

What Will Newport's Waterfront Look Like in 2030?



*A Two-Day Workshop
October 6 & October 27, 2007*

SUMMARY REPORT

*International Yacht
Restoration School
458 Thames Street
Newport, RI 02840*

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT, June 11, 2008

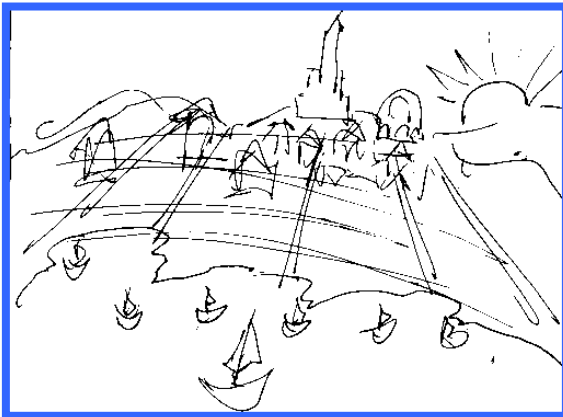
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What Will Newport's Waterfront Look Like in 2030? *Postcards from the future:*



*Dear Katie and Joe,
I hear you are ready to flee NYC! I hope you consider Newport – It will afford you a great sense of community, a manageable environment, the opportunity to see and enjoy the water everyday while giving you access to great dining, shopping, and the arts. There are great schools for the kids and plenty of activities for them to enjoy (with you!) from sailing to horseback riding. There's no place like it! XOX CC*



*Dear Abby,
Newport has done a wonderful job of keeping access to their waterfront and making a marine business zone on Lower Thames. There is a real sense of place and heritage of the waterfront here.
-G.*



*Dear Sparky,
Newport has been great for the past week even in February. The place is gorgeous with walkways along the harbor, great shops, excellent seafood, and friendly people. It is hard to believe that 40,000 people live here year-round today. The people are so friendly.
Love, Grandpa*

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Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge those who made significant contributions to this workshop. As a result of these contributions, this workshop yielded critical dialogue and recommendations for the future of Newport Harbor.

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Study Tour Leaders

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- Tour #2) *Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse of Major Properties* - Paige Bronk, City of Newport Planning; Keith Stokes, Newport County Chamber of Commerce
- Tour #3) *Commercial Corridor/Tourism* - Gale Goff, RI AIA; Jonathan Stevens, City of Newport Economic Development; Steve Cundy, Retail/Property Owner, Lower Thames; Kathryn Harrington, Gateway Visitor's Center; Steve Kirby, Marketplace Properties
- Tour #4) *Heritage/Cultural Tourism* - Kristine Royal, Lower Thames Business Assoc.; Susan Daley, IYRS/Museum of Yachting; Herb Marshall/Jan Slee, Bring Back 12M Yachts; Robert Foley, Newport Restoration Foundation
- Tour #5) *Harbor Management/Preservation of Natural Environment* - Jennifer McCann, University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center/RI Sea Grant; Tim Mills, Harbormaster; Neill Gray, CRMC & Newport Waterfront Commission; Hank Kniskern, Newport Waterfront Commission
- Tour #6) *Transportation Modes/Management* - Tanya Kelley, Newport Planning Board; Bruce Bartlett, City of Newport Redevelopment; Terry Farrell, Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
- Tour #7) *Maritime Industries* - Bonnie Watson, Alliance for a Livable Newport; Davison Bolster, Warren Working Waterfront Planner; Ron Ackman, Oldport Marine; Charlie and Eli Dana, Newport Shipyard; Wendy Waller, Save the Bay; Austin Becker, University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center/RI Sea Grant;

Event Sponsors

American Institute of Architects, Rhode Island Chapter

Lillian Cumming Streetscape Fund at the
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What Will Newport's Waterfront Look Like in 2030?

A Two Day Workshop
October 6 & October 27, 2007

1 YRS, 458 Thames Street, Newport, RI

SUMMARY REPORT

SECTION ONE: WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Background

The city of Newport and its residents recognize that Newport Harbor is one of their most valuable economic, historical, cultural, and natural assets. As working waterfront is lost and markets change, Newport recognizes the need for proactive planning and a new vision for the harbor, much of which is poised for significant redevelopment. Major issues facing the waterfront include determining future use for key parcels; enhancing transportation with waterborne options; creating a continuous pedestrian walkway to and along the water; preparing for sea level rise and natural disasters such as hurricanes; and bolstering the year-round waterfront economy to benefit all Newport residents. These are significant issues, yet there is no overall vision for that the Harbor should look and be like in 2030.



Existing public access to Newport Harbor can be found at the City's Ann Street Pier.

Strong Community Engagement

Historically, the Newport waterfront has been an important economic and social asset. This was recognized when in January 2007 the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, in coordination with the City of Newport, the Alliance for a Livable Newport, the Newport County Chamber of Commerce, the University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center/Rhode Island Sea Grant and others launched a project to conduct a public charrette and develop a community-wide vision for a vibrant Newport waterfront. (see Appendix X for the grant proposal).



Honoring the working waterfront was identified as a community priority.

The collaboration, guided by a steering committee, resulted in a two-day event in October 2007 that brought many community representatives together to identify and study waterfront issues and to explore challenges and opportunities for waterfront development. The workshop, “Newport Harbor 2030” included presentations from technical experts and officials, study tours, and mapping and visioning exercises for attendees.

With almost 100 participants (See Appendix A), the workshop demonstrated citizen commitment to, and passion for, preserving the best of the Newport waterfront and enhancing its potential for this and future generations. Together, the participants envisioned a Newport that is economically vibrant, accessible to the public, culturally diverse, and strongly tied to its history.

Priority Recommendations

After two days of intense discussion and learning, participants expressed a desire that this effort continue and focus on working towards achieving the following three objectives:

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.



Creating a continuous harbor walk was identified as a priority recommendation at the workshop.

Project Boundary

The project boundary for this initiative covers the waterfront, with a northern point at the Newport Visitor’s Center at America’s Cup Boulevard, and a southern point at the corner of Wellington and Thames streets (See Map A). Participants largely provided input based on the boundary, but also considered the implications of harbor redevelopment from Aquidneck Island, state, and regional perspectives.

Structure of the Effort

During the summer and fall of 2007, the project steering committee interviewed commercial and residential users of the waterfront to obtain a better understanding of their concerns. The steering committee then structured a two-day event (October 6th and October 27th) with presentations that:

- 1) Reviewed past and existing plans - both municipal and private - for the study area;
- 2) Identified common waterfront development issues;
- 3) Communicated how other communities had addressed these issues;
- 4) Organized study tours based on seven key issues; and
- 5) Provided participants with an opportunity to communicate their vision for the Newport waterfront.

The overall purpose of Day One was for participants to:

- 1) Obtain a better understanding of both past and existing planning efforts
- 2) Explore and discuss current issues and identify solutions that could resolve these issues.

The overall purpose of Day Two was for participants to:

1. Develop an integrated vision for the Newport waterfront study area.
2. Identify three priority projects that will help to implement this vision.

The issues, vision, and priority projects were then summarized and synthesized into the three overarching “priority recommendations” stated above for future harbor/waterfront planning in Newport.

As a final summary exercise to help workshop attendees summarize their thoughts on the future of Newport Harbor, participants were asked to write or draw a postcard for a relative or friend describing what they see, or are experiencing, in Newport Harbor during the year 2030. Excerpts from this exercise, similar to those found inside the

front cover of this Summary Report, can be found in the margins throughout the document, and the complete collection of postcard text is presented in Appendix ???.

The Purpose of this Document

This Summary Report serves to document the proceedings from the two-day workshop held in October 2007. It is the hope of the collaborators that the results of the workshop will be considered a starting point for a new chapter for the harbor – a redevelopment process with the next step focusing on the creation of practical, collaborative activities to implement these recommendations and achieve the community vision for Newport Harbor.

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SECTION TWO: Issues & Vision

As mentioned above, the workshop was organized as a two-day event that served to educate the attendees on the history and context of Newport's waterfront, and then to engage the attendees in the identification of issues, concerns, possible solutions, a vision, and some tangible projects that might be addressed in an action plan. These materials were synthesized into overarching recommendations that the City of Newport and others can use for future planning and fundraising efforts.

Presentations

The first day of the event focused on reviewing the history and context of Newport's waterfront. A series of presentations delivered on the morning of Day One provided an historical overview of the waterfront, pertinent plans, and lessons learned from other waterfront planning projects. The following is a brief overview of each presentation delivered, but the full presentations can be found online at : [ENTER WEBSITE LINK HERE].

Newport's Waterfront: A Brief History. Dr. Jim Garman, Salve Regina University, Associate Professor of Cultural and Historic Preservation): Dr. Garman provided a historical overview of the waterfront and harbor, including why it was selected as a port and the economic, social, and environmental role it has played since the 1600's.

City of Newport Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Robert Beaver, Newport Planning Board, Chair: Mr. Beaver offered an overview of the relevant elements about Newport Harbor within the City of Newport's Comprehensive Land Use Plan, first adopted in 1991 and updated on approximately 5-year intervals since that time. The Land Use Element of the plan specifically addresses the waterfront and coastal regions, but the plan also covers housing, economic development, natural/cultural resources, open space/recreation, and circulation elements.

1997 Newport Harborfront Plan, William Warner and Thomas Todd, William D. Warner Architect Architects and Planners, Ltd. Mr. Warner presented a summary of highlights from the 1996 Harborfront Plan, commissioned by the Foundation for Newport to study traffic and congestion problems in the City, and to generate design proposals that improve these conditions for the enhancement of the local economy and overall quality-of-life.

2004 Urban Design Plan for Central Newport, Ken Taylor, Taylor & Partners: Mr. Taylor reviewed the analysis of existing conditions and proposed design recommendations for improving pedestrian environment and vehicular circulation within Central Newport, defined in this study as the area bounded by the Gateway Visitor's Center to the north, the America's Cup Ave/Mill Street intersection to the south, Spring Street to the east, and Newport Harbor/Long Wharf to the west.

Newport's Harbor Management Plan, Neil Grey, Member of the Newport Waterfront Commission and the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC): Mr. Grey provided an overview of the City of Newport's Harbor Management Plan, mandated by the CRMC and recently revised in 2005. The plan's elements were discussed, including public access, water quality, mooring management, and storm preparedness, as well as some of the challenges to long-term implementation of the plan's recommendations.

Current Planning in the City of Newport, Paige Bronk, City of Newport Office of Planning, Zoning, Development & Inspection, Director: Mr. Bronk reviewed the City's recent and ongoing planning projects with waterfront impact, including: a review of the 'guiding' planning documents; the Aquidneck Island West Side Master Plan and Special Area Management Plan (SAMP); Pell Bridge Realignment Project; North End Master Plan; Newport Heights; Perotti Park; Harbor Shuttle Project; RIPTA Ferry and Trolleys; Ocean Drive/Bellevue Ave Scenic Roadway Application; and the Armory & Ann Street Pier Redevelopment Project.

[Newburyport, MA Case Study. David Spillane , Goody Clancy, Boston, MA:](#) Mr. Spillane told the story of the waterfront planning effort in Newburyport, Massachusetts, This effort served to combine public realm improvements, zoning changes, and design guidelines to form a cohesive set of recommendations that is expected to guide development over the next twenty+ years and encourage coordination among regulators, developers, and land owners.

[What will Newport's waterfront look like in 2030? Opportunities, Strategies and Policies for Positive Change. Keith Stokes \(Newport County Chamber of Commerce, Executive Director\):](#) Mr. Stokes offered an economic vision for Newport Harbor, and addressed innovative development techniques, including “new urbanist” zoning & planning tools that could serve to facilitate a rich diversity of uses along Newport’s waterfront. In addition, Mr. Stokes addressed the concept of a continuous Harbor Walk along Newport’s waterfront and provided examples of other successful Harbor Walks from around the U.S.

Study Tours & Issues Identification

After the morning Presentations described above, participants were invited to attend one of seven study tours in order to review and discuss issues and concerns specific to different elements of Newport’s waterfront:

- Tour #1) Streetscape/Signage/Public Access Along the Waterfront Tour
- Tour #2) Redevelopment and Adaptive reuse of Major properties
- Tour #3) Commercial Corridor/Tourism
- Tour #4) Heritage/Cultural Tourism
- Tour #5) Harbor Management/Preservation of Natural Environment
- Tour #6) Transportation Modes/Management
- Tour #7) Maritime Industries

Each waterfront study tour was guided by Tour Leaders who were well versed on the theme of their topic. The

groups were charged with answering the following questions:

- 1) What are the issues facing this topic?
- 2) What are solutions that could resolve these problems?;
- 3) Are there existing plans, organizations, or other places that should be engaged in resolving issues?

For each of the seven study tours, the participants were asked to identify key issues, possible solutions, relevant organizations to engage in future planning, a vision, and recommended priority projects. The information generated during the two workshops is intended to form the foundation of the priority recommendations upon which future planning and implementation can be based.

Each of the seven Study Tours are described below and organized as follows:

- Tour Leaders
- Focus of Tour
- Key Issues Identified
- Possible Solutions
- Plans/Organizations to Engage

Study Tour #1: Streetscape/Signage/Public Access Along the Waterfront Tour



Existing public access to Newport Harbor can be found at the City's Ann Street Pier.

Tour Leaders:

- Drayton Fair, RI AIA
- Ron Onorato, Professor of History
- David Wixted, Friends of the Waterfront
- Ross Cann, Architect & Planner

Focus of Tour:

This Study Tour investigated the following elements along Newport's waterfront:

- How can the streetscape of the study area from Long Wharf to Wellington be enhanced with improvements like better paving, utility lines, lighting, street furniture, improved signage, etc?
- How is public access to the waterfront handled?
- Are there improvements that can enhance and direct the public to the water from Thames Street itself?
- What are the design tools that can be used to improve the experience, safety and business environment?

Key Issues Identified:

- Privatization of parking poses a problem with gaps in the street frontage. Is this an assessment problem?
- No clear pedestrian crosswalk at America's Cup Blvd and Thames Street; a potentially dangerous situation for both cars and people. Would roundabouts as proposed help calm and control the traffic?

Possible Solutions:

- Enforce use of Bliven Place as a public street and not a private parking or loading area.
- Public access could be enhanced to the water at all public rights-of-way by shaping it with physical barriers; i.e., street furniture, signage, curbs, and paving setbacks.
- Design principles and guidelines could be established.

Postcard from 2030:

*Dear Caroline –
It is so beautiful here in
Newport! The harborwalk is a
wonderful stroll through the
historic waterfront – There
are so many lively shops,
restaurants, and historic boats
and buildings – The chowder
is fantastic! Wish you were
here!
Love, Uncle*

- A consistent street frontage line should be maintained.
- Utility lines should be buried or moved the rear of properties.
- Nice light fixtures could be installed.
- Use of pocket parks is good if used judiciously as they provide needed seats and shade at appropriate intervals.
- Review zoning restrictions on building square footage based on parking and support mixed use and design minimum and maximum heights.
- Support interpretive signage that is high quality, durable, vandal and graffiti resistant and integrated. Is there a possibility of integrated city-wide signage so that there is consistency?
- Reestablish historic connections, particularly at Long Wharf from the Water to the Colony House. Use alternatives to concrete, bunker-like planters.

[Plans/Organizations to Engage:](#)

- None were identified

Study Tour #2: Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse of Major Properties



Newport Armory

Postcard from 2030:

*Dear Susie,
Come visit! Sections of the waterfront's heritage and history of the way Newport began has been preserved and maintained → so remains a livelihood for some, while also serving as a history lesson to others. The character invites visitors and creates a beautiful place to live and experience living near the water. There's a connection to the water and waterfront, even those who visit or live several blocks away from the harbor. See you soon.*

Tour Leaders:

- Paige Bronk, City of Newport Planning
- Keith Stokes, Newport County Chamber of Commerce

Focus of Tour:

This Study Tour investigated the redevelopment adaptive reuse potential of the following areas and major parcels along Newport's waterfront:

- Waites Wharf;
- Parking lots next to IRYS and Pier restaurant;
- Armory and Ann Street Pier;
- Newport Harbor Hotel;
- Long Wharf parking lot and mall; and
- Gateway Visitor's center.

Key Issues Identified:

- Lack of a continuous harbor walk.
- Lack of desirable view of the harbor from the water side and Thames Street.
- Underdevelopment of the areas.
- No standards of the usage of the properties.
- Many different styles of architecture.
- Lack of conformity to size scale or massing.
- Misuse of properties.
- Too much surface parking with no control.
- Inappropriate methods of defining the properties (fences).
- Lack of streetscape or purpose of design to conform to the area.
- Lack of real access to the water in many places.

Possible Solutions:

- Most issues could be resolved with a master plan.
- Plan should incorporate or modify the existing zoning, planning and land usage guidance to obtain

the best possible solution to achieve the goals of the master plan.

Plans/Organizations to Engage:

- City council should generate a plan for the city manager and administration.
- The city administration should transmit the plan to various boards and commissions (Planning, Zoning, HDC and waterfront commission).
- The plan has to include the CRMC, RIDOT and other state agencies.

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Study Tour #3: Commercial Corridor/Tourism



Lower Thames Street

Postcard from 2030:

*Hi Taylor,
You and your husband and family will fall in love with Newport! A walk along the harbor walkway, stroll the turn of the century shops, and have lunch in one of the bistros -- all along the Lower Thames Village. The kids will really like taking the Harbor Shuttle to the Stokes Historical Harbor Center! From the transportation center, take the Blue Line to Lower Thames Station and I'll meet you at the Café before our Harbor Cruise!
Love, Auntie Chris*

Tour Leaders:

- Gale Goff, RI AIA
- Jonathan Stevens, City of Newport Economic Development
- Steve Cundy, Retail/Property Owner, Lower Thames
- Kathryn Harrington, Gateway Visitor's Center
- Steve Kirby, Marketplace Properties

Focus of Tour:

This Study Tour investigated the commercial corridor along the waterfront, including the following areas:

- Lower Thames Street Shopping Corridor
- Armory plaza, IYRS/Museum of Yachting
- Bank of America plaza (Wellington).
- King's Park

Key Issues Identified:

- Shopping district is not distinguishable.
- Signage is lacking.
- Information kiosks and maps, etc., are not as abundant as they should be.
- Streets are not cleaned regularly in the summer.
- There is a lack of foot traffic down to the wharves.
- Some of the sidewalks along Lower Thames are potentially hazardous and are unsightly.

Possible Solutions:

- Assign a special designation to the Lower Thames Street shopping corridor at median island or at the street entrance. This demarcation would be clearly distinguishable, and either a structure or planting.
- Place advance signage so that vehicles can access proper lanes for turns.
- Place a very visible information kiosk with maps of the Lower Thames Corridor. Kiosk should have "you are here" map on its façade. Map should indicate public facilities: bathrooms, transportation nodes (trolleys), transportation rentals, pocket parks, and

harbor access points. Restaurant and retail facilities should also be marked.

- Encourage weekly to draw spending families rather than resource-draining college students kids. Additional kiosk could be placed at newly renovated Armory plaza, IYRS/Museum of Yachting and Bank of America plaza (Wellington). Locations should have public restrooms and available outdoor seating/pocket parks for Newport visitors' use.
- Signs should be posted regarding free and fee parking lots.
- Place art -- banners or sculptures -- on utility poles, similar to Wickenden Street, Providence, to identify and celebrate the unique character of district.
- An historic walk with signage plaques would describe the history of Lower Thames.
- Clean streets and sidewalks more often in summer (youth program?), and put out more trash cans. Business owners need to be responsible for cleaning and sweeping in front of their stores.
- Trolleys, harbor access, and water taxis should be incorporated into plan, but these should be considered in conjunction with walking traffic accessing retail. Add trolley stops: Lower Thames Street at the Armory, IYRS/Museum of Yachting, Wellington, and beginning of King's Park.

[Plans/Organizations to Engage:](#)

- City of Newport Department of Public Works
- Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
- Newport County Chamber of Commerce
- City of Newport Planning Department

Study Tour #4: Heritage/Cultural Tourism



International Yacht Restoration School

Tour Leaders:

- Kristine Royal, Lower Thames Business Assoc.
- Susan Daley, IYRS/Museum of Yachting
- Herb Marshall/Jan Slee, Bring Back 12M Yachts
- Robert Foley, Newport Restoration Foundation

Focus of Tour:

This Study Tour investigated the heritage and cultural resources within Newport's waterfront and investigated the following concepts:

- Definition of history with visual tools – identify historical resources and include a timeline.
- Clarification of access to public waterfront spaces.
- Make access more inviting to waters edge.
- Consistent signage for pathfinding (way finding).

Key Issues Identified:

- Lack of historical identification (signage)
- Public access to harbor is difficult.
- Difficult for public to gain access to due to docking constraints of harbor.

Possible Solutions:

- Interpret space through tours and signage.
- Accenting history through signage, tour areas, etc.
- Reasons to celebrate harbor heritage include: Historic house preservation, via organizations such as the Restoration Foundation, International Yacht Restoration School (IYRS), International Twelve Meter Association (ITMA) - largest fleet in the world based in Newport.

Plans/Organizations to Engage:

- Organizations or plans that can help resolve the issue:
- Preservation Society of Newport County.
- Newport County Chamber of Commerce.
- Newport Restoration Foundation.

Postcard from 2030:

*Dear Cameron –
Now that you have graduated from college, I want you to consider moving to Newport to start your new life. The quality of living here is wonderful, with a beautiful waterfront, clean streets, great schools, and business friendly zoning ordinances. The water is clean and the harbor well managed. The cultural heritage is well preserved and protected and the community has strong leaders.*

Study Tour # 5: Harbor Management & Preservation of Natural Environment



Harbor management & preservation of natural environment

Tour Leaders:

- Jennifer McCann, University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center/RI Sea Grant
- [NAME?], Harbormaster
- Captain [NAME?], Save the Bay
- Neill Gray, CRMC & Newport Waterfront Commission
- Hank Kniskern, Newport Waterfront Commission

Focus of Tour:

This Study Tour investigated the following elements along Newport's waterfront:

- Protection of the waterfront's environment, diversity, mix of uses, and public access from land and water
- The existing Harbor Walk effort and connections between Newport's commercial core and other waterfront features, including Fort Adams
- Harbor economics and management;
- Cooperation among stakeholders, businessowners, local residents, decision makers, and other citizens to ensure long-term implementation

Postcard from 2030:

*Dear Future Person,
A great day – we went kayaking on the harbor today amongst the classic sailboats and modern boats. We got to see the underwater turbines that harness energy to power the city from tidal power. Check your handheld computer for pictures and comments from the seals in the harbor. There is still history here – and new boats and buildings too. The air and water are cleaner than ever before (in my memory).*

Key Issues Identified:

- Newport a premier harbor and destination, but not a visitor-friendly harbor
- Development process moves faster than waterfront planning process.
- Condo development and luxury waterfront development encroaches on public availability to waterfront
- Most marina facilities dominated by very large vessels
- Difficult to increase the density of moorings within the harbor; goal is to make better use of moorings
- Pump out services – boats and shore side facilities – very important but uneven responsiveness, quality of service and availability

- No place for marine service providers to load gear or keep their service boats
- We need to undertake economic research study to understand the economic drivers and linkages to shore side revenue
- Cruise ships contribute significant revenue to the Maritime Enterprise Fund – which funds the harbor. This is off-season traffic – helpful.
- How do you handle a special place for 12 meter yachts in the harbor, since Newport was the home of 12 meter racing.
- WFC feels the economic value of these events are not being adequately considered in planning – more support is prudent
- Riparian Lines and Fed Lines are important to public trust domain protection – needs more proactive attention
- Need to accelerate storm water remediation: harbor pollution, marine life and sedimentation
- There is a need for a methodology for seawall inspection, estimation, and budgeting and repair.
- We need to do better at involving the larger community
- Newport kids use Van Zandt, Elm Street and King Park for swimming – all near storm-water outlets (pollution prone)
- Fishing, walking, swimming and education opportunities – need to do more about increasing programs

Possible Solutions:

- A complete plan with a critical mass of community (public and private) to ensure stewardship, integration of ordinances and policies, and coordination among city commissions and state agencies.
- Authentic collaboration. Invest in suites of smaller projects (signage, public access, pedestrian walkways,

water-related educational programs, enhanced visitor facilities) to achieve quality and value.

- Maps or brochures for all public access, public spaces and areas of interest
- Have a walking tour pod cast (earphones – like museums)
- Identify those areas where we do not have a harbor walkway – persuade cooperation
- Education – “no child left inside” – have programs to have all kids on the water
- Have “summit meetings” for all City Commission officers to ensure coordination and unity of purpose
- Seasonal Mini-Marina for residents with a dinghy
- Consider a City Marina – perhaps at the Naval Hospital with shuttle access and marine services

[Plans/Organizations to Engage:](#)

- City commissions and state agencies.
- Developers.

Study Tour#6: Transportation Modes & Management



Water taxi

Tour Leaders:

- Tanya Kelley, Newport Planning Board
- Bruce Bartlett, City of Newport Redevelopment
- Terry Farrell, Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

Focus of Tour:

This Study Tour investigated the following elements along Newport's waterfront:

- Available modes of travel within Newport
- Sources of traffic congestion
- Parking and streetscape concerns

Key Issues Identified:

- Water transportation/ shuttles: connect Long Wharf to Ann Street Armory (proposed Maritime Center)
- Long Wharf access for fishing boats (improve facilities) and transient Boaters (short term visitors arriving by sea)
- Pedestrian Waterfront Access: provide signage, passages and encourage exploration
- Parking intercept directions to alternative parking (signage) and alternative routes through town
- Traffic congestion at Memorial and Thames
- Buses get stuck in traffic
- Armory needs renovation (revenue for city)

Postcard from 2030:

Dear Simon:

I have just spent the day wandering around Newport. It has been easy to get around and the cars are almost invisible. There is so much to see and do there hasn't been a boring minute all day – museums, stores, and a sail on the bay! Come see it soon!

Ross

Possible Solutions:

- Improve maps and signage for parking.
- Provide alternative parking and travel route directions. For example, Mary Street parking is hidden from view (as desirable) but needs some visibility or directional signage–also the Spring Street return loop ONE-WAY SYSTEM is not evident to visitors; connect waterfront to Bellevue Avenue and the beaches and use beach parking for more summer peak traffic days: provide signage directions and shuttles.

- Improve gateway center by providing alternate modes of transportation, especially water taxis and trolleys. Accommodate alternative land transportation such as bikes and mopeds (bike path), and on the water encourage kayaks (Kayak path in harbor), public launching sites, and water taxis. Water transportation and shuttles could connect Long Wharf to Ann Street Armory (proposed Maritime Center).
- Long wharf improvements (new slips, moorings) needed for fishermen and transient boaters who want to tie up and take water taxis to a possible locker/shower facility at future Ann Street Pier Armory facility.
- Traffic calming: roundabouts and paving textures on roads and sidewalks can slow vehicles.
- Remove America's Cup median: Explore dedicated bus or free "open trolley" lane in median; a loop through mall near Mary street; and thruways on America's Cup and through Long Wharf Mall with alternative "passages" through buildings as seen at former Christie's pier and near the former Armory.
- Pedestrian Waterfront Access: provide signage, passages, and encourage exploration.

[Plans/Organizations to Engage:](#)

- Marine Fund
- Tax Credits
- RIPTA
- Federal Grants
- Statewide Planning and Matching Grants
- City Council Members

Study Tour #7: Maritime Industries



Working waterfront

Tour Leaders:

- Bonnie Watson, Alliance for Livable Newport;
- Davison Bolster, Warren Working Waterfront Planner
- Ron Ackman, Oldport Marine
- Charlie Dana, Newport Shipyards

Focus of Tour:

This Study Tour investigated the following elements along Newport's waterfront:

- Identifying and defining the "working waterfront" in Newport Harbor
- Investigating the diversity of uses along Newport's waterfront, including the relationship between land-side and water-side uses, events, and planning efforts
- Public access

Key Issues Identified:

- Defining the "working waterfront" in Newport based on historic uses: boat building; boat maintenance, commercial and recreational fishing, and water dependent businesses, such as ice companies. This will help to maintain architectural and historical references to traditional industries as a means of maintaining a sense of cultural heritage and uniqueness of place.
- Ensuring sufficient landside and waterside space for fishing and boating operations, including laydown areas, gear maintenance (fishing), drydock storage, haulout facilities (both for normal operations and storm preparations), loading and unloading, and access to shore power, fuel, water, and waste facilities.
- Maintaining a diversity of waterfront uses in the face of economic pressure to convert to high-end residential uses and recognizing that diverse uses help ensure a strong economic future and diverse overall state and local economy. Maintaining diversity is often difficult, as high-end uses are often perceived to be incompatible with working waterfronts.

Postcard from 2030:

Dear friend:

Newport is a great place to live because it has a strong sense of community that recognizes its heritage (architectural and working maritime industries) while welcoming new businesses and uses and encouraging sustainable development. Everything you need is in walking distance and access to our beautiful harbor is an added feature.

- Providing public access from the land to the water for residents, visitors, and businesses that offer water-based transportation and recreation. Also, ensuring public access from the water to the land including providing public dinghy docks, transient slips and moorings, and cruising boat services such as showers, pump-out, fuel, and convenience/grocery facilities.

Possible Solutions:

- Tax incentives, zoning regulation such as the Maritime Zone, or the creation of covenants that protect maritime uses from nuisance lawsuits, could be used for certain areas in Newport.
- Active enforcement of the “Public Trust Doctrine” (that tidally influenced submerged lands are preserved for public use, and that the state shall maintain these areas for the public's reasonable use, including fishing, fowling, navigation, and passage along the shore).
- Use of CRMC’s water-type designations, as CRMC is the only state authority charged with regulating the use of the watershed in Rhode Island and already has an established zoning system in place that designates certain waters and adjacent lands for certain uses.
- The CRMC’s Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) or similar process that invites various stakeholders to engage in discussion around these issues with the common goal of compromise and consensus.

Plans/Organizations to Engage:

- Federal legislative representatives and federal agencies for funding assistance.
- State agencies.
- City departments and commissions.
- Community organizations representing residents
- Private sector representation
- Rhode Island Sea Grant/URI Coastal Resources Center

Waterfront Vision & Priority Projects

Nine new groups were then formed. Each group had representatives from the seven study topics. A facilitator was assigned to each table to guide the conversation to effectively develop a vision and identify three priority projects that would help to implement the vision.

Group 1:

Vision Points:

- 1) There will be a diversity of uses on the waterfront, with “Working Waterfront Enterprise Zones” that include trade stores, as well as recreational boating, markets, artisans, and craftspeople.
- 2) Through the creation of a harborwalk there will be lateral and perpendicular access to the entire waterfront that benefits both the general public and on-water commercial uses that require it to carry out work.
- 3) Overall, Newport will be a great place to live, work and visit with abundant parking, and transportation is seamless and convenient.



The visioning exercise and identification of priority projects utilized laminated maps to assist workshop participants organize and prioritize recommendations. This map represents the work of Group 1.

Priority Projects:

- 1) Parking/zoning
- 2) Utilities and overhead wires
- 3) Goals and policy for major parcels
- 4) Parking and traffic
- 5) Overarching committee needed for zoning to protect working waterfront
- 6) Policy should drive developers
- 7) Public access needs improvement with signage and identification
- 8) Liability issues regarding public access need to be considered
- 9) Residential part of mixed use
- 10) Easements for working waterfront



This map represents the work of Group 2.

Group 2

Vision Points:

- 1) Pedestrian environment
- 2) Preservation of Newport waterfront and cultural heritage
- 3) Transit plan top support Thames St with parking and gateway to King's Park and points south

Priority Projects:

Implementation 2017!

- 1) Year 1: Signage study and assign waterfront commissioner.
- 2) Year 2: Armory Redevelopment and pull-behind trolley.
- 3) Year 3: Waterfront walk connections.
- 4) Year 5: Parking garage at gateway (800-900 cars).
- 5) Year 10: Thames St. streetscape, southern Thames Terminal, trolley on rails, limos from TF Green, ferries from Providence, Pt. Judith, and Warwick.



This map represents the work of Group 3.

Group 3

Vision Points:

Newport 2030 will be:

- 1) A city where pedestrian is king and the car is subservient.
- 2) A community that has preserved and honored its heritage as a historic maritime city.
- 3) A municipality where planning and development are coordinated and supported by a single integrated management group.
- 4) A waterfront that is open and attractive to residents and tourists alike.
- 5) A major destination for both heritage and boating tourism.
- 6) A city where transportation and parking works to meet the needs of visitors and residents.

Priority Projects:

Heritage Tourism

- 1) Discontinuity of public access must be fixed and rationalized
- 2) Better historical signage (content, directions, character)
- 3) Lighting, parking and public amenities

Transportation

- 1) Satellite Locations:
- 2) Parking:
- 3) Mass transit improvements (buses, trolley)
- 4) Traffic pattern improvements (opening Long Wharf)
- 5) Connecting north and south ends in a more rational way



This map represents the work of Group 4.

Group 4

Vision Points:

Newport 2030 will feature:

- 1) Easy parking with an incentive to park at north/south ends that would include shuttle vouchers and a parking structure at gateway as well as parking nodes around Newport.
- 2) Walkable Newport with new routes, lighting, signage, maps and GPS geocaching, and coastal waterfront access.
- 3) More dockspace with a water gateway at Perotti Park

Priority Projects:

- 1) Parking nodes with Shuttles, Vouchers, Maps illustrating pedestrian & shuttle routes
- 2) Gateway structure with park on top
- 3) Walk Newport with new routes: Bollards, lighting, way-finding, signs & maps, GPS geocaching locations
- 4) Coastal waterfront access and passages
- 5) Dock Newport from the water: Gateway and Perotti Park nodes
- 6) Armory: café showers, internet

7) Regional links, limos from West Bay and ferries

Group 5

Vision Points:

In 2030 Newport will:

- 1) Preserve and build upon historic character and boating heritage of Newport.
- 2) Promote economic viability via public and private incentives.
- 3) Feature streetscape improvements, wider and cleaner sidewalks, pocket parks and restrooms; and signage.
- 4) Have a continuous harborwalk.
- 5) Offer free trolley service to Lower Thames and abundant water taxi service.
- 6) Have a new visitor center at the Armory.



This map represents the work of Group 5.

Priority Projects:

- 1) Improve physical area and streetscape of Lower Thames
- 2) Public Policy (Design review board)
- 3) Update Historic District Commission ordinances and raise awareness
- 4) Encourage better transportation (free?)
- 5) Public/private partnership (Waite's Wharf)

Group 6

Vision Points:

- 1) Newport will create a historically and aesthetically sensitive environment via realistic enhanced zoning and an economic plan which will promote a mixed-use waterfront that sustains good workforce housing, dynamic commercial activities, and compatible tourism.



This map represents the work of Group 6.

Priority Projects:

- 1) "Wake Up Newport"

- 2) Identify tools, specifically enhancing zoning codes, to allow a negotiated development process with waterfront property owners.
- 3) Enact a state policy to indemnify and encourage private property owners to participate in a public waterfront walkway.
- 4) Create a pedestrian focused waterfront on land and an intermodal focused system on water.

Group 7

Vision Points:

- 1) Newport will create a more visitor friendly atmosphere in Newport by introducing a harborwalk and additional waterfront access, cheap and easy transit, a de-cluttered Thames Street, and a sense that the public owns the waterfront.

Priority Projects:

- 1) Underground utilities as part of Thames Street work
- 2) Give preferential treatment to working waterfront business with residential/tourism benefits
- 3) Assert mindset of "Public owns the waterfront:"
- 4) Zoning
- 5) Taxes
- 6) Planning
- 7) Administrative umbrella
- 8) Harborwalk
- 9) Historic District Commission continuing

Group 8

Vision Points:

- 1) Key words: Waterfront, Vibrancy, Alive, Busy, Year-round, Urban maritime spirit, Inclusive, Positive energy, Welcoming, Waterfront Civic Life
- 2) Newport will zone and plan, within the constraints of space and money, to suit both tourists and year-round residents. There will be a means to allow tourists to easily travel around Newport by foot, boat, bike, and public transportation. And incentives will be created



This map represents the work of Group 7.



This map represents the work of Group 8.

so residents and local business owners want to participate in plan activities.

Priority Projects:

- 1) 1 year: Signage study, Waterfront Commissioner
- 2) 2 years: Establish mission, Armory redevelopment, Pull behind trolley
- 3) 3 years: Waterfront walk
- 4) 5 years: Parking garage at gateway
- 5) 10 years: Repave Thames (total streetscape), Utilities and railbed
- 6) 15 years: Southern terminus
- 7) 20 years: Trolley on rails



This map represents the work of Group 9.

Group 9

Vision Points:

- 1) Newport will increase public facilities which preserve the national treasure and safeguard the national trust. Planners will use integrated planning and management to zone the waterfront to improve Newport's access, desired uses, future development, and maritime industries.

Priority Projects:

- 1) Integrated planning and management
- 2) Waterfront zoning and recognized needs for an integrated coordinate function
- 3) Review of mooring ordinances with view to increased access to mooring for residents and transients

SECTION THREE: PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS & PROPOSED ACTIONS

Priority Recommendations for Moving Ahead

The groups came together and voted on what are the three overall priorities actions the community should implement to achieve the vision. The overall priority recommendations are:

- 1) *Create a continuous harbor walk that links all waterfront parcels and allows public access both laterally and along the shore.*

Participants agreed that a public harbor walk would be a major asset to Newport's waterfront, allowing lateral access, and enabling people to move from road to water, and along the shore. Participants pointed to harborwalks in other communities that have become the centers for lively public activity and allow tourists and residents to enjoy the beauty of the ocean and harbor. Many solutions were proposed, including taking advantage of the new CRMC Urban Coastal Greenways policy to require access on waterfront developments, encouraging shops and restaurants to "open their backdoors" to the water so that tourists could still browse the shops from the new harbor walk, and constructing a boardwalk out over the water to get around areas where it is not feasible to construct a walkway on the landside.

- 2) *Honor the working waterfront, maintain its relevance, and preserve its identity.*

Participants agreed that the working waterfront is an important part of Newport's culture and heritage. The working waterfront has decreased as new tourist-economy based uses and residences have grown along the shore. The fishing economy has declined, but there are many water-dependent uses that still require access to the harbor. Not only do these uses contribute to a sense of place, but they also help ensure economic resiliency for the place.

- 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.*

There is a need for additional coordination and leadership among municipal boards and commissions to make decisions about the city and its waterfront. It is important to find forums for dialogue that encourage communication between municipal commissions, as the decisions on the landside impact the harbor and vice versa. City government and its citizens need to work off a single plan to enhance coordinated implementation.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

Based on input from the nine (9) groups and subsequent group discussion, participants listed the following projects that might be considered for future implementation to help to achieve the vision stated in the three Priority Recommendations stated above.

- 1) *Create a continuous harbor walk that links all waterfront parcels and allows public access both laterally and along the shore.*

Proposed Implementation Projects:

- Review Zoning Regulations to evaluate mixed-use priorities for the waterfront (All Groups)
- Address discontinuity of public access by identifying barriers to and proposed improvements for the creation of seamless waterfront walk connections. (Group 2, Group 3, & Group 4)
- Initiate a signage study to improve identification of waterfront and historic resources as well as clearly-defined public access routes along the Waterfront. (Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, & Group 8)
- Investigate liability issues and concerns regarding public access. (Group 1)

- Develop a comprehensive “Walk Newport” program with new routes and physical identifiers installed on the ground, including: bollards, lighting, way-finding, signs, maps, & GPS “geocaching” locations (Group 3 & Group 4)
- Improve the physical area and streetscape of Lower Thames (Group 5)
- Create a pedestrian-focused waterfront on land and an intermodal focused system on water. (Group 6)

2) *Honor the working waterfront, maintain its relevance, and preserve its identity.*

Proposed Implementation Projects

- Review Zoning Regulations to evaluate mixed-use priorities for the waterfront (All Groups)
- Identify easements required by and in support of working waterfront activities. (Group 1)
- Establish an overarching committee focused on zoning to protect the working waterfront. (Group 1)
- Promote the redevelopment of the Armory site: include amenities such as a café, showers, & internet. (Group 2, Group 4 & Group 8)
- Identify tools that specifically enhance zoning codes to allow a negotiated development process with waterfront property owners. (Group 6)
- Give preferential treatment to mixed-use working waterfront business with residential/tourism benefits. (Group 1& Group 7)

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.*

Proposed Implementation Projects

- Review Zoning Regulations to evaluate mixed-use priorities for the waterfront (All Groups)
- Assert the mindset of "Public owns the waterfront:" (Group 7) and deliver a consistent message that policy should drive developers. (Group 1)
- Assign a dedicated Waterfront Commissioner. (Group 2 & Group 8)
- Update Historic District Commission ordinances and raise awareness. (Group 5 & Group 7)
- Target public/private partnership opportunities for locations such as Waite's Wharf. (Group 5)
- Enact a state policy to indemnify and encourage private property owners to participate in a public waterfront walkway. (Group 6)
- Consider forming an administrative umbrella that addresses zoning, taxes, & planning for Newport's harbor/waterfront. (Group 7 & Group 9)
- Review of mooring ordinances with view to increased access to mooring for residents and transients. (Group 9)

4) *Other Project Priorities*

Transportation Interconnectedness & Parking, Proposed Implementation Projects

- Develop a clear plan and zoning-supported strategy to alleviate traffic congestion and implement parking nodes in Newport (Group 1)
- Establish satellite parking locations with shuttles, mass transit connections (buses, trolley, pull-

behind trolley), and overall traffic pattern improvements. (Group 2, Group 3 & Group 5)

- Promote use of shuttles and other forms of public transit through the distribution of vouchers and maps illustrating pedestrian & shuttle routes. (Group 3 & Group 4)
- Expand the parking garage at the Gateway Visitor Center by 800-900 cars and create a public park space on the top of the structure. (Group 2, Group 4, & Group 8)
- Evaluate the feasibility and benefits to opening Long Wharf to vehicular traffic. (Group 3)
- Explore methods that will serve to connect the north and south ends of Newport in a clear, rational manner. (Group 3)
- “Dock Newport” - Address the transportation connections from the water onto land and promote Gateway Center & Perotti Park nodes. (Group 4)
- Establish a southern Thames Terminal with a trolley on rails, and regional links, which include trolleys (including trolley-on-rails), limo service from West Bay & TF Green Airport, and ferries from Providence, Pt. Judith, & Warwick. (Group 2, Group 4, & Group 8)

Welcoming Public Facilities, Design & Aesthetics, Proposed Implementation Projects

- Evaluate the feasibility of locating utilities and overhead wires underground as part of Thames Street work (Group 1, Group 7, & Group 8)
- Develop a comprehensive Thames Street streetscape improvement program, including paving, parking, lighting, and the location of public facilities and amenities (Group 3 & Group 8)

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SECTION FOUR: NEXT STEPS

With almost 100 participants, the two-day workshop demonstrated the commitment and passion that many people feel for the future of Newport's waterfront. Together, the participants envisioned a Newport that is vibrant, accessible to the public, culturally diverse, and strongly tied to its history. The Newport of 2030, as captured during the symposium, will have fewer cars on its roads and more walkers and bikers. There will be strong connections between the land and the sea, with clear leadership and a strong sense of community encouraging these ties. The workshop served as an initial step toward this vision, bringing together a diverse community to exchange ideas and reinforce common goals.

It is the hope of the project Steering Committee and participants that the results of the workshop will be considered the starting point of a new chapter for the harbor – a redevelopment process with the next step focusing on the creation of practical, collaborative activities to implement these recommendations and achieve the community vision for Newport Harbor.

As this effort continues its momentum into an Implementation Program focused on addressing the three “priority recommendations” outlined in Section Three, a strong public involvement process will ensure future actions reflect the desires of the community, and build upon the planning processes and products previously completed. Future public meetings should attempt to engage participants in this two-day workshop, and target as many stakeholders, decision makers, and residents as possible to ensure the long-term benefit of this new vision to all sectors of Newport's community.

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