



February 2024

Five-Year Comp Plan Reports

In 2011, revisions were made to the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act that required a new municipal comprehensive plan to be submitted to RI Statewide Planning every ten years, rather than every five years. Also added was the requirement for an implementation report to be submitted every five years to "report on the status of the comprehensive plan implementation program." The report should discuss the status of a comprehensive plan's action items: what has been fully implemented? Which actions have yet to be undertaken? What are the stumbling blocks that municipalities are encountering?



New legislation that goes into effect on March 1, 2024 also requires that an additional report (or "strategic plan") be created annually that details the actions to be taken annually by a municipality to achieve the goals and policies of their comp plan. It states that "the strategic plan shall be reviewed annually by a municipality" and that a municipal planning department "shall submit a report to the municipal planning board for the board's review, comment, and findings. The planning board shall submit to the respective city or town council, a report summarizing the status of the implementation of the strategic plan which report shall be reviewed by the city or town council at a public meeting."

These reports are meant to help, not hinder, municipal planners. Tracking implementation to see where communities have successes and where they struggle helps to shape the types of assistance provided by Statewide Planning, such as workshops, trainings, and technical assistance programs to support municipalities. It can also help focus local planning efforts and keep comprehensive plans "alive" for municipalities through benchmarking successes and identifying areas for improvement. Looking back what has been accomplished keeps a comprehensive plan relevant as a source for everyday decision-making and programming.

To date, twelve municipalities out of the twenty that that have reached the mid-point of their ten-year timeline for implementation have submitted their reports. Highlights and innovative planning solutions include Pawtucket's Conant Thread Transit Oriented Development District, Warwick's City Centre Warwick Design Manual, Newport's North End Urban Plan and Green and Complete Streets ordinance, East Greenwich's

[Waterfront Study: Greenwich Cove](#) and Gloucester's [Chepachet Village Revitalization Plan](#).

The challenges to comp plan implementation are numerous. Many communities cited funding and the allocation of staff resources as the primary obstacles to comprehensive plan implementation. Understaffing and the need to focus on other, more pressing tasks. Planners also flagged a lack of interest in topics or actions, changing leadership, and changing priorities as barriers to implementation.

For more information on municipal implementation successes and obstacles, please visit [this link](#). For details on five-year implementation reports, their format, and how to submit them, please contact [Caitlin Greeley](#), Principal Planner.

Legislative Review- 2023



Every year, the Division of Statewide Planning issues a summary of legislation passed by the Rhode Island General Assembly that is relevant to planners. In 2023, 140 planning-related bills were tracked and, of these tracked bills, more than forty were enacted as law. Our Land Use staff scans for a variety of topics related to centralized planning responsibilities for the Division, the State Guide Plan, and other requirements as the State's only metropolitan planning organization (MPO). The 2023 summary is now available on our website: planning.ri.gov.

We also created a [PowerPoint summary](#) of the zoning bills that were most impactful to planners, the duties they perform, and the development review process.

Top Ten Articles of 2023

In case you missed them the first time, here were the top ten most popular newsletter articles and topics in 2023, based on your clicks!

1. [Residents strongly oppose potential affordable development](#)
2. [2023 Legislative Session Wrap-up](#)
3. [Accusations hurled over hiring of grant writer](#)
4. [Planning board approves affordable development amid community concerns](#)
5. [All signs point toward demolition of old train station](#)
6. [Where are all the planners?](#)
7. [RI Food Policy Council municipal factsheets](#)
8. [Town buys land to keep it out of hands of developers](#)
9. [Town moves forward with affordable project](#)
10. [Small-town R.I. communities oppose state land use changes](#)

Stormwater Innovation Center's Annual Report

The RI Stormwater Innovation Center (SIC) conducts research, develops trainings and outreach on



stormwater best practices focusing especially on green infrastructure. A collaboration between the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, the City of Providence Parks Department, and The Nature Conservancy of Rhode Island, SIC builds regional expertise in stormwater management and organizes place-based professional trainings and workshops for planners, engineers, landscape architects, and contractors.

You can view SIC green infrastructure projects at Providence's Roger Williams Park, including rain gardens, bioretention systems, infiltration basins, and sand filters. Read or download the SIC Annual Report [here](#).

Planners on the Move

Recent shifting of local planners:

- **Jonathan Stevens** has retired from his job as the Planning Director in Cumberland;
- **Glenn Modica, AICP** is the new Cumberland Planning Director;
- **Thomas Deller, AICP** is the Director of the new Department of Development and Public Services in Johnston;
- **Joe Donohoe**, former Principal Planner in North Kingstown, is now an Interdepartmental Project Manager in the RIDOT Planning office;
- **Scott Millar** has retired from his job as the Senior Policy Analyst at Grow Smart RI;
- **Anthony Hebert**, former Economic & Cultural Affairs Officer in Pawtucket, is the Business Development Officer at the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank; and
- **Jonas Bruggeman** is the new Woonsocket City Planner.



Congratulations, everyone!



Next Planners' Roundtable- March 1

The next Planners' Roundtable discussion will be held on **Friday, March 1 at 2:30PM** at the RI Department of Administration, 1 Capitol Hill, Providence, in Room 2A. We'll have a presentation on why planners and local officials should *want* more children to move to their community and a presentation from the Office of Energy Resources on integrated grid planning. And because all of the 2023 mandated legislative changes will be in effect, we will also continue discussing planners' experiences with implementation.

There will be parking available in the northern lots behind the RIDOH/RIDOT/DOA buildings after 2PM, or consider taking the train or a RIPTA bus. Please make sure to leave extra time to go through security screening in the lobby.

If you cannot attend in person, you can also join us via [Zoom](#). See you then!

Upcoming Statewide Planning Meetings

State Planning Council

February 8 - 9AM

Room 2A, 1 Capitol Hill, Providence

Water Resources Board

February 16 - 9 AM

Rm 300, 235 Promenade, Providence

Transportation Advisory Committee

February 22 - 5:30PM

Room 2A, 1 Capitol Hill, Providence

Technical Committee/Planners' Roundtable

March 1 - 2:30PM

Room 2A, 1 Capitol Hill, Providence

All meetings are open to the public.

PHOTO TRIVIA

Do you know where in Rhode Island you can find this building?

See the answer at the bottom of the newsletter!



Events

Events may be held in person, virtually, or in a hybrid format.

February 2 Planning for Wildfire. Planners are still unaware of their roles in creating fire resistant structures and communities; learn what roles you can play in creating wildfire-ready communities. Time: 1PM-2:30PM. Free. 1.5 CM, 1 SR.

February 4 Audubon Regional Conservation Symposium: Birds Across New England. Annual bird conservation symposium with scientists from across New England. Time: 8:30AM-4PM. Location: Salve Regina University, O'Hare Academic Building, 36 Ochre Point Ave., Newport. Fee: \$75-\$145.

February 5 Zoning Reforms That Improve Access to Housing for All: Evidence and Lessons for Advocates. Event will feature a dialogue among practitioners, policymakers, and advocates about the barriers to passing and enacting zoning and other types of pro-housing reforms and strategies to overcome them. Time: 3:30PM-5PM.

February 6 From Bylaw to Action: Understanding Demolition Delay Implementation. Gain insight into safeguarding historical resources from demolition. Hosted by the Eastern Massachusetts Historical Commission Coalition. Time: 10AM. Free.

February 7 Using Your Municipal Tree Inventory. Learn how to leverage all the tools on the Municipal Web Viewer, how to read your inputs, and when to ask for help. Hosted by the Vermont Urban & Community Forest Program. Time: 5:30PM. Free.

February 8 "Citizen Jane: Battle for the City". Film details the revolutionary thinking of Jane Jacobs and the origins of her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, a critique of 1950s urban planning policy. Time: 7PM. Location: Newport Art Museum, 860 Bellevue Ave. Fee: \$10 donation suggested; RSVP required.

February 8 Fourth Annual Ocean and Coastal Resources Regional Agency Update The

EBC presents New England regulators discussing "Finding the Balance: Managing Competing Uses and Interests in the Coastal Zone." Time: 9AM-12PM. Fee: \$30-\$150.

February 8 [Funding Main Street Management: Three Models](#). Webinar will discuss business improvement districts (BIDs), 501(c)3 non-profit organizations, and tax incremental financing (TIF) districts. Time: 11AM-12PM. Free.

February 12 [11th Annual New England Regional Offshore Wind Conference](#). Join the EBC for presentations, audience interaction and networking. Time: 8AM-3PM. Location: online and at WilmerHale, 60 State Street, Boston. Fee: \$50-\$275.

February 12-15, 19, & 21 [RIPTA Public Hearings](#) throughout the state regarding reductions in service as a direct response to its driver shortage. Time: 12:30PM-2PM and 5:30PM-7PM. Locations vary.

February 14 [Mapping and Monitoring Tree Health Across Diverse Landscapes](#). Explore the challenges that plague trees and forests and the data, technology, and systems available to protect them from wildlands to city centers. Time: 1PM-2:15PM. Free.

February 15 [Accelerating Towards Equitable and Sustainable Transportation: Learning from Denver's E-Bike Rebate Program](#) Hear about the development and administration of Denver's successful e-bike rebate program and how to develop similar programs. Time: 2PM. Free. 1 CM, 1 SR.

February 15 [Urban Trees and Biochar in Stockholm, Sweden and Montpelier, Vermont](#). Learn how locally available materials like stone and biochar can improve urban tree growth by incredible amounts. Time: 9AM. Free.

February 16 [Adapting to Climate: Urban Landscape Transformation in the 21st Century](#). Climate change, drought, flooding, and heat present both challenges and opportunities for planners but the conversion of cities will not be easy. Time: 1PM-2:30PM. Free. 1.5 CM, 1 SR.

February 16 [GHG Emissions Prediction Using Machine Learning](#) Webinar from the University of Florida's Center for Urban Transportation Research. Time: 12PM-1PM. Free.

February 21-22 [ELA Annual Conference & Eco Marketplace](#). Ecological Landscape Alliance conference will help build and maintain resilient landscapes that work in harmony with the life that supports them. Time: 11AM-4PM. Fee: \$125-\$355.

February 22 [Resilience & Rewilding](#). Mikyoung Kim, FASLA, is at the vanguard of rewilding, preservation, neurodiversity, and inclusion, with notable projects like the Boston Children's Hospital Healing Gardens. Time: 2PM. Fee: \$5-\$15.

February 22 [Learning from Community Engagement Coastal Case Studies](#). Engagement tools and techniques are useful, but the question is: "How did it actually go?" Panelists from varied coastal contexts answer it honestly. Time: 1PM-2:30PM. Free. 1 CM.

February 22 [Trails Are Rural Economic Drivers](#). Webinar will discuss results of investing fully in trails, give examples of the benefits derived, and the pitfalls many communities experience in the process of embracing trails. Time: 1PM. Free.

February 23 [Designing for Wildfires: Information for Planners](#). Learn best practice examples on how planning, zoning and building codes can be effective in reducing community wildfire risk. Time: 1PM-2:30PM. Free. 1.5 CM, 1 SR.

February 23 [Economic Mobility & Housing Affordability](#). Webinar from APA-RI will explore the relationship between housing affordability and the factors that inhibit households from achieving economic mobility. Learn proven initiatives and insights on understanding how race factors into economic security and opportunities for homeownership and housing affordability. Time: 12PM-1PM. Free for APA-RI members, \$5 for others. 1 CM Equity (pending).

March 1 [Planners' Roundtable](#). See article, above. Time: 2:30PM-4PM. Location: RI Department of Administration, Room 2A, 1 Capitol Hill, Providence; or via [Zoom](#).

Grants & Deadlines

February 2 [Advanced Transportation Technologies and Innovation \(ATTAIN\) program](#) provides funds to deploy, install, and operate advanced transportation technologies to improve safety, mobility, efficiency, intermodal connectivity, and infrastructure.

February 5 [Draft Public Participation Plan 2024 Limited Update](#) public comment period deadline (RI State Planning Council's Transportation Advisory Committee).

February 7 [Farm Business Management and Benchmarking Competitive Grants Program](#) provides funds for improving the farm management knowledge and skills of agricultural producers.

February 7 [Rhode Island Streets Transformation Project](#) deadline for three mini grants of \$4,950 each to support demonstration projects that showcase the benefits of community design to promote physical activity and active transportation.

February 8 [Rhode Island Draft Digital Equity Plan](#) public comment period deadline.

February 13 [Food Safety Outreach Program](#) develops food safety training projects to address the needs of owners/operators of small to mid-sized farms, beginning farmers, socially-disadvantaged farmers, and/or small processors

February 13 [Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Pilot Program](#) provides funding to improve the coordination of transportation services/non-emergency medical transportation for older adults, people with disabilities, and people of low-income.

February 15 [NEA Grants for Arts Projects Program FY2025](#) supports opportunities for public engagement with the arts and arts education, and for the improvement of overall capacity and capabilities within the arts sector.

February 16 [Agricultural Land Easements](#) from Rhode Island NRCS helps private and tribal landowners and land trusts protect croplands and grasslands on working farms and ranches by limiting non-agricultural uses.

February 19 [U.S. DOT Bridge Investment Program Planning Grants](#) deadline for planning, feasibility analysis, and revenue forecasting of a bridge project.

February 20 [Community Connect Grants](#) provide USDA financial assistance to eligible applicants that will provide broadband service in rural, economically-challenged communities where service does not exist.

February 20 [Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program: Site-Related Infrastructure for](#)

[Affordable Housing Development](#) provides capital funds for RI municipalities to support projects that improve public infrastructure needed to build new housing units.

February 23 [WaterSMART Grants: Water and Energy Efficiency Grants](#) provide funding for projects that result in quantifiable water savings, implement renewable energy components, and support broader sustainability benefits.

February 27 [Partners for Places Grant Program](#) provides grants to create/improve collaborative partnerships between local government sustainability and/or water departments, frontline community partners, and place-based funders.

February 28 [Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity \(RAISE\)](#) U.S. DOT grants help complete critical freight and passenger transportation infrastructure projects at municipal and state levels, for Tribal governments, and others.

February 29 [The National Fund for Sacred Places](#) letter of interest deadline for congregations undertaking significant capital projects at historic houses of worship.

February 29 [RI Wild Plant Society](#) offers grants for the study of wild plants and their habitats to educators, members of a RI botanical or environmental association, or students in botany or environmental related studies.

February 29 [Urban & Community Forestry 2024 Challenge Cost Share Grants](#) will increase the biodiversity, health, and resilience of trees in urban and community forests and locally grown, regionally adapted, and diverse native/site-appropriate species.

March 6 [AARP Community Challenge Grants](#) fund quick-action projects that can help communities become more livable for people of all ages, with awards from \$500 to \$50,000.

Articles of Interest

[Your Amazon may arrive by Christmas 2024](#)

[How to make room for one million people](#)

[Are home buyouts the path forward for RI properties affected by flooding?](#)

[Officials to unveil bold plan to rebuild affordable housing](#)

[\\$94M bridge proposed in Jamestown](#)

[To get off fossil fuels, America is going to need a lot more electricians](#)

[Development of monastery property in Barrington clears key hurdle](#)

RI Statewide Planning Staff

Click [here](#) for staff contact information.

Photo Trivia Answer

GLOCESTER (Chepachet)
Brown & Hopkins Store (1799)

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