

Waterfront Development (WD) Zoning – Quick Overview

(Town of Waterford, CT)

Purpose of the WD District

The Waterfront Development (WD) District is intended to encourage **mixed-use waterfront development**, with a strong emphasis on **water-dependent and water-related uses**. These include uses that require direct access to marine or tidal waters and cannot reasonably be located inland. The district is designed to balance **economic development, public access, and environmental protection**, particularly along the Thames River and Niantic River waterfront areas.

Uses Permitted By Right

The following uses are allowed **without a special permit**:

- Public or private parks and playgrounds
 - Yacht clubs and marinas
 - Boat docks, slips, piers, and wharves
 - Boat building, storage, repair, service, and sales yards
 - Marine equipment sales, yacht brokers, marine insurance offices
 - Fuel docks and marina-related facilities
 - Boat rentals
 - Retail sales or rentals of boating, fishing, diving, and water-related equipment
 - Sail lofts and ship's chandleries
 - Swimming pools and swimming clubs
 - Nautical or maritime-themed museums
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Uses Allowed by Special Permit

The following uses may be approved **subject to Planning & Zoning Commission approval**:

- Retail stores and service establishments
- Restaurants
- Professional offices
- Residential development (up to density allowed by Section 18)
- Hotels and motels

- Commercial or private tennis and racquet clubs
 - Port facilities and bulk shipping/storage operations
 - Fishing and lobstering base operations, including seafood processing and markets
 - Towers, antennas, tanks, and similar structures exceeding 40 feet in height
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Lot & Building Requirements (Key Metrics)

Minimum Lot Size:

- 20,000 square feet

Minimum Frontage & Width:

- 50 feet of frontage on a public street
- 50 feet minimum lot width at building line
- Alternative access may be approved where public street frontage is infeasible

Setbacks:

- Front yard: 20 feet
- Side yard: 10 feet (may be reduced to 0 by approval)
- Rear yard: 20 feet
- Minimum 25 feet from mean water line of the Thames or Niantic River

Building Coverage:

- Maximum 50% of lot area

Building Height:

- Base maximum: 25 feet
- Height incentives may allow up to **45 feet** (see incentives below)

Riverfront Building Width:

- Structures along the river may not exceed **40% of parcel width**
 - May increase to 50% with public waterfront access incentives
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Parking

- Off-street parking required per Section 20
- Parking may be located **off-site within 400 feet**, subject to ownership, deed restrictions, and design compliance

- Encourages reuse of existing structures and flexibility for waterfront sites
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Environmental Protection

- Existing vegetation and topography must be preserved
 - All development must comply with environmental protection standards under Section 25
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Site Plan Approval

- **Site plan approval is required** for most development
 - Commission evaluates waterfront views, public access, building orientation, traffic flow, and pedestrian circulation
 - Special master plans (Mago Point / Thames River peninsulas) may apply
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Development Incentives (Major Value Add)

Height Incentives:

- Reduce building coverage by 10% → gain +10 feet in height
- Provide permanent public waterfront access → up to 45 feet max height

Width Incentives:

- Provide permanent public waterfront access → increase riverfront width allowance from 40% to 50%

These incentives can significantly enhance **development yield and project feasibility**.