

Groton 2035: Building a Greater Groton

Summary of Topic Content plus Policies and Strategies

Chapter 4: A Place Built to Last

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Chapter 4: A Place Built to Last

Goal Statement

Develop and maintain resilient, efficient, and environmentally responsible infrastructure systems that support Groton's long-term sustainability and quality of life. The Town will invest in resilient and connected roadways, modern and accessible community facilities, reliable and climate-resilient utilities, and a transition to clean, renewable energy—ensuring that infrastructure serves current needs while minimizing environmental impact and supporting future growth.

Transportation

Key Points

- A **well-maintained and safe roadway network** is essential to the daily life and long-term success of Groton. Roads support not only personal travel but also emergency response, school transportation, tourism, and local business activity.
- As the Town continues to grow and change, investing in roadway infrastructure—both in terms of maintenance and safety—will be critical to ensuring mobility, protecting public safety, and supporting a high quality of life for all residents. As new development occurs, it will be important to **construct appropriate road and multimodal connections** and consolidate access points to ensure an efficient and safe transportation network.
- In addition, safer streets with appropriate **traffic calming** can support broader goals for walkability and connectivity.

What We Have Heard

Community feedback for the Groton 2035 Plan consistently reinforced the priorities below.

- Community members voiced **concerns about speeding, distracted driving, and feeling unsafe** on major roads like Route 1.
- Many highlighted the need for more visible **enforcement of traffic laws** and design strategies to slow vehicles and provide dedicated space for and increase visibility of pedestrians and cyclists. **Sidewalk and road repairs** were identified as the highest priority for funding.
- In Mystic, **traffic congestion and bridge delays** were noted as challenges, while in other areas, such as the Route 1 corridor, residents pointed to the need for **improved traffic flow and safer crossings**.
- There is a strong public interest in ensuring Groton's roads are not only **functional and well maintained**, but also **safe and accessible** for everyone.
- Transportation involves more than just roadways. Rail service, Groton New London Airport, ferries, water taxis, trails, and multi-use paths **all** contribute to Groton's transportation network.

Our Current Work

Below are some of the things the Town is already doing or will continue to do throughout the ten-year period of this plan related to Transportation.

- Expand use of the Town's pavement management program (StreetLogix) to guide data-driven decisions for roadway resurfacing and preventive maintenance.

- Regularly review local crash data from the Groton Police Department to update and re-prioritize locations identified in the SECOG Regional Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Action Plan based on crash severity and frequency.
- Maintain and build upon existing comprehensive GIS-based inventory of roadway infrastructure, including culverts, bridges, and signage, and assess needs for repairs or upgrades to ensure system reliability and climate resilience.

Maps & Graphics

Set of graphics related to safety and safety improvements. This will include a summary of crash stats, text box about the Safe Systems Approach and Vision Zero, text box summarizing public feedback related to safety, graphic showing examples of roadway safety countermeasures. Text box summarizing support for roadway and sidewalk maintenance and repairs will also be included.

Policies & Strategies

Policy 4.1 Increase and Connect All Modes of Transportation.

Strategy 4.1.a Increase the resiliency of Groton’s transportation infrastructure to reduce vulnerability to flooding and climate-related impacts by conducting an inventory of flood-prone transportation infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and culverts, using local knowledge, past event data, and modeling tools to identify at-risk roadway infrastructure.

Strategy 4.1.b Integrate resilience considerations into all roadway and trail infrastructure improvement planning and development review processes, especially for infrastructure located within FEMA flood zones or coastal high hazard areas.

Strategy 4.1.c Construct appropriate road and trail connections and consolidate access points as development occurs.

Strategy 4.1.d Develop an access management plan for key corridors, such as Routes 1 and 12—developing recommendations such as consolidating driveways, limiting curb cuts, controlling left-turn access, and exploring the potential for roundabouts—to reduce conflict points and improve safety.

Strategy 4.1.e Advocate for the Shore Line East (SLE) extension to Groton and work with state and regional stakeholders to build on the [Eastern CT Corridor Rail and Transit Feasibility Study](#).

Spotlight on Resiliency

- Transportation infrastructure is a community lifeline that supports the safety and well-being of residents in sunny skies and during disasters. This includes pedestrian, bus, cycling, and other means of transportation, as well as cars.
- Several neighborhoods, such as Mumford Cove, Willow Point, and River Road, have only one roadway for access, making them particularly vulnerable to increased flooding. When these roads flood, there are no alternatives for neighborhood access.

Spotlight on Transportation Challenges in Mystic

Key Points

- Mystic is one of Groton's most prominent economic and cultural centers, drawing significant tourism activity and contributing to the local economy. To sustain its appeal and reduce the negative impacts of seasonal traffic, it is essential to **invest in multimodal transportation options** that support both residents and visitors.
- **Improved connectivity** through walking, biking, rail, and shuttle services can reduce congestion, enhance mobility, and create a more welcoming environment for tourists and a more pleasant place to live for residents.
- **Coordinating with state-led efforts**, including the working group proposed in House Bill No. 5432 to develop a plan for expanding the tourism industry in the Mystic Seaport area, presents an opportunity to explore a multimodal transportation center that integrates rail, transit, and alternative travel modes to strengthen Mystic's position as a regional destination.

What We Have Heard

Public feedback demonstrated broad community interest in solutions that support both everyday mobility and Mystic's tourism-driven economy.

- Community members frequently cited **traffic congestion, limited parking, and the impacts of bridge openings** as key transportation challenges in Mystic.
- Many expressed support for **improving pedestrian connectivity and safety, expanding public transportation** options such as shuttles and trolleys, and **addressing parking issues**—particularly by implementing the recommendations of the Mystic Parking Study and providing more designated parking for residents.
- The need for **regional transit connections**, including Amtrak and **ferry access**, was also highlighted.

Our Current Work

Below are some of the things the Town is already doing or will continue to do throughout the ten-year period of this plan related to Mystic's transportation challenges.

- Implement the priority recommendations of the 2020 [Mystic Parking Study](#), including improvements to parking capacity, management, pricing, and user experience.
- Develop and install a coordinated wayfinding signage system as laid out in the [Wayfinding Master Plan](#) to guide visitors to parking areas, transit options, local attractions, and regional connections.

Maps & Graphics

- Graphic from parking study or a graphic that shows Downtown Mystic & discusses the economic benefits of a walkability.

Policies and Strategies

Policy 4.2 Ease traffic congestion and expand multimodal transportation and parking options in the Mystic area to support tourism, economic development, and quality of life.

Strategy 4.2.a Work with Stonington on creative solutions to facilitate the movement of tourists and residents between destinations on both sides of the Mystic River and to reduce vehicle congestion. This

could include a bike share program, trolley service, water taxi or coordinated signage systems, for example.

Strategy 4.2.b To fund multi-modal improvements, establish a Parking & Transportation Fund, as recommended in the Mystic Parking Study, to reinvest revenues from parking meters, permits, fines, and in-lieu fees into the ongoing maintenance of parking infrastructure and the development of multimodal improvements.

Community Facilities, Utilities & Energy

Key Points

Groton's public infrastructure and facilities enable the Town to provide essential community services. To support Groton's long-term sustainability and the quality of life of residents, **the Town must invest in building and maintaining effective, resilient, and efficient infrastructure systems.** Groton's community facilities must meet current needs as well as future growth in housing and population. Since some facilities and infrastructure are not under the Town's direct control, the Town will need to engage with other service providers to plan for increased infrastructure demands to meet the needs of new housing, business, industries, and other growth.

- **Department of Public Works:** The Department of Public Works (DPW) manages the Town's buildings, sewer and stormwater infrastructure, roads, and fleet of vehicles.
 - **Sewer:** DPW's Water Pollution Control Division manages Groton's wastewater collection and treatment system. Much of Groton is sewered, with the remaining areas served by private septic systems that are permitted by the Ledge Light Health District. The Town, at the direction of the State, designated much of the area north of Interstate 95 as a sewer avoidance area. It recently extended sewer to the new middle school and is considering further sewer expansion into areas of interest for future development. Groton's Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) currently treats approximately 40% of the facility's maximum permitted flow allowing capacity for future increased flow. Funding limitations have prevented DPW from implementing resiliency measures, such as flood doors, that were recommended to protect pump stations in low-lying areas from flooding.
 - **Stormwater:** DPW manages the Town's stormwater system, which is separate from the sewer system. DPW implements a stormwater management program in compliance with the Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System General Permit (MS4 Permit) administered by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). In an effort to reduce Groton's impervious area by 2% as required by the MS4 Permit, OPDS (working in collaboration with DPW and Parks and Recreation) recently received a grant to evaluate the use of permeable pavers in municipal parking lots and to implement green infrastructure at a large parking lot at Esker Point Beach. Several low-lying areas experience tidal flooding, including Gravel Street, Water Street, Pearl Street, and the Willow Point area. To address localized stormwater flooding and nuisance tidal flooding, DPW is completing flood mitigation studies and planning stormwater infrastructure improvements.
 - **Public buildings:** DPW's Facilities Management Division is responsible for the repair, maintenance, and cleaning of 45 buildings, including Town Hall and Town Hall Annex, Groton Community Center, the Public Library, Hockey Rink, Thrive55+ Active Living Center, and the Police Station. Among those buildings, the Town's highway garage needs major upgrades or replacement because it is undersized for fleet maintenance. DPW has recently completed upgrades to the Groton Public Library.
- **Utilities:**

- **Drinking Water:** Groton is primarily served by two water providers: Groton Utilities, owned and managed by the City of Groton, and Aquarion Water Company of Connecticut, a subsidiary of Eversource. Groton Utilities' water is supplied by five surface water reservoirs located in the Town and Ledyard and three wells. The water is treated in a newly constructed water treatment plant. Two small water providers, Groton Long Point and Noank Water Company, purchase treated water from Groton Utilities. The remainder of properties are served by private wells. The water supply for Groton Utilities and Aquarion is adequate, but Aquarion (which serves Mystic on both sides of the Mystic River) has been concerned by recent development proposals which, if built, could strain their capacity. However, the interconnection between the two utilities could provide additional supply in the short term. Major challenges facing Groton's drinking water systems include limited additional water capacity potential to the north of Groton and climate change-induced problems such as drought. Aquarion has recently hired a consultant to analyze the resilience of their water system.
- **Electricity and natural gas:** Groton's electricity primarily comes from Groton Utilities and Eversource. Eversource also supplies natural gas in Groton.
- **Telecommunications:** Groton benefits from healthy competition between telecommunications providers and relatively high broadband internet access (roughly 94% of households) – although certain (often economically disadvantaged) areas have lower access to broadband.
- **Dams:** Of the 23 dams located in Groton, most have negligible or low hazard ratings assigned by DEEP. The Ledyard Reservoir South Dam (owned by the City of Groton) and the Plants Pond Dam (State-owned) have significant and moderate hazard ratings, respectively, indicating a higher degree of consequences that would result from failure or mis-operation of the dam.
- **Emergency Service Facilities:** Groton emergency services are provided by the Town of Groton Police Department and Office of Emergency Management, ten independent fire districts, the Groton Ambulance Association and the Mystic River Ambulance Association. Both ambulance services are private nonprofit organizations. Police Department facilities require several renovations including updates to cell block areas, plexiglass doors, generator, and HVAC system. Potential upgrades include solar panel installation. Groton's Office of Emergency Management could benefit from more space, more technologically advanced equipment, and a full-time employee rather than a part-time position shared with the Police Department. The Groton Ambulance Association would benefit from additional building space. The fire districts work together to effectively meet the need for emergency services across the entire Town. However, due to their small size, they struggle with the cost of expensive but necessary assets and equipment, and with maintaining adequate volunteers and staffing.
- **Schools:** Groton recently made major investments in school construction, adding two new elementary schools and combining two middle schools into one new facility. However, several of the schools have experienced flooding and mold issues in recent years, including new buildings like the Mystic River Elementary School. While school facilities meet current needs, every classroom is full and middle school teachers lack their own dedicated classrooms. The school system is working to expand solar energy generation to more buildings, find funding to purchase electric buses, and identify a local vendor to collect food scraps and produce compost.
- **Solid Waste:** Municipal solid waste is sent to several facilities through an agreement with the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resources Recovery Authority. The Town does not provide any residential solid waste collection service to residents.

What We Have Heard

- **DPW:** Residents are proud of DPW's infrastructure and separate sewer and stormwater systems, although the costs to maintain aging infrastructure continue to rise. Some of the most popular ideas for how to improve community services and facilities would fall under DPW's authority, including investing in more road and sidewalk repairs, increasing flood resilience (including elevating structures, building flood barriers, and moving pump stations out of flood areas), and investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy in the Town's buildings, facilities, and equipment.
 - **Sewer:** Some residents want Groton to expand the sewer system into areas that are currently unsewered; however, the State requires sewer avoidance in certain areas and the high cost of sewer expansion is a major barrier. The Town remains committed to maintaining much of the area north of Interstate 95 as a sewer avoidance area.
 - **Stormwater:** Residents want DPW to invest in preventing flooding and adding plants and trees to reduce the impacts of intense rainfall and heat. People want to limit pollution from stormwater runoff.
- **Utilities:**
 - **Drinking Water:** Groton's drinking water reservoir is highlighted as a Town asset. People are interested in opening up the land near the reservoirs for other uses, including biking, hiking, and potential development.
 - **Telecommunications:** People would like the Town to create infrastructure to expand access to broadband internet.
- **Schools:** In the focus groups, Groton's investment in education was highlighted as an asset and Groton Public Schools received special praise. Many participants expressed interest in continuing to modernize and renovate school buildings. Focus group participants also noted that although the new middle school building is nice, the transition for students from five elementary schools into one middle school presents challenges.
- **Other public buildings:** People greatly appreciate the wide range of social and community services the Groton Public Library (GPL) provides to Town residents.

Our Current Work

Below are some of the things the Town is already doing or will continue to do throughout the ten-year period of this plan related to Community Facilities, Utilities, and Energy.

- **Invest in facility and infrastructure maintenance** to keep up with the gradual deterioration of physical infrastructure.
- **Plan for new infrastructure** to meet changing community needs related to housing growth, economic development, and climate change.
- **Coordinate among service providers**, including utilities and telecommunications providers. Groton has a particularly fractured network of service providers due to its political subdivisions.
- Engage in regular discussions with the Groton Public Library about their facility needs.
- Ensure regular interaction between fire districts and centralized Town departments to ensure consistent and effective coverage.

Maps

- Horsley Witten created “Town Services and Utilities” and “Dams” maps for Groton, which can be included in the chapter.

Graphics

- A variety of photos of Groton’s community facilities and utilities would be helpful, including the WPCF and the Esker Point Beach green infrastructure project (if sufficiently far along).

Policies & Strategies

Policy 4.3 Foster sustainable, resilient, and adaptable infrastructure that ensures uninterrupted access to essential services such as water, sewer, electricity, broadband, etc.

Strategy 4.2.a Develop a comprehensive study and plan to improve the resiliency of local utilities and other infrastructure. Invest in increased resilience of wastewater and stormwater collection and treatment systems, including through flood proofing. Consider options for a more resilient electrical system, such as burying these utilities whenever possible and establishing more microgrids.

Strategy 4.2.b Conduct a baseline energy audit for all Town buildings, facilities and vehicles and track changes over time. Invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy for Town buildings, facilities and vehicles and factor in the longer-term benefits of such investments versus any short-term savings of investing in less efficient and renewable alternatives.

Strategy 4.2.c The Town will serve as a clearinghouse of information on local, state, and federal resources to help individual homeowners and business owners invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy retrofits on their properties.

Strategy 4.2.d Work with local broadband providers to ensure high speed internet access for the approximately 6% of Groton households currently lacking it.

Spotlight on Resiliency

- Community lifelines, according to FEMA’s framework, are the most fundamental services in the community that, when functioning well, enable all other aspects of society to function. Groton will continue to prioritize these lifelines both in blue skies and in disaster planning.
 - FEMA’s community lifelines are: safety and security; food, hydration, and shelter; health and medical; energy; communications; transportation; hazardous materials; and water systems.
 - *Graphics: FEMA has [icons](#) for each of these*
- These lifelines are critical because they serve the people of Groton. The Town will continue to focus on strengthening infrastructure so it can better serve the whole community, including the intangible social connections and networks that also enhance resilience.