



Town of North Kingstown, Rhode Island

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To: Town Council
From: Planning Department
Date: November 19, 2015
Re: Comprehensive Plan Re-Write Update

As you are aware, the Town of North Kingstown has embarked upon a re-write of the comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan is a living document that sets the vision and goals of the community and provides the town with a roadmap for accomplishing these items. This comprehensive plan rewrite is a critical step towards establishing innovative and successful policies and practices that will guide North Kingstown to a sustainable future.

The town hired Interface Studios to assist us with this re-write. We have been working with them since the spring of 2015. Interface will be attending the Town Council meeting on Monday, November 23, 2015 to provide you with an update as to where we are in the overall process, what we have accomplished to date and what the next steps will be. They will update the Town Council on the following topics:

- Comprehensive Plan Process
- What is a Comprehensive Plan and Why it Matters
- Summary of Public Engagement
- Summary of Key Themes
- Where are We Headed

In advance of the meeting, we would like to provide you with a summary of where we are in the process.

PHASE I - COMMUNITY VISIONING

This first step in the process was the creation of a Steering Committee to assist the town with the comprehensive plan re-write. This Steering Committee was appointed by the North Kingstown Town Council and is comprised of representatives of various boards and commission as well as at large public members. The committee has met several times over the last six months and has provided a wide range of insight and feedback to the team.

In addition to the steering committee meetings, the consultant has provided a wide variety of public input opportunities into the process. A public participation plan was drafted and reviewed with the Steering Committee as well as town staff. This plan helped to guide the outreach activities and outlined the specific tools, methods and timing for outreach activities.

To date the following public input activities have taken place:

- ✓ Stakeholder Interviews
- ✓ Walking tours of local neighborhoods and corridors
- ✓ Creation of a Facebook page to host information on the re-write
- ✓ Creation of a web page on the town site as an additional resource
- ✓ Survey (over 600 responses)
- ✓ Collaborative map exercise
- ✓ Focus Group Meetings
- ✓ First public forum (July 2015)
- ✓ Meetings with municipal department heads
- ✓ Meetings with local organizations (Chamber of Commerce and Quonset Development Corp)
- ✓ Second public forum (October 2015)

Four focus groups were formed around the major subject areas of the comprehensive plan. They are made up of about 10 participants to allow for a rich discussion of ideas and concerns. The focus groups met one time in September and these discussions were facilitated by Interface Studios. Existing conditions data was presented and a targeted discussion took place around specific questions based upon each focus group theme. We plan to reconvene the focus groups again in December.

DELIVERABLES

- > Request for GIS data
- > Public Participation Plan
- > Welcome letter to the Steering Committee
- > Marketing materials to promote public events
- > Interactive exercises for public forums
- > Graphic summary of public comments

The first public forum provided an introduction to the project and identified the participants' main concerns through various hands on activities. The second public forum included an analysis of the baseline information collected to date as well as a summary of the initial findings from the collaborative mapping and focus groups. Additional hands on activities were provided to

elicit responses from participants about the analysis and to discuss their vision and goals.

In conjunction with the public input, the consultant team has been collecting base line data to incorporate into the plan. This included review of past plans, reports and studies completed for the town as well as review of available survey mapping and GIS data. This information was presented as graphic summaries to the Steering Committee as well as at the public forums noted above.

PHASE II - ANALYSIS

In the second phase of the project, we moved into the analysis portion of the project. Interface Studios reviewed previous plans completed for the town and reviewed all major projects proposed in North Kingstown. They have also reviewed the extensive list of state requirements that are necessary for the comprehensive plan re-write. Interface created an excel spreadsheet detailing what information is required by the state and where that information could be obtained. This will allow us to easily track what has been collected and what information is still needed.

The consultants have also reviewed local demographic data and identified key trends. This allows us to see in what direction the town is moving. This included data from the US Census Bureau, the US Department of Labor, PA State Data Center, and other reputable resources. Social demographic trends were identified, a summary of key economic development trends were documented (such as employment figures and market trends), and housing values and conditions were ascertained (such as vacancy, tax delinquency, etc.). All of these indicators were summarized to help tell the story about North Kingstown.

DELIVERABLES

- > Demographic review and trends summary with info-graphics
- > Written summary of the 2006 Comp Plan assessment
- > List of GIS maps required for updating
- > Additional analysis and summary maps
- > Asset map(s)
- > Existing conditions summary document & presentation

Phase III - RECOMMENDATIONS / FINAL PLAN

Upcoming Tasks

The next portion of the project will focus on creating the recommendations and drafts of the final plan. One of the first steps is to assess the existing 2008 Comprehensive Plan. The various town department heads have been tasked with reviewing the relevant sections of the existing comprehensive plan and identifying goals, objectives and strategies that should be removed from the plan, remain in the plan as is or recommend that certain items remain with some edits. This process will also identify any duplicative / overlapping policies that could be streamlined. The result of this analysis will provide us with a basis from which to understand the primary gaps in current comprehensive plan policies. This task is ongoing.

A draft **vision statement and goals** for the future of North Kingstown will be developed for review by the town and steering committee. This draft vision will be the result of our public engagement to date and be refined as the process moves toward identifying strategies. Based upon these vision statements, a set of **strategies** related to each component of the comprehensive plan will need to be developed. We are planning to ask the steering committee to start the process of strategy formulation in November. The first draft set of strategies will then be shared with the focus groups as well.

The consultants will also have additional meetings with the Planning Commission and Town Council at key stages over the course of the last phase of this project.

Once the vision, goals and strategies are complete, a **Future Land Use Plan** will be drafted. This will be based upon the results of the work completed above. The consultants will develop a future land use scenario for discussion with the steering committee and the public. The future land use will conform to State guidelines for comprehensive planning but also seek to translate the planning principles and strategies into one overall land use approach for the Town. The future land use scenario will help

identify the necessary zoning changes required for implementation which will be documented as a part of the comprehensive plan update. Illustrative plans will help explore development options in key locations.

An **implementation strategy** will also be developed. This strategy will outline the phasing, necessary actions, lead agencies, partners, and funding sources for each recommendation. The strategies will be divided into short-, mid- and long-term recommendations to help guide fund raising and staffing. This information will be organized in a matrix for review and editing by the Steering Committee.

A **preliminary comprehensive plan** will be created that describes in detail the set of policies, goals and action steps developed by through the community engagement and visioning. A summary of the preliminary plan will also be drafted to spread the word about North Kingstown's future. Once the preliminary plan is reviewed, the **final comprehensive plan** and summary will be completed. It will incorporate all final comments provided by the town, steering committee and public.

The steering committee will continue to meet regularly over the next few months. An additional public forum will be held towards the end of the process. This will include a discussion of the draft Comprehensive Plan with an emphasis on necessary action steps following completion of the plan as well as potential barriers to implementation.

If you should have any questions or are looking for additional information, please feel free to contact Rebecca P. Lamond, Principal Planner at blamond@northkingstown.org or 268-1572.

- DELIVERABLES**
- > Statement of Vision & Principles
 - > Draft Strategies & Future Land Use Plan
 - > 1-2 illustrative development plans
 - > Implementation matrix
 - > Preliminary Comprehensive Plan and Plan Summary
 - > Final Plan documents
 - > Final Powerpoint presentation