

Chapter 3: Land Use and Zoning

Introduction

This chapter discusses Orange's current land use patterns and existing zoning code. Land use describes what is currently happening on the ground, and zoning is the regulatory tool by which municipalities set regulations to control the land use, height, bulk of buildings, and other dimensional standards for new construction and renovations. The land use and zoning maps included in this chapter are illustrative – official land use and zoning data is available at the Orange Assessor's office and the Plan & Zoning Department, respectively.

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Land Use Patterns

Orange is a suburban community primarily made up of residential neighborhoods accompanied by commercial, light industrial, and community / institutional uses, as shown in Figure 1. The Town contains approximately 11,190 acres with a wide range of land uses that serve residents, employees, and visitors. Land uses in Town are largely bifurcated by Route 1 (Boston Post Road). The area northwest of Boston Post Road features residential, community / institutional, and open space land uses. In contrast, the area along and immediately southeast of Boston Post Road is predominantly characterized by commercial and industrial land uses. The Town's land use pattern is mostly consistent with the one described in the 2015 POCD; approximately two-thirds of land is dedicated to residential use.

One notable land use change is the development of additional multi-family and senior housing, including properties like Firelite Commons, Lascana Homes, Charter Senior Living, and Maplewood at Orange, which have all been developed since the 2015 POCD (See Chapter 4: Housing and Neighborhoods, Figure 1).

Another land use change has been a continued effort by the Town to gradually acquire open spaces and increase this land use category. This is a major land use category in the Town, representing approximately 23% of Orange's land use (a 2% increase from 2015).



Treat Farm's Farm Stand

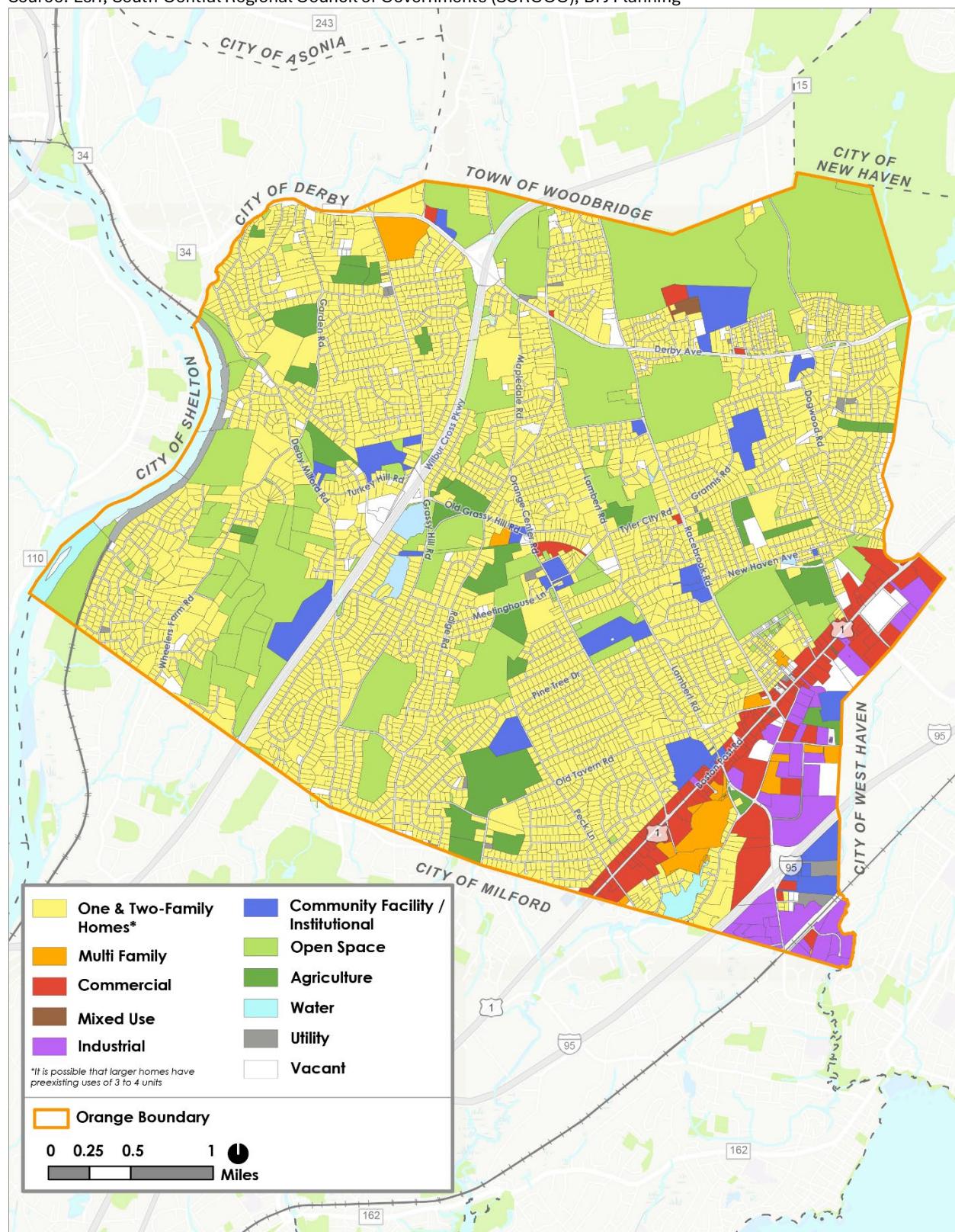


Home Depot Plaza on Boston Post Road

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Figure 1: Land Use

Source: Esri, South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG), BFJ Planning



Zoning

The primary law governing land use in Orange is the Zoning Code (Chapter 383). Zoning regulates the use and dimensional regulations for all parcels. As shown in Table 1 and Figure 2, Orange has 12 mapped zoning districts: three residential districts, five business / commercial districts, and four industrial districts. Since the last POCD, major zoning changes include the removal of the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) District from the town's zoning code, and the adoption of the Senior Living District (SLD) and the Assisted Housing District. The TOD district was eliminated, as the Connecticut Department of Transportation decided against building a train station in Orange, opting instead for a new station in the City of West Haven.

Table 1: Summary of Existing Zoning

Source: Town of Orange, 2025

District	Minimum Lot Area	Setbacks			Building Height	Maximum Ground Coverage
		Front	Other	Rear		
Residential (RES)	60,000 square feet	50 feet	25 feet	50 feet	2.5 stories / 35 feet	10%
Senior Living (SLD)	1.5 acres	50 feet	35 feet	35 feet	60 feet	25%
Assisted Housing	2 acres	30 feet	10 feet	25 feet	3 stories / 40 feet	-
Local Shopping (LSC)	25,000 square feet	50 feet	12 feet	50 feet	3 stories / 40 feet	25%
Commercial (C-1)	25,000 square feet	50 feet	12 feet	50 feet	3 stories / 40 feet ^d	25%
Commercial (C-2)	25,000 square feet	50 feet	12 feet	50 feet	3 stories / 40 feet	25%
Light Industrial (L-1)	2 acres	50 feet	35 feet	35 feet	40 feet	40%
Light Industrial (L-2)	2 acres	50 feet	35 feet	35 feet	60 feet	40%
Light Industrial (L-3)	2 acres	50 feet	40 feet	40 feet	40 feet	35%
Light Industrial (L-4)	2 acres	50 feet	35 feet	35 feet	60 feet	40%
Business Office Park (BOP)	8 acres ^a	50 feet ^c	35 feet	35 feet	60 feet	25%
Office Park (OP)	5 acres ^b	50 feet	25 feet	50 feet	4 stories / 60 feet	20%

^a Lot area may be reduced to five acres when shown on a subdivision map approved by the Commission and the lot has access on a street other than Marsh Hill Road and Indian River Road.

^b Except as otherwise provided in § [383-96.101](#).

^c A setback of 100 feet shall be provided from the centerline of a major street, including Marsh Hill Road and Indian River Road.

^d Except as otherwise provided in § [383-143.9C](#).

Residence Districts

Orange has three residential districts (Residential (RES), Senior Living (SLD), Assisted Housing). 80% of the Town is zoned **RES**. Principal permitted uses in this zone include single family detached housing; farms, nurseries and livestock; and two-family family dwelling units. Single-family homes on one and a half acre lots (60,000 square feet) create the single largest characteristic of Orange's land development. This is consistent with state planning guidance to keep higher density uses to areas that are sewered. Non-sewered areas rely on septic fields and need reasonable lot sizes so that septic fields can percolate through the soil without leading to contamination.

The **SLD**, which was adopted in 2018, was created to provide flexible housing arrangements to accommodate the Town's senior population. Located southeast of Boston Post Road, the SLD permits assisted living, memory care assisted living, and senior independent living facilities by special permit. The **Assisted Housing District**, adopted in 2020, was established to facilitate the development of multifamily apartments that qualify as "assisted housing" in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes § 8-30g(a)(3). The AHD is located along Smith Farm Road and is occupied by Lascana Homes, a 46-unit affordable housing development.

Commercial and Industrial Districts

Orange's five commercial districts include Commercial C-1, Commercial C-2, Local Shopping Center (LSC), Business Office Park, and Office Park. Principal permitted uses in the **C-1** and **C-2** districts include retail, business and professional offices, restaurants, hotels, and places of worship. The C-1 and C-2 districts are characterized by the big box retail stores and commercial centers along Boston Post Road. The two **LSC** districts are focused on local retail - the LSC along Orange Center Road is home to the Orange Market, while the second LSC district encompasses the Firelite Shopping Center and the Orange Commons Shopping Center on Boston Post Road. The **Business Office Park District's** principal permitted uses include business and professional offices, utility substations, and government facilities. The **Office Park District** supports business and professional offices, in addition to laboratories, printing and publishing, data centers, childcare facilities, and convalescent care; the Office Park District encompasses the University of New Haven Orange Campus.

ORANGE POCD UPDATE- DRAFT

The Town's four industrial districts are Light Industrial #1 (LI-1), Light Industrial #2 (LI-2), Light Industrial #3 (LI-3), and Light Industrial #4 (LI-4). All four districts are located southeast of Boston Post Road. **LI-1**'s principal permitted uses include manufacturing, research laboratories, office buildings, warehousing, freight businesses, motor vehicle repair, and utility substations. **LI-2** is Orange's light industrial district. It permits a mix of industrial uses, with commercial uses permitted as special uses subject to approval. **LI-3** provides a transition between commercial and light industrial uses. It permits some light industrial uses and office buildings and allows commercial uses and hotels as special uses. **LI-4** supports university activity in town; principal permitted uses include university facilities, medical offices and health care facilities, research laboratories, and data centers. This district is primarily occupied by Yale University facilities, including the Yale School of Nursing.

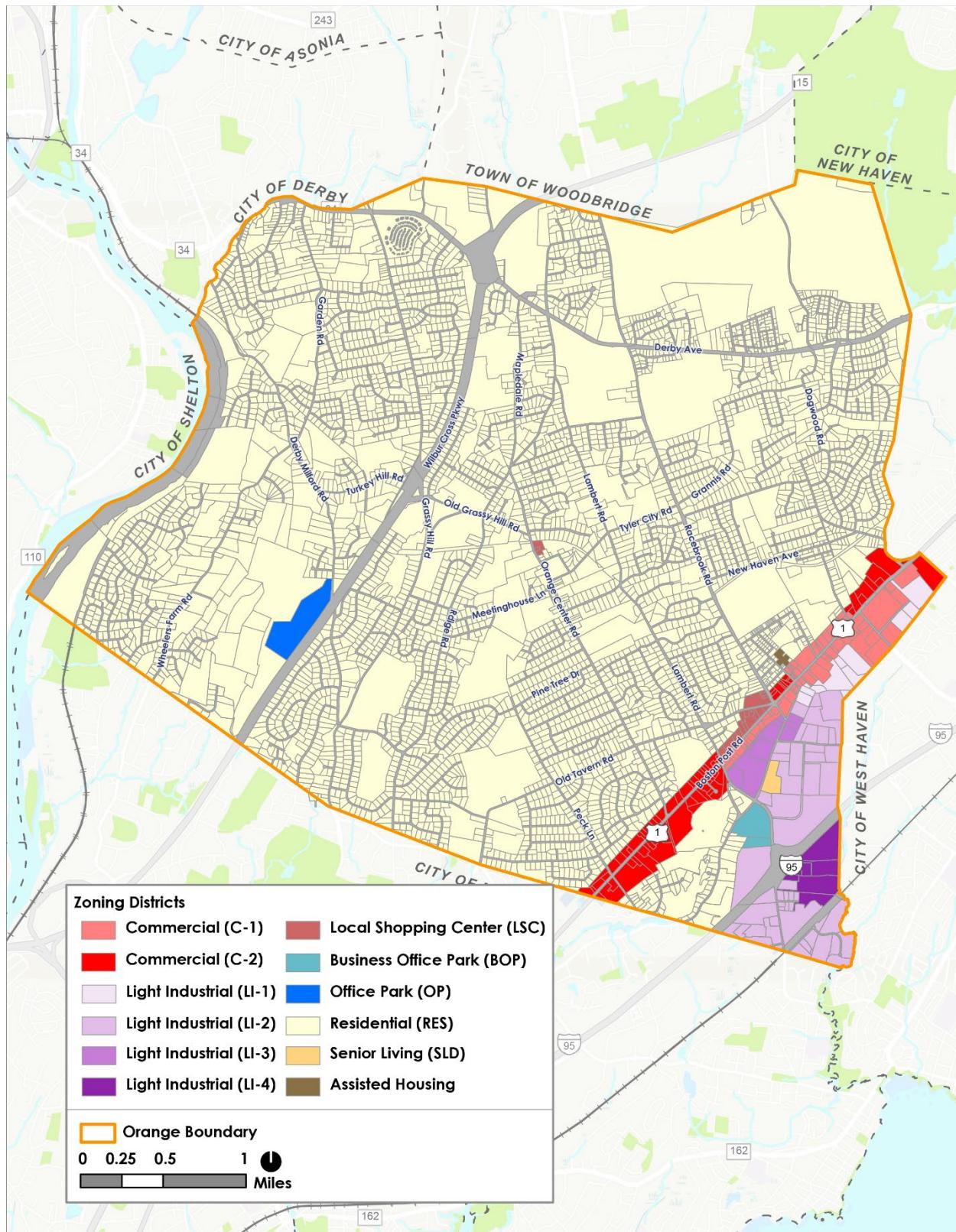


Orange Market, located in the LSC District on Orange Center Road

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Figure 2: Existing Zoning

Source: Esri, Town of Orange, BFJ Planning



Recommendations

3.1 Maintain existing community character.

3.1.1 *Preserve existing single-family neighborhoods.*

3.1.2 *Encourage mixed-use development, where appropriate.*

3.1.3 *Maintain Orange Center's character as a rural hamlet.*

3.2 Continue to preserve and expand open space.

3.2.1 *Encourage policies to help Orange continue to grow and maintain its open space.*

3.4 Agricultural uses are important to Orange's identity and economy and should continue to be supported.

3.3.1 Maintain reduced local tax assessment on agricultural lands (PA-940).

3.3.2 Continue to lease Town land to farmers, as appropriate.

3.4 Route 1 is an important commercial corridor.

3.4.1 *Promote mixed-use development on Route 1.*

3.4.2 Implement stronger site design and landscape controls along Route 1 / Boston Post Road

3.4.3 *Explore strategies to reduce curb cuts and enhance road safety along Route 1, especially with sidewalks.*

3.5 Land use regulations need regular review and updates to ensure consistency.

3.5.1 *Regularly review definitions and regulations.*

3.5.2 *Examine the zoning code and identify potential revisions that would enable homeowners to make minor property upgrades more easily; examine potential regulatory changes to address common nonconforming uses.*

3.5.3 *Review performance, noise, and lighting standards, particularly in the core commercial areas.*