

PORTSMOUTH COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN

ELEMENT 5 – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION

PORTSMOUTH WILL POSSESS A BALANCED FRAMEWORK OF LOCAL ECONOMIC POLICIES THAT PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN JOBS, BUSINESS ACTIVITY AND TAX BASE WITHOUT COMPROMISING PORTSMOUTH’S UNIQUE COMMUNITY CHARACTER, ITS FISCAL STABILITY OR THE QUALITY OF ITS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

GOALS, POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

Note to reader: The following Goals, Policies and Action items can be read as follows:

Goal – *“In order to achieve the economic development vision for the Town of Portsmouth, this plan sets as a goal for the town to.....”*

Policy – *“In order to achieve the above stated town Goal, this plan sets forth as a policy that the town will.....”*

Action – *“In order to implement the above stated town policy, the town will.....”*

As is the practice throughout in this plan, each of the action items listed in this section are evaluated with the following guiding principles in mind. Does the action.....?

- Conserve, protect and enrich our historic landscape and cultural heritage.
- Embrace energy conservation and responsible stewardship of our natural environment.
- Provide a safe and healthy environment for current and future generations to live, work and play.
- Ensure a stable, long-term economic future by making Portsmouth a great place to live, work and conduct business.
- Improve community resilience in the face of a changing natural environment.
- Build on existing community strengths.
- Advance the wise use of technological innovation where appropriate.
- Minimize negative impacts on future generations.
- Foster civic engagement and community cohesion.

GOAL ED - 1 - *Achieve a high and growing standard of living for Portsmouth’s citizens and entrepreneurs by empowering a 21st century workforce to match a 21st century economy.*

Policy ED - 1.1

Seek local business input to assess the workforce skills gap and support strategies to meet local employer’s talent needs.

Action ED - 1.1a – Institute an annual roundtable of local business leaders to discuss local employer’s workforce needs and ways local government can assist local businesses in hiring quality employees.

Policy ED - 1.2

Coordinate with local educational institutions and other entities that provide career growth counseling, technical education and training opportunities and management of apprenticeship / internship programs.

Action ED - 1.2a – Inventory, maintain and actively publicize a list of all state and local workforce education and training programs.

Action ED - 1.2b – Fund programs to transform the Portsmouth School District into a leading center for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM).

Action ED – 1.2c – Establish and fund a public / private partnership, “Workforce 2038,” to support adult education and training as well as apprenticeship / internship programs to improve the Portsmouth workforce.

GOAL ED - 2 - *Direct economic development efforts towards those which promote and enhance Portsmouth’s strengths as a community.*

Policy ED-2.1

Recognize and promote the belief that the very best business attractor we can create is to make Portsmouth an exceptional place to live, work and play.

Action ED – 2.1a – Identify and prioritize Comprehensive Community Plan goals and policies that express direct efforts to improve the quality of life as a business attractor.

Action ED – 2.1b – Pursue State and Federal grants to help fund programs to improve the landscape, built environment and quality of life in Portsmouth.

Action ED – 2.1c – Identify and prioritize items in the 5-year Capital Improvement Plan that express direct efforts to improve the quality of life as a business attractor.

Action ED – 2.1d – Develop short, medium and long-term Marketing Plans that focus on Portsmouth as an exceptional place to live/work/play rather than business incentive strategies.

Action ED – 2.1e – Establish a Beautify Portsmouth committee to draft a 10-year plan to “spruce the place up.”

Action ED – 2.1f – Work with the Newport County Board of Realtors to promote housing choices in Portsmouth.

Action ED – 2.1g – Work with the Portsmouth Arts Guild and the Portsmouth Historical Society to promote arts, culture and historic preservation values in Portsmouth.

Policy ED-2.2

Prioritize programs and policies that focus on retaining and strengthening existing local businesses. Keep local businesses in Portsmouth.

Action ED – 2.2a - Institute an annual roundtable of local business leaders to discuss the kinds of municipal support most needed by local businesses.

Action ED – 2.2b – Develop a 5-year Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Action ED – 2.2c – Create and annually update a Portsmouth business roster based on tangible asset tax accounts.

Action ED – 2.2d - Develop and bi-annually update a set of industry standard economic indicators to analyze trends in the Portsmouth Economy and institute an bi-annual Report Card on business activity.

Action ED – 2.2e – Actively engage with the Portsmouth Business Association and advocate for a town official to serve on the PBA Board of Directors.

Policy ED-2.3

Support the growth of home occupations as an important component of business activity in Portsmouth.

Action ED - 2.3a – Review and amend (if necessary) provisions in the Portsmouth Zoning Ordinance regulating home occupations, balancing support for the

expansion of business activity and the negative impacts in residential neighborhoods.

Action ED - 2.3b – Conduct a business survey of current home occupations to determine the best ways Portsmouth can aid in the expansion of this business sector.

Policy ED-2.4

Continue to focus on attracting maritime, technology and defense-related businesses as desirable economic activity in Portsmouth.

Action ED – 2.4a – Collaborate in and support the efforts to transfer the Navy land referred to as the “Melville Backyard” for use by the Portsmouth Marine Partners, LLC.

Action ED – 2.4b - Evaluate actions to develop Tank Farms 1 and 2 for consistency with the needs of the Melville maritime-related companies.

Action ED – 2.4c – Review the Planned Marina Development provisions of the Zoning Ordinance for unwarranted limitations on marina development.

Action ED – 2.4d - Pursue active membership in the Newport County Chamber of Commerce to ensure that the interests of Portsmouth’s marine, technology and defense-related businesses are adequately represented.

Action ED – 2.4e – Work closely with the Southeastern New England Defense Industry Alliance (SENEDIA), which is the primary defense Industry group that advocates for defense industry support in the area.

Action ED – 2.4f – Work closely with Navy officials to ensure that excessing of Navy property is handled consistent with the needs of local businesses.

Action ED – 2.4g - Evaluate development plans for the West Side Defense Highway (i.e., the “Burma Road”) and Stringham Road to ensure any plans are consistent with the support of local marine, technology and defense businesses.

Action ED – 2.4h - Task the Portsmouth Economic Development Committee to establish procedures and policies that will help innovative entrepreneurs to develop into viable local technology businesses.

Policy ED-2.5

Promote tourism and the local tourist economy at every opportunity.

Action ED – 2.5a – Establish a Portsmouth Tourism Board to oversee efforts to promote tourism in Portsmouth.

Action ED – 2.5b – Partner with the Newport County Chamber of Commerce and other island, county and regional entities engaged in the promotion of tourism.

GOAL ED - 3 - *Focus on the type of economic growth that makes Portsmouth more resilient, self-sufficient and resistant to the impacts of external natural and economic forces.*

Policy ED - 3.1

Ensure that built infrastructure and municipal services are maximized to support local business activity in Portsmouth.

Action ED – 3.1a – Collaborate in and prioritize the development of high-speed, broad band internet to all of Aquidneck Island.

Action ED – 3.1b – Develop a plan to establish Wi-Fi “hotspots” to enhance the hard-connected internet infrastructure and provide internet access to more businesses and residences.

Action ED – 3.1c – Work with RIDOT to ensure traffic improvements to both East and West Main Roads as well as the Town Center area maintain the highest priority for completion.

Action ED – 3.1d – Investigate the inclusion of a collection system and wastewater treatment facility at Melville to support future growth in the area.

Action ED – 3.1e – Work with the Portsmouth Water and Fire District to ensure adequate water supply for future economic growth in Portsmouth.

Action ED – 3.1f – Investigate operating town recreational assets as enterprises to maximize return on investment. Use the Melville Campground private operation and the operation of the Glen Manor House as examples of success.

Policy ED - 3.2

Encourage local business-to-business programs and policies that encourage local relationships and local business coordination. Keep Portsmouth dollars in Portsmouth.

Action ED – 3.2a – Institute an annual roundtable to bring local business leaders together to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Action ED – 3.2b – Task the Director of Business Development, working in conjunction with the Newport County Chamber of Commerce and the Portsmouth Business Association, with identifying and bringing together local businesses that can work together for mutual benefit.

Action ED – 3.2c – Investigate innovative business practices such as co-ops and local business strategies such as local currency for applicability in the Portsmouth business climate.

Policy ED - 3.3

Address the increasing impacts of climate change and seek ways to protect both public and private business and infrastructure assets within Portsmouth.

Action ED - 3.3a – Dedicate funding and seek grants to study the impacts of storm surge, flooding, and sea level rise in flood prone areas including Park Avenue and the Melville area.

Action ED - 3.3b – Collaborate with Rhode Island Sea Grant and other state and federal agencies to educate business owners on the negative impact of climate change and what can be done to protect business assets and infrastructure.

GOAL ED - 4 - *Attain a level of business growth that supports a balanced and sustainable tax base without compromising Portsmouth’s natural, historic, architectural and aesthetic character.*

Policy ED - 4.1

Through zoning, ensure there is a sufficient amount of land to support growth in the commercial/industrial tax base to maintain a balance with Portsmouth’s residential tax base at appropriate levels.

Action ED – 4.1a – Compile and maintain a list of vacant and underutilized parcels with commercial and industrial zoning designations.

Action ED – 4.1b – Prepare an Economic Built-out Analysis to determine how much commercial/industrial development remains possible under current zoning.

Action ED – 4.1c – Undertake an analysis of the magnitude of commercial and industrial development required to impact the balance of residential to commercial tax revenue by a given percentage point.

Policy ED - 4.2

Manage commercial/industrial growth patterns around the concept of nodes and clusters rather than large concentrated retail centers, extended commercial strip development or growth centers. Promote transportation alternatives accordingly.

Action ED – 4.2a – Prepare a Community Purchasing Power study to determine how much, where, and what types of businesses Portsmouth have the capacity to support in the future and adjust Commercial zoning accordingly.

Action ED – 4.2b - Review and update provisions in the Zoning Ordinance for Mixed Use development in commercial districts.

Action ED – 4.2c – Review and update provisions in the Town Center Zoning District to reflect changes in RIDOT’s concept for traffic improvements in the area.

Action ED – 4.2d – Review and update Portsmouth’s Design Review standards.

Action ED – 4.2e – Study residential and commercial zoning patterns along West Main Road for opportunities to rezone for a commercial development cluster.

Policy ED - 4.3

Continue to require landscape buffers and other regulatory safeguards that protect residential properties from the negative impacts of commercial and industrial development.

Action ED - 4.3a – Review zoning and sub-division regulations and all town ordinances to maximize reasonable protections to residential parcels from the negative impacts of commercial and industrial development.

Policy ED - 4.4

Consider direct public investment in unique development, re-development and in-fill opportunities as a way to ensure quality business development that does not compromise community character.

Action ED – 4.4a – Determine the best course of action for the Town with regard to the Tank Farm properties being expropriated by the Navy.

Action ED – 4.4b – Pursue strategies to create a business incubation facility in Portsmouth.

Action ED – 4.4c – Investigate the creation of a public/private Portsmouth Economic Development Corporation to facilitate local economic development.

GOAL ED - 5 - *Deliver the type of economic conditions and business climate that increase the competitive advantages of doing business in Portsmouth.*

Policy ED - 5.1

Seek ways to improve business licensing, permit approvals and development regulations so as to minimize regulatory constraints on new and existing business owners.

Action ED – 5.1a – Adopt a new “Industrial Park” Zoning District with updated zoning regulations to replace the now expired site restrictions and development standards guiding development of the original park.

Action ED – 5.1b – Implement an audit of business licensing and permitting procedures with the goal of streamlining the process for new business applicants.

Action ED – 5.1c – Update and modernize the Use Tables in the Portsmouth Zoning Ordinance.

Action ED – 5.1d – Review zoning regulations for mixed-use development to allow for more flexible property use strategies.

Action ED – 5.1e – Update Article III of the Portsmouth Zoning Ordinance, Division into Districts and update the official Portsmouth Zoning Map accordingly.

Action ED – 5.1f – Create a “Handbook for Starting a Business in Portsmouth” as an aid to prospective business applicants.

Policy ED - 5.2

Promote policies and programs that reduce the cost of doing business in Portsmouth.

Action ED – 5.2a – Revitalize and re-task the Portsmouth Economic Development Committee (PEDC) to study ways the municipality can help reduce business costs. Ensure that the Town Director of Business Development is maintained as an Ex-Officio member of the PEDC.

Action ED – 5.2b – Investigate the establishment of a locally-funded revolving loan program to provide local small businesses with better access to short-term cash requirements.

Action ED – 5.2c – Work with CommerceRI and other state partners to identify grant opportunities for Portsmouth’s businesses.

Action ED – 5.2d – Work with the General Assembly to support tax reform at the state level.

Action ED – 5.2e – Establish a Grant Coordinator who will monitor for potential grants and track grant funding that can enhance town investments in improved infrastructure and services.

Policy ED - 5.3

Ensure there is robust municipal support of local businesses including active promotion of Portsmouth as a good place to do business.

Action ED - 5.3a – Revitalize and re-task the Portsmouth Economic Development Committee to attract and support businesses in Portsmouth rather than concentrate on seeking out new revenue sources for the Town.

Action ED - 5.3b - Develop short, medium and long term Marketing Plans to promote Portsmouth.

Action ED - 5.3c - Where permissible by state law, adopt municipal purchasing practices that favor Portsmouth businesses.

Action ED - 5.3d – Establish an annual week-long, town-wide, large-scale civic event to “put Portsmouth on the map,” foster civic engagement and promote community cohesion.

Action ED – 5.3e – Maintain the position of the Director of Business Development as a Town employee to advocate for existing and prospective businesses.