



# Annual Report of the Planning Board

City of Newport, Rhode Island  
2024

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## From the Chair

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Dear Mayor Holder & the City Council,

The Planning Board had another busy and successful year with fourteen (14) applications and recommendations considered. This was the first full year with the sweeping new zoning amendments from the state adopted, and over all they were well received and successful. A big achievement was the passage an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance which allows for the further expansion of housing options for residents within the existing housing inventory.

Another major accomplishment of this year was the Board's analysis, writing and approval of an updated housing chapter to better reflect the city's current housing needs and our trajectory. Covid changed the national landscape for housing needs and where people choose to live, and Newport has benefited greatly from that. We want to ensure that benefit is shared by all its citizens and stakeholders and the first step was this new housing chapter.

With the year ahead we hope to use this chapter to draft new zoning code to better alleviate the struggle to build and add housing here in the city and to offer more housing options for all of the city's residents.

Jeffrey Brooks  
Chairman, Newport Planning Board

## Meeting Schedule and Attendance

The Planning Board met the first Monday of the month. The months of January and September were irregularly scheduled for the second Monday of the month due to an observed city holiday. There was no regularly scheduled meeting in July. The January 8<sup>th</sup> and November 4<sup>th</sup> meetings were cancelled.

Planning Board Member 2024 Meeting Date	Jeffrey Brooks – Chair	Adam Moore – Vice Chair	Margaret Polski – Secretary	Theresa Stokes	Anand Toprani	Richard Cromwell	Paul McGreevy	Patricia Antonelli	Jarrold Pimentel
January 8*	Meeting Cancelled						Appointed January	Appointed February	Appointed February
February 5	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present		
March 4	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Absent
April 1	Present	Present	Present	Present	Absent	Present	Present	Present	Present
May 6	Present	Present	Present	Present	Absent	Present	Present	Present	Present
June 3	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
July	No regularly scheduled meeting								
August 5	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
September 9*	Present	Present	Present	Absent	Absent	Absent	Present	Present	Present
October 7	Present	Present	Present	Absent	Present	Present	Present	Absent	Present
November 4	Meeting Cancelled				Term ended Oct 31 <sup>st</sup>	Meeting Cancelled			
December 2	Present	Present	Present	Present		Present	Present	Absent	Absent

\* Irregularly scheduled meeting due to observed city holiday.

### Staff Attendance:

Patricia Reynolds, Director of Planning & Development was present at the May, Aug., Sept., Oct. & Dec. meetings.

Tuuli Martin, City Planner (former) was present at all meetings until her resignation in July.

Rebecca Trefethen, City Planner (current) was present at the October and December meetings.

Hayden McDermott, Assistant Planner was present at all meetings.

Nick Armour, Zoning Officer was present at the June meeting.

Dylan Conley, Assistant City Solicitor was present at the April, May, and June meetings.

Julissa Arce, Legal Counsel was present at the May, June, August, and September meetings.

Meagan Bellamy, Legal Counsel was present at the March meeting.

Tristan Laughlin, Deputy Harbormaster and Michael Crittenden, GIS Coordinator were present at the April meeting for the review of the 2024 Harbor Management Plan draft.

## Applications Reviewed

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The Planning Board reviewed the following application types and applications:

### Principal Structure(s) Demolition Approval:

#### **209 South Rhode Island Avenue, TAP 31, Lot 94**

Application of Nula Properties III LLC, owner, and John Hurd, applicant to demolish a one-story, single-family residential structure to provide for the construction of a new residence.

#### **6 Sharon Court, TAP 39, Lot 44**

Application of Newport Luxury Homes, LLC to demolish a two-story, single-family residential structure to provide for the construction of a new residence.

#### **63 Roseneath Avenue, TAP 39, Lot 004**

Application of Kurt Edenback and Meaghan O'Neill to demolish a one-story, single-family residential structure.

#### **507 Broadway, TAP 6, Lot 009-4**

Application of the Church of Jesus Savior of Newport to demolish a two-and-a-half-story, two-family residential structure.

### Subdivisions:

#### **Beechwood Merger Plan, Administrative Subdivision, TAP 37, Lots 13, 102, & 108\***

Application of Beechwood Museum Eastern Estates, LLC, and SF Pacific, LLC, to merge three (3) existing lots into one (1) lot.

#### **Di Napoli Subdivision; Minor Subdivision under Unified Development Review; Preliminary, Final\*, and Revised Plan Review; TAP 23, Lot 47**

Application of Christopher & Bethany Di Napoli to subdivide one (1) existing residential lot into two (2) residential lots. The applicants requested dimensional variances to subdivide property, resulting in a shorter than the required side setback for existing accessory structures and greater than allowable lot coverage.

#### **Island House Subdivision, Minor Subdivision under Unified Development Review, Preliminary Plan, TAP 9, Lot 103**

Application of Island Associates, Inc. to subdivide one (1) existing substandard lot into two (2) substandard lots. The applicant requested dimensional variances to minimum lot size, lot width, setback, and density requirements; and a special use permit to alter nonconforming development.

#### **Pond Avenue Subdivision, Minor Subdivision under Unified Development Review, Preliminary & Final\* Plans, TAP 14, Lots 53-4 & 113**

Application of Humphrey J. Donnelly IV and Mary Pritchard to adjust the property line between two existing substandard lots. The applicants requested a special use permit to alter nonconforming lots and dimensional variances from minimum lot area and minimum lot coverage.

**Coach House Condominiums Subdivision, Minor Subdivision, Final Plan, TAP 37, Lot 100\***

Application of Coach House Condominium Association to subdivide one (1) existing lot into two (2) lots.

**Triplett School Merger, Administrative Subdivision, TAP 6, Lots 365, 366, 367, & 368\***

Application to merge four (4) existing lots that contain the former into one (1) lot containing the former Triplet School building for the purpose of adaptive reuse.

**Schoolyard Properties Subdivision, Minor Subdivision, Final Plan, TAP 41, Lot 014\***

Application of Schoolyard Properties LLC to subdivide one (1) existing lot into four (4) lots.

**7 Hope St & 42 Rhode Island Ave Subdivision, Minor Subdivision under Unified Development Review, Preliminary Plan, TAP 11, Lots 162 & 335**

Application of Laura Glazier 1998 Family Trust to adjust the property line between two existing lots, transferring an accessory barn structure from Lot 162 to Lot 335. The applicant requested special use permits to alter non-conforming lot coverage and to amend a previous SUP for the multi-family dwelling, and requested dimensional variances for the barn to have a shorter than required accessory side setback and shorter than required driveway width.

**Boxcroft Subdivision, Minor Subdivision, Final Plan, TAP 26, Lot 44\***

Application of 7 Red Cross Avenue, LLC, to subdivide 1.11 acres of land from one (1) lot into two (2) lots.

*\* Administrative subdivisions and final plans are reviewed and decided by the Administrative Officer to the Planning Board. Decisions are reported to the Planning Board at the next scheduled meeting.*

**Findings and Recommendation to the City Council regarding Zoning Ordinance Amendments:**

**Zoning Quick Fixes**

On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Planning Board reviewed a series of proposed amendments to the zoning ordinance, “zoning quick fixes,” for findings of consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, in response to City Council Resolution No. 2023-10. The resolution called for near-term changes to render “the Zoning Ordinance more objective and affordable for homeowners.” Proposed amendments included changing demolition applications to be under the purview of the Technical Review Committee instead of the Planning Board, setting impervious surface limitations, establishing specific, reasonable dimensional regulations for accessory structures, and refining several use definitions.

**Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**

On August 5<sup>th</sup>, the Planning Board reviewed the proposed zoning ordinance to allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. State changes to the Zoning Enabling Act

required the allowance of ADUs under certain conditions, and permitted limited local discretion regarding maximum unit size and parking requirements.

**Accessory Uses, Buildings, & Structures**

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, the Planning Board reviewed the proposed zoning ordinance to not count the area of shorter sunken and raised decks in calculations of lot building coverage for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

**Guest Houses**

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, the Planning Board reviewed a proposed zoning ordinance that would prohibit the creation of new non-owner-occupied Guest Houses in the Limited Business, General Business, and Waterfront Business zoning districts for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

## Plans, Action Items, Working Groups & Committees

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Members of the Planning Board participated in the following plans, action items, working groups and committees:

- Tree and Open Space Commission
- Waterfront Commission
- Energy and Environment Commission
- Housing & Zoning Working Group
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission

### Housing Analysis

The City was admitted to the Municipality Technical Assistance Program (MTAP) administered by RI Housing for conducting a housing study. The objective of the study is to gather housing data, identify housing opportunities, allow for and support public input regarding housing issues, and create an updated housing chapter for the City's Comprehensive Plan to provide for thoughtful growth. Planning staff and Planning Board members Jeffrey Brooks, Theresa Stokes, Richard Cromwell, and Jarrod Pimentel formed a Housing Working Group and have been working with the consulting group, Libra Planners, since September 2023.

On February 22, 2024, the Planning Department and Libra Planners held a public outreach event in City Hall. The event consisted of a presentation of preliminary results of the housing study and opened an online survey, obtaining resident views on housing needs for the city. The survey was open for 30 days and had 470 respondents. The survey results shaped the housing goals and strategies in the final Housing Buildout Analysis and new Housing Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

The results of the Housing Buildout Analysis were presented at a joint City Council – Planning Board Workshop held at Innovate Newport on June 24, 2024. The Council and Planning Board discussed major housing policy directions and strategies to emphasize in the new Housing Chapter.

At the August 5, 2024 Planning Board meeting, the Board reviewed and made a recommendation that the City Council adopt the new Housing Chapter as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. The City Council considered and passed the ordinance adopting the Housing Chapter amendment at its first and second readings on August 28, and September 11, 2024. Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning approved the amendment on November 12, 2024. The Housing & Zoning Working Group are now working to draft Zoning Ordinance amendments that align with the new Housing Chapter.

### Newport Harbor Management Plan

At the April 1, 2024 Planning Board meeting, Waterfront Commission members and Harbor Management Office staff presented the draft 2024 Harbor Management Plan. The Planning Board reviewed the plan and made a recommendation to the City Council, finding the Harbor Management Plan to be consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.



### Transportation Master Plan – 2024 Award

*Keep Newport Moving*, the City's transportation master plan was adopted in early 2023 after nearly two years of public outreach, community engagement, and collaboration with the Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning. The plan offers solutions to reduce travel stress, increase pedestrian safety, implement technology to better manage traffic flow, parking and public safety. On April 25, 2024, the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Planning Association presented the Newport Planning Board with the 2024 Excellent Plan Award for *Keep Newport Moving*.

### Amendments to the Newport Subdivision Regulations

In June 2023, the RI General Assembly adopted a package of 10 bills, which made changes to various aspects of land use regulation, including both the Zoning Enabling Act and the Land Development and Subdivision Review Enabling Act. The goal of the package was to standardize and streamline development processes in RI municipalities. At their May 6, 2024 meeting, the Planning Board reviewed a series of proposed amendments to the Newport Subdivision Regulations to bring local regulations into compliance with state law. Key changes included revising the definitions, timelines, and noticing requirements for major and minor subdivisions, and adopting Unified Development Review which enables the Planning Board to grant zoning relief as part of subdivision, land development, and development plan review applications.

## Trainings

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All members of the Planning Board completed training concerning the effects of development in a flood plain and/or effects of sea level rise as required by the R.I. General Law §45-22-7(j).

The Planning Board members heard a presentation from planning staff regarding the City's Green and Complete Streets at the February 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## Staff

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The Board received regular updates on the Technical Review Committee reviews through the City Planner Tuuli Martin and Planning Director Patricia Reynolds.

Director Reynolds, City Planner Martin, and Assistant Planner Hayden McDermott worked regularly with the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank (RIIB) and municipal planners from Town of Middletown and Town of Portsmouth on regional resiliency. The group applied for and received a NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge grant to form a regional planning organization, the Aquidneck Island Regional Resilience Collaborative.

In January 2024, RIIB awarded the City of Newport a \$2.4 million Municipal Resilience Action Grant for the King Park Shoreline Resilience Improvements project that Planning Department staff had applied for in 2023.

Director Reynolds, City Planner Martin, and Assistant Planner McDermott participated in the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns 2024 Annual Convention on March 21<sup>st</sup>.

On April 25<sup>th</sup>, Director Reynolds received the Dan Varin Memorial Leadership Award from the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Planning Association.

On May 13<sup>th</sup>, Director Reynolds and City Planner Martin participated in Ride Island University: Cambridge – a day-long bike tour and review of bicycle infrastructure in Cambridge.

In July, Assistant Planner McDermott joined the Newport Tree Canopy Advisory Committee as part of a new Urban Forests for Rhode Island Technical Assistance grant received from the RIDOH and USDA. The program aims to assess Newport's existing tree canopy, particularly within designated Environmental Justice census tracts, and to develop urban forestry management plans and policy changes to preserve and expand Newport's tree canopy.

In August, the Planning Department jointly received a Charging and Fueling Infrastructure BIL Grant with RIOER, RIDOT, and other RI municipalities, with \$700,000 dedicated to installing electric vehicle charging stations at four public parking lots in Newport.

Director Reynolds and Assistant Planner McDermott participated in the Nantucket Climate Change Summit on September 4<sup>th</sup>, and met with Nantucket Land Bank staff to discuss climate adaptation challenges that are specific to island communities.

City Planner Rebecca Trefethen joined the City of Newport in September.

On October 7<sup>th</sup>, City Planner Trefethen and Assistant Planner McDermott travelled with municipal planners from Middletown and Portsmouth and Aquidneck Land Trust to meet with Martha's Vineyard Commission staff to discuss island resiliency challenges.

Director of Resilience and Sustainability Teresa Crean joined the City of Newport in October.

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, Director Reynolds gave a presentation on the Newport Housing Buildout Analysis and new Housing Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan at the Southern New England American Planning Association Regional Conference.

Director Reynolds worked regularly with community partners on Elizabeth Brook Watershed resilience planning and potential redevelopment of parcels available from the RIDOT Pell Bridge Realignment Project throughout the year.

Following the RI General Assembly's 2023 changes to the Zoning Enabling and Land Development and Subdivision Review Enabling Acts, effective January 1, 2024, adaptive reuse (conversion of existing commercial and municipal buildings into housing) became a use permitted by-right in all zoning districts, with adaptive reuse projects being approvable by City Staff on the Technical Review Committee (TRC). In 2024, the TRC reviewed and approved three Development Plan Review applications for adaptive reuse projects, adding a total of 43 dwelling units to Newport's housing stock.

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