



**COASTAL RESOURCES CENTER**

*University of Rhode Island*

November 3, 2010

Newport City Council  
City of Newport  
43 Broadway  
Newport, RI 02842

**RE: Newport Waterfront Economic Study and Harbor Walk Update**

Dear Mayor Napolitano and Newport City Councilors:

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with an update on the waterfront-related planning efforts that have been in progress for the past two years. You may recall that in October 2007, a two-day workshop was held at the International Yacht Restoration School called "What will Newport's Waterfront Look Like in 2030?" This workshop was sponsored by the American Institute of Architects, Alliance for a Livable Newport, the Newport County Chamber of Commerce, and supported by the city of Newport.

At the end of that two-day workshop, three "priority recommendations" emerged from the workshop attendees, and included:

1. ***Create a continuous harbor walk that links all waterfront parcels and allows public access both laterally and along the shore.***
2. ***Honor the working waterfront, maintain its relevance, and preserve its identity.***
3. ***Develop mechanisms to encourage consistent coordination & communication among different levels of government, commissions, and officials so that they may identify and work toward common goals for Newport's waterfront.***

Understanding the importance of keeping City Council updated during this ongoing process, we provided brief updates to Council on May 7, 2008 (Gale Goff, RIAIA) and on May 26, 2010 (Teresa Crean, URI-CRC). In addition, several Council members attended open public forums related to this effort over the past two years.

In response to priority #2 listed above, a need was identified to compile available economic baseline data for the land-side and water-side economies of Newport's waterfront that can be used by city decision-makers for future development strategies, investment, policy and management decisions. Through a grant secured from the Rhode Island Foundation, Prince Charitable Trusts, and RI Sea Grant College Program, the University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center/Rhode Island Sea Grant hired a consultant, FXM Associates, to conduct an Economic Study for Newport's Waterfront.

The goals of the Newport Waterfront Economic Study included:

1. Establish and describe an economic baseline for the Newport waterfront/harbor project boundary.

2. Understand the value of the land-side and water-side economies in Newport Harbor and the interrelationships between the two to generate an analysis that synergizes both sides as one Harbor economy.
3. Provide credible and practical economic scenarios that illustrate the economic impacts of different mixes of land/water uses for the harbor and provide guidance to the City to set policies and make investment decisions related to the waterfront and harbor.

A Steering Committee consisting of the city of Newport Planning Director, Economic Development Director, Redevelopment Agency Coordinator, Chair of the Newport Waterfront Commission, Executive Director of the Newport County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Executive Director of the Newport County Chamber of Commerce was assembled to help guide this effort.

The final report from this project is attached to this memorandum for your consideration and review. In addition, a binder with hard copies of data & PowerPoint presentations developed over the course of the effort is available in the City Manager's office, and this study will be posted on the city's Planning Department website by November 9<sup>th</sup>. At a minimum, the study team hopes that this report and data generated during the process will provide a starting point for future economic redevelopment planning discussions for the waterfront study area.

Our office has also been working with multiple stakeholders in the city of Newport on the ongoing Newport HarborWalk effort. We will provide a brief overview on the status of the HarborWalk progress, but would like to use the time allotted for the Council workshop to focus on the details of the economic study.

We look forward to discussing this effort with you at the November 9<sup>th</sup> Council Workshop and identifying how the information in this study can be applied to future decision-making in the city of Newport.

Sincerely,

Teresa A. Crean, AICP, Coastal Community Planner  
University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center / Rhode Island Sea Grant

cc. Ed Lavalley, City Manager  
Kathy Silvia, City Clerk  
Paige Bronk, Planning Director  
Hank Kniskern, Waterfront Commission  
Bruce Bartlett, Newport Redevelopment Agency  
Evan Smith, Newport County Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Jody Sullivan, Newport County Chamber of Commerce  
Keith Stokes, Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation  
Jim Perrier, Friends of the Waterfront  
Gale Goff, American Institute of Architects  
Bonnie Watson, Alliance for a Livable Newport  
Jennifer McCann, URI Coastal Resources Center/RI Sea Grant  
Francis Mahady, FXM Associates