

Town Council Legislative Policy Initiative to Increase Revenues

REGULATORY REVIEW AND MARKET ANALYSIS

Zoning Audit

October 29, 2015



Agenda

- Goals and Purpose
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Zoning Audit
 - General Comments
 - Recommendations
- Next Steps

Goals

- Maximize economic development opportunities
- “Less is more”
- Be user friendly: clear and concise
- Simplify the approval process
- Provide predictability
- Recognize “best practices”
- Ensure consistency with Town’s Plan of Conservation and Development
- Recognize demographic trends that relate to development patterns



Purpose

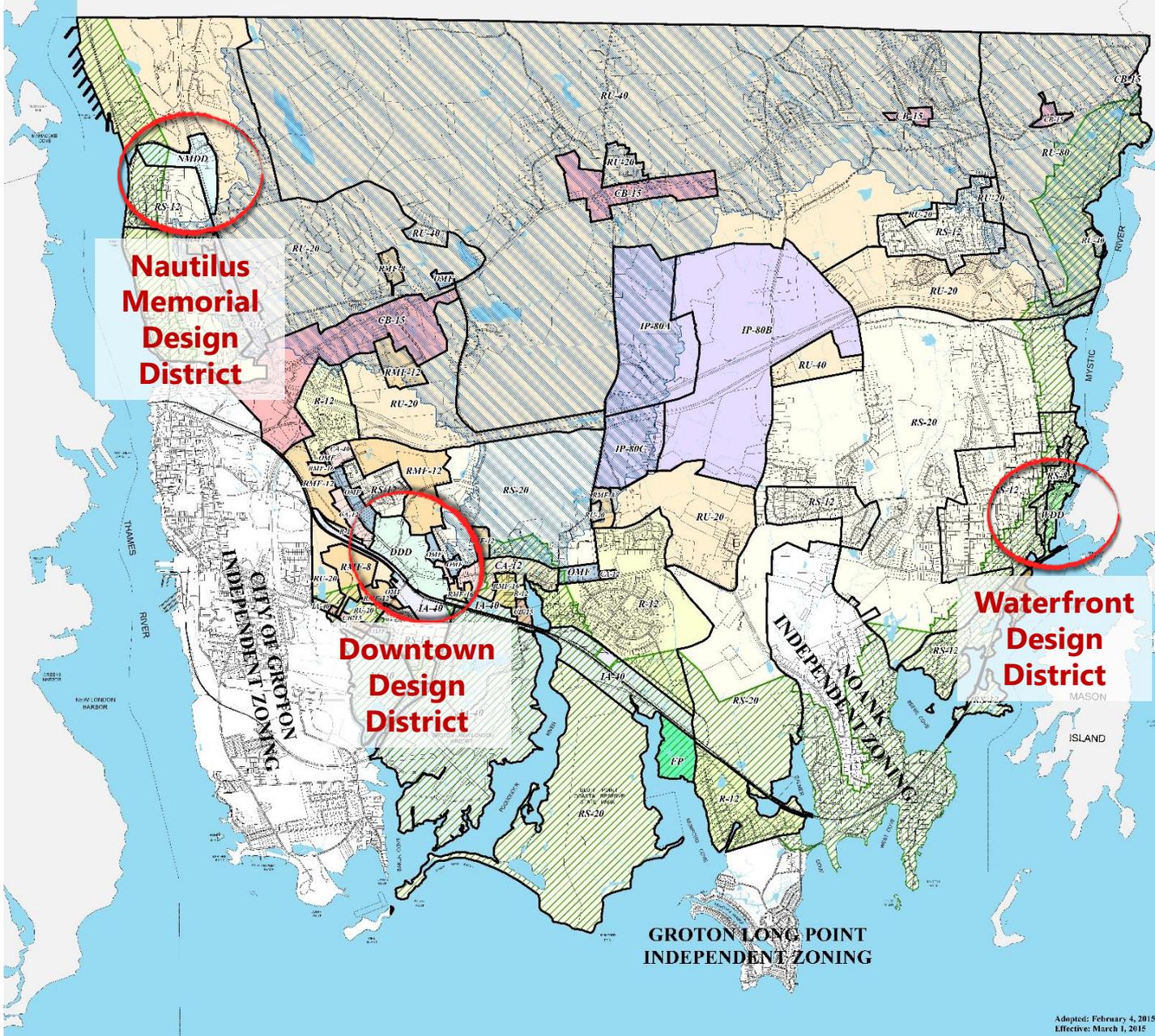
- Identify areas of concern
- Suggest changes
- Provide a “roadmap” to assist the Town in implementing recommendations





Focus Areas

- Inconsistencies
- Organization
- Confusing/Vague language
- Out-of-date provisions
- Barriers to efficient permitting
 - Staff review vs. commission approvals
 - Consolidation of boards/commissions
- Best practices
- Consistency with state statutes
- Consistency with Town's economic development objectives



**Nautilus
Memorial
Design
District**

**Downtown
Design
District**

**Waterfront
Design
District**

**GROTON LONG POINT
INDEPENDENT ZONING**

Adopted: February 4, 2015
Effective: March 1, 2015



**Town of Groton
ZONING**



- | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| RS Single Family | OMF Office Multiple Family | NMDD Nautilus Memorial Design | IP Industrial Park |
| R Residence | CA Commercial Retail | WDD Waterfront Design | FP Flood Plain |
| RH Rural | CB Commercial Heavy | WF Waterfront | WR Water Resource Protection |
| RMF Multiple Family | DDD Downtown Development | IA Industrial | CAM Coastal Area Management |

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Stakeholder Interviews

- Regulations are cumbersome, outdated and lack consistency; hinder the Town's ability to attract development
- Town is losing out to coastal communities in attracting development
- Capitalize on Town assets
 - Waterfront location
 - Regional access (highway, ferry, rail, airport)
 - Schools, parks, museums, and destinations
- Complacency due to past success (Pfizer and Electric Boat)
- Multiple Committees and Commissions create complexities
- Confusion created by Town/City of Groton jurisdiction; redundancy of functions and operations
- Land use regulations should support Town's goal for attracting economic development
- "Can do" attitude of current planning and ED staff

General Comments

- Zoning is difficult to get through; lacks streamlined review process
- Few incentives to encourage quality development
 - FAR bonuses, flexible standards
- Not supportive of emerging trends and changing demographics
 - Particularly mixed use and on-site employee amenities
- Lack requirements
 - Pedestrian and bike facilities, sustainability, alternative energy
- Bring code into the 21st century
 - Structure
 - Purpose
 - Definitions
 - Consistency
 - Consolidation

General Comments

- Simplify table of permitted uses (12 pages long)
- Numerous Boards and Commissions
- Waterfront Design District
 - Balance needs of residents with desires of tourists
- Nautilus Memorial Design District
 - Aspirations too lofty?
- Downtown Development District
 - Reconcile existing strip commercial land use pattern with desire to create a true town center

Recommendations

- 1. Pave the way for high quality economic development that reinforces a “sense of place”.**
 - Eliminate the MX District and create a Mixed-Use Special Use Permit.
 - Establish a vision for the Route 1 corridor.
 - Quantify “what’s on the ground” in the WDD. Create a “pattern book” to convey guidelines for future development (in coordination with Historic District Commission).
 - Reconcile the NMDD (purpose, use, development standards)

Recommendations

2. Create “user friendly” regulations.

- Change pagination to a simple number progression.
- Expand/modernize the Town’s website capabilities.
- Create an illustrated “Developer’s Handbook” as a supplement to the regulations.
- Create a Permit Table and Process Checklist as handouts for applicants.
- Clarify thresholds for Site Plan Review.

Recommendations

3. Simplify the regulations.

- Amend the Definition Section to reflect contemporary terminology.
- Simplify the existing Table of Permitted Uses.
- Consolidate the General Regulation Section by bringing parking requirements, sign standards, landscaping standards, environmental controls, and conditional uses into this section.
- Incorporate principles of Complete Streets into the Subdivision Regulations.

Next Steps

- Target areas for high quality economic development
- Create a new Mixed Use Special Permit which can be applied along the Route 1 corridor and elsewhere
- Staff -
 - Simplify use tables
 - Establish a vision for the Route 1 corridor
 - Conduct land use studies in representative cross-sampling of the built industrial environment to better understand development characteristics (establish baseline for making adjustments to dimensional and density requirements)
- Investigate streamlining, including potential to combine commissions, hold joint hearings and give approval authority to staff
- Create a developers handbook
- Use technology (on-line permitting)

Schedule

