

Question:

How does the draft North End Urban Plan (NEUP) mitigate displacement of residents in the area?

Answer:

Newport has seen rising housing values in recent years due to the desirability of coastal areas, second homes for seasonal use, and the growing popularity of short-term rentals. The 2017 Comprehensive Plan lays the groundwork for addressing housing affordability, and this is built upon in the draft NEUP. The draft NEUP is in line with the 2017 Comprehensive Plan's goals of supporting neighborhoods and housing, and it creates tools to support housing affordability and prevent displacement. The draft NEUP protects neighborhoods and promotes housing affordability, by:

1. Preserving our deed-restricted affordable housing

The draft NEUP proposes the preservation of the deed-restricted affordable housing at Bayside Village, Bridgeview, and Festival Field, as shown in the Opportunity Illustrative Plan on page 50 and mentioned on page 52.

2. Preventing housing loss

The draft NEUP limits short-term rentals in the innovation zone (page 52 of the draft NEUP), and residential properties are preserved with existing R-10 zoning (page 7 of the Comprehensive Plan amendment overview document), which has strict limitations on nonresidential use.

3. Adding more housing units

Increasing the amount of housing in the North End will reduce market-rate housing costs in the area. In the existing Commercial-Industrial zoning district, housing is not an allowed use. In the proposed innovation zone, housing is permitted (page 9 of the draft NEUP). The R-10 zoning district, which covers much of the study area, allows more density than currently exists in the North End residential neighborhood. The draft NEUP supports greater density in the proposed innovation zone (to a level comparable with other areas of the city [page 82 of the draft NEUP]), and adding housing capacity to the residential neighborhoods in and around the innovation zone, while also supporting existing buildings and streetscapes (graphic at the bottom of page 82 of the draft NEUP).

Both the 2017 Comprehensive Plan and the draft NEUP focus on creating and supporting live/work arrangements (page 1 of the draft NEUP appendix), which reduce costs. The draft NEUP allows for many hundreds of housing units. New, low-maintenance housing units will help keep housing prices affordable in the immediate area. Workforce housing, priced between deed-subsidized housing and luxury housing, is prioritized by the draft NEUP (page 3 of the Comprehensive Plan amendment overview document and pages 8, 52, and 70 of the draft NEUP), so that residents in subsidized housing will not be displaced from the neighborhood if their income grows beyond the caps for subsidized housing.

4. Promoting a year-round economy

Newport's reliance on tourism exacerbates affordability issues for residents. By focusing on year-round blue, green, and innovation economies, the desirability of the area is directed towards residents and away from vacationers (page 51 of the draft NEUP).