

## Newport North End Urban Plan

### Questions and Answers to Questions Received October 23-November 2, 2020

1. *The NBBJ plan provides suggestions for growth and design and planning guidelines but not a detailed actionable plan to best support phased growth. Can NBBJ provide more of a roadmap or action plan for potential growth? For example, we know the bridge development is funded and likely happening, and the Carpionato Development will likely be supported as well. What recommendations would NBBJ put forth for the city to consider or prioritize to best support those developments?*
2. *It is our understanding that this plan is to be adopted into the Comprehensive plan as a reference. Without clear action items and implementation how does the city propose to remain accountable and reinforce the suggestions put forth by NBBJ?*

The first question has two parts. The second question is similar and grouped together for the purposes of providing one answer. Implementation of key recommendations in the plan will be the purview of the Planning Board, and the City Council, with support from Planning Staff. Some recommended actions will be included in future public capital expenditure plans, such as the public safety facility, while others will be requested of private parties as projects come before the city for review and approval. Ideally, specific projects will be required to provide public benefits that directly mitigate project impacts, such as the need for better pedestrian crossings, open space or job training or affordable housing, to name just a few.

3. *Was a phased plan considered? For example, partial development of Jai Alai site with corresponding and commensurate development of streetscape, transportation plan, could allow for more holistic and sustainable growth that supports the development and community long term? The concern is the jai alai/Carpionato development becomes a retail dessert like many others if unsupported by city supported and funded initiatives as outlined in the plan. And the city may not have the money to keep pace with the proposed developments.*

It is expected the North End Urban Plan will be implemented in phases. Land Development Projects and Development Plan Review requires project phases to be shown as part of an application. The plan and accompanying design guidelines will also help to establish project features that will be compatible with future development, such as an integrated pedestrian network that will extend beyond the boundaries of one single development (the former jai Alai facility being just one example).

4. *What is the proposed action plan to address the brownfield sites left behind by Jai Alai removal and bridge realignment, and encourage responsible development of those sites so they don't lie fallow?*

The former jai alai site received a \$250,000 grant from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to address contamination in 2019. The Newport Pell Bridge approaches reconstruction parameters will need to be further explored as the project design is finalized.

5. *The NBBJ plan doesn't provide guidance for a Community investment plan for developers which would provide a guideline for developers to invest in or build desired facilities or provide %5 [sic] (or whatever %) of the investment to a fund dedicated to North End civic improvements that support the plan. Is there consideration for a requirement like this?*

Developer-funded civic improvements are among the community benefits cited by residents, and supported by the Plan. Other benefits (such as roadway improvements, bike paths, tree plantings, open space, stormwater improvements) are all part of an overall development plan review and land development project and may be conditions of approval. There is no requirement for an investment fund under consideration at this time.

6. *While the HEZ contributed to a community needs checklist, there is little suggestion as to how to achieve it. Can NBBJ provide some guidance as to how their plan will support the HEZ list?*

An important part in the development of a project is communication between area residents and the developer. The community needs listed in the Plan represent amenities identified and preferred by the community. It will be considered with every proposed development in the North End, and in conjunction with any future city improvements in the area. Overtime, and as goals are achieved, the list may be amended by the community.

7. *The NBBJ plan provides multiple suggestions for foot and bike traffic, open air dining and gathering, and outdoor recreation spaces. As an environment that spends half of the year in snow and cold there was little to no recommendation for community space or transportation or ways to engage in new development in inclement weather.*

Low-carbon design options will be utilized to expand community space, transportation, and engagement opportunities in new development in inclement weather. The proposed intermodal center would be the focus of transit connections for the North End providing year-round-weather-protected areas for bus or shuttle transit use. Separated multi-modal paths provide safe alternatives that can be plowed and kept open during snow events with protection from traffic by snow storage areas.

8. *Does this plan provide for community art requirements in support of the partnership between the RI Department of Health and the RI State Council on the Arts as referenced here:*  
<https://health.ri.gov/healthcare/about/artsandhealth/>?

Art opportunities did not come up during public engagement, but could be included as a public benefit during negotiations with developers and as part of public parcels available after highway removal.

9. *As communities and developments grow, the need for community resources increases as well. The proposed foot/bike path to the Florence Gray center is a good recommendation. The existing Florence Gray center provides many needed services for the North End community but needs further support and repair to continue to provide these services, especially if the community increases. There is also mention of the potential use of the Maher Center. Is there a plan to better tie these facilities together as a community services, or community civic center?*

There is currently no proposed future use for the Maher Center. The City has supported Florence Gray with \$600,000 in renovation grants over the last two years.

10. *On page 32 of the Appendix (Section H, Allowed Uses), the table shows the UV-5 and UV-3 districts cap multi-family dwellings at 35% square footage or more with a special use permit. However, is it possible to set a minimum amount of market rate workforce housing provided in any large development plan in these districts? Currently, the city is desperately in need of workforce housing. Supply is low and rents continue to go up making it difficult for young professionals in particular to rent in the city at a manageable rate. These areas of the North End are one of the last areas of the city where we could provide a large number of apartment rentals (as part of a mixed-use development) to help housing supply keep up with demand. A larger supply of market rate housing would help make all apartments across the city more affordable. The proposed development in the North End is supposed to bring more people working full time in Newport. Where will they live? Right now [sic] from my reading, if a developer chose to they could just build these areas out commercially with zero apartment units. Newport needs more workforce housing like one and two bedroom apartments if we want a successful year-round economy where people can live in the city they work in.*

Housing is the second-highest-ranked community benefit. It could be a part of a community benefits agreement. For more information on housing, please see the response to the question regarding displacement.

11. *The plan often cites the need for equitable development but then provides almost no information on tools to actually make it happen. Could the plan provide more information, templates, and more on CBAs [community benefit agreements] and other tools to ensure development is equitable? Are there examples from other communities that have been successful that could be referenced?*

The finances of development are such that subsidy is typically required. Due to the attractiveness of Newport, there may be small opportunities for additional developer spending on community

benefits. A good resource on community benefits is <https://www.forworkingfamilies.org/page/community-benefits-101>.

12. *Why does the Equity section not mention CBAs [community benefit agreements] and not recommend that any negotiation process must include and prioritize community voices?*

Community benefit agreements are mentioned in the Implementation section. The Equity section does call for the inclusion and prioritization of community members (last sentence of first column on page 71 of the draft NEUP). There is also a proposed amendment to Page 105 of the Plan, Development Actions, for the Planning Board's consideration addressing CBA's and community participation.

13. *The plan refers to economic development in the Innovation District as relying on "resiliency-oriented industries," "digital industries," and "emerging high-technology industries." "Digital," "high-technology," and "resilience" are very general terms. What do these terms actually mean for actual business activities in the context of the Innovation District?*
14. *What does "advanced manufacturing" specifically encompass (other than the use of "technology"? Also, is there market research to support the North End Urban Plan's reliance on that sector physically locating in the Innovation District? Based on that analysis, what are the kinds of jobs that are likely to be available – particularly to North End residents within the Study Area – and how many?*
15. *What are the jobs and business opportunities related to the "Blue Economy" and the "Green Economy" that will be available for North End residents?*

These questions are similar; therefore, one answer is provided. Due to projected consequences of human-driven climate change, as well as the long march towards digitization, the projected high-growth, high-wage industries in the medium-term are in these fields. It is not clear at this point in time, how government investment will proceed in the climate-change resiliency sector; government investment in digitization is quite clear. Market opportunities are increasingly abundant, as well. Growth will create opportunity for North End residents, dependent on skill sets matching employment needs. Therefore, education and job training are critical pathways moving forward.

16. *What evidence exists, other than the presence of the Naval Station and the Naval Undersea Warfare Center, that such businesses will physically come to Newport if the Innovation District is built? Has there been market research to underpin the North End Urban Plan's reliance on those sectors locating within the Innovation District? Based on that analysis, what are the kinds of jobs that are likely to be available – particularly to North End residents within the Study Area – and how many?*

There are already area businesses potentially interested in relocating or expanding to the Innovation District. The concept of the Innovation Hub was developed five years ago, but land use regulations have not been modified, nor has significant land been made available, to make this concept possible. Hundreds of jobs will be located within the study area. The availability of those jobs to North End residents will depend on negotiated community benefit agreements and the alignment of skill sets of North End residents with job opportunities. Therefore, education and job training will be critical. The Blue Economy provides the greatest opportunity for our region and the State of Rhode Island to create new quality jobs. Already employing over 36,500 people statewide and an economic impact of over \$5.6 Billion dollars in the state, the Blue Economy's impact on the Greater Newport region is significant and can be leveraged.

17. *What is the difference between the "Advanced Manufacturing, Research and Technology" allowed in the Urban Village (UV-5) and "Advanced Manufacturing, Research and Production" allowed in the Maker Tech subdistrict?*

Advanced Manufacturing, Research and Technology is the study and development of advanced manufacturing processes. Advanced Manufacturing, Research and Production is the study, development, and operation of advanced manufacturing purposes.

18. *If expected development does not occur, what other uses would be contemplated in the Innovation District?*

There are many existing viable businesses that can and will remain and provide a range of jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities. As new developments are proposed, they will be evaluated for their consistency with both the North End Urban Plan and the Comprehensive Plan, including the Economic Development Chapter that calls for a robust and diverse economy, providing suitable employment opportunities for residents, and a stable tax base.

19. *Will "Resiliency" measures such as stormwater management through wetlands restoration and the harbor floodgate be undertaken if development lags?*

Yes, these projects are necessary regardless of any future development in the North End.

20. *If "Equity" measures mentioned in the plan – such as possible conversion of Housing Authority land to community agriculture and/or renewable energy, potential job and entrepreneurship training (as contemplated on p. 52 as part of a "ladder of success" for North End residents in the Study Area), and preservation of deed-restricted affordable housing and/or workforce housing attainable to North End residents in the Study Area – remain optional rather than commitments, how does the North End Urban Plan realistically "address historical inequities and current disadvantage" in the North End community within the Study Area?*

These are commitments.

21. *Why were the housing, job/job training, entrepreneurship, and recreational issues in the North End community within the Study Area not undertaken with the same level of analysis as the Innovation District? Why were the potential ideas scattered throughout the plan for responding to those issues not compiled in one place as a set of recommendations?*

The North End Residential neighborhood itself is not expected to undergo great change. The 2017 Comprehensive Plan indicates the continued use of this area as housing. The NEUP considers potential benefits of development for the North End community and protects against adverse impacts.

The Plan is organized by themes. (Recreational elements, for example, are included in sections addressing Equity and Resiliency and also called out in the Quality section.)

22. *Why is the Newport fire station showing up in the Equity section, especially since it has never been mentioned before?*

The North End currently suffers from longer response times than the rest of the city due to a lack of a local fire station. Increased public services was the #1 priority for survey respondents.

23. *In noting that "Opportunity and the other Themes must be weighed by the permitting authorities (p. 107), does the North End Urban Plan equate equity to just one of many possible trade-offs among other competing pressures over land use?*

No, equity is an integral aspect of the Plan. The Plan can not be achieved i.e. it will not reach its goals without advancement in equity commensurate with advancements in the other Themes.