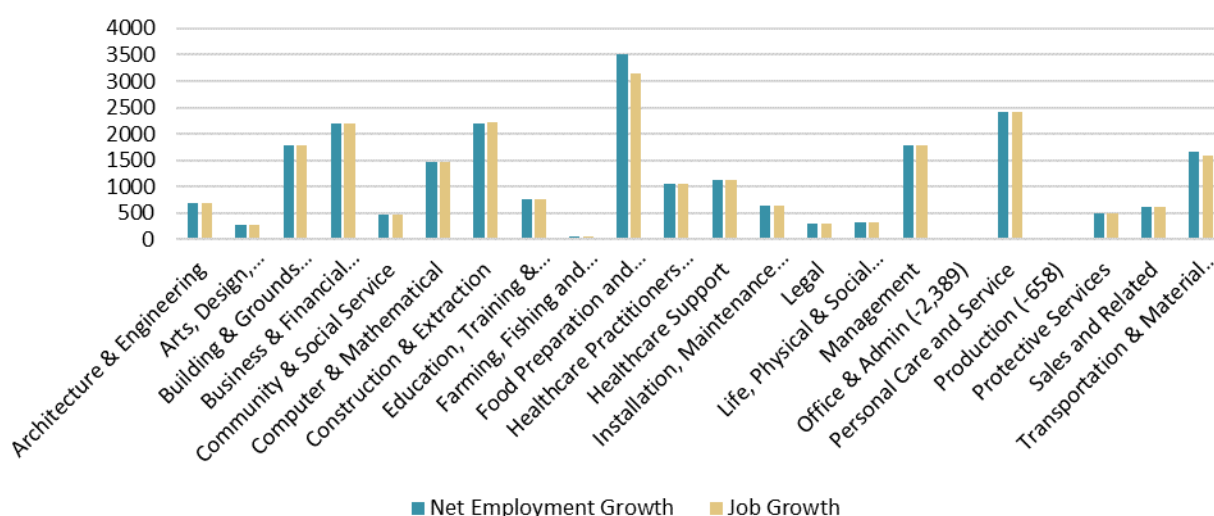
ceramics business in a third unit. That site has now become a commercial business. The site was extensively renovated, and it appears to be accepted well by the community.

## PROJECTED CONDITIONS

### Employment Opportunities

Looking at recent history and contemporary trends, RIDLT has projected several occupations in the health care, manufacturing, and retail trade industries will be among the fastest growing from 2018 to 2028. This would indicate these industries will thus continue to be important suppliers of employment opportunity to the local labor force. Figure 11 below illustrates comparable employment over a decade among several occupational groups.

Figure 20: Occupational Groups by Projected Employment, 2018-2028<sup>16</sup>



### Local Industry Trends

#### Health Care

Health care has been a primary focus industry among state leaders, academic institutions, and other stakeholders interested in developing the state's knowledge economy. The recent and planned expansions of biomedical engineering and pharmaceutical science programs at several universities in Rhode Island, among other developments, are one indicator that the push for high-technology (hi-tech) in the state may be taking hold.

Hi-tech industries generally seek a well-educated labor force, however, and Foster has experienced brain drain in its 25 to 34-year-old age group greater than almost all communities in the state according to 2010-2014 ACS estimates on educational attainment. The number of 18 to 24 year olds with at least some college education was much larger as a percent of their whole age group though, suggesting Foster is undergoing a period of brain gain. This is further supported by the local public school systems (for more information, see in the Introduction chapter).

<sup>16</sup> Source: RIDLT Occupational Outlook 2028

### ***Agriculture***

In contrast to health care, as well as the food services industry, agriculture has been projected to experience low employment gains from 2018 to 2028 across the state. As Foster contains the largest number of farms in Rhode Island, and many of these have entered operation in only the past 16 years, there is reason to expect the local farming sector will continue to grow in the community.

### **Planned Redevelopment**

Currently, the Foster Library is exploring options to construct a new facility in town. However, at the time of this plan, no site has been selected for the proposal. The Town has also assembled a committee dedicated to the construction of a new Police Station at the intersection of Route 6 and Route 94. Foster received approval at Financial Town Meeting 2022 to retain a \$3 million bond for the construction of the facility.

In 2009 Foster implemented a general business zone (GBM) on Route 6. Within that zone, the maximum building size has been changed to a lot based size criterion, 25% of the net buildable area of the lot. The Town has also passed a medical marijuana ordinance which allows compassion centers by-right within the GBM zone. As noted elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan, there has been very little development on Route 6 since the adoption of the new zoning district.

While the Town has no specific redevelopment plans, the Planning Board has been considering the matter of redevelopment along Route 6. The Planning Board wants to specifically target Route 6 as the town's major commercial district and highest trafficked area. The Board also has stated intentions to address the matter of perception of Route 6 as a generally blighted area.

The Planning Board has recently created a draft document which provides an inventory of all Route 6 properties which are either business uses in the residential zoning district, or any use located in the commercial (GBM) zoning district. The Route 6 Property Inventory was created out of discussions the Planning board was having about how to expand the Town's commercial tax base. The identification of those properties are represented in the FLUM in the Land Use chapter. The document serves as a resource for all redevelopment efforts in the future. The inventory provides histories of properties including any violations and noted contamination.

The document also provides a draft ranking of properties pertaining to their development potential. Properties were evaluated by size, existence of wetlands, known contamination, or any other constraints that would limit development. Moreover, some properties which are noted as having a high probability of development potential have remained vacant for over 10 years and the owners have not shown any interest in selling.

The Town must confront the issue of having a limited inventory of commercially zoned properties, which are complicated by the prevalence of development constraints.

## **ASSESSMENT OF CONDITIONS**

### **Issues Affecting Economic Growth in Foster**

In this section, Foster will identify which categories of issues currently impact its economy or are forecasted to effect economic growth in the next twenty (20) years.

As revealed in community surveys, Foster's residents want a more diverse tax base while retaining the rural qualities and features that have attracted them to remain in, relocate or return to the town.

This rural lifestyle can further economic growth within the State of Rhode Island; as Foster can be classified as a rural living area that complements the suburban and urban environments around Narragansett Bay and the Blackstone River.

Though economic recovery and growth in Foster has moved at a slower pace than the state as a whole, there are economic development opportunities to be explored. These include redevelopment opportunities along commercial corridors in Foster and the spirit of self-reliance among residents, many of whom are open to new economic opportunities for themselves through unconventional resources or venues.

### **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats Analysis**

#### ***Strengths***

Virtually all employment in Foster is of a small business nature and is not subject to the whims of absentee owners.

Individual ingenuity and independence seem to characterize the local economy.

Overall, the economic growth of Rhode Island is enhanced by having reasonable access to rural living which complements the suburban and urban areas of the State.

Foster has a living and physical environment and a self-reliant population; and some of our businesses are long existing businesses.

Foster has access to wide swaths of forested areas, which are highly valued by the local population.

Foster has an abundance of land and had not yet approached build-out.

Like much of Rhode Island, Foster also is a reasonable commuting time, under 30 minutes by car, to Providence's city center. It's also under 1 hour commuting distance to Worcester, Massachusetts. This provides an extended reach for Foster residents to access larger labor markets.

Foster center is only 15 minutes from I-395 and I-295, which provides close access to interstate commerce, particularly trucking and transportation markets.

#### ***Weaknesses***

Foster's attractive living environment will continue to draw those who seek a more rural lifestyle while working outside of the Foster community. That sensibility is often coupled with a desire to limit commercial development and increase services and services quality levels to single family homes.

Being a bedroom community, some residents are more likely to make purchases outside of Foster.

Incomes available from local employment, except for those who may be self-employed, generally will not support the cost of purchasing a new house/home in Foster.

The lack of public sewer and water services, and the constraints imposed by having greater than fifty-five percent (55%) of the town within the Scituate Reservoir Watershed limit the community's options.

The Scituate Reservoir Watershed Management Plan, the State Guide Plan Element 125, requires that wherever possible, commercial, retail, and light industrial uses be located outside of the watershed.

A large amount of land along Foster's major commercial routes (Route 6) is compromised by high water tables and wetlands.

Prior practices of land owners and current conditions have left many commercially zoned properties with contaminated soils, or the prospect of contamination is a threat level too high. Finding appropriate soils for wells and septs is already costly to developers and business owners looking to locate or expand. Prospective land owners do not want to invest additional money into remediation of soils unless their return on the value/use of the land will account for that cost.

### *Opportunities*

The natural features of the community open the door for possible tourism – which will make use of the significant natural and scenic resources of the community. Agri-Tourism is just one such example.

On a broader scale, Foster has the potential to capitalize on combining existing resources such as visual qualities and historic areas with publicly and privately supported actions to make tourism, recreational activities, and other non-traditional approaches, a source of revenue and employment for residents.

Cottage industries (as listed under Strengths) and similar activities would bring even greater diversity to the local economy without introducing suburban style developments. All these would tend to complement the town's attractiveness as a destination for those seeking "slow lane" recreational diversions from the "fast lanes" of their daily lives.

Foster is land rich as its primary natural resource. The minimum lot size is 4.59 acres and many landowners have larger lots than is required. By promoting appropriate use of the General Business Use district, Foster could attract certain uses that would increase its tax base substantially.

### *Threats*

The national, regional and statewide outlook for economic recovery and development is slowly moving forward.

The population of the community is aging, and therefore, economic development must not only be structured to meet the needs of our current population, but also one that is aging; however, there is still the need to create the type of economic development that attracts a younger population to the community.

Limited funds are available to, and are difficult to get by private individuals for commercial development for example one landowner stated how the bank did not want to offer funding until he had commercial tenants, yet the possible tenants did not want to commit until they knew the construction was funded.

### *Agriculture*

To craft policies and determine implementation actions that can help to capitalize on the community's agricultural opportunities, consider the following guiding questions: Are there any opportunities to expand the components of the agricultural system within the municipality? What opportunities exist for enhancing public access to local agricultural products? How can the people and organizations currently doing agricultural work be better supported?

### *Reduced Food Miles Traveled*

Most of the food that is purchased within Rhode Island is brought in from out-of-state. Improving the local agricultural system by encouraging more production-based farms, allowing food processing facilities, and retail outlets in close proximity to farms, and adopting local food purchasing policies will reduce the overall number of miles food travels before it ends up on a Rhode Island table. The benefits of reduced food miles include decreased air pollution, reduced oil consumption, and improved population health, with the added bonus of decreased cost of food.

### *Increased Access to Healthy Food*

With a robust local food system and multiple points of sale, all Rhode Islanders will experience increased access to healthy foods. Additionally, Rhode Island's food supply will be less vulnerable to emergencies that may occur in the industrial food system, such as a salmonella outbreak.

### *Increased Sense of Community*

An important part of supporting local agriculture is allowing farmers' markets and farm stands, and these specialized retail outlets bring together residents, families, artists, and farmers in an unprecedented way. The state's many farmers' markets are well attended, especially by people who live in the neighborhoods in which the events are held.

## **GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS**

<b>GOALS:</b>		
<b>GE</b>	G1	Broaden the sources of town revenues to assure a sound financial future to achieve town goals expressed in the Comprehensive Plan.
<b>GE</b>	G2	Encourage commercial growth using a framework for mutual success, to develop infrastructure at the lowest possible cost, with the lowest possible environmental impact, maintaining the rural character of the town.
<b>GE</b>	G3	Encourage viable and sustainable agricultural related businesses. The creation of a village center along the Route 6 corridor, to encourage a mixed use of residences and commercial entities. The creation of a viable manufacturing / industrial center / park within the Foster community.
<b>OBJECTIVES:</b>		
<b>GE</b>	O1	The creation of a village center along the Route 6 corridor, to encourage a mixed use of residences and commercial entities.
<b>GE</b>	O2	The creation of a viable manufacturing/ industrial center/ park within the Foster community.
<b>GE</b>	O3	To achieve the economic development goals of this plan while maintaining the compatibility and consistency with other plan elements, and Land Use 2025.
<b>GE</b>	O4	Develop a reputation as an artist-friendly community and tourist destination.
<b>GE</b>	O5	Increase the number of businesses within the Foster community.
<b>GE</b>	O6	Develop an economic base capable of providing a desirable standard of living, and creating job opportunities for Foster residents
<b>POLICIES:</b>		
<b>GE</b>	P1	To promote economic development sensitive to Foster's rural and village character, and the historical, cultural and environmental resources of each.
<b>GE</b>	P2	Encourage retail commercial development necessary to provide convenient services to Foster residents within the confines of existing commercially zoned areas.



## Town of Foster, RI Comprehensive Plan

<b>GE</b>	P3	Encourage compatible cottage-type industries
<b>GE</b>	P4	Encourage the continuation and growth of economic activities such as recreation, forestry, and agriculture, which are related to the natural resources of the town, and support local employment opportunities, which relate to indigenous and rural resources and occupations.
<b>GE</b>	P5	Support the activities of an Economic Development Advisory Commission to explore and solicit preferred development opportunities for location in Foster and to work with successful Foster businesses, the local Chambers of Commerce and various Business Associations to further their efforts.
<b>GE</b>	P6	Encourage the formation of a Western Rhode Island Tourism Council and explore mutually beneficial relationships with the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Northeastern Connecticut Visitors District. (Take advantage of the designation of the Blackstone Valley and the Quinebaug-Shetucket Rivers National Heritage Corridors in tourism development planning.)
<b>GE</b>	P7	Encourage improvement in appearance and function of the town's newly created General Business Mixed Use zone along Route 6 and remaining Neighborhood Commercial Zones within the Foster Community.
<b>GE</b>	P8	Encourage revitalization and reuse of existing commercial and industrial facilities, and encourage creative adaptive reuse(s) of the town's historic homes and buildings when properly zoned.
<b>GE</b>	P9	Maintain and enhance the historical and cultural resources which contribute to the town's overall economic development opportunities.
<b>GE</b>	P10	Promote education and training to prepare Foster's workforce for the future economy.
<b>GE</b>	P11	Encourage an inclusive economy that targets opportunity to typically underserved populations.
<b>ACTIONS:</b>		
<b>GE</b>	A1	Develop and maintain a list of possible light industrial and commercial development and research facilities to attract to Foster and promote this at the state level.
<b>GE</b>	A2	Designate and possibly rezone suitable areas for viable manufacturing / commercial parks.
<b>GE</b>	A3	Develop and maintain tax incentives to assist in achieving the economic and environmental development goals and policies, including cottage industries.
<b>GE</b>	A4	Hold seminars and field trips to attract principals interested in rural assisted living and senior housing development and coordinate efforts with the affordable housing program.
<b>GE</b>	A5	Enact development controls and performance standards in the zoning ordinance to mitigate conflicts between commercial and industrial development and other uses. These include but are not limited to: buffers to side and rear lots; landscaping; and compliance with state and federal air, and water quality regulations;
<b>GE</b>	A6	Review and update Foster's zoning ordinance to create a set of design standards for commercial developments which are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood in appearance, with varied rooflines, alternative construction materials, scaled down signage etc., exploring options of using 2nd story apartments in General Business Mixed Use developments, and promoting walkability.
<b>GE</b>	A7	Work with the Foster Preservation Society to increase economic development based on Foster's history, such as former stagecoach stops, inns, mills and the W3R.

Town of Foster, RI Comprehensive Plan

<b>GE</b>	A8	Update / upgrade Foster's zoning ordinance to facilitate the encouragement of future commercial business in Foster.
<b>GE</b>	A9	Create an Economic Development Strategic Plan with assistance from an Economic Development Consultant group which will provide the town more specific and tangible actions.
<b>GE</b>	A10	Incorporate recommendations from the Economic Development Consultant into an update to the approved Comprehensive Plan

## HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

- ❖ INTRODUCTION
- ❖ EXISTING CONDITIONS
- ❖ PROJECTED CONDITIONS
- ❖ ASSESSMENT OF CONDITIONS
- ❖ GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Housing is a fundamental component of communities and is dependent on many aspects including the allocation of land for residential and commercial uses as well as the infrastructure and facilities available or planned to deliver services. It also has considerable influence over our choices and options for transportation as well as our consumption and use of energy. Further, the Town of Foster recognizes the need to provide an inclusive supply of housing and to contribute in overcoming a regional shortage of affordable housing. This chapter will offer a review and response to findings from contemporary data, estimates, and projections on housing and housing-related information to ensure quality and affordable homes continue to serve the community.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

The official housing stock for Foster at the dissemination of the 2010 Census was 1,775 units. This accounted for less than half of one percent of the total housing stock in Rhode Island and was an increase of 197 units (a 12.48 percent increase) from the previous census in 2000.

#### Residential Development

Of the 50.8 square miles of land area in Foster, 92.4% is within the Agricultural/Residential (AR) zoning district. By the dimensional regulations the zone requires, including a minimum 200,000 square foot lot size and a three percent maximum building coverage, nearly all developed real estate exists as single-family homes on multi-acre parcels. As of the 2010 Census, the town had an overall housing density of less than one unit per acre; alternatively, this was almost 35 units per square mile.

The few areas of slightly greater density generally correspond to hamlets and villages listed as historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), such as Clayville, Foster Center, Hopkins Mills, and Moosup Valley (for more information on Foster's historic resources go to Historical and Cultural Resources chapter). Though not registered on the NRHP and built long after the colonial and federal eras, a World War II era military housing development for personnel working at the nearby Nike missile site was later purchased by a private developer. The houses, together known locally as Abbey Lane, are now in private ownership.

Along with smaller lot sizes and shorter setbacks, these areas also have their own development constraints and issues regarding private wells and onsite wastewater treatment systems - or a private community well and community wastewater treatment system in the case of Abbey Lane - due to the absence of any public water or sewer system in town. Each also has unique characteristics which make them distinct among one another.

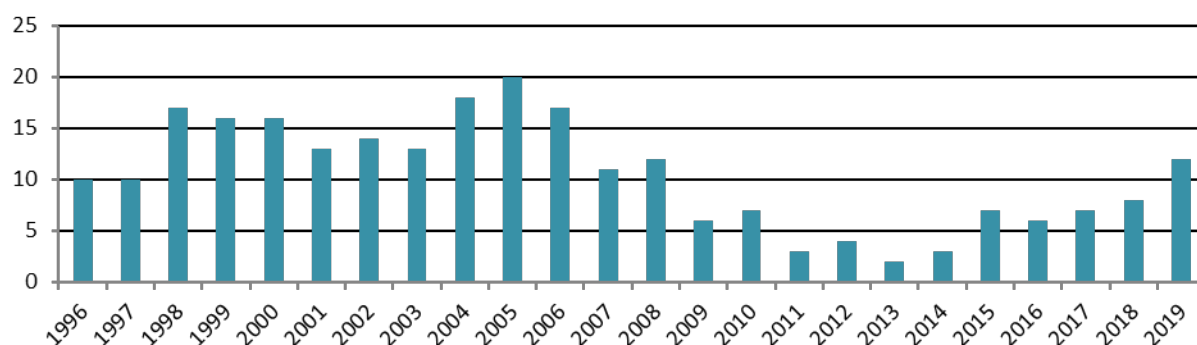
#### Growth Management

As noted in the Introduction chapter, there was significant residential growth in the second half of the twentieth century when measured as the number of people living in Foster. Overall, the population more than doubled from 1950 to 2000 as an average of almost 53 residents joined the community each year.

Although there was a slight decline between 1990 and 2000, which may have been due to undercounting, building permit information reported to the Census Bureau did not reflect a decline in residents. As depicted in Figure 12 below, there was actually a notable increase in the number of permits being issued after 1997. When the predecessor to this Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2003, Foster was projected to continue experiencing demand for and growth in housing construction. Shortly thereafter, the town then developed a Growth Management Program (GMP) which was adopted by the Town Council as part of the town's zoning ordinance in March 2004. The GMP, citing the number of housing units projected for 2010 to be 1,948, allowed for a maximum of 26 permits to be issued annually for a timeframe extending to the end of the decade (the timeframe of the GMP is indicated by the blue shading in Figure 12). Ultimately, exactly half of the maximum 182 new permits allowed under the GMP's regulations were issued. The official number of housing units in 2010 was 173 less than the 2004 projection.

The town allowed the expiration of the GMP at the end of 2010. In the years since, Foster has experienced comparatively slower growth with fewer requests for residential units being submitted to the Building and Zoning Department. Though no longer in place, the town should consider having a new study completed in the near future to update the previous findings, in order to be prepared for the next onslaught of the next housing boom.

Figure 21: Reported Building Permits Issued in Foster, 1996-2019<sup>17</sup>



### Physical Characteristics

As of the 2014-2019 five-year period, the ACS estimated most of Foster's housing units (1,667 units or 91 percent of the total estimated 1,824 housing units) were single-family homes while a small minority (148 units or about 8 percent) were within multi-family homes including duplexes and triplexes. The property with the largest number of units in Foster was Hemlock Village, which contained 30 units spread out between four structures (eight units each in three structures built in 1982 and an additional six units in a fourth structure built in 1989). The remaining 1 percent (9 units) of total housing units was made up of mobile homes.

By construction, 220 units (12 percent) were estimated to have been built in or after 2000 while 1,106 units (61 percent) were built prior to 1980. The oldest homes in Foster date back to the eighteenth century, offering greater value to the town's local heritage landscapes and providing some affordability to those whose homes were transferred from family in earlier generations. Due to the age of some homesteads however, there can be a need for rehabilitation which could be challenging to

<sup>17</sup> Source: Building Permits Survey, US Census Bureau

homeowners. Successful and affordable rehabilitation would likely be a factor supporting current and future homeowners choosing or being able to remain in their homes and in the community.

### **Households and Tenure**

Though taking place during a period of economic decline in the state, only 68 (3.83 percent) of Foster's 1,775 housing units were reported vacant at the dissemination of the 2010 Census. Inversely, 1,707 (96.17 percent) were occupied – the largest percentage of any city or town in the state. Overall, 1,760 units (99.15 percent) could be considered year-round as only 15 units (0.85 percent) remained vacant for seasonal, recreational or occasional use.

The number of occupied housing units is always equivalent to the number of households, as a household is defined as a housing unit with one or more occupants. Of Foster's 1,707 households in 2010, 1,302 (76.27 percent) were families and 405 (23.73 percent) were nonfamilies. The average household size was 2.68 persons (a slight decline from 2.77 persons in 2000) and 99.50 percent of the local population resided in a household (meaning, conversely, 23 people lived outside of a family or nonfamily).

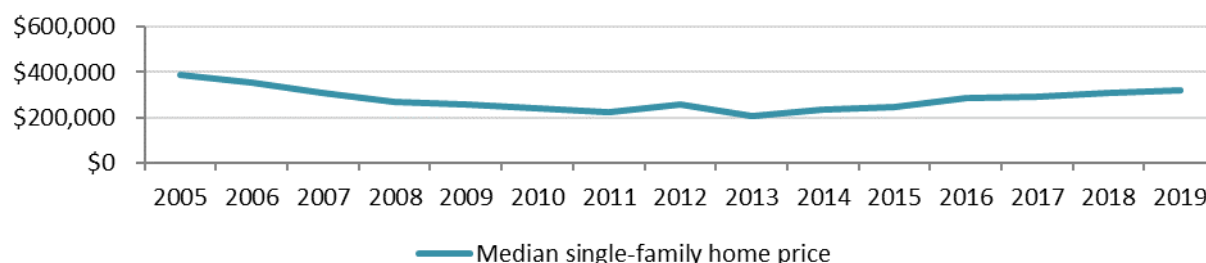
Households are identified as families when they contain at least two people related to one another by adoption, birth or marriage. The 2010 Census included three sub-family categories: husband-wife families, female householder with no husband present, and male householder with no wife present. A large majority of families in Foster (84.02 percent) were husband-wife families while a minority (38.79 percent) included children under 18 years old. The average family size was 3.05 persons, also a slight decline from 3.14 persons in 2000. Households without any occupants related by adoption, birth or marriage or consisting of only one occupant are nonfamilies. More than three out of every four nonfamilies in Foster (78.77 percent) consisted of residents living alone.

Homeownership was much more prevalent among households than renting, with 1,508 units – nearly nine out of every ten occupied units (88.34 percent) – owner-occupied. This percent was the second highest in the state and its homeowner vacancy rate, as well as its rental vacancy rate (4.3 percent), was also the lowest among Rhode Island's communities. Renter-occupied units totaled 199 (11.66 percent of total occupied units). Many factors likely contributed to the local housing stock's high levels of occupation and homeownership, including its small population, geographic location, rural character, and private household finances.

### **Housing Affordability**

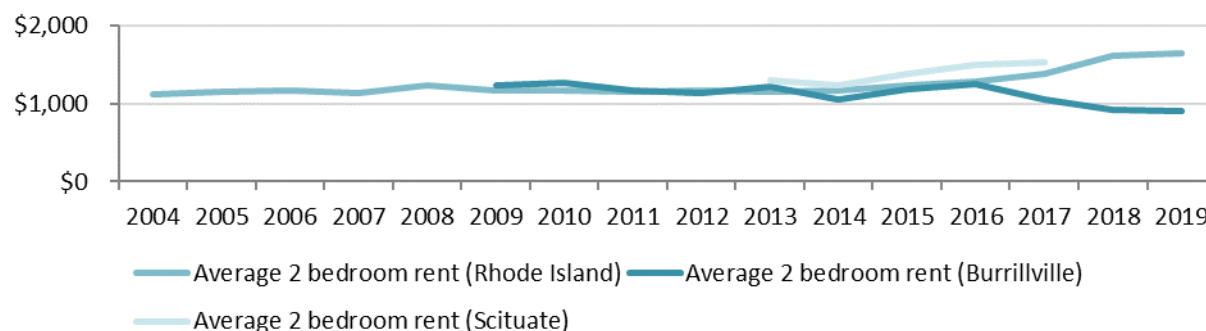
At the beginning of the century, median single family home prices were increasing at significant rates in Rhode Island and many of its communities. The median price peaked in Foster at \$389,950 in 2005 before a consecutive six-year decline, fueled by the subprime mortgage crisis and late 2000s recession, brought down the median price to \$225,000 in 2011. Since then, median prices have been generally fluctuating. In 2015, the median price was \$245,900; in 2019 the median home price was \$296,200.

Figure 22: Median Single-Family Home Prices, 2004-2019<sup>18</sup>



Average rent did not experience a similar trend. While such information was not reported for Foster due to its small stock of renter-occupied households, a review of the state’s average rent and the average rents for nearby Burrillville (available for 2009 and after) and neighboring Scituate (available 2013 through 2017) for two bedroom apartments indicate a stable, perhaps slight decline. In 2004, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Rhode Island was \$1,121. Five years later, it had increased by only 4.37 percent to \$1,170. At the same time, average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Burrillville was \$1,228. As of 2014, average rents were \$1,172, \$1,047, and \$1,240 for Rhode Island, Burrillville and Scituate, respectively. During 2017 – 2019, ACS estimates indicate a divergence between average rents statewide and average rents in Burrillville, as indicated in the figure below:

Figure 23: Average Two Bedroom Rents in Rhode Island, 2004-2019<sup>19</sup>



The ability to afford a home is a critical matter for all households in Foster regardless of their type, size, tenure or location. While affordability has no uniformly standard definition, it has generally been accepted to exist when a household’s spending on housing costs equals no more than 30 percent of its annual income. This threshold has been used since the 1980s by many organizations and programs involved in housing finance, including the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the research center HousingWorks RI at Roger William University.

The most current statistics on affordability from HUD and HousingWorks RI were respectively made available in their Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data and 2019 - 2020 Fact Books. While both used 2013 - 2017 American Community Survey five-year estimates as their source of data, each used similar though separate methodologies in finding cost burden. Arguably the most noticeable difference was that HousingWorks RI excluded owner-occupied households reporting negative or no

<sup>18</sup> Source: HousingWorks RI fact books, 2005-2020

<sup>19</sup> Source: HousingWorks RI fact books, 2005-2020

income and renter-occupied households reporting no rent. The cost burdens calculated by HUD and HousingWorks RI are shown in the table below:

**Table 15: Cost Burden by Tenure, 2013-2017<sup>20</sup>**

	Owner-occupied		Renter-occupied	
	CHAS	HousingWorks RI	CHAS	HousingWorks RI
Foster	27%	29%	34%	59%
Providence County	29%	-	42%	-
Rhode Island	28%	29%	44%	50%

The table presents Foster's housing affordability when looking at all income levels for owner- and renter-occupied households in comparison to Providence County and the state as a whole. Despite Foster's significantly smaller occupied housing stock being largely comprised of owner-occupied units, only about a third of these were experiencing cost burden according to the calculations of both HUD and HousingWorks RI. Less than half of these 410 owner-occupied, cost-burdened households per the CHAS were experiencing severe cost burdens of more than 50 percent of their incomes spent on housing costs.

In renter-occupancy however, there was a divergence in the percentage of households experiencing cost burden in Foster and, to a lesser extent, Rhode Island (county-level indicators were not reported in the HousingWorks RI Fact Book). This is likely due to the differences in calculations noted above and a high margin of error for Foster due to its small housing stock. The CHAS reported 69 of 135 renter-occupied households were cost burdened while 4 renter-occupied households were severely cost burdened.

Along with providing cost burden by separate tenures, CHAS data also included the percent of cost burdened owner- and renter-occupied households combined as well. Overall, 31 percent of Foster's households expended more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs.

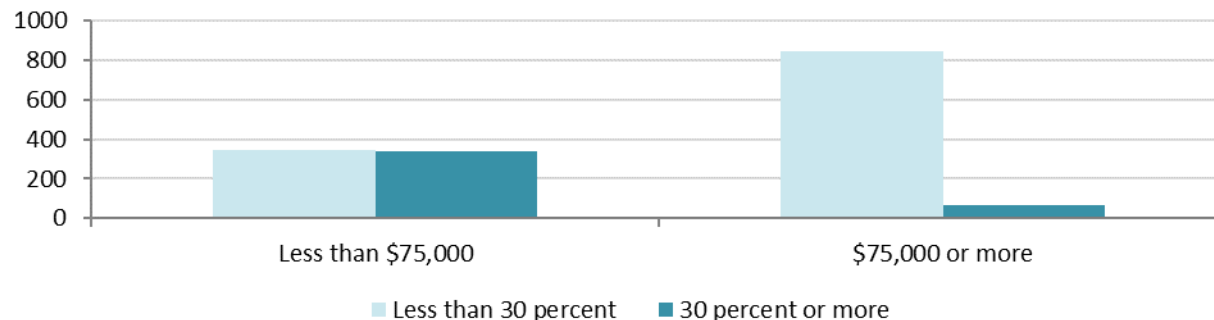
### ***Contributors to Cost Burden***

While these statistics were comparably positive, they did not negate that about one-quarter of all Foster's homeowners and around half of all renters continued to face cost burdens in recent years. Reviewing the ACS's definitions of housing costs in its estimates, there could be any of several factors contributing to cost burden. For homeowners, these might have included mortgages and/or other debt payments, real estate taxes, property insurance and, where appropriate, condominium or mobile home fees. For renters, this might have included contract rent. For both, utility bills and fuel costs could have also played a role.

Fundamentally however, the most impactful factor on housing affordability for both owners and renters would be income. While the ACS did not estimate housing costs as percentage of household income in detail, it did make estimates available through several income brackets: less than \$20,000, \$20,000 to \$34,999, \$35,000 to \$49,999, \$50,000 to \$74,999 and \$75,000 or more. A condensed representation of these brackets is shown below.

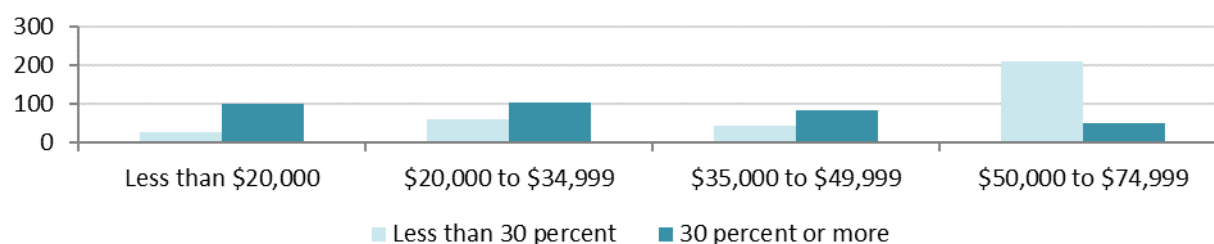
<sup>20</sup> Sources: CHAS Data Query Tool and 2019 HousingWorks RI FactBook

Figure 24: Housing Costs as a Percent of Household Income by Income Bracket, 2014-2019<sup>21</sup>



As \$75,000 was the closest value to the estimated median incomes and income needed to afford the median single-family home price, it could be expected that households in lower income brackets would be more likely to face cost burdens. As Figure 17 shows, this expectation was accurate. While approximately one-tenth of households with incomes of at least \$75,000 were cost burdened, slightly more than half of households could not finance their home affordably when their income was under \$75,000. A more detailed overview of this is provided in Figure 18, below.

Figure 25: Housing Costs as a Percent of Household Income by Lower Income Bracket, 2014-2019<sup>22</sup>



Overall, any household with an income of less than \$50,000 was slightly more likely to be cost burdened than to be able to afford their home with less than 30 percent of their income. These estimates thus confirmed income had a significant impact on housing affordability for households.

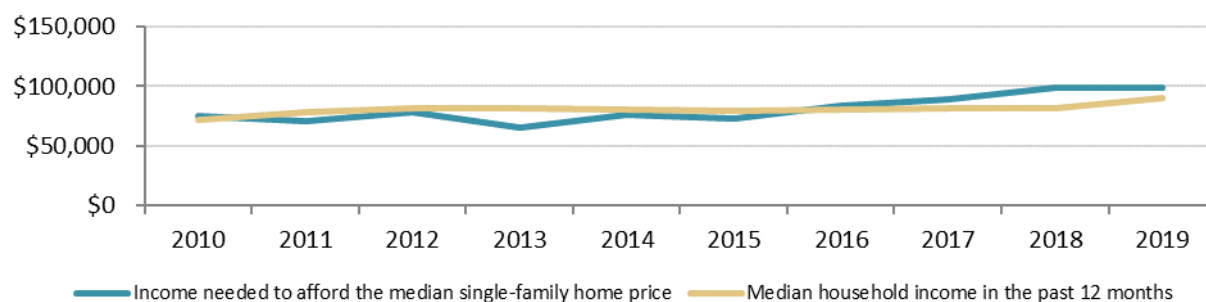
Reviewing Table 15, the differences in cost burden suggest there was a notable gap between incomes for owner- and renter-occupied households. This was also confirmed by ACS estimates. In the five-year period 2013 - 2017, the ACS estimated the median household income in Foster to be \$81,036. According to HousingWorks RI, the actual income needed to afford the median single family home price of \$310,000 was estimated to be \$98,639. Thus, median income in Foster fell below the estimated income needed to afford the median-priced single-family home without experiencing cost burden.

<sup>21</sup> Source: ACS 2014-2019 five-year estimates

<sup>22</sup> Source: ACS 2014-2019 five-year estimates

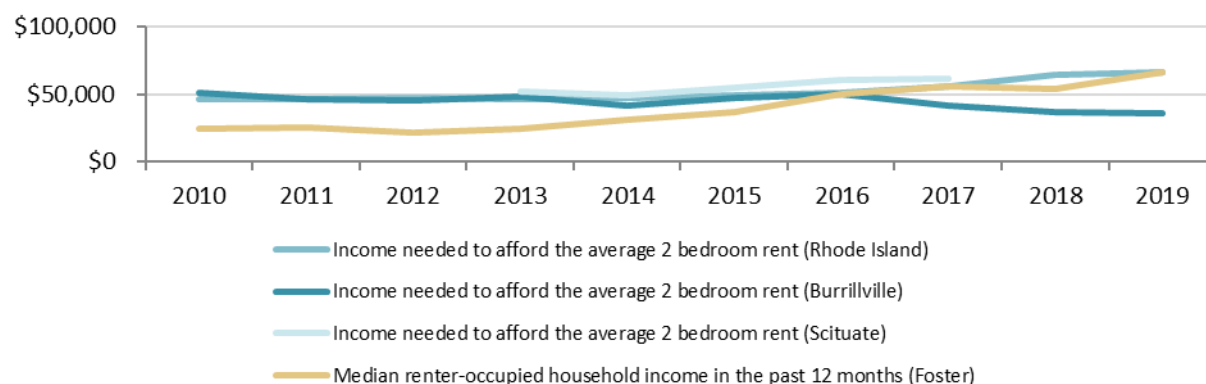


Figure 26: Median Income and Income Needed to Afford Median Single-Family Home Price, 2010-2019<sup>23</sup>



While some information on renting in Foster was unavailable, a comparison of the local median renter-occupied income to the incomes needed to afford average two bedroom rents in Rhode Island, Burrillville, and Scituate presents very different results.

Figure 27: Median Income and Income Needed to Afford Average Rents in Rhode Island, 2010-2019<sup>24</sup>



During and immediately following the economic recession of the late 2000s, information from the State-wide Multiple Listing Service published by Rhode Island Living reported an increase in the annual number of distressed properties. While the number has declined more recently, it is indicative of how near some households - particularly those of lower incomes - may be to losing their home. Currently, there are no shelters in northwestern Rhode Island to provide emergency bedding for cases of home loss.

### LMI Housing

In 2004, Rhode Island adopted the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act to address the state's deficit of affordable housing available to citizens with low or moderate incomes (LMI). As defined in Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) §45-53-3, the act sets a mandate for all municipalities to contribute to the state's LMI housing stock. The mandate is successfully met when more than ten percent of the city's or town's year-round housing units as officially recorded in the most recent US Census are subsidized by a municipal, state or federal program providing assistance for LMI housing construction or rehabilitation and will remain affordable through a land lease and/or deed restriction for no less than 30 years from the time of initial occupancy. Based on these criteria, or alternative criteria made available for urban

<sup>23</sup> Sources: HousingWorks RI fact books, 2011-2020 and 2010-2019 ACS five-year estimates

<sup>24</sup> Sources: HousingWorks RI fact books, 2011-2020 and 2010-2019 ACS five-year estimates

communities in the state with significant stocks of rental housing, six municipalities had achieved the mandate as of 2019.

Table 16 below uses CHAS data based on 2013 - 2017 ACS estimates to identify the cost burdens experienced by LMI households in Foster, Providence County and Rhode Island. HousingWorks RI did not report on the cost burden of LMI households in its Fact Book.

**Table 16: LMI Housing Cost Burdens by Tenure, 2013 – 2017<sup>25</sup>**

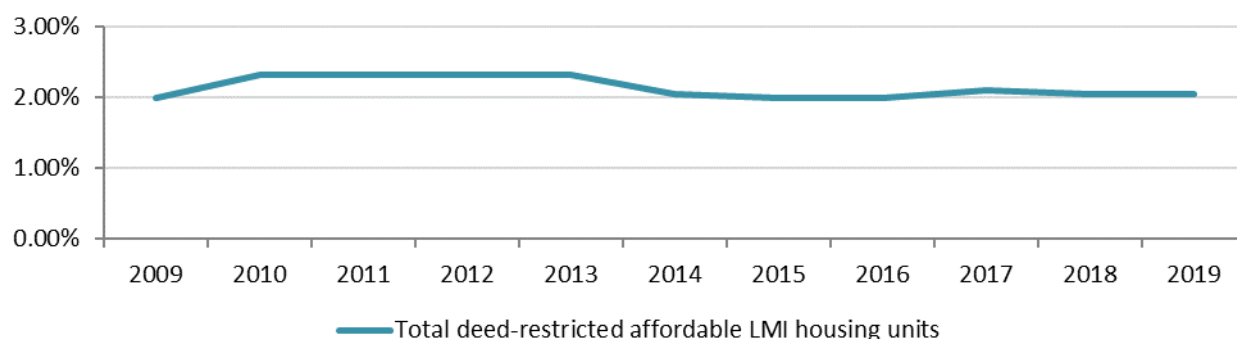
	LMI Owner-occupied		LMI Renter-occupied		LMI occupied	
	Cost Burdened	Severely Cost Burdened	Cost Burdened	Severely Cost Burdened	Cost Burdened	Severely Cost Burdened
Foster	62.2%	34.1%	51.1%	3.0%	60.6%	26.6%
Providence County	67.8%	37.8%	60.8%	31.8%	63.1%	33.8
Rhode Island	67.1%	38.0%	61.8%	32.9%	63.8%	34.8%

According to the CHAS data, 330 of Foster’s 545 LMI households experienced housing cost burdens and 145 experienced severe housing cost burdens in the 2013 - 2018 five-year period. By tenure, 255 of 410 owner-occupied LMI households and 69 of 135 renter-occupied LMI households were cost burdened, with an additional 140 owner-occupied households, and 4 renter-occupied households severely cost burdened (it should again be noted that there were high margins of error due to Foster’s small housing stock; this resulted in inconsistencies between in reporting on individual and combined tenure). In all cases, Foster’s percentages were lower than those of either the county or the state.

Despite Foster’s lower percentages of cost burden among its low and moderate income households, the town was not recognized as meeting the LMI Housing Act’s mandate due to its low percent of deed-restricted affordable LMI housing units. The following figure shows the annual percentage of mandate-meeting units in Foster since 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Source: CHAS Data Query Tool, 2009-2013 ACS

Figure 28: Percentage of Deed-restricted Affordable LMI Housing Units, 2009-2019<sup>26</sup>



As of 2019, 36 units (2.05 percent) of the year-round housing stock met the requirements of the act. Most these (30 units, or 83.33 percent) were in Hemlock Village and considered elderly housing financed by US Department of Agriculture Rural Development funds. An additional six units (making up the remaining 16.67 percent) fell into the category of LMI units which were dedicated to neither family nor elderly occupation (other LMI housing units).

Based on the 2010 Census, Foster required a minimum of 176 deed-restricted affordable LMI housing units to meet the state mandate. With 36 units existing, an additional 140 units were thus needed.

### *LMI Housing Strategies*

The 2004 Affordable Housing Plan included four strategies which the town has been meant to rely on to attain the additional LMI units needed to meet the statewide mandate: senior housing/resale, coordination between Foster’s Housing Trust and Land Trust, building, rehabilitating and converting units and density bonuses.

The senior housing sub-strategy has intended to create a senior housing facility providing 30 deed-restricted affordable LMI units modeled on Hemlock Village. The town identified three potential locations for the facility and anticipated it to be completed by 2007 due to its experience in creating and managing such a development. As of 2021, such a facility has not been constructed.

A second sub-strategy has been to convert existing housing units occupied by the elderly into deed-restricted affordable LMI housing through an option for seniors to voluntarily sell their property with the intent for it to be converted into an LMI unit which they can continue to occupy through a tenancy agreement with the buyer. The sub-strategy was projected to result in ten LMI units.

The second strategy supports the establishment of a housing trust to coordinate with the existing Foster Land Trust in subdividing the latter’s property acquisitions over the succeeding years to support new LMI housing construction. By 2025, 20 units were expected to exist for LMI families through local funding and funding from Community Development Block Grants, the Federal Housing Authority, the Historic Preservation Fund and other applicable programs.

The third strategy has focused on increasing the LMI housing stock through rehabilitating and converting existing housing units and identified specific locations which could allow for multi-unit structures. With this, the strategy also maintained the 2003 Comprehensive Plan’s call for revisions to the zoning

<sup>26</sup> Source: HousingWorks RI fact books, 2010 - 2020

ordinance. A total of 25 units, using the same sources of funding as the previous strategy, were projected to be generated from this strategy before 2025.

The final strategy has been to reconfigure the local residential compound formula and to make use of density bonuses which the LMI Housing Act supports. The strategy required a revision to the 1998 Residential Compound Ordinance to allow for the building of additional housing units on select properties meeting the necessary requirements so long as they would be deed-restricted affordable LMI units. The greater density could be financially advantageous for property owners and developers as it could allow for more housing units to be developed and sold while limiting the construction and installation of utilities through decreased infrastructure costs, shared driveways, utility access, telephone pole placement and other shared services needed.

## **PROJECTED CONDITIONS**

### **Future Households and Housing Stock**

As discussed in the Introduction chapter, the RISPP projected a population of 5,101 for Foster in 2040. Based on a comparison of the 2000 and 2010 censuses, it is likely that about all but 23 of these persons would be in a household as the number of people outside a household fell by one over the ten-year period. Of this remaining population, 4,508 would be within families while 570 would be in nonfamily households. Considering the respective average sizes (the average family size was corrected from 3.05 to 3.13 persons in this calculation) of these household types, the resulting population growth would result in a minimum of 1,889 households by 2040. Assuming there would be no increase in the number of vacant housing units, the total housing stock would then be 1,957.

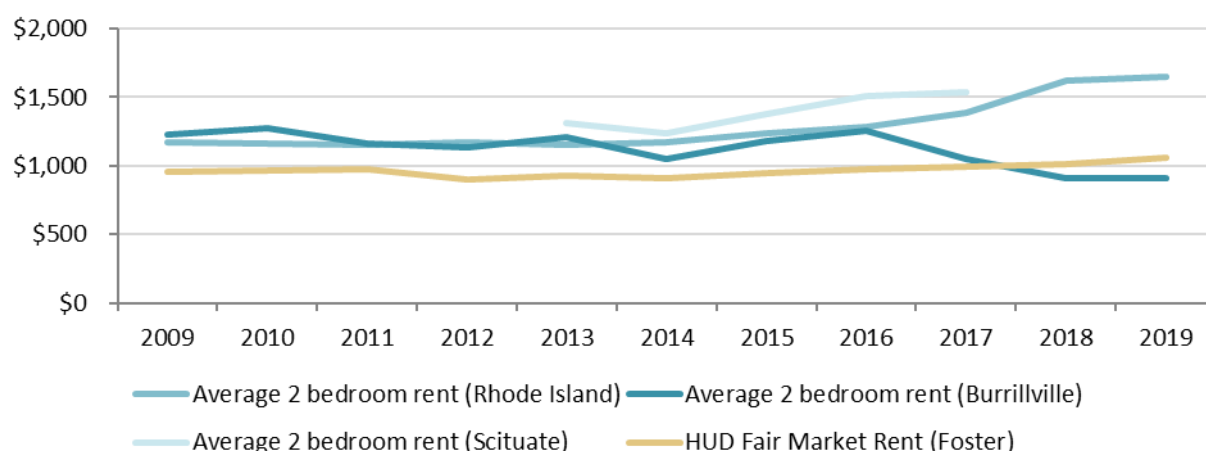
The two most recent censuses also suggest household tenure will remain steady for the next two decades at about 88 percent owner-occupancy and 12 percent renter-occupancy. This would result in about 1,662 owner-occupied households and 227 renter-occupied households in 2040.

### **Affordability in 2040**

Prior to the recession of the late 2000s, the median owner-occupied household income was several thousand dollars below the average single-family home price. During and after the economic downturn however, a slight increase in median income coupled with a significant drop in home prices to allow the median income household to afford the average value of a single-family home. As the economy steadily strengthened, home prices once again rose to be more than a household with a median income could afford. This is concerning, suggesting the need for affordable LMI units is increasing in Foster.

For renter-occupied households, the general stability of rent over the past decade does not indicate rent increases or decreases significantly due to periods of economic downturn (Figure 22, below). ACS estimates indicate an increasing gap between the HUD fair market rent and the average rent statewide.

Figure 29: Fair Market and Average Rents in Rhode Island, 2009-2019<sup>27</sup>



### LMI Housing

As projected above, Foster can expect its housing stock in 2040 to be 1,957 housing units assuming no change in the number of vacant housing units from 2010. With this same assumption, the year-round housing stock would then be 1,942 housing units and the number of deed-restricted affordable LMI housing units needed to meet the state mandate would be 193 units.

If the number of currently deed-restricted affordable housing units were to remain at 36 units through this time period, the LMI unit stock would fall as a percent of year-round housing units from 2.05 percent to 1.85 percent. At the same time, the minimum number of additional units needed to meet the state mandate would rise from 140 to 157 LMI units. This would mean all but 25 of the additional units projected to be built from 2010 to 2040 would need to be deed-restricted affordable LMI units. As of July 2021 no new residential construction permits have been issued which would contribute to the local LMI housing stock. This indicates Foster will be at least in part reliant on rehabilitating and converting existing units to deed-restricted affordable LMI housing to meet the mandate by 2040.

According to 2014-2019 ACS estimates, the approximate number of households in Foster with incomes lower than 80 percent of the median was between 423 and 694. Of those, between 294 and 338 householders are age 65 or greater. The remaining “Non-elderly” low and moderate income households present in Foster are characterized as family or non-family households. As a group, family households are more numerous throughout town than non-family households, and one might expect a larger overall demand from that group for affordable housing. However, non-family households have a greater percentage of housing needs as a group, and may therefore create a similar demand for LMI housing unit going forward as that posed by families.

LMI householders aged 65 and older occupied 188 units (39.41 percent), either in families or nonfamilies. When calculating the distribution of the projected LMI units needed in 2040 based on these percentages and rounding to the nearest whole number, it can be projected that an additional 46 LMI units are needed for the elderly, 54 LMI units are needed for families without elderly persons, and 57 units are needed for others.

<sup>27</sup> Source: HUD FMRs, 2009-2019 and HousingWorks RI fact books, 2010-2020

Table 17: LMI Projections by Need<sup>28</sup>

	Existing LMI Units	As a % of LMI Units	As a % of Lower Income Housing	Projected LMI Units Needed	Additional LMI Units Needed
Elderly	30	83.3%	39.41%	76	46
Families	0	0.0%	27.88%	54	54
Other	6	16.7%	32.71%	63	57

## ASSESSMENT OF CONDITIONS

Foster is a small community that has historically provided its residents an opportunity to grow, mature, and retire within the town. Residents, in turn, have a strong attachment to a rural lifestyle supported by an expansive Agricultural/Residential zoning district. Given this character and the local support for its maintenance, Foster must make use of the resources of its boards, commissions and committees to collaboratively improve its neighborhoods. Opportunities to take advantage of the growth of general business mixed use zoning and to engage residents in housing-related discussions are also important. Over the twenty-year period this plan projects out to, Foster must seek to address concerns related to housing development and affordability while recognizing its limits due to an absence of a public water supply and public wastewater treatment system and to the importance of ensuring the wellbeing of the Scituate Reservoir Watershed.

### Managing Growth

The results of Foster's growth management study indicate that the town has not reached its maximum build out capacity. It is therefore a reasonable assumption the town can still accommodate more growth in residential construction. This will likely occur even if the projected population growth halts or reverses in the future due to currently unforeseen factors. As mentioned earlier and shown in Table 17, there is an unmet need for additional deed-restricted affordable housing for LMI seniors, families, and others. Likewise, the demand for senior housing in general could be expected to rise as the local population ages and seeks housing opportunities which provides varying levels of assistance in performing frequent or infrequent tasks.

Another demand, particularly from single parents, seniors, persons with disabilities, and those in their 20s and 30s, is an increase in the number of rentable housing units as an option for lower-priced housing. As noted above, the increase in population could be expected to result in an additional 28 units for rent.

One possible way to address this currently insufficient supply of rental units is through the local Zoning Ordinance. In July 1994, new housing categories were established in a revision of the ordinance which promoted accessory apartments attached to primary residences. An accessory apartment could serve as a more affordable opportunity for persons taking care of family members to remain close by. Unfortunately, none of these accessory apartments have been counted towards the LMI Housing Act's mandate.

While the town must respond to these needs, it must also recognize it does not have the public infrastructure in place to furnish public water or public sewers nor will it in the foreseeable future. Currently, each individual household is responsible for constructing and maintaining wells and OWTSS for drinking water and sewer. By extension, this means the costs to construct these private wells and

<sup>28</sup> Source: HousingWorks RI 2020 Fact Book and 2014 - 2019 ACS five-year estimates

treatment systems are added to the construction of new residences while occupants must pay for their maintenance.

### **Housing Conditions**

Very little information is available regarding the current condition of housing in Foster. The previous Comprehensive Plan noted that 31% of the housing stock (468 units) was constructed prior to 1953, 48% prior to 1973, and 86% prior to 1993. Interviews with town personnel indicate that the existing homes are adequate for the existing and projected future population and that unsafe or substandard housing has not been a serious problem in Foster.

### **Affordable Housing**

As lower incomes are the primary cause of housing cost burden among households, local economic development must be encouraged to offer work experiences and employment opportunities for residents to attain greater earnings. To this end, this plan provides a vision for economic development over the next twenty years in the Growing Economy chapter.

### **Low and Moderate Income Housing Production**

#### ***LMI Needs Assessment***

Foster has much work to do to meet the statewide mandate of the LMI Housing Act. In its Affordable Housing Plan adopted in 2004 and revised in 2006, the town expected 181 deed-restricted affordable LMI housing units were needed to meet the mandate by 2025 when it had an existing supply of 40. As mentioned previously, the LMI need in 2016 was 176 and the existing supply was 36.

The supply of LMI housing for the elderly has remained constant since the LMI Housing Act was passed and is fully contributed by Hemlock Village. Originally comprised of three buildings with eight units in each, a fourth building with six units was constructed less than a decade later in 1989. No further additions or construction has since occurred however. As of 2021 Hemlock Village had a waiting list of almost 100 housing requests, with an average waiting period of 3-4 years for the first 15 people on the waitlist, as only 1 to 2 spots open up per year. At the same time was the only local opportunity for senior residents with disabilities to maintain a certain level of independence after choosing to leave their private home. These indicate a definite need to develop more affordable senior, including disabled senior, housing in Foster. A failure to respond to this need could impact the wellbeing of elderly residents as more seniors would attempt to maintain their existing lifestyle without a sufficient alternative available to them. It could also stagnate the local housing market due to a limited number of homes being available for sale to relocating and first-time homeowners.

In contrast, the supply of deed-restricted affordable LMI housing for non-elderly, non-family households has fluctuated from a low of five units in 2009 to a high of 11 units in the following year and continuing into 2013. As of 2020, the town supplies six units for other LMI housing needs. No progress has been made in creating a supply of deed-restricted affordable LMI housing units for families.

In supporting the creation of an LMI housing stock equal to no less than ten percent of the number of its year-round units, the town intends to follow the suggested dimensions, square footage of particular types of units of the Statewide Planning and Rhode Island Housing, as follows. It also expects the creation of the minimum mandate of LMI units will significantly impact the infrastructure of the town and require an expansion of the Police Department, school system, emergency services and watershed safety. It is important to note that when watershed safety applies to the Scituate Reservoir Watershed, it becomes a concern of the state as well as the municipality. Therefore, it is the expectation of the town that the State will provide the financial assistance needed to satisfy the mandated need.



### *Effectiveness of LMI Housing Strategies*

Given the size and rural character of the town, it is incumbent upon Foster's residents to realize the need for affordable housing and to aid the town in its efforts to add to its existing deed-restricted affordable LMI housing stock. The Foster Affordable Housing Board will be the driving force in community outreach, educational opportunities, and supporting project developments.

In this plan, as in prior plans, Foster has sought to demonstrate that it intends to develop the necessary units of LMI housing to meet the mandate of the LMI Housing Act. The town has already adopted zoning changes to allow for density bonuses in the residential compound, and multi-unit areas. An ongoing review of zoning at this juncture in time is consistent with the town's Comprehensive Plan. As the elderly have been identified as experiencing greater cost burden locally than families or others, priority will be given to the construction of housing for the elderly, including those with one or more disabilities.

The town does not intend, however, to limit the rehabilitation, conversion or the senior resale strategies noted in previous plans.

### *LMI Production Plan*

In considering the noted limitation of public infrastructure, the Affordable Housing Board has identified nine sites which are most likely to allow for future affordable housing through development, in-fill, redevelopment and/or remediation. Nevertheless, there are many challenges these sites present. An appropriate expansion of services will be needed and it would be likely beneficial for future LMI units to be located in close proximity to major routes such as Routes 6, 101, and 102. This will allow LMI unit occupants closer access to economic opportunities as the town and this plan support economic development in commercial nodes along these same roadways. Likewise, it would also allow closer access to the potential public transit stops for any future Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA). Though these sites are included in this plan however, the Housing Board and the town recognize and fully respect that the individual owner(s) of any of these sites must also be supportive of these proposals.

**Site One (Plat 12, Lot 70)** - the Wright Auto Body property is presently owned by Coastal Atlantic, LLC. and is located on Mill Road. The property is approximately 30 acres and would require a well and septic system upgrade. The property is in uplands adjacent to the Mill River, which feeds the Scituate Water Supply system. The property likely requires site remediation and federal and state brownfield funds would be sought to complete the necessary remediation work.

**Site Two (Plat 20, Lot 20)** -the Wieselquist property is an undeveloped parcel of approximately 43 acres and is located west of Route 94 on North Road. The property has no buildings and a portion of it has been excavated for gravel removal. This property is considered suitable for the construction of a 30 LMI unit senior housing facility called for in the first strategy due to the following reasons: it is not a brownfield site; it is centrally located within the town and it is near Hemlock Village. This last reason potentially supports shared services between the facilities and can allow for visitation of residents from either facility to the other.

**Site Three (Plat 14, Lot 98)** - the Jade Real Estate property consists of a manufacturing building and is located on Route 6 east of Route 94. It has been on and off the real estate market for approximately 9 years and is approximately 20 acres. The property contains a building, a water supply well, and a septic system. The building would require an expansion to facilitate a development project but could provide community rooms for residents. A site assessment would need to be performed on the property and



there may be some site remediation required. If that is the case, federal and state brownfield funds would be sought to complete the necessary remediation work.

**Site Four (Plat 13, Lot 27)** - the Hopscotch property consists of approximately 14 acres of real estate containing a public supply well that serviced the restaurant once located at the site. Today, the only visible reminder of the restaurant (or any other business previously located on the site) is the “Hopscotch” sign located close to its boundary with Route 6. There is a single-family residence located on the back of the site, and access to the residence is gained from Snagwood Road. At present, it is not known if remediation is necessary at the site.

**Site Five (Plat 14, Lot 100)** - the Muba Realty property located on Route 6 east of Route 94 was at one time a motel and consists of six apartments and one duplex home. Through subsidized rehabilitation or a total demolition and rebuilding, this site could offer several LMI family units. The property is 25 acres and there is a possibility of developing a further portion of the acreage in the rear of the property. A site evaluation would be needed to determine the number of units the property could properly contain however, as there are concerns regarding wetlands and the Scituate Reservoir Watershed.

**Site Six (Plat 10 Lot 37)** - the Stone House Motel property is located on Route 6 west of Route 94 and contains approximately 6 acres of real estate. The property is an operational motel that provides rooms to the public. Through subsidized rehabilitation or through a total demolition and rebuilding, the property could provide several LMI units.

**Site Seven (Plat 10 Lot 43)** - the CLM Realty property located on Danielson Pike contains approximately 8 acres of real estate and was recently rezoned to General Business Mixed Use (GBM). The zoning regulations allow for both commercial and residential development on the site. Though this is a possible LMI housing site location, the current owner presently has a conceptual design for a commercial development without a residential component.

**Site Eight (Plat 17 Lot 41)** - the Rhode Island State Police facility is located on Winsor Road and contains approximately 13 acres of real estate. The land and existing buildings could accommodate residential housing units that could be developed or redeveloped following the relocation of the training site. The main building is approximately 7,732 square feet, and could be used to generate approximately seven 1,104 square feet LMI family units.

**Site Nine (Plat 18 Lot 10)** - the old Fogarty School (also known as the Nike site) is located off Theodore Foster Road (itself off of Route 101) and consists of approximately 6.7 acres of real estate. At present, there is one building on the property which houses some of the educational staff offices for the Foster-Glocester Regional School District. At present, the property faces water contamination which requires remediation. Federal and state brownfield funds would be sought to complete the necessary remediation work.

### *Density Bonuses*

All properties zoned Agricultural/Residential (A/R) will qualify for the residential compound density bonus defined in the Zoning Ordinance’s article on residential compounds if they meet four requirements. The requirements are: a total area of 30.00 or more acres, a minimum linear frontage of 300 feet, no record of subdivision of the property since February 1998, and a record of ownership by the current owner for a period of no less than five years.

The town had previously provided density bonuses for multi-unit structures in areas adjacent to commercial zoning on the town’s major roads.

The approximate acreages under consideration for rezoning include:

- 350 acres along Route 101 (Hartford Pike) in the northern portion of the town
- 110 acres along Route 6 (Danielson Pike) near its junction with Shippee Schoolhouse Road
- 500 acres along Route 6 (both east and west of Route 94)
- 100 acres along Route 102 (Plainfield Pike) in the southern portion of the town

These areas, particularly Route 6 (and Route 101 to a lesser degree) are also the commercially zoned areas of Foster. Ideally, higher density residential zoning could provide buffer zones between commercial areas and residential areas of Foster. These areas comprise a significant number of acres; but, like much of Foster, they face high water tables, hydric soils, shallow bedrock and/or wetlands. This mirrors the difficulty of developing land anywhere in Foster.

On Route 102, there is an area that could accommodate affordable housing units adjacent to the neighborhood commercial zone. There is a second area adjacent to the Route 101 neighborhood commercial zone that could accommodate affordable housing units. A third area along the Route 6 General Business Mixed Use could accommodate affordable housing units.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

GOALS:		
HO	G1	Increase affordable housing units to achieve State goal of 10% of all units, without sacrificing Foster's rural character or compromising environmental goals and policies
HO	G2	Provide comprehensive planning to encourage housing rehabilitation, preservation and development that meets the needs of our citizens, giving them an opportunity to grow, mature and retire in Foster.
HO	G3	Effect changes in the state's affordable housing statute to recognize the particular demographic, topographic and economic characteristics of the state's rural communities.
HO	G4	Ensure the provision of enough housing units to meet population needs.
OBJECTIVES:		
HO	O1	Protect existing occupied housing in our historic villages by recognizing them as affordable housing resources.
HO	O2	Achieve balanced growth that does not threaten water resources (including rivers and streams that serve the Scituate Reservoir Watershed).
HO	O3	Develop residential compounds.
HO	O4	Attract established, reputable developers of affordable housing to Foster.
HO	O5	Add units of senior housing.
HO	O6	Improve access to housing for younger residents.
HO	O7	Revisions in the law to expand the definition of affordable housing to encompass existing housing in the town that requires improvement.
HO	O8	Revisions in the law to balance development with environmental concerns.
POLICIES:		
HO	P1	Implementation of the General Business Mixed Use District
HO	P2	Review and update relevant statistical data annually

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HO	P3	Review and update the list of potential affordable housing sites annually
HO	P4	Coordinate actions of the Planning, Zoning and Housing Boards by scheduling an annual joint meeting
HO	P5	Communicate with town residents regarding challenges and opportunities for expansion and improvement of affordable housing
HO	P6	Annual review of building permits as part of statistical update
HO	P7	Coordinate information gathering with similar communities and state resources such as RI Housing and HousingWorksRI.
HO	P8	Establish periodic meetings with legislators and related state officials, organizations and boards, including House and Senate, RI Housing, Water Resources Authority, and Historic Preservation.
HO	P9	Establish communications strategy with town residents and promote their involvement in the effort.
<b>ACTIONS:</b>		
HO	A1	Coordinate with the Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission.
HO	A2	Continue discussions with HousingWorksRI.
HO	A3	Identify and apply for grants to develop an ongoing housing database.
HO	A4	Meet with officials of the Providence Water Resources Authority.
HO	A5	Encourage affordable housing as part of residential compounds.
HO	A6	Submit updated plan to town council annually.
HO	A7	Secure access to affordable home repair, water and septic upgrades, heating assistance and maintenance to support residents in existing housing.
HO	A8	Complete feasibility study of Hemlock Village expansion to increase the number of units.
HO	A9	Evaluate the option of a second senior housing location.
HO	A10	Conduct a study of the demand for housing by demographic group.
HO	A11	Conduct annual review of building permits as part of statistical update
HO	A12	Continue discussions with RI Housing, legislators and others regarding the relationship between development and protecting the watersheds.
HO	A13	Coordinate with other western and northern RI communities to educate and persuade legislators and officials to expand the definition of affordable housing to encompass existing housing in the town that require improvement.
HO	A14	Adopt Inclusionary zoning to incentivize developers to create affordable housing stock.
HO	A15	Adopt an expanded version of Accessory Dwelling Units in the zoning ordinance allowing in all residential zones as a way to increase housing stock and to provide variety in housing options to the community.
HO	A16	Revise Subdivision Rules and Regulations to allow for more flexibility in design as a way to provide adequate incentive for developers to construct housing; this action will work in tandem with the inclusionary zoning ordinance
HO	A17	Reduce minimum lot area requirements in Residential Compounds to incentivize Residential Compound development and increase density bonus for providing affordable housing.
HO	A18	Establish Affordable Housing Trust utilizing payment in-lieu-of fees from Inclusionary Zoning projects to promote additional affordable housing

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<b>HO</b>	A19	Amend zoning ordinance to allow for more dense development within designated growth centers that is sensitive to the existing development and character of the town.
<b>HO</b>	A20	Allow Senior Housing to be built in other zoning districts, whether by-right or by Special Use Permit, including the Agricultural Residential (A/R) zone.

## LAND USE

- ❖ INTRODUCTION
- ❖ CURRENT CONDITIONS
- ❖ PROJECTED CONDITIONS
- ❖ ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING AND PROJECTED CONDITIONS
- ❖ GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Foster's natural environment of rocky soils, ledges, steep slopes and high water table has determined local land uses for centuries, continuing today. The expansion of colonists in the eighteenth century led to the clearing of hundreds of acres of woodland for the establishment of farms along a small number of roads connecting to the urbanized portion of the town (Foster was originally part of Providence). These large farms were interspersed with small businesses and a small number of hamlets to encompass most of the present-day town. With the realization of manifest destiny, larger tracts of farmland west of the Mississippi River resulted in many of Foster's farms and fields being abandoned and reclaimed by the forest. Those which remained faced new competition in crop production and focused their activities on livestock and hay or began to be divided into smaller lots.

Increased residential and commercial development occurring in the last decades has brought population growth (as discussed in the Introduction) and a greater diversity in its local economy (see Growing Economy Chapter). At the same time, it has also intensified demand for expanding public services and potential threats to the natural, historic and cultural resources which are highly-valued by the community. This chapter seeks to present the current land use pattern in Foster and the zoning regulations currently in place to manage future development. It will also analyze these findings and address the concerns which may be identified as existing now or likely to occur in the coming years.

### CURRENT CONDITIONS

#### Zoning

Zoning regulations in Foster were created largely due to two primary concerns. The first was a need to maintain the community's rural character despite the widespread growth of development occurring from post-war demand for suburbanization. The second was a need to meet development with an appropriate supply of buildable lots. This presented challenges due to environmental constraints and the requirements to provide onsite water from wells and wastewater treatment. To respond to these challenges, the zoning regulations adopted districts which supported large lot sizes. As of 2022, there are six zoning districts established by the Zoning Ordinance:

AR agricultural/residential district - This AR agricultural/residential district is characterized by a mixture of low density residential and farming uses with certain light industrial uses requiring special use permits. This AR district is designed to help preserve the rural character of the town, to regulate the development of the town so that the tax base will be adequate to support necessary public expenditures, to protect land now used for agriculture and forestry from haphazard encroachment and to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the residents of the district.

NC neighborhood/commercial district - This NC neighborhood/commercial district is characterized by establishments providing retail goods, such as groceries and drugs, and furnishing certain personal services. The NC district is designed to provide convenient local shopping services and to promote public safety to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

GBM—General business—Mixed use - This district is characterized by commercial establishments that serve town-wide shopping and service needs, such as retail businesses, offices, and restaurants. This district may also include compatible residential and municipal uses. It is designed to encourage planned development resulting in a sustainable and attractive commercial environment for the community.

MI manufacturing/industrial district - This MI manufacturing/industrial district is characterized by manufacturing and industrial uses, conveniently located to major highways and suitable for industrial development. This MI district is designed to provide sufficient land area to attract industry and afford it room for expansion, to prevent an unsafe mixture of industrial and residential uses and to protect residential and commercial districts.

R-SC residential/senior citizen district - This R-SC residential/senior citizen district is to promote the establishment of new housing developments particularly suited for senior citizens; to promote the use of large parcels of land dispersed throughout the town and particularly suitable for this purpose by reason of land use capability; to facilitate a more economic arrangement of buildings, common facilities, a vehicular circulation and utilities within the boundaries of a senior citizens development; to preserve to the greatest extent possible the existing natural landscape features and to utilize such features in a harmonious fashion; to permit the formation of such R-SC residential/senior citizens districts within the town only as the need for such housing can be clearly demonstrated; to permit the formation of single developments geographically spread according to established population centers in the town.

M municipal district - This M municipal district is the town center where the town clerk's office, the town house, the town hall, the police station, the highway department and the other municipal uses are located.

Additionally, the Zoning Ordinance allowed for one overlay district which had not yet been established. Within the Dimensional regulations, there is a subsection reserved for the FC farmland/conservation overlay district<sup>29</sup>.

The following table presents the acreage of each zoning district as of 2016, excluding the FC overlay district as it was reserved at this time.

**Table 18: Total Acreages by Zoning District, 2019<sup>30</sup>**

Zoning District	Acreage	Percent of Total Acreage
AR agricultural/residential	31,869.32	98.41
NC neighborhood/commercial	31.52	0.10
GBM—General business—Mixed use	297.12	0.92
MI manufacturing/industrial	137.75	0.43
R-SC residential/senior citizen	26.87	0.08
M municipal	22.16	0.07
Total	32,384.74	100

<sup>29</sup> Foster Zoning Ordinance Section 38-192. Dimensional regulations. (7)

<sup>30</sup> Source: Tax Assessor and Zoning Map

Foster is presently zoned for a uniform minimum 4.59 acre lot per one single-family residential unit pattern of residential, agricultural and general business/mixed use development. This is intended to preserve rural character. The land use study undertaken as part of the 1991 Comprehensive Plan demonstrated that, while the density of development overall might be appropriate for the preservation of an abundance of sensitive environmental features, the '5 acre' lots being created and built on were actually suburbanizing the landscape. Sprawling development along Foster's roads was resulting in houses at uniform intervals much like land use patterns in standard large-lot suburban development. Likewise, Foster's single example of a backlot subdivision is not unlike subdivisions in suburban communities such as Cranston, East Greenwich and North Kingstown, where houses are at regular intervals on wide curvilinear streets. Although protective of some environmental features, this land use pattern is at odds with the natural environment of the town as well as the historical pattern of development which, in part, created the rural character present today.

### Residential Land Use

Residential land use, like most other cities and towns, is the most common land use in the Town of Foster. In the land use studies developed for this plan, residential land is divided into four use categories:

- Single-family residences on a lot of 9.2 acres or more
- Single-family residences on a lot of less than 9.2 acres
- Residential compounds
- Multi-family residences including duplexes and triplexes

The purpose of identifying single family residences on lots with more or less than 9.2 acres is derived from the town's Zoning Ordinance. As noted above, current regulations require a minimum lot size of 4.59 acres for building to occur. By effect, any lot size less than twice this size - equaling to about 9.2 acres - cannot be subdivided and is thus considered built out. A lot with 9.2 acres or more can be subdivided to allow for the construction of a new residence. The following table presents an overview of uses allowed by right (✓) or special use permit (S) or prohibited (X) within the six zoning districts as of 2019.

**Table 19: Allowed and Prohibited Residential Uses by Zoning District, 2019<sup>31</sup>**

	AR	NC	GBM	MI	R-SC	M
Single-family detached dwelling	✓	S	S	X	X	X
Accessory family dwelling <sup>32</sup>	✓	X	S	X	X	X
Residential compound	✓	X	X	X	X	X
Multi-family dwelling	S	S	S	X	X	X
Community residences and family daycare homes	✓	S	S	X	X	X
Rest home or convalescent home	S	S	S	X	X	X
Senior citizens group dwelling	X	X	X	X	✓	X

<sup>31</sup> Source: Town of Foster Zoning Ordinance

<sup>32</sup> To be used solely by one or two more family members of the occupant(s) of the principal residence

### ***Single-Family Residential (9.2 acres or more)***

Single-family residential development is allowed by right in only one of Foster's six zoning districts – the AR zone. According to the Zoning Ordinance, the AR zone is meant to "help preserve the rural character of the town" and "protect land now used for agriculture and forestry from haphazard encroachment." While allowed only in one zone, the AR zoning district covered over 98 percent of the town as of 2019. Additionally, single-family dwellings could also be allowed in the GBM and NC zones by special use permit. In the case of the GBM zoning district, special use allowance was incorporated into the regulations with the intent to provide greater options for low and moderate income (LMI) housing to be developed.

Overall, this land use category represented approximately 42.6 percent of the total land area (~13,897 acres) in Foster as of 2021. This was the single-largest use in the town as well as one of the uses with greatest potential for future development. While vacant land is usually subdivided and developed at one time, large tracts of land tend to be subdivided and sold off in smaller increments. Many of these large lots contain a secondary agricultural use that is not reflected in records kept by the Tax Assessor. While new state tax incentives promote the maintenance of these large lots as agricultural land or forest, they are also often attractive to typical suburban-type developers who have little interest in conserving their agricultural and rural features. As a result, many of these secondary uses have disappeared and the rural character of the community is becoming endangered.

### ***Single-Family Residential (less than 9.2 acres)***

While about half (49% percent) of the properties recorded by the Tax Assessor are used for single-family residences, this represents only 57.3 percent of the total actual land use (~18,687 acres). The minimum-sized lot has been the most predominant use of land allowed by current zoning ordinances. In all relevant zones (AR, GBM and NC), a minimum lot frontage of 300 feet is required and most of the new minimum-sized lots created in the last decade do not exceed this minimum. This has resulted in a pattern of relatively long and thin lots facing roadways, sometimes called 'piano keys' in reference to their shape. Although more land can be potentially left untouched as open space, an appearance of suburban development can result when many of these residences are also constructed at the minimum front yard depth of 35 feet.

### ***Residential Compound***

Residential compounds are only allowed in the AR zoning district and must meet the same dimensional regulations as single-family dwellings with the exceptions that they must have a greater minimum front yard depth (50 feet instead of 35 feet) and side yard depth (100 feet rather than 50 feet). The intent of residential compounds is to allow a landowner in Foster owning a property with 30 or more acres for at least five consecutive years to develop three residences (or five residences if at least two are designated for deed-restricted affordable LMI housing) using one shared driveway.

While resulting in lots which comply with the minimum lot size, these compounds require 300 feet of frontage for the entire development and eliminate interior lot setbacks (with the exceptions of those setbacks from wetlands, wells and/or septic systems). This is beneficial to both the town and developers. Along with potentially leaving more land untouched as open space, the cost of development is minimized by the sharing of driveways and utilities.

### ***Multi-Family Residential***

Only 41 properties (approximately 427.5 acres) recorded by the Tax Assessor contain multi-family structures of two or more dwellings as of 2021. The largest multi-family structure is Hemlock Village, which contains 30 dwellings deed-restricted for affordable LMI housing. Under the current zoning



ordinance, no multi-family construction can occur without a special use permit. With such a permit, developments are allowed in the AR, GBM, and NC zoning districts but dwellings within the structures are limited to a maximum of two bedrooms each. As an alternative to multi-family residences, the Zoning Ordinance allows for the construction of accessory dwellings in the AR zoning district by right and in the GBM zoning district by special use permit.

Foster has additionally established the R-SC zoning district to support housing opportunities specifically for its senior and elderly population, which the Zoning Ordinance recognizes as having particular needs and different lifestyles than residents at younger ages. The ordinance allows this zoning district to be designated anywhere in the town at the discretion of the Town Council via a zone change; thus, the R-SC zoning district does not appear on the town's Zoning Map.

## Land Use

### Agricultural Land Use

Despite the predominance of the AR zoning district previously noted, four (4) properties and only slightly more than one percent (approximately 385 acres) of land in Foster is used solely for agricultural purposes. As previously stated many large lot residential properties appear to be supporting secondary agricultural use. This is understandable, as large parcels of land are needed to sustain farms and commercially viable agricultural operations. As of 2021, five of the six zoning districts in town allow for at least one agricultural use by special permit and four allow for at least one use by right.

Agriculture at any scale is proving to have the potential to noticeably contribute to the local economy however, and this has become increasingly apparent with a growing interest in producing food locally. In Foster, there are many small properties being used for agricultural activities which provide residents with second sources of income while helping to maintain the rural character of the town.

Though Foster offers a reduced tax assessment for agricultural land, owners are not prohibited from converting the use of or selling the land for its conversion into a nonagricultural use at any time. Currently, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) actively engages in a program whereby the property owner(s) of an agricultural land can protect their prime agricultural and open space lands through accepting a purchase of development rights (PDR) by the state. There is also a state-enabled preferential tax assessment program made available through the Farm, Forest and Open Space Act (FFO). This program includes the potential for a penalty to be assessed if a property ever becomes developed. As of 2021, approximately five parcels totaling 6,779 acres (21% of land in Foster) were included in this program locally.

### Commercial Land Use

The majority of the commercial properties in Foster, approximately 608 acres (less than 1percent) is within the GBM zoning district and includes many lots developed under regulations of the GBM zone's predecessor as well as new nodes established in 2011 along Route 6 (Danielson Pike). Most of the properties are single use retail establishments that serve local residents and commuters and visitors traveling on state routes.

A smaller number of commercial uses can also be established in the NC zone, which is designated with the intent "to provide convenient local shopping services and to promote public safety for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic." To date, NC zones have been designated in four areas town-wide:

- Intersection of routes 94 (Mt. Hygeia Road) and 101 (Hartford Pike)
- Intersection of Moosup Valley Road and Potter Road

- Route 94 (Foster Center Road) north of Howard Hill Road
- Route 102 (Plainfield Pike) south of Luther Road

Of these however, only two areas (the intersection of routes 94 and 101 and Route 94 north of Howard Hill Road) are currently used commercially. The NC zoning district is designated by dimensional setbacks from roadways and so does not correspond to actual lot boundaries. Despite the intent of the zone, it has been recognized that none of the designated areas are large enough to support the mix of uses needed to establish the intended neighborhood character. Similarly, the Zoning Ordinance does not allow the commercial and residential use mix that encourages walkability to better balance pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

A limited number of commercial uses are allowed in the AR zoning district by right or special use permit. Along with all agricultural uses, the zoning district also supports the establishment of libraries, museums, professional offices and veterinary clinics. Home occupations when not using more than 200 square feet of a residential structure are allowed by right which is supportive of the cottage industry and helps to maintain the spirit of self-sufficiency among residents.

### **Industrial Land Use**

There was only one property being used for an industrial purpose in Foster as of 2021, though two forestry-based businesses exempted from the state's manufacturing classification also operated. One of these is located on Winsor Road while the other is located on Route 6, east of the junction with Route 94. The last is a secondary use on a large residential lot along the Foster-Scituate border. Foster has set aside 155 acres of land in the MI zoning district in the north-central area of town off Hartford Pike. Presently only 60 acres are used for manufacturing and industrial purposes. Many of the limited uses permitted in an MI zone are also allowed either by right or special exception in Foster's other zones. Foster's industrial zone is located within the Scituate Reservoir Watershed and as such should be regulated by strict land use performance standards, including site design, and use limitations which protect the Scituate Reservoir Watershed from adverse impacts. In addition to the Turnquist property, the current industrial zoning district includes undeveloped property along both sides of the Ponagansett River and within two wellhead protection zones. These environmentally sensitive areas are not suitable for industrial development and should be excluded from the zoning district.

### **Institutional Land Use**

Along with use by the municipal, state or federal government, land uses may also be considered institutional when they are used by charities, non-profits and not-for-profits, and religious organizations with a designated tax exemption. While institutional land is generally scattered throughout the town and is limited in area, many municipally-owned properties are concentrated within Foster Center (the de facto seat of local government) and the M zone allows the development of municipal buildings, fire stations and ambulance garages by right.

### **Historic Villages**

As may be assumed, institutional land in Foster commonly has important cultural significance. Foster Center, mentioned above, is one of four historic areas in the town along with Clayville, Hopkins Mills, and Moosup Valley. Each of these areas, along with others listed on the National Register of Historic Places has a unique identity. Although recommendations for establishing special area management plans (SAMPs) were included in the 1982 Comprehensive Plan, no such plans have been prepared. Likewise, potential individual components of these SAMPs, such as neighborhood conservation planning or local historic district zoning regulations have also not been adopted.

### **Recreational Land Use**

The large amount of vacant land (discussed below) and the rural character of Foster provide residents with ample opportunities for recreation. However, like the case of agricultural uses, recreational land is often not specifically designated for such use and may be developed at any time. The largest recreational use is the Foster Country Club. Other notable places include the Woody Lowden Recreation Center, a public facility in the southern portion of the town, and open space behind the Captain Isaac Paine School. Open space recreational land, which includes playgrounds and parks, is allowed by right in all of Foster's zoning districts. This gives Foster the opportunity to create recreational areas town-wide, an appropriate vehicle to promote the development of additional commercial-recreational areas in keeping with the town's character. A portion of land dedication and in-lieu-of fees as specified in the Foster Land Development and Subdivision Regulations should be used for the purchase and development of future recreation land in Foster. Seven acres of land were purchased for the development of sports fields on Foster Center Road.

### **Other Land Uses**

#### ***Utilities***

Land owned by utility companies totals approximately 3,533 acres (10.9 percent of total land) in the Town of Foster. While all of these lands lie east of Route 94 (Foster Center Road and Mt. Hygeia Road), they have an effect on the entire town.

The Providence Water Supply Board (PWSB) oversees the largest portion of this land and has regulatory power over the use of land within the Scituate Reservoir Watershed, which extends largely beyond the boundaries of PWSB's owned land. Since the Town of Foster expends tremendous effort to protect and produce pure water use for much of the state, the town should be more fairly compensated for the cost borne by residents.

Narragansett Electric Company also owns large tracts of land in Foster. Although currently on hold, the utility company has had plans to use this land (along with easements purchased across existing properties) to install a high voltage power line. The line would follow a zig-zagging path running north-south in the eastern portion of the town. At the same time however, residents have expressed serious concerns regarding the health risks due to exposure to high level electro-magnetic fields (EMFs) associated with high voltage power lines as well as herbicides used in brush control. The town should continue to monitor any plans related to the proposed power line.

### **Vacant Land**

There is still a significant amount of vacant land in Foster. Approximately 13 percent of the total land area (4,322 acres, 283 properties) was vacant as of 2021, which was surpassed only by the single-family residential use on lots of 9.2 acres or more category. Almost all of this vacant land was located within the AR zone as well and had the potential to be developed into minimum-sized lots, though a large number had little or no frontage. For these potential subdivisions to conform to zoning regulations, there would need to be an expansion of the roadway system which would rely on public funding for construction and maintenance. As noted above, the Zoning Ordinance has been updated to allow for the development of residential compounds using shared driveways on certain lots meeting minimum criteria. This may prevent potential subdivisions which would result in the town needing to expand its network of roads.

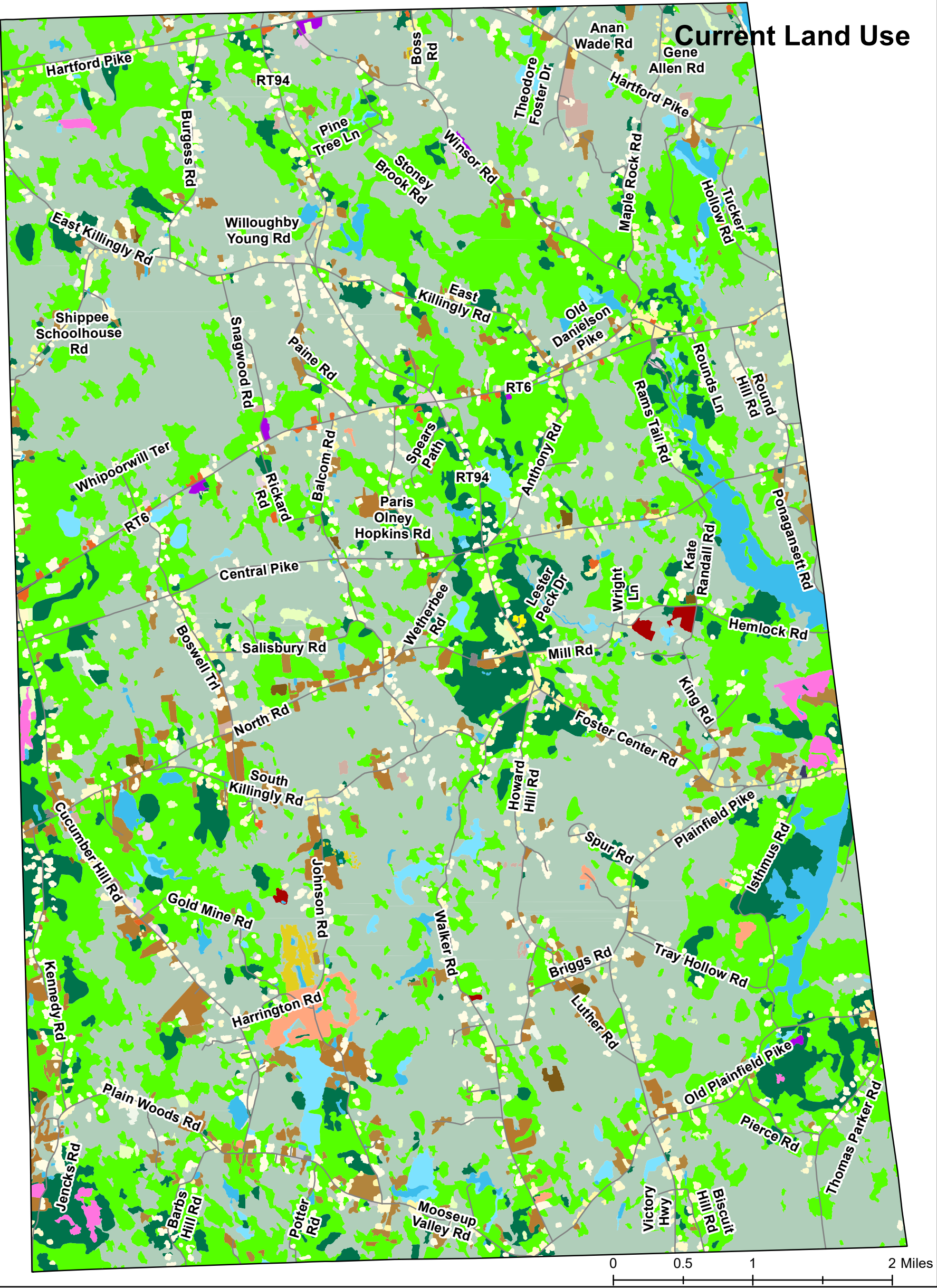
To date, Foster has not been largely subjected to the scale of suburban development experienced in many other communities within the Providence-Warwick metro. If this sprawl continues into the future

however, it is likely that Foster will experience increasing pressure for the subdivision of its vacant land commonly found in the rear portions of partially-developed lots. This is exemplified by the Bridle Path Estates development off of Route 102 (Plainfield Pike). Over the years, many residents have expressed concerns about future suburbanization. Options for flexible zoning and cluster development will be reviewed for possible implementation in Foster to encourage development that conforms to the existing rural character.

Figure 30: Map of Current Land Use

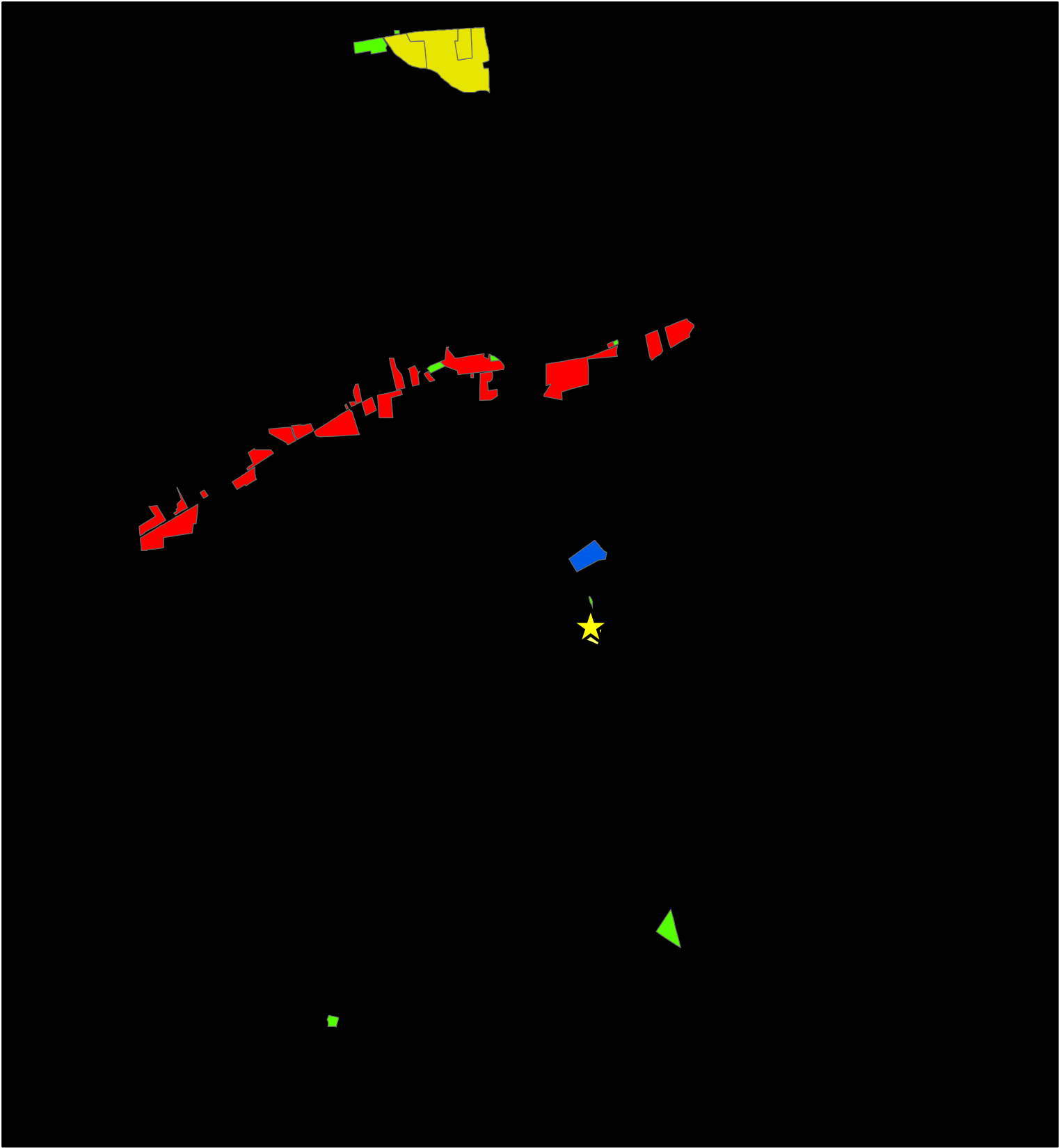






- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Foster Boundary                                    | Low Density Residential (>2 acre lots)                 |
| Roads  | Medium Density Residential (1 to 1/4 acre lots)        |
| Brushland (shrub and brush areas, reforestation)   | Medium High Density Residential (1/4 to 1/8 acre lots) |
| Cemeteries   | Medium Low Density Residential (1 to 2 acre lots)      |
| Commercial (sale of products and services)         | Mines, Quarries and Gravel Pits                        |
| Confined Feeding Operations                        | Water  |
| Cropland (tillable)                                | Water & Sewage Treatment                               |
| Deciduous Forest (>80% hardwood)                   | Wetland  |
| Developed Recreation (all recreation)              | Orchards, Groves, Nurseries                            |
| High Density Residential (<1/8 acre lots)          | Pasture (agricultural not suitable for tillage)        |
| Idle Agriculture (abandoned fields and orchards)   | Softwood Forest (>80% softwood)                        |
| Industrial (manufacturing, design, assembly, etc.) | Transitional Areas (urban open)                        |
| Institutional (schools, hospitals, churches, etc.) | Vacant Land  |
|  | Roads (divided highways >200' plus related facilities) |
|  | Waste Disposal (landfills, junkyards, etc.)            |

Figure 24: Future Land Use Map



**Future Land Use Map**

 Growth Centers

**Zone**

 A/R


 GBM

 M

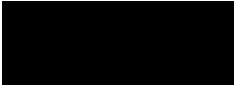
 MI

 NC

 R-SC

 Future Rt 6 Business Overlay

This map is not the product of a Professional Land Survey. It was created by the Town of Foster for general reference, informational, planning and guidance use, and is not a legally authoritative source as to location of natural or manmade features. Proper interpretation of this map may require the assistance of appropriate professional services. The Town of Foster makes no warranty, express or implied, related to the spatial accuracy, reliability, completeness, or currentness of this map.





## PROJECTED CONDITIONS

In considering the rates of population growth and economic development to be experienced over the next twenty years, it is likely that zoning regulations and land use in Foster will remain generally similar to the present.

### Zoning

In the past decade, the HC zoning district was found to promote land development and project design which was not in keeping with Foster's rural character, due in part to 400 foot dimensional setbacks from the right-of-way for Route 6 (Danielson Pike) between Paine Road and the Connecticut-Rhode Island state line. These boundary lines did not conform with existing lot lines. In 2011, the GBM zoning district was established to succeed HC zoning in selected areas along Route 6 (Danielson Pike) to promote mixed use development. The design standards for development have not been solidified as of yet, but the town intends to incorporate these in the future. This effort demonstrated the town's willingness to amend and revise its zoning regulations as needed to ensure the continuation of its rural character while not adversely impacting its residents or visitors.

### Residential Land Use

With an increasing number of residents expected until at least 2040, the large majority of land will continue to be used residentially. Without any amendments to dimensional regulations, most of this land will also continue to be made up predominantly of the minimum-sized lot allowed.

### Agricultural Land Use

Foster is one of the state's most agriculturally-active communities and its zoning regulations are supportive of agriculture at a wide range of intensities. Larger farming operations are likely most at risk however, as a comparison of the 2002 and 2012 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Census of Agriculture identify the number of larger farms (180 or more acres) has halved while the number of small farms (one to nine acres) has doubled over the decade. Additionally, principal operators who did not identify farming as their primary occupation shifted from the minority to the majority during this time.

### Commercial and Industrial Land Uses

The Route 6 (Danielson Pike) rezoning project has ensured that commercial strip development is not built along the whole of Route 6. It confines development to a series of nodes along Route 6. Current trends show that commercial businesses are leaving Route 6 for a myriad of reasons. There will need to be a reemphasis on bringing more businesses to town.

The value added by the new General Business Mixed-Use (GBM) zoning district along Route 6 provided land with this zoning designation is the ability to serve multiple uses on a single lot. While that is potential benefit to commercial landowners, this new zone has seen no new development over the past 12 years since its adoption within the original boundaries of the zone.

Within the last year, one homeowner with a home business on Route 6 had decided to subdivide their land and have the newly created lot zoned as GBM. They've since constructed a commercial garage for storage of commercial vehicles and machinery as home base for their operations. This construction required multiple public hearings:

1. Minor Subdivision approved by the Planning Board;
2. Recommendation to approve Zone Change to GBM by the Planning Board;
3. Approval of the request to re-zone to GBM from the Town Council;

4. Approval of a Variance to build within 100 feet of a wetland from the Zoning Board (wetlands are locally controlled within the Zoning Ordinance beyond DEM standards);
5. Site Plan Approval from the Planning Board.

This construction would have otherwise been allowed by-right under the former Highway Commercial zoning designation which was eliminated in 2009 with the adoption of the GBM zone. Under the former zoning designation, the construction would have likely only required Site Plan approval from the Planning Board, as is typical for most new businesses construction within commercial districts. If the town intends to allow for the construction of new business and expansion of existing business to diversify and expand local tax base and revenue, the town must seriously consider the limitations of the existing GBM district.

### **Institutional Land Use**

No new public facilities are currently planned within Foster except there is a committee considering the building of a new Police Station. A bond for the construction of the new Police Station at the intersection of Rt. 94 and Rt. 6 was approved by the taxpayers at the 2021 Financial Town Meeting. There are no existing facilities owned by either the municipality or the state, expected to be sold.

### **Other Land Uses**

As the Narragansett Electric Company's power line project has not been abandoned, there remains an expectation that a portion of the land east of Route 94 (Foster Center Road and Mt. Hygeia Road) could change in use before 2040.

## **ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING AND PROJECTED CONDITIONS**

The Town of Foster seeks to address the conditions discussed above to provide basic policy direction for corrective changes and enhancements in support of all other planning areas included in this Comprehensive Plan.

### **Zoning**

To achieve the community's aims of preserving the existing rural character, preventing the sprawl of suburbanization and providing environmental protection, the present minimum lot size allowed for the development of residential dwellings in the AR, GBM and NC zoning districts must be enhanced with standards for development more specific to the land and its historic character. A 200,000 square foot lot is not reflective of historical development patterns in which small groups of houses and other structures were interspersed among larger areas of fields and woodland. **The current dimensional zoning regulations have allowed for suburban sprawl to accelerate largely through the subdivision of lots.**

Restrictive use regulations in the R-SC zoning district have also been found to be a concern. Senior citizens who do not have the ability to operate or have access to an automobile, which becomes increasingly likely as they age, face isolation from the rest of the community.

The NC zoning district, beyond needing revisions for its minimum lot size, is not promoting the type of development that was intended by its establishment. Two of the four portions of this zoning district, at the intersection of Cucumber Hill Road and Moosup Valley Road and at the intersection of Luther Road and Route 102 (Plainfield Pike), are located in areas inappropriate for many of the zoning district's uses allowed by right or special permit. The entire NC zoning district is also designated by dimensional setbacks from roadways which do not correspond to actual property lines. Given the similarities to the former HC zoning district, the town should... The town should also consider expanding the allowed

commercial uses within the AR zoning district, subject to constraints that prevent commercial character from encroaching on agricultural and residential properties.

As development continues, Foster's historic villages are even more susceptible to losing their unique identity than the town is overall. Preserving their integrity is a critical component of preserving the character of the town. Serious attention should be given to the study of factors adversely affecting the integrity of each individual historic village, as well as strategies which will contribute to their preservation over the next twenty years and beyond. The development of SAMPs for each area, informed by the respective residents of each, will lead to constructive and specific actions for this aim to be realized. One of these strategies may be the establishment of a Village Center zoning district, as previously suggested in the 1982 Comprehensive Plan. The proposed regulations for such a zoning district in that plan included a small, maximum lot size, greater limitations on lighting and impervious surface than found in other zoning districts and limitations on allowed building materials and architectural details.

As is mentioned above, the GBM zone has been unsuccessful in attracting or incentivizing new business creation or existing business expansion. The rezoning of Route 6 brought the town from a total of 110 commercially zoned properties (78 GBM, 32 NC), down to a total of 46 commercially zoned properties, (39 GBM, 7 NC). That total excludes manufacturing zones as it was not altered with the Route 6 rezoning. Additionally, with the reduced number of eligible lots for commercial use it has been discovered that there are major use limitations along Route 6 closer to the Connecticut line where there is a substantial cluster of GBM zoned properties. Due to soil contamination and the placement of underground storage tanks from current and previous gas station uses, this presents major complications to the installation of new public wells. Without a public water supply, this will continue to be a barrier for commercial development within the existing commercial district.

### Land Use

Currently, there are local tax mechanisms through assessment that can help interested property owners to retain their agricultural and forested land. This is the only local incentive to keep existing agricultural lands from being developed. The town should consider implementing a policy requiring property owners to enter into a legal contract with the Tax Assessor stating their intention to not develop the land for use other than open space or agriculture and to pay accrued back taxes plus interest if they at some point choose to revoke the contract with the intent to develop the land.

The tax revenue and open space currently enjoyed by the town made available by the land owned by utility companies has no protection from future development. As noted, some of this land is currently projected to be developed in the future. These lands are important open space assets however. The town...

### Future Land Use

The town of Foster has seen steady, but modest development over the last decades. This is due to many factors including lack of infrastructure requiring any new uses to develop onsite wells and wastewater systems which require larger lot sizes in comparison to more suburban and urban landscapes. Of the land still available for development, much of the undeveloped areas are subject to moderate to severe development constraints including high ground water, rock and ledge, incompatible soils and the presence of wetlands. As a result, land use in the town has not changed significantly as a result. However, as noted in the previous section, the town still faces potential impacts of future development.

The town intends on maintaining current Agricultural/Residential zoning for the protection of ground water, preservation of open space and agricultural, and will pursue policies and regulations that support these goals.

The town recognizes the suggested “Growth Center” as presented in the Land Use 2025, State Guide Plan. The growth center is located in the historic village of Foster Center, which is the current and historic location of municipal services, Department of Public Works, Town offices, The Old Town House, Public Library, Benjamin Eddy Building, and the post office. Given the cluster of residential services it is reasonable to expect future in-fill growth around Foster Center. Before identifying specific lots as “inconsistent” with the FLUM, the town must first go through the process of identifying boundaries of any newly proposed district.

Given the prevalence of residential zoning and uses, residential taxes are the number one source of tax revenue. Therefore, Foster values the importance of appropriate planning for commercial uses along its major corridor, Route 6. Expanding and diversifying Foster’s commercial tax base is vital to supplement necessary municipal services for the continued growth of residential construction.

In 2010, the Planning Board presented a major commercial zoning change to the Town Council which was characterized by “nodes” of commercial property deemed suitable to support a variety of commercial uses and encourage mixed use and flexibility. Since its adoption there has been no substantial development or utilization of the newly adopted zoning district in the designated nodes.

The town must consider new measures to capitalize on its largest economic development asset, the traffic traveled along Route 6. There are a number of actions the town could take to incentivize commercial development along its major artery. Some of those that are limited to Land Use include expanding the existing GBM district to include more parcels and providing an overlay district which would allow property owners the option to utilize property as commercial or to continue as residential if currently zoned A/R. Currently, the Planning Board, in conjunction with the Town Council, are considering an overlay district that would provide such an option.

The Future Land Use Map highlights many of the lots with frontage along Danielson Pike (Route 6) for Proposed Route 6 Business Overlay. The highlighted parcels are restricted to lots with frontage on Route 6 which are not dedicated as conservation space. The highlighted parcels are meant to represent potential for expansion of existing General Business Mixed use where it may be deemed appropriate by the Planning Board and Town Council to balance the needs of the community with regard to economic development, conservation, preservation, and sense of place.

Additionally the highlighted parcels are meant to identify the potential for development of an overlay district which would provide property owners along Route 6 the option to utilize their property as a commercial use, with appropriate dimensional controls and pertinent regulations to manage growth appropriately and limit impacts. Below is an itemized list of properties that are inconsistent between the current zoning map and the future land use map. All properties along Route 6 have been identified in the property inconsistency table for the potential implementation of a business overlay district spanning Route 6. While the inclusion of an overlay district may not cause the parcels to be “inconsistent” per se, they are still provided in the table for reference.

**Table 20. Property Inconsistency FLUM**

Town of Foster, RI Comprehensive Plan

AP/Lot	Address	Use	Acres	Current Zone
21/0020	54 OLD DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	4.60	AR
22/0041	30 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.90	AR
22/0048	33 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.55	AR
22/0040-A	26 A DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	1.00	AR
22/0040	26 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.20	AR
21/0032	42 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	8.00	AR
15/0048-A	DANIELSON PIKE	Vac Res Land	15.50	AR
21/0019-A	37 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	3.50	AR
21/0030	DANIELSON PIKE	Res. Vacant Other	1.47	AR
10/0037	162 DANIELSON PIKE	Mixed Use Mdl-01	6.10	GBM
14/0112	126 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.27	AR
14/0113	127 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.41	AR
10/0033	172 DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	4.60	GBM
10/0046	167 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	13.00	AR
21/0035-B	48 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	8.43	AR
14/0089	96 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	9.26	AR
21/0025	72 OLD DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.75	AR
14/0114	127A DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.46	AR
14/0107	120 DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	0.23	GBM
14/0109	121 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	2.15	AR
14/0110	123 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	3.50	AR
13/0025	0 DANIELSON PIKE	Vac Res Land	15.80	AR
14/0116	132 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	1.86	AR
14/0115	125 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	11.50	AR
14/0111	126 A DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.46	AR
14/0003-A	51 PAINE ROAD	Mixed Use Mdl-01	2.00	GBM
13/0028	154 A DANIELSON PIKE	Small Bus Mdl-94	0.37	GBM
10/0043	153 DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	30.00	GBM
10/0078	173 A DANIELSON PIKE	Mixed Use Mdl-01	4.33	GBM
21/0017	41 OLD DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	6.36	AR
22/0026	10 A DANIELSON PIKE	Mixed Use Mdl-94	0.90	AR
21/0023	67 OLD DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	2.30	AR
21/0035-A	47 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	10.00	AR
14/0106	119 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.69	AR
14/0117	DANIELSON PIKE	Vac Res Land	0.92	AR
13/0024	150 B DANIELSON PIKE	Mixed Use Mdl-01	5.00	GBM
14/0119	1 BALCOM ROAD	Single Family	1.95	AR
22/0027	11 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	9.00	AR
22/0013	21 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	1.00	AR
13/0027	1A SNAGWOOD ROAD	Single Family	14.02	AR

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11/0025	4 BALCOM ROAD	Oth Imp Com Mdl-94	34.00	AR
11/0019	141 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	6.90	AR
21/0035	DANIELSON PIKE	Vac Res Land	4.79	AR
21/0026	52 DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	0.38	GBM
13/0026	0 DANIELSON PIKE	Tax Sale MDL 00	4.00	AR
10/0038	160 DANIELSON PIKE	Farm/Forest Mdl 01	43.40	AR
10/0037-A	163 DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	1.90	GBM
10/0044	160 A DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	2.00	AR
22/0028	2 ROUND HILL ROAD	Single Family	2.00	AR
14/0093	82 OLD DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	4.00	AR
21/0027	53 B DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.25	GBM
21/0028	53 A DANIELSON PIKE	Mixed Use Mdl-01	0.31	GBM
14/0092	86 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	3.09	AR
21/0029	0 DANIELSON PIKE	Vac Res Land	3.00	AR
10/0036	164 DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	11.00	GBM
10/0054	0 CENTRAL PIKE	Vac Res Land	47.00	AR
14/0096-A	0 DANIELSON PIKE	Vac Res Land	1.03	GBM
22/0020	1 A DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	2.50	AR
22/0036	DANIELSON PIKE	Vac Res Land	13.00	AR
22/0038	22 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	4.73	AR
14/0088	100 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	16.45	AR
14/0019	0 DANIELSON PIKE	Religious Lnd	21.56	GBM
10/0035	0 DANIELSON PIKE	Farm/Forest Mdl 00	14.00	AR
10/0042	0 DANIELSON PIKE	Res. Vacant Other	0.11	AR
14/0087	107 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	4.33	AR
22/0019	DANIELSON PIKE	Vac Res Land	7.50	AR
15/0023	DANIELSON PIKE	Vac Res Land	32.00	AR
22/0045	36 OLD DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.36	AR
22/0042	35 OLD DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.49	AR
22/0044	34 A DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.72	AR
22/0043	32 OLD DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.89	AR
22/0038-A	24 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	11.96	AR
14/0091	87 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.69	AR
10/0034	169 DANIELSON PIKE	Devel Land	5.40	GBM
14/0090	92 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	23.00	AR
21/0021	61 OLD DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	7.50	AR
14/0019-C	0 DANIELSON PIKE	Religious Hse	5.30	GBM
14/0090-A	90 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	2.00	AR
14/0019-A	116A DANIELSON PIKE	Religious Mdl 94	7.10	GBM

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14/0019-A	116A DANIELSON PIKE	Religious Mdl 94	7.10	GBM
14/0085	3 MT HYGEIA ROAD	Single Family	2.04	AR
14/0097	85 DANIELSON PIKE	Two Family	5.73	GBM
14/0002	140 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	11.70	AR
10/0038-A	160 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	4.59	AR
11/0019-B	143 DANIELSON PIKE	Oth Imp Com Mdl-94	2.30	GBM
21/0022	65 OLD DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	1.90	AR
10/0047	1 BOSWELL TRAIL	Single Family	1.73	AR
10/0032	173 DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	0.62	GBM
10/0081	175 DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	3.70	GBM
22/0012	DANIELSON PIKE	Utility Mdl-00	7.65	AR
22/0022	1 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	3.90	AR
21/0033	44 DANIELSON PIKE	Three Family	15.10	GBM
14/0002-A	142A DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	10.16	GBM
14/0098	88 DANIELSON PIKE	Industrl Mdl-94	19.36	GBM
14/0100	91 DANIELSON PIKE	Res Typ Apt	23.00	GBM
14/0101	93 DANIELSON PIKE	Mixed Use Mdl-01	8.80	GBM
11/0020	146 DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	11.50	GBM
22/0022	1 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	3.90	AR
22/0016	10 B DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	2.25	AR
14/0001	DANIELSON PIKE	Vac Res Land	10.00	AR
14/0086	1 MT HYGEIA ROAD	Single Family	0.75	AR
14/0102	95 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	11.97	AR
11/0021-A	147 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.52	AR
11/0021-B	148 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	6.32	AR
15/0025	19 A TUCKER HOLLOW ROAD	Farm/Forest Mdl 94	194.00	AR
22/0023	3 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.79	AR
14/0002-B	137 DANIELSON PIKE	Oth Imp Com Mdl-94	5.50	GBM
14/0017	127 B DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	6.43	AR
14/0018	126 B DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	2.50	AR
14/0102-A	108 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	5.70	AR
11/0022	149 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	6.92	GBM
22/0018	7 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	3.00	AR
14/0003	134 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	4.70	AR
22/0017	9 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.78	AR
22/0024	6 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	0.60	AR
22/0015	10 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	4.50	AR
22/0025	8 DANIELSON PIKE	Farm/Forest Mdl 01	22.80	AR



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14/0104	109 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	2.50	AR
14/0105-D	111 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	6.03	AR
13/0029	151 DANIELSON PIKE	Mixed Use Mdl-01	1.50	GBM
13/0029-A	152 DANIELSON PIKE	Two Family	0.70	AR
11/0022-A1	152A DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	5.49	AR
10/0079	174 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	3.10	AR
10/0082	DANIELSON PIKE	Res. Vacant Other	27.50	AR
14/0105	114 A DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	13.46	GBM
14/0105-F	114 A DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	4.92	AR
10/0027-A	180 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	61.00	AR
10/0022	DANIELSON PIKE	Res. Vacant Other	39.66	AR
10/0083	0 DANIELSON PIKE	Vac Res Land	28.76	AR
10/0084	185 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	21.66	AR
10/0087	194 DANIELSON PIKE	Devel Land	30.98	GBM
10/0020	192 DANIELSON PIKE	Devel Land	6.25	GBM
10/0088	195 DANIELSON PIKE	Mixed Use Mdl-01	13.01	GBM
10/0028-A	4 A WHIPOORWILL TERRACE	Farm/Forest Mdl 01	20.24	AR
10/0025	183 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	17.62	AR
10/0026	181 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	5.30	AR
10/0025-B	187 DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	3.63	GBM
10/0026-A	184 DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	1.50	GBM
10/0023	188 B DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	1.50	AR
10/0021	190-191 DANIELSON PIKE	Mixed Use Mdl-01	5.60	GBM
10/0022-A	189 DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	5.00	AR
10/0025-A	187 1/2 DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	0.70	GBM
10/0024	188 A DANIELSON PIKE	Mixed Use Mdl-01	0.36	GBM
10/0085	186 DANIELSON PIKE	Devel Land	1.01	GBM
10/0086	186 DANIELSON PIKE	Large Bus Mdl-94	1.00	GBM
10/0008	129 CUCUMBER HILL ROAD	Res. Vacant Other	0.45	AR
10/0009	SHIPPEE SCHOOLHOUSE ROAD	Res. Vacant Other	0.49	AR
10/0009-A	SHIPPEE SCHOOLHOUSE ROAD	Res. Vacant Other	0.02	AR
10/0028	0 DANIELSON PIKE	Vac Res Land	20.00	AR
10/0045	164 A DANIELSON PIKE	Single Family	55.33	AR

## Resolution of FLUM and Current Zoning Inconsistencies

The FULM identities parcels along Route 6 which have been identified for an overlay district. The overlay district is intended to allow more opportunity for business to locate, expand and thrive. The overlay district would not affect the existing zoning designation status of existing parcels which do not intend to capitalize on use of the overly district.



## GOALS, POLICIES, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

GOALS:		
LU	G1	Maintain the rural and historical character of town
LU	G2	Provide venues for commercial, industrial, agricultural, and residential uses that are supported by appropriate infrastructure, as appropriate for a healthy rural community
OBJECTIVES:		
LU	O1	Create standards for development that maintain low density, but make zoning less rigid and more lot and feature specific
LU	O2	Assure a high standard of building quality and site design consistent with rural identity of the town
LU	O3	Protect and maintain the unique character of Foster's hamlets, such as Clayville, Foster Center, Hopkins Mills and Moosup Valley and others
LU	O4	Promote land use patterns that reflect and respect the town's scenic and natural resources, wildlife habitat, and cultural heritage, minimizing potential adverse impacts on the greenspace system
LU	O5	Support nodal General Business Mixed Use development and expand where appropriate while maintaining consistency with rural the character of the town
LU	O6	Create a Manufacturing Industrial zone that is environmentally sound and meets the needs of the town
LU	O7	Develop policies that address land and easements owned by public and private entities that provide water, energy and communication services, as important Open Space / tax revenue assets
POLICIES:		
LU	P1	Adopt Conservation Zoning that will provide protection for areas of the town that are most sensitive to development
LU	P2	Sustain Hamlets with the active participation of residents from each neighborhood
LU	P3	Support local, state and federal tax mechanisms that help owners retain agricultural and forest land
LU	P4	Siting and delivery of energy sources should be consistent with the needs, health and safety of Foster residents and businesses.
LU	P5	Develop Manufacturing-Industrial Zoning
LU	P6	Regularly review and update commercial and industrial needs of the town
LU	P7	Ensure that Foster's land use regulations and decisions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
ACTIONS:		
LU	A1	Create zoning standards that minimize homogeneity of land development and suburban sprawl
LU	A2	Create design standards that maintain views over fields and woodlands
LU	A3	Create zoning standards and other policies that preserve open space and protect environmentally sensitive areas
LU	A4	Promote continuing education of landowners regarding local, state and federal tax mechanism that helps owners retain agricultural and forest land

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<b>LU</b>	A5	Develop dimensional and design standards for General Business Mixed Use and Manufacturing Industrial development
<b>LU</b>	A6	Re-evaluate existing Neighborhood Commercial zones
<b>LU</b>	A7	Form a committee or study group to develop policies for siting and delivery of energy sources which are consistent with the health and safety of Foster residents
<b>LU</b>	A8	The Planning Board shall hold public hearings for the designation of district boundaries for all historic villages in town
<b>LU</b>	A9	Propose appropriate zoning amendments either for the creation of new village district districts (pursuant to LUA9) after substantial review, or by amending the current zoning as applicable for the continued preservation of the villages while allowing for reasonable growth in support of sustainable communities.

## **IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**

Proposed actions to implement this plan are shown below along with the associated time frame and responsible parties.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS				
Chapter Code		When	Who	What
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES, CONSERVATION, AND RECREATION</b>				
<b>NRCR</b>	A1	S	PD, PB, TC, TS, CC	Revise specific regulations for conservation zoning to protect agricultural land, water resources forests and wildlife habitat, open space and scenic views, natural topography of land, and other valuable natural resources including country quiet and dark skies
<b>NRCR</b>	A2	M	PD, PB, TC	Revise regulations for MI zoning to protect all of the above
<b>NRCR</b>	A3	L	PD, PB, TC, CC, TS	Set up agreements with Scituate, Glocester and Coventry, RI and Plainfield and Killingly, CT to protect common surface and groundwater resources.
<b>NRCR</b>	A4	L	TC, LT	Maintain Land Trust as the key town agency in the program of coordinating land or development rights acquisitions.
<b>NRCR</b>	A5	M, L	PD, CC, PB, TC	Acquire development rights to large contiguous parcels funded in part by private donations and State open space bond issue funds. Enhance other incentives to preserve these parcels as open space (e.g. tax incentives) or include penalties for conversion.
<b>NRCR</b>	A6	M, L	PD, TC	Promote Foster as a whole as a Greenway.
<b>NRCR</b>	A7	S, M	PD, CC, PB, TC	Pursue available grant funding through such State, Federal and Private Foundation sources that will allow the town to move forward with its Open-Space and Recreation objectives and goals.
<b>NRCR</b>	A8	S, M	PD, CC, PB	Identify all unique areas of conservation concern, including unique habitats and formations, and scenic areas.

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<b>NRCR</b>	A9	S, M	PD, CC, PB	Develop / Update a list of priority areas critical for preservation with direct assistance from the Conservation Commission and the Land Trust. (Areas designated or listed in the Comprehensive Plan should form the base for this inventory.)
<b>NRCR</b>	A10	M	PD, REC, TC	Determine the future recreational needs of the community – taking into consideration all residents of the community.
<b>NRCR</b>	A11	L	PD, REC, TC	Expand existing recreational sites owned by the town if feasible.
<b>NRCR</b>	A12	S	PD, DPW, TC	Continue the development of the Foster Center Road athletic field complex.
<b>NRCR</b>	A13	L	PD, DPW, TC	Locate areas within the Foster community for future recreation facilities.
<b>NRCR</b>	A14	S	PD, PB, TC, CC, TS	Research Dark Sky friendly regulations and consider recommending for adoption into the Zoning Ordinance and development regulations
<b>NRCR</b>	A15	M	TP, DPW, TC	Conduct traffic counts, head counts, at local facilities to keep track of the demand for each facility.
<b>NRCR</b>	A16	L	TC, REC	Allocate resources and funding to improve facilities that are deemed priority and high trafficked
<b>NRCR</b>	A17	M, L	TC, PB, DPW, TP	Improve signage and wayfinding to create sense of place and generate greater ease of access
<b>NRCR</b>	A18	M, L	TC, REC	Promote local recreational resources to generate regional interest in the expanse network of open space that Foster offers
<b>NRCR</b>	A19	M, L	TC, REC	Implement a bike rack system town wide for priority uses that are deemed most appropriate for bike access
<b>NRCR</b>	A20	M, L	TC, REC	Provide Recreational Resources that should accompany Town Hall and the Library, either in Foster Center or on Route 6.
<b>NRCR</b>	A21	S, M, L	TC, TP, DPW, REC	Provide uses in demand for passive and active recreation that serve the elderly population near Foster Center or other suitable location

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<b>NRCR</b>	A22	S, M, L	TC	Monitor demand for the different sites and facilities throughout town and identify highest trafficked areas and priority sites to dedicate funding for upgrades and expansion
<b>NRCR</b>	A23	M, L	TC, DPW	Create a dedicated Bike Lane through the town's local, paved roads, which are wide enough to accommodate such a use;
<b>NRCR</b>	A24	M, L	TC, DPW, REC, TP	Allocate resources and funding, or partner with the Foster Land Trust to purchase parcels of land to provide pathways and connectivity to existing recreational uses and open space
<b>NRCR</b>	A25	M, L	TC, CC, DPW, TP	The Town Council, Conservation Commission, Director of Recreation, Director of Public Works, and School Superintendent to work collaboratively to identify areas for expansion of recreational resources and the need for additional resources
<b>HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>				
<b>HCR</b>	A1	L	TC, PB	Establish a Historic District Commission to oversee issues regarding protection, and future of development of the town's Historic Districts: the villages of Clayville, Hopkins Mills, Foster Center, and Moosup Valley
<b>HCR</b>	A2	M, L	PD, PB, PS, CC, TC	Develop special area management (SAM) plans for the historic villages, including but not limited to Foster Center, Clayville, Moosup Valley and Hopkins Mills; providing for the preservation and enhancement of each village's unique identity and character
<b>HCR</b>	A3	S, M	PB, PD	Develop a rating system as a component of the performance standards for new developments in historically and visually significant areas
<b>HCR</b>	A4	S, M	PS, PD, PB, LT, CC	Evaluate new planned development and subdivision development regarding impacts to our historic buildings, cultural, and scenic areas

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<b>HCR</b>	A5	S, M	TC, PD	Work with the Foster Preservation Society to design and distribute interpretive brochures of Foster's cultural landscape
<b>HCR</b>	A6	M	PB, PD, ZB, BO	Work with the Foster Preservation Society to develop a design guidelines manual for renovations to historic properties, and work with the Society to distribute the manual to local property owners
<b>HCR</b>	A7	S, M	PD, PS, TC	Seek funding to update the Historical Barns Inventory
<b>HCR</b>	A8	M, L	PD, PS, TC	Continue preservation and protection of all town-owned historic, cultural, and scenic sites from adverse effects of on-going development
<b>HCR</b>	A9	M, L	PD, PS, TC	Encourage the continuation of community-wide celebrations such as Foster Old Home Days
<b>HCR</b>	A10	M, L	PD, PS, TC	Encourage the continuation of cultural and community activities such as Swamp Meadow Community Theatre
<b>HCR</b>	A11	S, M, L	CC, TC, PS	Work with the Foster Land Trust on the acquisition of historic, cultural and scenic easements as a way to preserve historic, cultural and scenic resources
<b>HCR</b>	A12	S, M, L	PS, CC	Work with the Blackstone Heritage Corridor, Inc. and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, as well as neighboring communities to establish a regional approach to historic, cultural and scenic asset protection and promotion
<b>HCR</b>	A13	S, M, L	CC, TC, PS	Publicize the scenic road loops which connect with the scenic routes of neighboring towns
<b>HCR</b>	A14	S	PB, PD, ZB, PS	Review and update the town's sign ordinance to include standards for cottage industry signs, commercial and industrial signs and signage within our historic districts / hamlets.
<b>HCR</b>	A15	M, L	PS, DPW	Complete the scenic road loops which connect with the scenic routes of neighboring towns.

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<b>HCR</b>	A16	S, M, L	PS, PD, TC, PB	Implement the recommendations contained in the 1982 RI Historic Preservation Commission Survey including the following: a) Map archaeological sites as constraints to development and apply criteria for their consideration in any new development projects which would be located on them or in close proximity to them; b) Maintain and continuously update a collection of restoration reference material in the town libraries or at the Planning Office for use of the community with the aid of the Foster Preservation Society; c) Continue efforts to record information concerning Foster's historic resources, farms, mills and cemeteries.
<b>HCR</b>	A17	S, M	PD, PB, CC	Implement conservation zoning so as to balance new development with the preservation of historic and scenic resources.
<b>HCR</b>	A18	S	PD, PB, TC, TS, CC	Enact protective ordinances for stone walls and trees within the road R-O-W.
<b>HCR</b>	A19	M	DPW, BO	Establish standards for town improvements such as pavement, width and drainage which will not adversely affect scenic road character.
<b>COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES</b>				
<b>CSF</b>	A1	S, M, L	TC, PB, EB, POL, DPW, T	Update and implement a realistic schedule of repairing and/or replacing needed public service vehicles and equipment such as police, fire and rescue apparatus; improve efficiency and upgrade specialization among the private fire and rescue organizations; coordinate allocation of capital funds through the Engineering Board.
<b>CSF</b>	A2	S, M	TC, PB, PD, T, POL	Evaluate and plan for relocation of police department to more efficient and up-to-date facility by 2022.



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<b>CSF</b>	A3	S, M, L	POL, EB, TC, EMA	Develop and implement regular training schedules for police, fire and rescue personnel; encourage coordination of volunteer recruitment and retention among fire and rescue organizations; develop non-financial incentives to encourage police officers and fire and rescue volunteers to remain in their positions.
<b>CSF</b>	A4	S, M, L	EMA, EB, CC, PD, POL	Provide training, information and guidelines for the public concerning proper use and maintenance of wood stoves, first responder skills, safe storage of firearms, proper driveway access for emergency vehicles, safe forest management, healthy water and septic systems, and other safety issues.
<b>CSF</b>	A5	S, M, L	EMA	Conduct regular joint training with other municipalities, State and Federal entities related to the town's Emergency Operations Plan, Emergency Management Agency, and Scituate Reservoir Hazardous Material Spill Contingency Plan; and participate in other emergency management activities.
<b>CSF</b>	A6	S, M, L	DPW, PD, PB	Update and implement an ongoing five year plan for road and bridge maintenance.
<b>CSF</b>	A7	S, M, L	DPW, CC	Determine the viability of maintaining existing gravel roads, and investigate "greener" alternatives to asphalt surfaces.
<b>CSF</b>	A8	S, M, L	CC, LT	Promote the installation and maintenance of rain barrels, rain gardens, native species propagation, and other water conservation measures.
<b>CSF</b>	A9	S, M, L	DPW	Perform annual inspections of all town above-ground and underground storage tanks (AST's and UST's) to verify tank integrity, as required by State law.

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CSF	A10	S, M, L	PD, PB, TC, ZB, CC	Ensure town ordinances, zoning and subdivision regulations meet or exceed current standards for setbacks for protection of watersheds, wells, septic systems, and wetlands; incorporate updated standards for water run-off, water supply and wastewater disposal into requirements for community development.
CSF	A11	S, M, L	TC, DPW, ZB, PB, PD	Actively coordinate with Providence Water Supply Board and local communities to uphold Scituate Reservoir Hazardous Material Spill Contingency Plan.
CSF	A12	S, M, L	TC, TR, TA	Actively seek compensation through the Providence Water Supply Board for the community's active work in conserving the State's water quality.
CSF	A13	S, M, L	CC, DPW, TC	Promote recycling efforts through public education and improved availability of transfer station facilities and recycling tools, including but not limited to specialty item disposal, consumer information, recycling bins, and composters.
CSF	A14	L	DPW, CC, TC	Work with the RIRRC to identify ways that Foster residents contribute to source reduction and waste diversion (such as "green" consumer habits, composting, and avoidance of yard waste) and additional means of improving overall diversion rates to 50%.
CSF	A15	S, M	PB, POL, ZB, BZO, TC	Develop appropriate zoning and permitting regulations for the siting and operation of residential and commercial scale energy production (such as solar, geothermal or water power).
CSF	A16	S, M, L	DPW, TC, PS	Maintain buildings in accordance with preservation standards and as funds permit.

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<b>CSF</b>	A17	S, M, L	TC, PB, PD, ZB, DPW, BO	Support the work of the Preservation Society, Land Trust, Conservation Commission, Historical Society, and other local public and private agencies dedicated to preservation of and public access to natural and cultural sites.
<b>CSF</b>	A18	S, M, L	TC, TO	Ensure availability to town officials, information, and services. (relocated from original table position).
<b>CSF</b>	A19	S, L	PD, TC, PB, CC, BO, DPW Dir.	Maintain ongoing communications with Army Corps of Engineers, RI State Police, DEM, Abbey Lane residents, Foster-Glocester Regional School System and any other appropriate entity to develop and implement plans for new wellwater and wastewater systems, asbestos abatement / demolition of deteriorating buildings, and/or relocation of functions associated with site; work with ACE to identify and remediate sources of contamination at the site, as necessary. (relocated from original table position).
<b>CSF</b>	A20	S, M, L	REC, TC, PD, PB, DPW	Develop youth athletic fields and facilities; support and enhance senior programs; promote town-based activities. (relocated from original table position).
<b>CSF</b>	A21	S, M, L	SC, SD	Continually evaluate and implement best practices in educational curricula, teaching, and administration
<b>CSF</b>	A22	S, M, L	SC, SD	Monitor changes in student demographics to ensure appropriate classroom space and educational services at all levels.
<b>CSF</b>	A23	S, M, L	SC, SD, TC, FIN	Maintain cooperative administrative structure and active participation in Foster/Glocester Regional School System
<b>CSF</b>	A24	S, M, L	SC, SD, DPW	Maintain buildings, athletic fields, repair/replace playground facilities and equipment, and provide adequate educational equipment and furnishings.

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<b>CSF</b>	A25	M	SC, SD, PD, BO, T, DPW	Determine and implement upgrade of shared administrative offices through rehabilitation of wastewater, heating and building facilities at current site (intermediate time frame).
<b>CSF</b>	A26	L	SC, SD, TC, DPW	Evaluate and plan for relocation of administrative offices to more suitable and up-to-date facility by 2026.
<b>CSF</b>	A27	S, M, L	DHS + Other Depts.	Collect and distribute food, clothing, household items, gift cards, school supplies and other basics secured through private donations and State and local social service agencies.
<b>CSF</b>	A28	S, M, L	DHS	Department of Human Services with assistance from other departments Provide emergency food and clothing based on apparent need.
<b>CSF</b>	A29	S, M, L	DHS, TA	Evaluate eligibility of clients seeking ongoing assistance, and assist in applying for programs, including federal and state aid programs, energy programs, property tax relief, job search, budgeting, elder affairs, transportation, and others.
<b>CSF</b>	A30	S, M, L	DHS	Act as liaison and referral to private, State and Federal social service providers.
<b>CSF</b>	A31	S, M, L	DHS, TC	Secure funding for purchase/lease/share of vehicle and funding for driver.
<b>CSF</b>	A32	S, M, L	DHS, PD, TC	Secure funding to enable providing energy assistance to eligible residents.
<b>CSF</b>	A33	S, M, L	PD, DHS, TC	CDBG Grants
<b>CSF</b>	A34	S, M	PB, TC, TS, CC, DPW	Pursue opportunities to secure solar energy owned or leased by the Town at the Nike Site and any other appropriately located Town owned properties.
<b>NATURAL HAZARDS</b>				
<b>NH</b>	A1	S	PB, PD	To identify the types of natural hazards which have and can occur in the Foster community including but not limited to hurricanes, fires and winter storms etc.

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NH	A2	S	PD, EMA, PB, TC, Var. Dept Heads	To update and revise the Foster Local Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (Natural Hazard Plan), Emergency Operations Plan, the Continuity of Operations Planning, and the Foster MED Plan, with the assistance of the Rhode Island Emergency Management Services, and the Rhode Island Department of Health.
NH	A3	S, M, L	TC, PD, AC, DPW, POL	To continue the education of Incident Command Services for all hired personnel and volunteers.
NH	A4	S, M, L	EMA	To hold at least quarterly training programs for the Foster Shelter Team, to keep them up to date on statewide requirements.
NH	A5	S, M, L	DPW, PD, PB	To continue to update and revise the Foster five (5) year road plan.
NH	A6	S, M, L	DPW, PD	To continue to update and revise the Foster Storm Water (Wastewater) Plan in accordance with state regulations.
NH	A7	S, M, L	EMA	To develop, update, revise or obtain emergency preparedness flyers (information) and pass them out to Foster residents.
NH	A8	S, M, L	EMA, SD	Develop, update and revise emergency evacuation plans for the Foster community, including the Foster School system, Foster Residents, and provide routes (directions) to emergency community shelters.
<b>TRANSPORTATION NETWORK</b>				
TN	A1	S, L	DPW	Update scenic roads itemized in the Historic/Scenic inventory and nominate the most important of these roads for State Scenic Road designation using the RIDOT criteria for such nominations, including scenic roads that are scheduled for State funded improvement projects.

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<b>TN</b>	A2	M	PD, DPW, TC	Adopt design standards for roads that preserve the rural character and provide safe travel.
<b>TN</b>	A3	M, L	PD, PB, TC	Include traffic impacts in town review of subdivision and new large scale development proposals including commercial and industrial projects. Expand the current Commercial Site Plan Review process and extend the developer's responsibility for town road improvements should he expected traffic from new development adversely affect road conditions or safe traffic circulation.
<b>TN</b>	A4	M	DPW, PD, CC, TC, PB	Town staff should maintain an updated list of improvements needed on Federal aid roads (Transportation Improvement Program, TIP) in order to be able to respond to State requests for projects. This list should be updated and compiled through an open public process including review by the Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Town Council.
<b>TN</b>	A5	M	DPW	Town staff should track proposed (TIP) improvement projects to be sure that the projects are still appropriate at the time they receive funding for design.
<b>TN</b>	A6	M, L	DPW	Improve signage and safety features on major through-routes within and through the town.
<b>TN</b>	A7	S	POL	Improve enforcement of traffic regulations on major through-routes within and through the town.
<b>TN</b>	A8	M, L	PD, PB, CC, TC	Coordinate with landowners and interested stakeholders to create a network of bicycling and walking paths,
<b>TN</b>	A9	S, M, L	PD, DPW, TC	Town staff should coordinate bridge reconstruction with RIDOT to make sure that the reconstructed bridges are compatible with the town's rural character and its ability to maintain the bridges over time. The current wooden bridge program includes compatible design and should be encouraged.

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<b>TN</b>	A10	S, M, L	DPW, PD, PB, TC	Implement and fund a 5-year Road and Bridge Improvement Plan for upgrades and maintenance. This plan would provide for the paving of important connector roads, allowing others to remain as unpaved rural and scenic roads.
<b>TN</b>	A11	S, M, L	DPW, PB, PD	Reevaluate and update the 5-year Road and Bridge Improvement Plan and projections for funding every year.
<b>TN</b>	A12	S, M, L	DPW	Identify which roads will be used by low density residential growth, where rural road widths and pavement type should be maintained, and which roads should become well traveled connectors and be improved.
<b>TN</b>	A13	M, L	TC, POL, LD	Explore the formulation of a Town Traffic Court
<b>TN</b>	A14	L	LT, CC, DPW	Complete Scenic Roads project including bicycling and walking paths
<b>TN</b>	A15	S, M, L	PD, PB, TC, LT, CC	Encourage bicycle friendly and pedestrian friendly provisions in both residential and commercial development
<b>GROWING ECONOMY</b>				
<b>GE</b>	A1	M	PD, TC, PB	Develop and maintain a list of possible light industrial and commercial development and research facilities to attract to Foster and promote this at the state level.
<b>GE</b>	A2	M, L	PD, PB, ZB, TC, BO	Designate and possibly rezone suitable areas for viable manufacturing / commercial parks.
<b>GE</b>	A3	M, L	TC, FIN	Develop and maintain tax incentives to assist in achieving the economic and environmental development goals and policies, including cottage industries.
<b>GE</b>	A4	S, M, L	PD, AHB, TC, FSH	Hold seminars and field trips to attract principals interested in rural assisted living and senior housing development and coordinate efforts with the affordable housing program.

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<b>GE</b>	A5	S, M	PD, PB, ZB, TC, BO	Enact development controls and performance standards in the zoning ordinance to mitigate conflicts between commercial and industrial development and other uses. These include but are not limited to: buffers to side and rear lots; landscaping; and compliance with state and federal air, and water quality regulations;
<b>GE</b>	A6	S, M	PB, PD, BO, ZB, TC	Review and update Foster's zoning ordinance to create a set of design standards for commercial developments which are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood in appearance, with varied rooflines, alternative construction materials, scaled down signage etc., exploring options of using 2nd story apartments in General Business Mixed Use developments, and promoting walkability.
<b>GE</b>	A7	S, M, L	PD, PB, CC, TC	Work with the Foster Preservation Society to increase economic development based on Foster's history, such as former stagecoach stops, inns, mills and the W3R.
<b>GE</b>	A8	S, M	PB, PD, TC	Update / upgrade Foster's zoning ordinance to facilitate the encouragement of future commercial business in Foster.
<b>GE</b>	A9	S, M	PB, TP, TC	Create an Economic Development Strategic Plan with assistance from an Economic Development Consultant group which will provide the town more specific and tangible actions.
<b>GE</b>	A10	S, M	PB, TP, TC	Incorporate recommendations from the Economic Development Consultant into an update to the approved Comprehensive Plan
<b>HOUSING OPPORTUNITY</b>				
<b>HO</b>	A1	L	PB, PD, TC	Coordinate with the Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission.
<b>HO</b>	A2	S	PB, TC, PD	Continue discussions with HousingWorksRI.



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HO	A3	S	PD, TC	Identify and apply for grants to develop an ongoing housing database.
HO	A4	M	PB, PD, TC	Meet with officials of the Providence Water Resources Authority.
HO	A5	S	PD, PB	Encourage affordable housing as part of residential compounds.
HO	A6	M, L	PB, TC, PD	Submit updated plan to town council annually.
HO	A7	M, L	PD, TC	Secure access to affordable home repair, water and septic upgrades, heating assistance and maintenance to support residents in existing housing.
HO	A8	L	PD, PB, TC	Complete feasibility study of Hemlock Village expansion.
HO	A9	S, M	PD, PB, TC	Evaluate the option of a second senior housing location.
HO	A10	M, L	PD, PB, TC	Conduct a study of the demand for housing by demographic group.
HO	A11	S	PD, BO	Conduct annual review of building permits as part of statistical update
HO	A12	M, L	CC, PB, PD	Continue discussions with RI Housing, legislators and others regarding the relationship between development and protecting the watersheds.
HO	A13	M, L	PB, TC	Coordinate with other western and northern RI communities to educate and persuade legislators and officials to expand the definition of affordable housing to encompass existing housing in the town that require improvement.
LAND USE				
LU	A1	M, L	PD, PB, CC, TC, BO	Create zoning standards that minimize homogeneity of land development and suburban sprawl
LU	A2	M, L	PD, PB, CC, TC, BO, LT	Create design standards that maintain views over fields and woodlands

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LU	A3	M, L	PD, PB, CC, TC, BO, LT	Create zoning standards and other policies that preserve open space and protect environmentally sensitive areas
LU	A4	S	PD, PB	Promote continuing education of landowners regarding local, state and federal tax mechanism that helps owners retain agricultural and forest land
LU	A5	M, L	PD, PB, TC, BO	Develop dimensional and design standards for General Business Mixed Use and Manufacturing Industrial development
LU	A6	S, M	PD, PB, TC	Re-evaluate existing Neighborhood Commercial zones
LU	A7	S, M, L	PD, PB, ZB, CC, LT, TC	Form a committee or study group to develop policies for siting and delivery of energy sources which are consistent with the health and safety of Foster residents
LU	A8	M, L	PD, PB, TC, PS	The Planning Board shall hold public hearings for the designation of district boundaries for all historic villages in town
LU	A9	M, L	PD, PB, TC	Propose appropriate zoning amendments either for the creation of new village district districts (pursuant to LUA9) after substantial review, or by amending the current zoning as applicable for the continued preservation of the villages while allowing for reasonable growth in support of sustainable communities.
		Key:	S	Short-Term (0-3 Years)
			M	Mid-Term (4-6 Years)
			L	Long-Term (7-10 Years)
			BO	Building Official

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			CC	Conservation Commission
			DHS	Department of Human Services
			DPW	Department of Public Works
			EB	Engineering Board
			EMA	Emergency Management Agency
			FIN	Finance Department
			LD	Legal Department
			LT	Foster Land Trust
			PB	Planning Board
			PD	Planning Department
			POL	Police Department
			PS	Foster Preservation Society
			REC	Recreation Department
			T	Treasurer
			TA	Tax Assessor
			TC	Town Council
			TS	Town Solicitor
			ZB	Zoning Board