



The Vision Plan

Executive Summary

City of Newport, Rhode Island | April 2015

The Vision

The vision for the Newport Innovation Hub is to create a research, scientific and technological center or institute that focuses on oceanographic research, resilience related environmental and alternative energy, community resiliency, defense and emerging digital industries and cyber technologies that create a variety of full-time employment opportunities. The vision takes advantage of the City's history, location, and community assets in creating an appropriate environment for "dependable and science based" research and discovery for coastal communities.

There are a number of initiatives that anchor institutions have expressed interest in applying private and public funds for research and development. The City of Newport is an ideal venue to house this research and development.

The core vision of creating an Innovation Hub within the City is to realize the opportunity of building upon Newport's history, geographical setting, and limited underused land to plan a development based on innovation, sustainability and civic economic development. The resulting development will not only benefit the City and State of Rhode Island, but serve as a model for the nation and world.

Perhaps the best description of the Newport Innovation Hub is provided by the Brookings Institute:

"Innovation districts represent a radical departure from traditional economic development. Unlike customary urban revitalization efforts that have emphasized the commercial aspects of development (e.g., housing, retail, sports stadiums), innovation districts help their city and metropolis move up the value chain of global competitiveness by growing the firms, networks, and traded sectors that drive broad-based prosperity. Instead of building isolated science parks, innovative districts focus extensively on creating a dynamic physical realm that strengthens proximity and knowledge spillovers. Rather than focus on discrete industries, innovation districts represent an intentional effort to create new products, technologies and market solutions through the convergence of disparate sectors and specializations (e.g., information technology and bioscience, energy, or education)."



The Challenge

Within the next decade, there is a strong possibility that the public sector, at all levels, will function much more as a facilitator and service delivery vehicle than a prime funder of the many projects, programs and initiatives that are currently considered “public sector.” This major paradigm shift, and the associated potential funding void, requires us to explore new systems that address the upcoming economic and environmental challenges we face as a nation. Responsive new partnership systems between the public sector, impact investors/pay for success organizations, social enterprises, the private sector and non-profit sector can generate a proactive shift toward integrated resilience, which has the potential to produce the effective and necessary programs and initiatives needed to address these ever evolving economic and environmental concerns.

Our challenge is simply to engage thoughtful and passionate partners that share our vision of creating integrated systems of resilience that create economic enterprise and improve the quality of life throughout the state. Winston Churchill was fond of saying, “Success is never final”. The right partners will be able to provide both technical and financial resources to communities that are willing to invest in their future and devote the framework for a successful and long term strategy to evolve.

The Opportunity

Historically and throughout the United States regional units of government and communities would prepare “comprehensive plans” or “vision plans” that would attempt to frame their qualitative and quantitative future. Many of these plans were instructive and guided communities and regions to more informed and enlighten futures. The fact is, most future comprehensive plans failed to capture future trends and conditions that were elusive or simply unknown. The comprehensive plans of the past decade were not intentionally negligent – they were simply too linear and assumed that economic, demographic, infrastructural systems and land use patterns would somehow combine to create a sustainable future. We have learned not to assume that we can plan for our future in a definitive and predictable manner. Tomorrow’s successful and healthy communities will be more about contingency planning, strategic planning, and resiliency planning. Change is a constant not an event.

Due to its historical settlement pattern, oceanfront location, and unique demographics as well as the “two degrees of separation” between stakeholders and decision makers across all sectors, Rhode Island is in a potentially ideal position to offer itself as a national beta site for developing, testing and perfecting integrated resilience for a variety of issues and conditions.

The benefit, from a national perspective, is that Rhode Island, compared to larger states, can furnish, fairly quickly, evidence-based results that demonstrate the successes and weakness of the emerging paradigm. Moreover, Rhode Island would allow partnership-driven economic development to be considered for application and scalability to other states.

“Eternity is a long time, especially towards the end.”

WOODY ALLEN



The benefit, from the state's perspective, is that it would enjoy the first adopter advantage. Rhode Island would have access to thought leaders (individuals, organizations and corporations) that can assist it, through their knowledge and networks, to develop effective partnerships and structure itself as an effective demonstration model. Also, as a test case and first adopter, Rhode Island will have access to innovations in technology, process, product development, and design, as well as potential seed funding, for programs across the spectrum of integrated resilience. Rhode Island citizens and educational/training systems will also have first access to the development and use of the skills needed to prosper in the new paradigm. Such an advantage can have a significant impact on the state's employment trends, and position the state as a skills leader.

Newport is the first Rhode Island community to recognize the opportunity in the above concept and is striving, through projects and advocacy, to take advantage of the emerging paradigm for its own economy and for Rhode Island's as a whole. We need the advisory and technical assistance of thought leaders and innovators from local, regional, and global concerns to help Newport and the state prepare the field for this transformative initiative.

Innovation Hub Goals & Objectives

The vision for creating the Innovation Hub is based on achieving the following goals and objectives:

- Attract high quality businesses and institutions providing employment opportunities to the Innovation Hub that will broaden the year round economic base with an emphasis on clean industries, scientific research and technological employment opportunities.
- Seek the best partners for establishing and building the district, maintaining the community qualities and infrastructure, and for achieving success in promoting the Innovation Hub's expansion.
- Create a model innovation district that sets a new standard for resilient communities that will encourage investment, employment, and redevelopment opportunities.
- Protect the historic aspects and attractions of the community.



Guiding Principles

As visions become reality, they can manifest in different ways but maintain common qualities and reference points.

The following guiding principles reflect the values of the community and serve as the touchstones for planning decisions resulting in the quality development of the Innovation Hub that will be the pride of Newport.



Achieving Goals

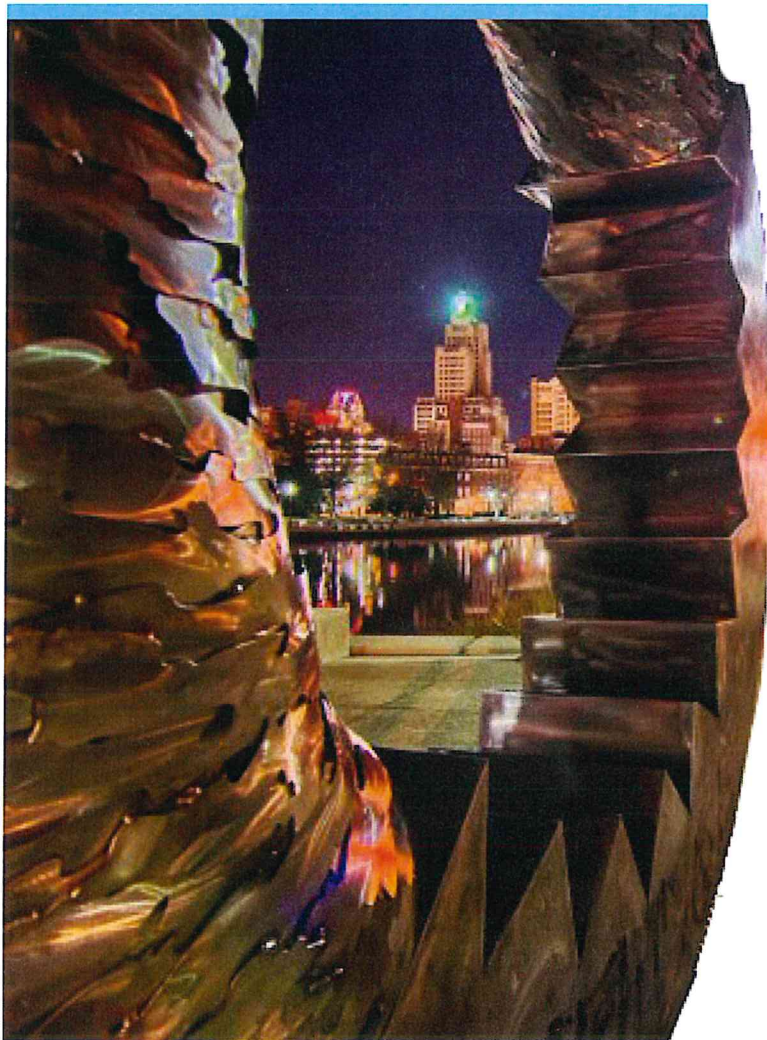
Take the necessary steps to organize, plan, analyze, and develop an Innovation Hub that achieves the goals and objectives stated above.

Maintain a strategy to measure the success of each step and action to inform any adjustments needed to achieve a successful development.

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Preserving Historical Character

- Preserve the unique historical character of the Newport community.
- Promote architecture that is sensitive to the vernacular of the area.
- Promote building massing that minimizes any negative visual impact on the community.
- Encourage the use of high quality and long lasting building materials that are complimentary to the community character.



Designing a Quality Community

- Promote the highest and best lands uses that achieve the goals of the Innovation Hub.
- Encourage a mix of uses both within the district and within individual structures to create a diverse and dynamic neighborhood for research and technology.
- Organize the development with a street network that accommodates vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit in a comprehensive and safe manner.
- Require sidewalk and trail connections to provide citizens with access to homes and businesses.
- Require landscape open spaces to provide Gathering places, recreation areas, and buffers to Contrasting land uses.
- Landscape public and private properties in a sustainable manner to conserve water and enhance the environment.
- Establish gateways and boundaries to the Innovation Hub to announce access points, delineate edges, and establish a sense of place.
- Promote multi-modal transit opportunities to serve the Innovation Hub and reduce parking demand.
- Set high standards for sustainability for all components of the Innovation Hub especially in the areas of energy and environmental design (LEED).
- Focus on programs, policies, and techniques that lead to increased resiliency toward adverse events that may affect the community.
- Establish and maintain an identity and brand for the Innovation Hub that conveys the values and quality of the community.
- Enforce the consistent use of the brand through signage.

Strategic Approach

The development approach to start an Innovation Hub is complex and requires a definitive process of strategic evaluation, analysis, planning and execution to be successful. As previously discussed the creation of an Innovation Hub is reliant on the public private partnership model that forms a consortium that is aligned in vision, purpose and funding for an extended period of time. The development approach outlined by the City of Newport envisions the following steps:

- Establish a clear vision for the Innovation Hub including goals, objectives, and guiding principles so that all developers, partners, and investors know the City's commitments and expectations.
- Outline a strategy to follow in order to achieve the set goals.
- Engage the Newport community to be partners and provide input throughout the process to create an Innovation Hub in the North End Neighborhood. Form dedicated committees to be part of the process and serve as ambassadors to promote the project to the public.
- Evaluate available public lands within the North End Neighborhood that may be appropriate for an Innovation Hub.
- Analyze all information regarding the potential site and vicinity for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT Analysis)
- Determine a realistic development program and site plan concept for an Innovation Hub.
- Describe and discuss the relative advantages and opportunities associated with the future development of an Innovation Hub to all interested parties.
- Develop a clear process or development strategy that potential investors, developers and entities can partner with the City.
- Evaluate the cost and benefit of providing public land, infrastructure and other public improvements as a part of the Innovation Hub.
- Modify the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, development standards, and the entitlement process to support the vision and encourage development
- Obtain committed support for the vision plan from City agencies, citizens, land owners, potential developers and investors through letters and participation in the process.
- Prepare plans, reports, and studies that clearly document the information needed for evaluation and decision making by potential partners.
- Establish a marketing plan, create a brand, distribute collateral material.
- Contact potential partners: developers, investors, institutions, anchor corporations/businesses, etc. to invite to Newport, present the vision, solicit input, and to distribute request for proposal.
- Establish a long term partnership with a master developer and anchor institutions to develop the Innovation Hub.
- Monitor and measure the success of the development and make adjustments as necessary.

The intent is not to prepare a definitive master plan, but rather a vision and framework that become the basis for entering into more detailed project analysis and suitability discussions with a qualified development team. The development approach assumes that there will be more detailed financial, planning, engineering, and regulatory issues that will emerge once a qualified developer has been selected to work with the City. This document represents the current summary of the results from implementing many of the steps above.

The Concept Plan

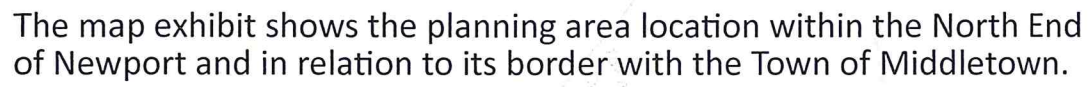
It was through a recent transportation study triggered by the need to improve traffic conditions for the main gateway into Newport over the Pell Bridge, that the opportunity to open up land for development that has been highway right-of-way presented itself. Combining these parcels with other parcels owned by the City and the potential re-use of surplus Navy property created a significant assemblage of public land that deserved a thorough analysis for its highest and best use. In addition, there have been recent redevelopment projects in the North End of Newport that have been creating positive changes in the character of the area with the introduction of new housing, a new Paul W. Crowley MET School (design for learning about sustainability) and the most high-tech campus in the Community College of Rhode Island system.

The two working groups formed by the City (The Public Sector Working Group and The North End Neighborhood Group) along with the consultant group and City staff worked together to identify the initial boundaries for the Innovation Hub, the encompassing potential Overlay Zone, and a characterization of the neighborhoods within the vicinity.

The area subject to the planning effort and SWOT Analysis is considered the Planning Area or Innovation District Overlay Zone and is depicted on the following map exhibit along with the following areas:

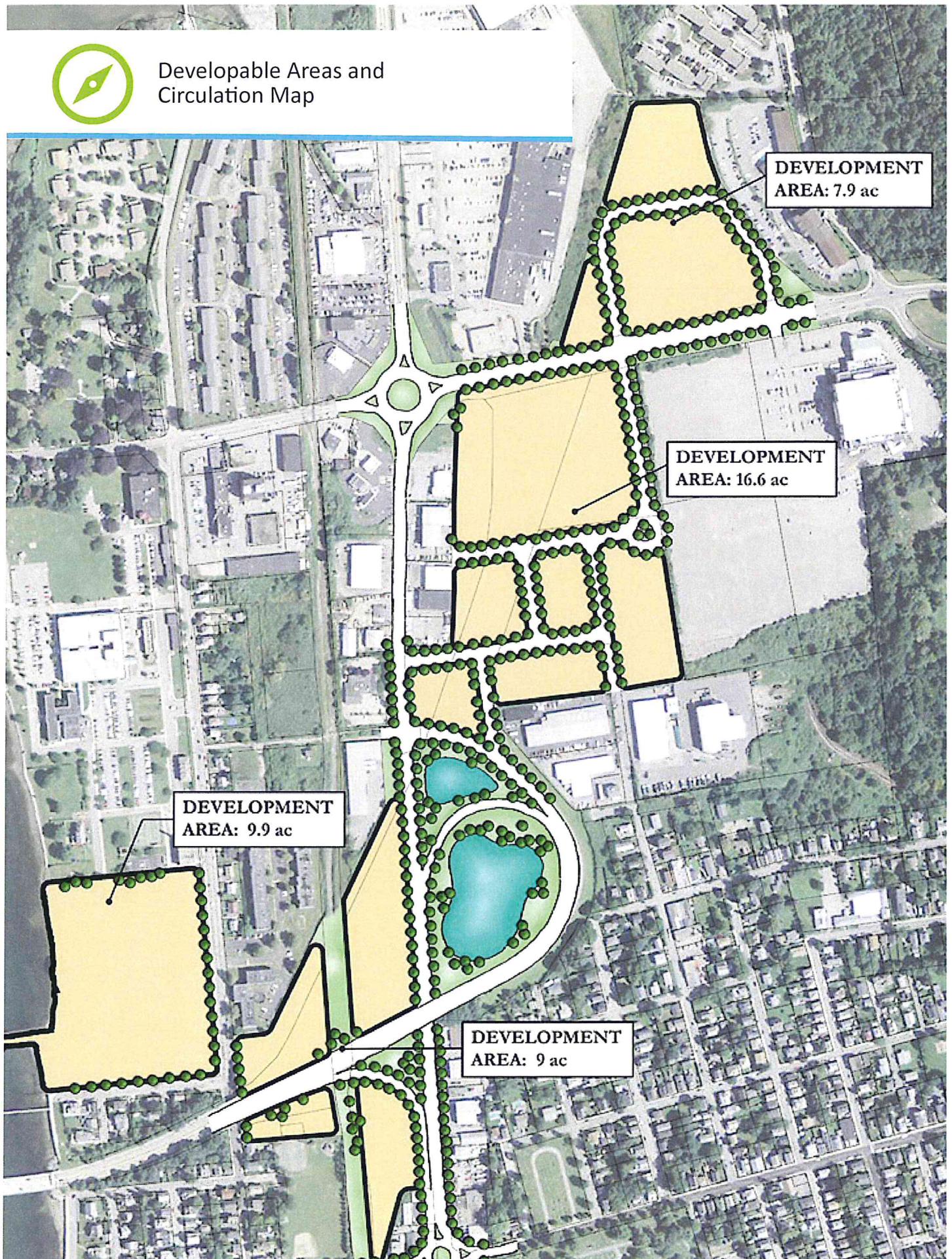
- **INNOVATION DISTRICT OVERLAY (APPROX. 245 ACRES)**
This is the area where redevelopment would be subject to the requirements within an Overlay Zone District allowing a greater mix of uses and more specific development standards supportive of a successful Innovation Hub.
- **INNOVATION HUB (APPROX. 58 ACRES)**
These are the actual properties that will be subject to an initial Request for Proposal (for a Master Developer partner) and represent a smaller area within the District. It consists of property owned by the City and the Rhode Island Department of Transportation.
- **STABILITY AREA** is the adjacent areas that represent established residential neighborhoods and significant historical assets to the City that will remain intact and require preservation and sensitivity to impacts from new development.
- **OPPORTUNITY AREA** describes those adjacent areas that will likely experience increased land values from the development of the Innovation Hub that would further encourage redevelopment of properties.

The following exhibit uses the assumptions outlined in the Development Program to illustrate a potential yield of commercial space based on keeping building height in character with the City and providing adequate parking. This plan assumes that parking spaces may be provided on portions of the ground level of buildings and within a central four to five story parking structure in addition to surface lots and on street. The site plan illustrates a circulation pattern of local streets and private driveways to access all buildings and parking structures using existing established connections that allow for adequate spacing of intersections. This initial concept explores a modified grid layout in order to provide the most efficiency. Street cross sections assume that streets will have on street parking and buildings will be built close to the street to create a traditional urban streetscape. Ground level space can accommodate support retail while upper levels would be configured for office and research & development uses.



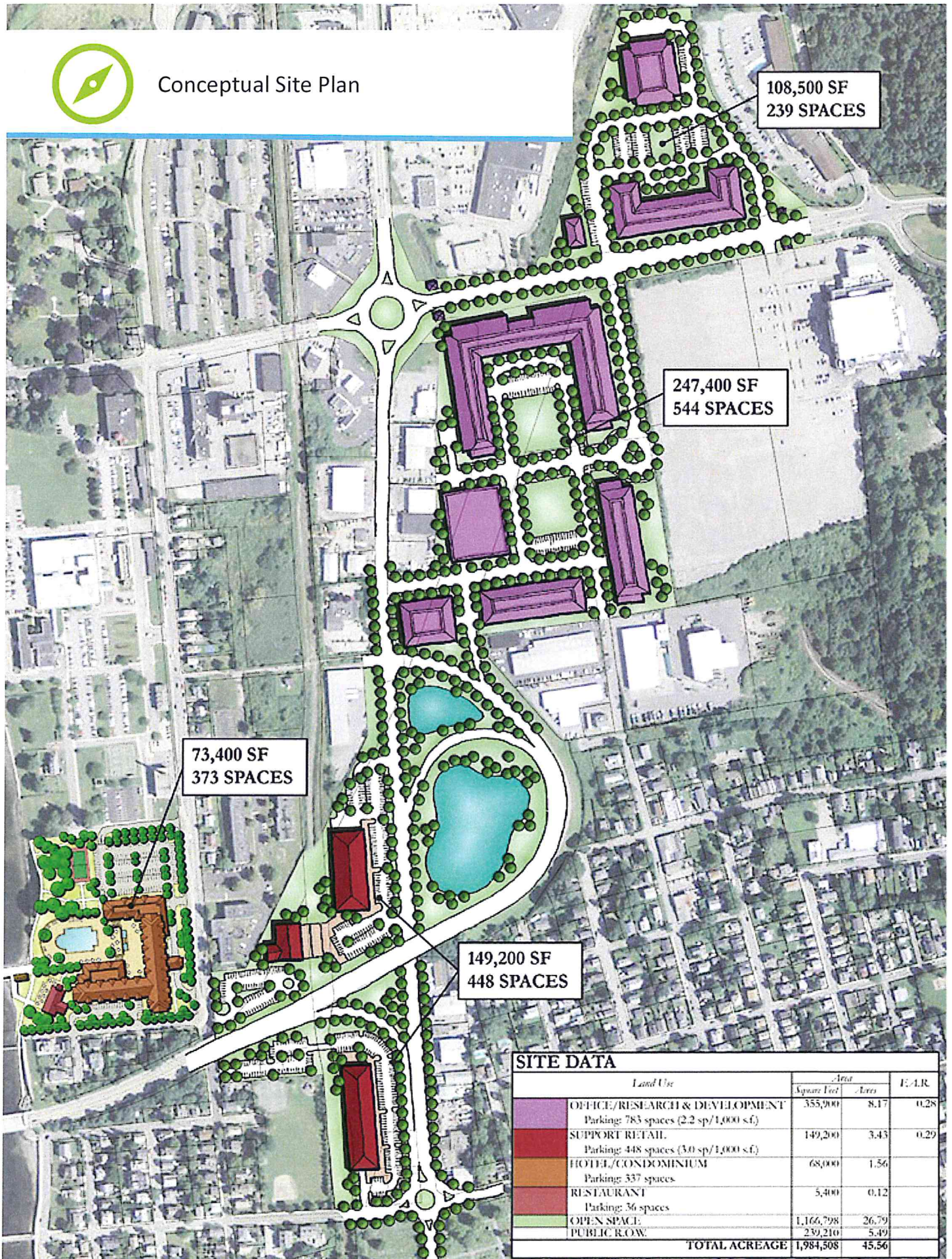


Developable Areas and Circulation Map





Conceptual Site Plan



Community Outreach and Support

The planning effort to date has involved a large team of City staff and consultants that have regularly met with the public working groups and garnered support from key stakeholders and potential partners.

The **Public Sector Working Group** consists of representatives from:

- City of Newport Staff
- Newport Citizens
- Rhode Island Department of Transportation
- Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association
- Naval Undersea Warfare Center
- Newport County Chamber
- Rhode Island Turnpike & Bridge Authority
- Rhode Island Department of Administration
- U.S. Federal Highway Administration

The **North End Neighborhood Group** consists of:

- Residents in the North End Neighborhood
- Residents in adjacent neighborhoods
- Business owners
- City Council representatives

Meetings were held to engage the Public Sector Working Group and the North End Neighborhood Group on March 13-14, 2014. The sessions began with the introduction of the consultant team and the outline of project tasks, products, and schedule. In addition, base maps were drafted and each of the groups provided valuable input on the existing conditions of the planning area including input on their perception of the strengths and weaknesses of the area and their individual visions for the future.

Meetings were again held with each group on June 5 - 6, 2014 to present the draft reports for the comprehensive strategy and public private partnership framework including a presentation on selected precedent projects. The SWOT Analysis was presented along with a discussion on the necessity and content of a zoning overlay that best reflects the vision for the development of an Innovation Hub. This was followed by the presentation of the initial concept plan that illustrated an assumed development program in order to begin the discussion on what could actually be the potential development yield of the combined properties. Comments were recorded and discussions led to outlining the next steps in the process.

Future meetings will occur to keep the groups updated on final reports, garnering support, issuance of a Request for Expression of Interest, and other developments related to the planning process and identification of potential partners.

Supporting Partners

As the Vision continues to be presented to interested groups and stakeholders, the City has received the following Letters of Support for the Innovation Hub Vision:

- Department of the Navy, Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division
- Community College of Rhode Island
- Salve Regina University



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