

Newport Tree and Open Space Commission  
2025 Annual Report

The Newport Tree and Open Space Commission had an active and varied 2025. Activities ranged from updating a current Master Plan to working to activate art and learning into parks. Below are some of the highlights.

Throughout the year, the Commission held or sponsored seven public workshops to gather community input on three distinct topics. Four of these workshops informed the update to the 2017 *Newport Tree, Park and Open Space Master Plan*, with discussions focused on youth athletic facilities and active recreation, sustainability and climate resilience, waterfront access, and neighborhood connectivity. The two workshops addressed potential locations for the historic Carousel and explored opportunities to update and enhance the Martin Recreation Center.

The remaining workshop was held as part of the Commission's RIDEM Forestry Technical Assistance Project. The public presentation on tree canopy and green infrastructure, hosted at Innovate Newport, was well attended and attracted more than 30 members of the community. The event featured multiple informational booths, each focused on a specific aspect of urban tree canopy, climate resiliency, and community health, and reflected a year's worth of research and collaborative work.

The goals of the RIDEM Forestry Technical Assistance Project are to:

1. Improve the City's capacity to plan for and respond to urban forestry needs.
2. Expand community engagement and education, particularly among private property owners.
3. Increase tree canopy coverage, with a focus on the North End.
4. Strengthen processes, plans, and policies that promote resiliency and preserve existing natural assets.

The newly opened Newport Skatepark, dedicated in memory of Seamus Kirby, has been an exceptional success. The Friends of the Skatepark continue to work closely with the Commission to support and manage the facility's growing use. Due to the park's popularity throughout the day, the addition of lighting has been identified as necessary to allow for safe evening use. The Commission has provided support and recommendations to advance the installation of these improvements.

Newport's parks and open spaces continue to see increased use by residents and visitors alike. While the Commission maintains a focus on playground equipment for children of various ages and stages of play, as well as adult workout stations, we also recognize the importance of quiet recreation opportunities. This year, the Commission encouraged greater artistic and literary engagement in several parks. The installation of local lending libraries, supported by neighborhood associations, was promoted to enhance community access to books. Additionally, a generous donation added a new art feature to Aquidneck Park: two elephant sculptures from the Great Elephant Migration Project, providing a joyful experience for all who visit.

The Friends of Cardines Field (FCF) continue to collaborate with the Commission to ensure that this beloved historic field remains in excellent condition for decades to come. This year, the Commission worked with FCF to help launch a fundraising campaign aimed at supporting the ongoing maintenance and preservation of Cardines Field.

The Middle Passage Marker Project required a location with sufficient space and visibility for the proposed monument. The Commission reviewed both city and state-owned land and identified a section of state land adjacent to America's Cup Boulevard that meets the project's spatial requirements while offering high visibility for visitors to view, reflect, and experience the site. The City Administration is currently in discussions with the State, and the Commission remains hopeful that the project can move forward at this location.

City parks and open spaces continue to receive updates and enhancements. This year's improvements included ADA accessibility upgrades, basketball and tennis court renovations, restoration and enhancement of playing fields, upgraded playground equipment, and new or improved trails and walking paths. Additionally, the Pine Street Drift way project is now underway and is expected to be completed by spring. This project will provide a safe pathway to the water, secure dinghy and kayak storage, and a small accessible beach area.

In early 2025, the Commission began exploring potential locations for the beloved Carousel, which had been removed from the beach. Multiple public meetings were held, during which community members shared their opinions and feedback. The Commission identified six essential criteria that a site would need to meet to accommodate the Carousel. After reviewing available options, no existing locations met these requirements. It was also noted that the Carousel would require an estimated \$400,000 to \$500,000 in repairs and updates to become operational. Based on these findings, the Commission issued an advisory to the City Council and Administration, indicating that it could not recommend a relocation site at this time.

The Commission continues to work on the landscape plans associated with the completion of the Pell Bridge Realignment project. A meeting to be held in January 2026 with state and local leaders is expected to advance progress on this initiative.

2026 will mark the 250th anniversary of our country, and numerous special events are planned to commemorate this significant milestone. On Arbor Day 2026, the Commission will host a ceremony to honor the Newport Liberty Tree by replacing the current tree, which has succumbed to age, with a new Newport Liberty Tree.

Over the past year, the Commission has made significant strides in supporting, enhancing, and preserving Newport's parks, open spaces, and community assets. Through public engagement, thoughtful planning, and collaboration with community partners, the Commission has advanced projects that promote recreation, sustainability, cultural enrichment, and accessibility for all residents and visitors. Looking ahead, the Commission remains committed to fostering vibrant, resilient, and inclusive public spaces that reflect the needs and values of the Newport community.

During 2025 the Tree and Open Space Commission held 10 monthly meetings.

The Commission members are listed below with their attendance after their names. Some members listed below have not been serving for a full year.

Maureen Cronin (10)

Rob Currier (6)

Tanya Kelley (5)

Kara DiCamillo (5)

Stephanie Szneke (6)

William Willis (3)

Lola Herrera-Ximenez (4)

Denis Demers (1)