

PORTSMOUTH COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The 2019 Portsmouth Comprehensive Community Plan (2019 Portsmouth CCP) updates previous Town of Portsmouth (the Town) CCP, approved in 2002. Although there have been several updates, the 2019 Portsmouth CCP is a full update including complete re-visioning, census and other data updates, full review of policy and actions, and comprehensive public involvement process. The 2019 Portsmouth CCP is the culmination of tremendous hard work and dedication on the part of residents who have participated in surveys and data gathering exercises, Citizens Interested in the Comprehensive Community Planning Process Committee (CICPPC), the Portsmouth Planning Board, and of course Town staff including members of the Planning Department who lead the overall effort. The Planning Department wishes to extend its thanks to all involved in this work.

CRITICAL NEED FOR AN UP-TO-DATE COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN

Comprehensive community plans are required for each municipality by state law. The 2019 Portsmouth CCP was prepared under the authorizing legislation of Chapter 45-22.2, the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act of 1988 and subsequent amendments. Under this authority, The 2019 Portsmouth CCP is the primary land use document for the Town and all successive land use regulations.

The goals identified throughout the 2019 Portsmouth CCP are the unifying guiding principles. They are the solid foundation upon which the remainder of the 2019 Portsmouth CCP rests. Goals and policies are an extremely important part of the 2019 Portsmouth CCP because they outline the community's intent, as expressed by its direct participation in the planning process. This approach works to gain community consensus on what the overall values are, so that the community and Town leadership can work to identify and agree upon those specific policies and actions necessary to achieve their goals. The 2019 Portsmouth CCP was drafted with an eye towards Portsmouth's physical, cultural, social, demographic, environmental, and economic characteristics. The 2019 Portsmouth CCP lays out how these factors, individually and in combination with each other, will influence future development in Portsmouth.

In Rhode Island, a CCP underpins a community's zoning code and subdivision development regulations. Upon adoption of this Plan, Portsmouth will need to revise the Zoning Ordinance and Land Development and Subdivision Regulations accordingly to ensure consistency with the goals, policies and actions of the Plan.

MECHANICS OF A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN

2019 Portsmouth CCP is designed to serve as the guide for development with a 20-year planning horizon. It is presented as a fully integrated policy document to be used in the planning and decision-making process by local officials. The 2019 Portsmouth CCP provides for the protection, development, use, and management of Portsmouth's land and natural resources. All land use and policy decisions must be consistent with the Plan.

The 2019 Portsmouth CCP provides a long-range vision of how various areas of the town should be developed. This vision is accomplished by outlining and identifying goals and policies associated with each of the elements identified above. At the end of each element is a list of action items intended to achieve those goals and policies. The Implementation Element provides a schedule of how, when, and who will take the lead on these items.

The 2019 Portsmouth CCP is designed to be a rational framework for future growth and decision-making. Although it is understood and expected that changes in circumstances and policy will require occasional amendments to the CCP, adherence to the 2019 Portsmouth CCP provides Town officials and residents with a predictable path.

This CCP update is a culmination of months of participation from a wide range of stakeholders with varying viewpoints working together to develop a guide for future growth in Portsmouth. This update was prepared under the direction of the Portsmouth Planning Board, with guidance from the CICPPC. The Planning Department offered technical assistance and generated updated drafts. Extensive public participation, which included (surveys, meetings, charrettes, workshops, is based on the understanding that the more the 2019 Portsmouth CCP reflects the sentiments of Portsmouth's people and staff, the more successful the Town will be in realizing the Plan's vision. A successful CCP should achieve the following:

- Be reflective of the desires and viewpoints of the Town's residents.

- Be based upon an accurate inventory of the Town’s resources.
- Act as a reference document for facts, concepts, goals and actions.
- Be maintained as a dynamic living document, providing a roadmap for the future of the Town.
- Be flexible in order to respond to changes in growth pressures, economic forces, environmental conditions and shifts in policy.
- Provide a means to manage conflict between differing town priorities

PLANNING PROCESS

The Portsmouth Planning Department, in coordination with the Planning Board, began working on updating the CCP in 2016. The exercise was approached as essentially a complete rewrite. During this process, Town staff paid particular attention to the goals, policies and implementation sections of the various elements.

Initial work was primarily conducted by the Planning Department staff and Planning Board. A coordinated effort was made to further engage residents and appropriate officials and the CICCPP was formed. This group worked in coordination with the Planning Board and Department staff to guide the formation and refinement of each element to reflect the needs and desires of the entire community.

In 2018, the Town decided to hire an outside consultant to act as a project manager and assist the Town in finalizing each element, engaging citizen participation and submitting a final document to the state for approval. The consultant worked closely with the Planning Department and Planning Board to refine each element, provide updated data and incorporate citizen input through a series of public meetings.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Planning staff have made it a priority to ensure that public engagement and involvement were considered and implemented throughout the drafting of the 2019 Portsmouth CCP. During drafting of the 2019 Portsmouth CCP by staff, regular workshops were held where the public was invited to review draft elements and provide feedback and comments to staff, who then worked with the consultant to incorporate that information into the draft elements.

The Town maintained a website throughout the process, which provided continual access to draft elements as they were being formulated. All meetings in which the 2019 Portsmouth CCP was discussed were advertised public meetings, providing ample opportunity for public review and input during the process.

Planning staff assisted in forming the CICCOP as an effort to prioritize public participation in the planning process. The CICCOP was composed of a broad constituency to ensure that all viewpoints and perspectives were actively engaged in the process.

The CICCOP held several meetings over the course of many months to review and revise each element as the group saw appropriate. They worked in close coordination with Planning Department staff and the Planning Board to finalize the sections of the 2019 Portsmouth CCP for ultimate adoption by the Town Council and the State of Rhode Island. Because of the extensive public engagement and input that was present throughout the process, the 2019 Portsmouth CCP is a document truly for and by the community.

STRUCTURE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN

The CCP is a far-reaching, over-arching policy document. It sets a vision and lays out a path for achieving it. The 2019 Portsmouth CCP is organized by elements. Each element presents the existing conditions within the community and then provides challenges and opportunities, which inform the goals and policies that are the basis for the action items identified within each element. The goals, policies and action items are the backbone.

A goal is a desired outcome. Goals are simple, broad, and high reaching. A policy is a statement that guides municipal decision makers so that all decision help to achieve the goals. The actions are specific, measurable acts whose implementation will bring the municipality closer to achievement of its goals.

The following topics are required by RIGL 45-22.2-6 for inclusion in the Plan:

- Goals and policies
- Maps
- Natural Resource Identification and Conservation

- Open Space and Recreation
- Historical and Cultural Resources
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Services and Facilities
- Circulation and Transportation
- Natural Hazards
- Land Use
- An Implementation Program

The 2019 Portsmouth CCP also provides several optional sections, which include:

- Agriculture
- Energy
- Water Supply
- Climate Change (which is included as part of the Natural Hazards element)

The 2019 Portsmouth CCP is organized in a fashion where each of the topics above, with the exception of maps and goals and policies, constitute an element of the Plan. Maps are integrated into each element as needed to support the narrative. Each goal contains policy statements that are then further refined into action items. The Implementation Program compiles the goals, policies and action items into a chart which identifies the implementation horizon (short, medium and long term) and the party or parties responsible for implementation.

A VISION FOR PORTSMOUTH - 2039

Circulation and Transportation - Portsmouth will enjoy a safe, efficient, and well-maintained multi-modal transportation network that increases mobility for all residents, supports the growth of business activity, reduces negative impacts on the natural environment, and enhances the character and quality of life of the community.

Economic Development - Portsmouth will possess a balanced framework of local economic policies that promote sustainable growth in jobs, business activity, and tax base without compromising Portsmouth's unique community character, its fiscal stability or the quality of its natural environment.

Energy - Portsmouth will be a community that is energy efficient in all its municipal functions and supports the development of both public and private renewable energy production facilities within the community.

Historic and Cultural Resources - Portsmouth will be a community where cultural heritage, historic buildings, and traditional landscapes are preserved, enriched, and protected and an enduring commitment has been made to continue this effort for future generations.

Housing - Portsmouth's sense of community will be evident in a diverse stock of good quality, safe, affordable housing options for all individual needs and income levels while maintaining the character of individual neighborhoods and traditional development patterns.

Agriculture - Agriculture will remain a vital and vibrant component of Portsmouth's way of life, land use, and economic activity.

Natural Hazards and Climate Change - Portsmouth will be a community that has prepared its most vulnerable areas and populations to minimize the impacts of natural hazards in a changing environment.

Natural Resources - Portsmouth will be a community that has preserved and protected its natural resource systems, sensitive water resources, and natural habitat for the benefit of current and future generations.

Recreation and Open Space - Portsmouth will be an active and healthy community with aesthetically pleasing open spaces and scenic vistas, well-marked and maintained public access to the shoreline, and a high-quality, well-maintained system of passive and active recreation facilities and programs that meets the changing needs of all residents.

Services and Facilities - Portsmouth will be a community where cost-effective, high-quality municipal services and facilities meet the changing needs of current and future Portsmouth residents.

Water Supply - Portsmouth will possess a safe, reliable long-term supply of clean drinking water for the benefit of current and future residential, agricultural and business uses.

Land Use - The landscape of Portsmouth will present an orderly, balanced, and rational development pattern that supports community comprehensive planning goals to preserve community character, enhance fiscal stability, and protect the quality of the natural environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

OTHER PLANS INCLUDED BY REFERENCE

Although this is a complete update to the 2002 Plan, many of the supporting documents that serve as technical guidance and historical analysis remain influential in the development of this update. These supporting plans, which are incorporated into the 2019 Portsmouth CCP here by document reference, are listed below:

- Portsmouth Home Rule Charter
- Capital Improvement Plan
- Storm Water Management Plan
- On-Site Wastewater Management plan
- Portsmouth School District Strategic Plan
- Portsmouth School District Capital Improvement Plan
- Emergency Operations Plan
- Portsmouth Library: Long Range Plan
- Harbor Management Plan
- Affordable Housing Plan
- Open Space Plan
- Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan

These plans provide more detail on their relative subject than the 2019 Portsmouth CCP and may be consulted for more specific information. In addition to being incorporated by reference, certain selected sections of these plans have been directly integrated into and reflected in the goals, polices, and action items with each appropriate element.