

1 Introduction



“And meet it is, that over these sea pastures, wide-rolling watery prairies and Potter’s Fields of all four continents, the waves should rise and fall, and ebb and flow unceasingly, for here, millions of mixed shades and shadows, drowned dreams, somnabulisms, reveries, all that we call lives and souls, lie dreaming, dreaming still; tossing like slumberers in their beds; the ever-rolling waves made so by their restlessness.”

Herman Melville – Moby Dick

Newport is of the sea. It is embedded within and surrounded by the sea. It’s beginning as a colonial settlement and its subsequent evolution are closely tied to the sea. From the protected, deep harbors of Narragansett Bay, ships can, and do, access every port in the world. From Newport, hundreds of pleasure craft of every type set out to ply Melville’s “rolling watery prairies.” In Newport, families seek refuge from the summer heat in the cooling surf, bop to live music and dine on fresh, local seafood. Newport attracts over 3.5 million visitors each year, many of them drawn to its extraordinary coast and all that it offers. The sea is the one inescapable constant in Newport’s life.

And that sea is changing. In the years ahead, Newport will need to manage the impacts and challenges of rising seas and more frequent and dangerous coastal storms. Fortunately, City leadership and staff have already begun to evaluate and plan for these challenges, which will impact almost every subject area addressed in this update to Newport’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan update (the “Plan” and “Comprehensive Plan”).

State Planning Goals and Comprehensive Plan Requirements

Rhode Island is one of only a few States in the U.S. that has adopted a system of planning which closely ties State, regional and local policies, goals and strategies together into a comprehensive, long-range program. This integrated and holistic approach helps to avoid or mitigate conflicting actions, helps citizens prioritize funding, and in general, enhances the ability to accomplish common objectives. This approach, referred to by state officials as “reciprocal comprehensive planning,” has been in place in Rhode Island since 1988.

Important amendments were made to the 1988 law in 2011 and this most recent Newport Comprehensive Plan has been created to meet the requirements of the current law, codified as Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) 45-22.2 (the “Act”).

The Act mandates that “the goals and policies of the municipal plan shall be consistent with the goals and intent of this chapter (i.e. RIGL 45-22.2) and shall embody the goals and policies of the State Guide Plan” (“SGP”) Therefore, Newport’s Plan must address two sets of state goals (i.e. those in the Act itself and those in the SGP).

State Planning Act Goals

The goals of the Act are found in RIGL 45-22.2-3 (c) and include:

- To promote orderly growth and development that recognizes the natural characteristics of the land, its suitability for use, the availability of existing and proposed public and/or private services and facilities, and is consistent with available resources and the need to protect public health, including drinking water supply, drinking water safety, and environmental quality.
- To promote an economic climate which increases quality job opportunities and overall economic well-being of each municipality and the state.
- To promote the production and rehabilitation of year-round housing and to preserve government subsidized housing for persons and families of low and moderate income in a manner that: considers local, regional, and statewide needs; housing that achieves a balance of housing choices, for all income levels and age groups; recognizes the affordability of housing as the responsibility of each municipality and the state; takes into account growth management and the need to phase and pace development in areas of rapid growth; and facilitates economic growth in the state.
- To promote the protection of the natural, historic and cultural resources of each municipality and the state.
- To promote the preservation of the open space and recreational resources of each municipality and the state.
- To provide for the use of performance-based standards for development and to encourage the use of innovative development regulations and techniques that promote the development of land suitable for development while protecting our natural, cultural, historical, and recreational resources, and achieving a balanced pattern of land uses.
- To promote consistency of state actions and programs with municipal comprehensive plans, and provide for review procedures to ensure that state goals and policies are reflected in municipal comprehensive plans and state guide plans.
- To ensure that adequate and uniform data are available to municipal and state government as the basis for comprehensive planning and land use regulation.
- To ensure that municipal land use regulations and decisions are consistent with the comprehensive plan of the municipality, and to ensure state land use regulations and decisions are consistent with state guide plans.
- To encourage the involvement of all citizens in the formulation, review, and adoption, or amendment of the comprehensive plan.

State Guide Plan Goals

The SGP is essentially a list of various plans developed separately and relating to the broad spectrum of subject areas typically addressed in a comprehensive plan. The SGP organizes its general goals (SGP Element 110) within four broad categorical areas:

- Human Resources
- Economic Development
- Physical Development
- Facilities and Services

In addition to the general goals contained in Element 110 of the SGP (listed above), each of the other major SGP Elements also contain specific goals (e.g. the goals from the 2014 “Rhode Island Rising” report, which is part of the SGP’s economic development element). However, for purposes of compliance with this specific requirement of the Act (i.e. consistency with SGP goals), a municipality is not required to specifically address each subject area goal listed or described in the SGP, in its comprehensive plan. The municipality is however, required to use the SGP elements as guidance in developing their own Plan’s content.

Comprehensive Plan Requirements

The Act also includes very detailed requirements for Plan content, data, maps analysis and policy, as well as the process for the Plan’s review and approval. In order to assist communities with developing and updating their Plans, the Rhode Island Division of Planning Statewide Planning Program has produced a number of general, as well as, topic specific guidance documents.

In addition to required existing conditions maps, specific data sets, goals, policies, areas of analysis, and the implementation element, the State mandates specific topical elements. A list of the required and additional elements is provided at the end of this chapter, along with the corresponding chapter number where the element can be found in the plan.

Finally, as a part of this plan, various issues and trends are explored in each element. Issues and Trends are identified in Chapters 3 through 13 using the icons described below.

 <p>Issue A specific concern, opportunity, constraint relating to one or more topics (e.g. Over-reliance on seasonal tourism as the source of local employment and revenues)</p>	 <p>Trend The general course a topic is taking, or has been heading in the recent past (e.g. Newport has long been committed to providing ample affordable housing to its community)</p>
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Demographics

Since the 1980's, Newport has reported steady and consistent declines in population. According to the 2014 U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, population in the City of Newport declined from 26,476 persons in 2000 to 24,340 persons in 2015, an 8% decrease. Background data on a city's population can help focus planning efforts on catering to the population present within the city. Newport has already taken steps to manage the population decline seen within the city, most notably in the disposition of public school properties. These have been re-purposed for a variety of uses. The city will need to go further to assess all of the service, revenue and quality of life implications of population decline. That detailed analysis will lead to the development and implementation of a strategy, tied to other key Plan goals and policies.

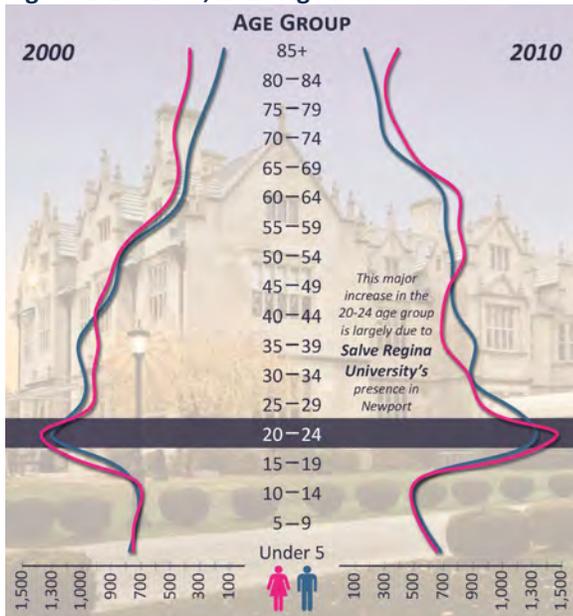
Although population is declining, the city sees increases in population on a seasonal basis due to various industries as can be seen in Table 1-1. Tourism, the Navy, and Salve Regina University are all sectors that generate fluctuations in Newport's nonresidential population. While the permanent resident population is generally decreasing, the city must plan for influxes in seasonal population.

Table 1-1 Entities Causing Seasonal Population Growth in Newport

Entity	Population
Salve Regina University (student enrollment)	2,739
Naval Station Newport (Civilian)	8,340
Naval Station Newport (Military)	13,000
Tourism (estimated yearly visitors)	3,500,000

Source: Salve Regina University, Naval Station Newport, City of Newport

Figure 1-1 – 2000, 2010 Age Distribution

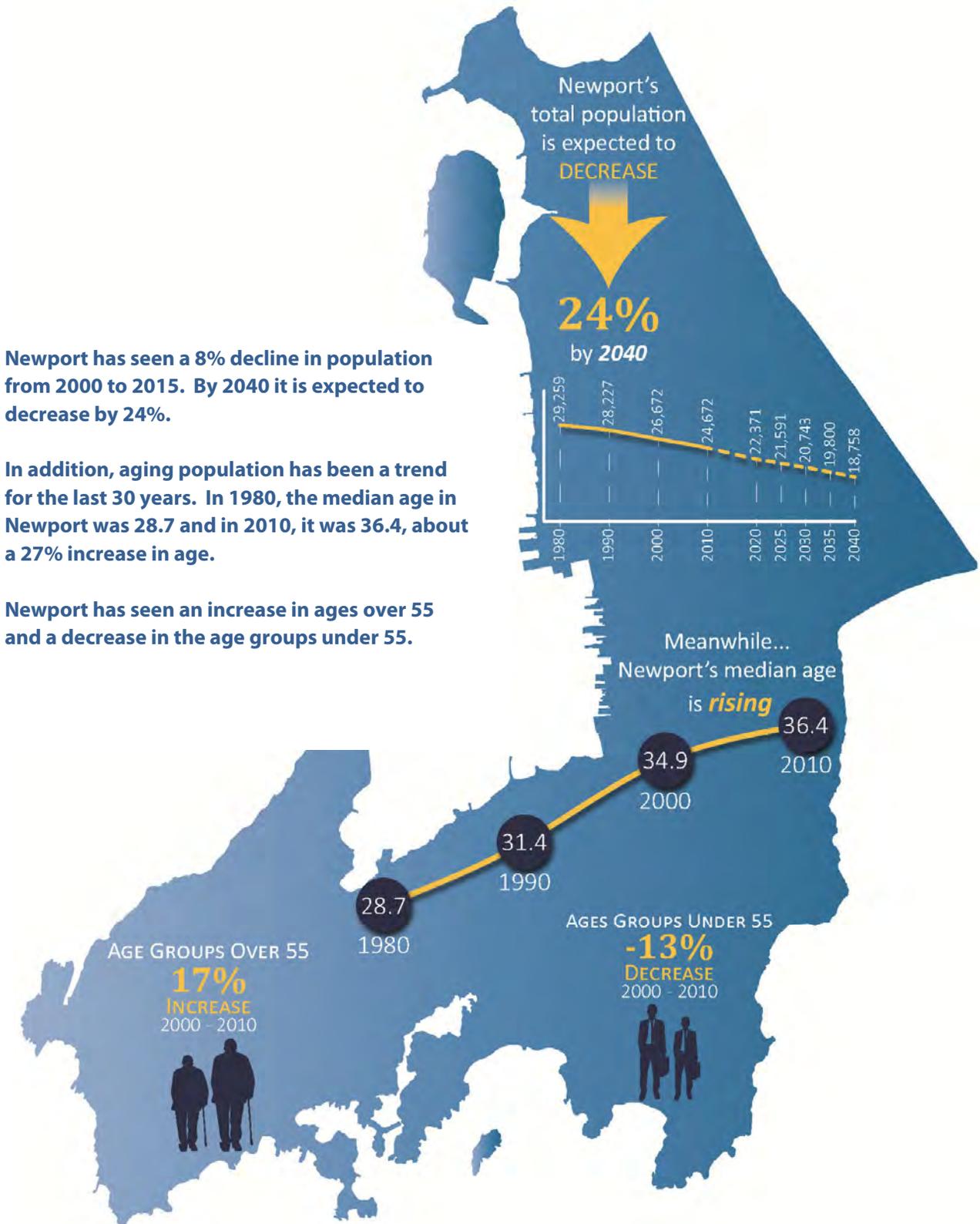


One of the most important demographic characteristics of a population is its age-gender structure. Age-gender pyramids, also known as population pyramids, graphically display total population separated by age and gender. In Figure 1-1, to the left, Newport's female and male residents are represented in red and blue, respectively. The left side of the figure is for the year 2000, with the right being for 2010.

The age group figure is a visualization of the changes in the city's population and give implications on where Newport is heading into the future. From 2000 to 2010, general increases can be seen in the age cohorts 50 years and up. Another sign of an aging population are the decreases in the youngest three age cohorts. The large spike in the 20 to 24 and 25 to 29 age cohorts can be attributed to the two post-secondary schools in Newport, Salve Regina University and Community College of Rhode Island. More information on demographic changes in Newport can be seen on Figure 1-2.

Examining a community's age distribution helps to understand the composition of the population. Newport's age distribution shows a large percentage of population between the ages of 20 – 24. This may be due to the presence of the military and Salve Regina University.

Figure 1-2 – Trend in Population Decrease



Further demographic analysis shows a diversifying population. Table 1-2 highlights the diversity in races and ethnicities within the City of Newport for the years 2000, 2014, and 2015. Newport continues to be primarily white, but continued diversity in the other Race category and Hispanic or Latino ethnicities can be seen.

Table 1-2 City of Newport Race and Ethnicity by Percent of Population 2000, 2014

Race	2000	2014	2015
White	82.5%	84.1%	85.6%
Black or African American	6.9%	6.1%	6.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.8%	0.5%	0.3%
Asian	1.4%	0.9%	1.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0%	0%
Other Race	3.1%	3.5%	3%
Two or More Races	5.2%	5%	3.8%
Ethnicity	2000	2014	2015
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	8.4%	9.1%	9.3%

Source: 2000, 2010-20104 American Community Survey

Vision Statement

A vision statement describes a future ideal state. It articulates the shared aspirations of community residents, property owners, leadership and other stakeholders. The vision serves as a source of inspiration and guidance. It should be creative and bold, yet pragmatic enough to allow for the development and implementation of strategies designed to accomplish community goals and objectives. The residents of Newport helped in drafting a vision statement for this 2016 Plan during a public workshop held during the plan process. The statement contains the key values upon which all of the subordinate goals, policies and implementation actions within this Comprehensive Land Use Plan are based and is as follows:

The City of Newport is a vibrant, forward-looking and welcoming community built upon a strong sense of place and cultural heritage. Residents and visitors alike enjoy the city for its rich history, natural beauty, boating traditions, walkability, enticing downtown, community diversity, and overall quality of life. We are committed to charting a course for our future that embraces and encourages innovative growth and development, taking an active role in the stewardship of our architectural and natural resources, and an enhanced quality of life, all while we maintain our unique historic and cultural assets that are the foundation of our character.

Objectives

The year is 2036 and Newport is ...

A Prosperous City...

- *Where the community has the resources it needs to provide the services and facilities desired.*
- *Where investment in the future is used as a tool to create value for all.*
- *Where great paying jobs are available in a diverse range of fields.*
- *Where a wide-range of businesses and entrepreneurs thrive year round.*
- *Where regional and global businesses want to be located.*

A Beautiful City...

- *Where culture, history and architecture are respected and preserved.*
- *Where good design and planning enhances the community and preserves its unique heritage and protects its natural assets.*
- *Where art in all its forms is found throughout the community.*
- *Where there is public access to the waterfront, both physically and visually.*

A Happy City...

- *Where proud citizens celebrate their community's unique sense of place.*
- *Where all citizens have equal access to resources and opportunities.*
- *Where the well-being of children and families is supported by maintaining a level of affordable living.*

A Destination City...

- *Where world class amenities and unique historic architecture draw international visitors for yachting and cultural tourism.*
- *Where movement through the city positively frames the experience of the physical environment and where the impact of vehicular movement is minimized.*
- *Where visitors and residents alike may safely travel on the streets and sidewalks.*

A Collaborative City...

- *Where community leaders embrace an integrated, strategic approach to planning, programming, budgeting and staffing.*
- *Where communication and community collaboration are the foundation of good decisions.*
- *Where a user-friendly government applies best practices to keep citizens engaged and informed.*

A Smart City...

- *Where lifelong learning, from early childhood through adult education, is a priority.*
- *Where innovation and technology are embraced and drive improvement in all aspects of the community.*
- *Where our educational system is high performing and attractive to all families.*

A Healthy City...

- *Where clean air and water are abundant.*
- *Where protection and improvement of natural resources is highly valued.*
- *Where environmental stewardship is integrated into all city staff and government decision-making.*
- *Where community elements, such as open spaces and parks, are designed to encourage and facilitate healthy lifestyles.*
- *Where recreational amenities are integrated into and maintained as a part of the community.*
- *Where public spaces and facilities are accessible and ADA compliant.*
- *Where affordable, fresh local food is available in abundance to support local agriculture, healthy lifestyles and sustainable initiatives.*

A Resilient City...

- *Where the built environment, economy, investments and all aspects of the community are designed, structured and operated to adapt to physical, financial, social and other challenges.*
- *Where programs, plans and practices are routinely evaluated and adjusted as necessary to maximize resiliency and safeguard the environment.*
- *Where proactive planning and action on the issue of sea level rise has helped to ensure the community and its historic and public assets remain safe.*
- *Where we promote multiple and alternative transportation modes which do not contribute to environmental hazard.*

Issues and Priorities

Over time, conditions and circumstances affecting the subjects addressed in a municipal comprehensive plan change. Some changes may be relatively minor or incremental while others may be more notable. As issues rise to the forefront or fade into the distance, community priorities need to be adjusted. To be effective, each new plan must review and adjust the course laid out by the prior plan. Planning is a constant process of evaluating, establishing consensus, implementing, refining, and adjusting.

Table 1-3 provides a brief summary of issues deemed important to the 20-year vision for the city. Some of these are relatively new and global in scope, while others are more familiar and focused. Some will require long-term collaborations among multiple stakeholders, while others might be adequately addressed by a smaller group of key interests and technical resources. The challenge is to navigate through these changes in a way that allows Newport to reach the destination safe, solvent, and authentically Newport.

Table 1-3 City of Newport 2036 Issues

Issues	Descriptions
Managing Sea Level Rise	Empirical physical evidence shows that the oceans levels are rising and that coastal environments are already experiencing the impacts of sea level rise. Newport's geology, topography, cardinal orientation and location at the end of a peninsula all have relevance to how this issue should be evaluated and managed.
Diversifying the Economy	Newport's seasonal tourism based economy creates unique challenges including tremendous variability in the demand for public safety and sanitation, potable water, sanitary sewer use, and implications on the housing market.
Population Decline	Declines in population have been common in Newport since back in 1980. Impacts from a shrinking population include lower revenues from public goods and services, less support for local businesses, and increased demand on public services, like police.
Changing Demographics	Newport's median age is rising in almost all respects. Aging populations require different services and facilities than young populations do.
Community Preservation	The city's unique character, landscape, and community shape help make Newport a desirable place to live. A balance will need to be struck on shaping the future and preserving the past.
Aging Infrastructure	A great deal of Newport's street network, building footprints, land subdivision, and other physical features trace their origins to the colonial periods. As such, the costs of updating the city's public services and resources are substantial.
Public Education and Human Capital	A tourism based economy typically does not require high skilled or highly compensated labor. As a consequence, wages and salaries are lower compared to those in economic sectors which require specific technical skills or training.

Plan Structure

Newport's Comprehensive Plan is organized into six main sections and 15 subordinate chapters. In addition to this introduction section and its two chapters, the Plan's other five main sections are listed below, including the subject area content found in each. Each of these main sections is based upon one of the major themes described above. An attempt has been made to organize content within each theme as a way to highlight the inter-relationships between issues. Hopefully this will help readers understand and appreciate how decisions in one subject area can impact other collateral areas. Carried forward, this insight helps to inform and drive the development of an implementation plan which maximizes the benefits of coordinated strategies. In this way, Newport can hopefully avoid the costs, conflicts and inefficiencies which typically result from a selective "silo" approach to designing, funding and managing public projects and programs.

Guidance from the Statewide Planning Program (SPP) provides an excellent example of this foundational principle:

Comprehensive planning is all about making connections. Through analysis and discourse, the public, municipal officials and employees and other stakeholders discover how each land use, transportation, economic development and infrastructure decision is connected. The comprehensive planning process provides a venue for discovering how the way we use land relates to what transportation options are appropriate, how the transportation options provided relate to a family's cost of living, how a high cost of living relates to the need for economic development, how encouraging economic development relates to the form of buildings and spaces, how specific building forms relate to compact development patterns, how compact development relates to land conservation and so on.

It should be noted that in order to provide flexibility and encourage creativity, with the exception of the Land Use and the Implementation Plan Elements, topics required by the State to be addressed in the Plan do not require their own separate “element” or chapter, as long as the required content is provided in the Plan. Newport’s Plan is a hybrid; topical areas are provided with their own “chapters” but as noted, these are organized by themes to highlight interrelationships. In addition, each chapter will include a section that specifically addresses important interrelationships, to further explain and emphasize the “comprehensive” nature of a good Plan.

Section 1 Charting Our Course

- Chapter 1 Introduction
- Chapter 2 Community Involvement

Section 2 Community Framework

- Chapter 3 Land Use (Mandated)
- Chapter 4 Economic Development (Mandated)
- Chapter 5 Housing (Mandated)

Section 3 Healthy and Vibrant Communities

- Chapter 6 Community Services and Facilities (Mandated)
- Chapter 7 Transportation and Circulation (Mandated)

Section 4 Preserving Our Heritage

- Chapter 8 Open Space and Recreation (Mandated)
- Chapter 9 Natural Resources (Mandated)
- Chapter 10 Historical and Cultural Resources (Mandated)

Section 5 Sustainable Systems and Stewardship

- Chapter 11 Energy (Mandated)
- Chapter 12 Water
- Chapter 13 Natural Hazards and Climate Change (Mandated)

Section 6 Implementing the Plan

- Chapter 14 Implementation Program (Mandated)

Section 7 Glossary

- Chapter 15 Glossary