

2 Community Involvement



An essential part of any comprehensive planning process is community engagement. Participation by a broad cross section of interests increases the likelihood that the plan's goals and objectives will be based in community consensus. Strong consensus increases the likelihood for successful plan implementation.

From the very early stages of the project, city staff and leadership emphasized the need for a robust and creative stakeholder engagement program. Working in collaboration with the project consultant, the staff at Engage Newport and local print and digital media, the city designed and carried out a program which included multiple events, modes and opportunities for the public to access, review and comment on project work products. The elements of the community involvement program are described below in more detail.

Outreach

Throughout the planning process, it was important to consistently disseminate information about the project to keep all interested parties up to date on the progress of the plan. This was accomplished through:

- A dedicated and “branded” project website
- Periodic eBlasts
- Local print and digital media outreach
- Close collaboration with Worldways, Newport’s professional public engagement provider and developer of “Engage Newport.”

Project Website (www.newportchartingourcourse.com)

The project website was created at the project’s initiation as an interactive tool for sharing information about the progress of the comprehensive plan update. In addition, the website included a tab for joining the project email list, as well as a tab for sending comments to the project leadership. This tool was constantly available for those who were not able to make it to the workshops or who did not wish to speak publically at the workshops. Through this tool, residents were able to send in as many comments as they wished. The site also included information about the project scope, work program, schedule and the committee members and city staff responsible for the plan’s development.



Newport Comprehensive Land Use Plan

The project website was also used to promote and notify citizens of all public workshops and hearings. A “library” was maintained on the site for the project’s duration which included a digital copy of the current (2004) plan, presentation and meeting materials, an extensive map atlas, a draft of the comprehensive plan, and the final Newport Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Finally, for convenience, links to 40 websites were provided, including appropriate local, state and federal government agencies, local and regional community organizations, and a variety of general planning sources. Over half of these links were to local organizations, such as neighborhood groups, arts and cultural groups and others.

Engage Newport (Worldways)

Engage Newport was an essential partner in the community outreach process, providing links to the project website, social media outreach and other notifications. These efforts greatly expanded the potential audience for project awareness and participation. (www.engagenewport.com)

eBlasts

An eBlast is a message sent via email to a group email. Citizens self-select for this service by signing up either via the web page or at a project event. These notifications were used primarily for notifying parties of upcoming public meetings and workshops.



Print and Digital Media

Periodic press releases and links were provided in order to facilitate and encourage local media to cover the project, report on project events and to otherwise generate interest.

Community Workshops and Outreach

Community workshops are a standard engagement component of any comprehensive planning program. Due to the limited timeframe for plan development, state review and formal adoption, the project team identified key points in the work program to engage stakeholders in a workshop, meeting, or community forum setting. These outreach efforts are described briefly below. Detailed information concerning these workshops was uploaded to the project website for public review following each event.

Community Workshop #1 Introduction /Initial Visioning/ Issues Identification

Held on October 13, 2015 at the Pell School, Workshop #1 introduced the project to the public. The main objectives of the workshop were to collect ideas about issues that the City of Newport has been facing and may face in the future. After an introductory power point presentation, attendees participated in small group exercises focused on developing a draft vision statement, initial issues identification and general goals and policies. This information was essential in helping the team frame the plan’s focus and ultimately, implementation strategies.

The vision statement captures what residents hope that Newport will be in the future and is, thus, the foundation for the goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan. The City’s Vision statement can be found in Chapter 1 of the Plan.

Planning Board Meeting

The project team met with the Planning Board on November 2, 2015 to discuss and review the City of Newport's 2004 Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Board offered valuable insight on the aspects of the previous Comprehensive Plan that they recommended be carried over, modified, or excluded from this Comprehensive Plan update.

Community Workshop #2 Plan Visioning

This workshop was held on December 7, 2015 as part of a joint City Council / Planning Board meeting. This workshop focused on having community leadership provide direction and guidance with respect to the community's vision for the plan horizon of 2036. In addition, input was sought regarding the level of success in accomplishing the 2004 plans objectives, which of these might still be valid to include in the 2016 plan and identifying the principal issues to be addressed in the 2016 plan. The workshop / meeting was held in a town hall format where the public was encouraged to interact with the City Council and Planning Board members as the vision statement and objectives were developed.



Community Workshop #3 Existing Conditions, Goals and Policies

The third community workshop focused on goals and policies that could be used to guide Newport to its ideal future state. The workshop was held on February 23, 2016 at Pell School in a town hall style and community members were asked to answer questions regarding the elements in the comprehensive plan. This was done to garner ideas that the community had about methods to tackle issues as well as to identify any additional issues or opportunities the Comprehensive Plan should address. This workshop fostered enthusiastic dialogue between community members on the key topic areas being considered for the Comprehensive Land Use Plan update.



Community Forum

The City held a Community Forum on April, 6 2016 at the Salvation Café. The purpose of the forum was to give members of the public an opportunity to discuss issues within the City that were important to them.

Stakeholder Interviews

The project team, Matrix Design Group, conducted interviews of 18 community stakeholders as identified by the City. The interviews were held in person during the week of December 7, 2015 as part of telephone interviews conducted the weeks of December 7 and 14, 2015. The purpose of the interviews was to gather insights into key issues and

concerns that should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan update. The individuals interviewed are listed below and the description in parenthesis highlights the group each person was representing.

- Paul Carroll (Newport Department of Civic Investment)
- Sam Shuford and Steve Ostiguy (Church Community Housing)
- Sasaki Associates (Newport Open Space Partnership Consultant)
- Justin McLaughlin (City Councilor)
- Kim Salerno (Chair, Newport Planning Board)
- Helen Johnson (City Preservation Planner)
- Colleen Burns Jermain (Newport Public Schools)
- Tim Mills (Harbor Master)
- Sarah Atkins (Newport Department of Civic Investment)
- Kristie Gardiner (Energy & Environment Commission)
- Peter Connerton (Newport Fire Department)
- Bill Boardman and Frank Marinaccio (City Engineering, Public Services)
- Scott Wheeler (Newport Buildings & Grounds)
- William Riccio (Newport Public Services)
- Thomas Ardito (Aquidneck Island Planning Commission)
- Kate Leonard (City Councilor)
- Lauren Carson (State Representative, District 75)

Planning Board and City Planner Meetings

At several points throughout the planning process, members of the Planning Board and the Planning Department of the City held meetings with important stakeholders throughout the community. Insight about issues in the community that should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan update was gained during these interviews. The following is a list of the meetings held including the meeting date and the name of the group and individuals present:

- January 13, 2016 – Newport Open Space Partnership (Dawn Euer and Tanya Kelley)
- January 15, 2016 – Naval Station Newport BRAC process meeting at the Preservation Society of Newport County
- January 15, 2016 – Newport Open Space Partnership Leadership, Consultant, & Civic Investment
- January 26, 2016 – Harbor Management Commission (Ryan Miller)
- February 1, 2016 – Newport Historical Society (Ruth Taylor), Newport Restoration Foundation (Pieter Roos), Preservation Society of Newport County (Trudy Cox and Kaitly Ryan), Newport District Commission (Diana Sylvaria & Mary Jo Valdes)
- February 4, 2016 - Green Infrastructure (Harvard Law School - Environmental Policy, URI Coastal Resources Center, URI Department of Natural Resources Science), (Kate Konschnik, Jamie Konopacky, Sangyong Cho, Judith Rodriguez, Pam Rubinoff, Drew Youngs Lorraine Joubert, and Andrew Youngs)
- February 10, 2016 – Newport Housing Authority (Rhonda Mitchell)

- March 8, 2016 – Van Beuren Charitable Foundation (Elizabeth R. Lynn, Executive Director)
- March 23, 2016 – Bike Newport (Bari Freeman)

Comprehensive Land Use Plan Sub-Committee Meetings

At various points throughout the planning process, members of the Sub-Committee held meetings to discuss the Comprehensive Plan update. The purpose of the meetings was to provide insight on the progress and development of the Comprehensive Plan update. The following is a list of the meetings held including the date and element(s) discussed:

- May 16, 2016 – Land Use and Economic Development
- June 20, 2016 – Historic & Cultural Resources
- July 18, 2016 – Community Services & Facilities
- August 15, 2016 – Open Space & Recreation and Natural Resources
- August 22, 2016 – Transportation & Circulation
- September 12, 2016 – Water
- September 19, 2016 (Final Comprehensive Plan Sub-Committee Meeting) – Energy, Housing, and Natural Hazards & Climate Change

City Council and Planning Board Meetings/Hearings

The Planning Board had the primary project management role throughout this planning process. Subsequent to Planning Board adoption the Comprehensive Plan was transmitted to the City Council for final approval and adoption.

- October 13, 2015 – Planning Board Workshop
- November 2, 2015 – Planning Board meeting included the discussion and review of the 2004 Comprehensive Plan
- December 7, 2015 – Joint City Council and Planning Board Workshop
- February 23, 2016 – Planning Board Workshop
- April 6, 2016 – Newport Comprehensive Plan Open Forum, Salvation Cafe
- May 2, 2016 – Regularly scheduled Planning Board Meeting.
- October 3, 2016 – Regularly scheduled Planning Board Meeting / Public Hearing
- October 17, 2016 – Special Meeting of Planning Board (continuation of October 3, 2016 Public Hearing)
- October 26, 2016 – City Council Public Hearing
- November 9, 2016 – City Council Public Hearing
- November 16, 2016 – Resolution 2016-132, Special Council Workshop
- January 25, 2017 – Ordinance (1st Reading)
- February 8, 2017 – Ordinance (2nd Reading) and Adoption
- March 2, 2017 – Forward to Rhode Island State Planning Program

Please see the next page.