
NEWPORT TREE, PARK & OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN 2026 UPDATE



Agency
Landscape + Planning

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Dear Friends,

Newport's natural beauty, history, and cultural landscape are central to who we are as a community. Our trees, parks, open spaces, shorelines, and cherished vistas are essential not only to our quality of life, but to the city's resilience, public health, and economic vitality. These assets inspire residents and visitors alike, and they anchor the sense of place that makes Newport unique.

In 2017, the Newport Tree, Park & Open Space Master Plan ("Master Plan") was adopted by City Council to provide our community with something we had lacked for more than a century: a shared framework for stewarding these resources with intention, inclusiveness, and collaboration. The creation of that plan brought together hundreds of residents, dozens of nonprofits and community groups, City staff, and State partners in a truly collective effort. That broad coalition identified common values, clarified shared priorities, and established the guiding principles that have shaped our work ever since.

After significant community engagement to develop this first update of the Master Plan, we are encouraged to find broad agreement that the plan's core vision and guiding principles remain sound. The priorities identified eight years ago are still relevant today, and the framework continues to provide a strong foundation for decision-making, investment, and long-term stewardship.

Much has been accomplished since 2017. Across Newport, partners have protected important landscapes, expanded public access, planted and cared for trees, restored habitats, improved park amenities, strengthened community programming, and built new relationships between residents, institutions, and neighborhoods. These achievements—large and small—are the direct result of the collaborative spirit that defined the original planning process.

With all the progress we have made, much remains to be done. Our parks and open spaces face increasing pressures from climate change, development, aging infrastructure, and evolving community needs. Meeting these challenges will require continued partnership, creativity, and commitment.

This 2026 Update reaffirms the shared vision that emerged in 2017, highlights the progress realized over the past eight years, and outlines priority recommendations for the years ahead. We urge you to read the plan, reflect on the opportunities before us, and join us in advancing these next steps. Your voice, your stewardship, and your support remain essential.

Together, we can ensure that Newport's trees, parks, and open spaces continue to enrich our daily lives and strengthen our community for generations to come.

Sincerely,

LILLY DICK

Board Chair, Aquidneck Island Land Trust

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Executive Summary

This **2026 Newport Tree, Park & Open Space Master Plan Update** builds upon the foundation of the original 2017 Master Plan, adopted as a guiding city planning document. This update evaluates the progress made over the past eight years, highlights areas of significant advancement, and identifies new priorities essential to stewardship of Newport's natural and recreational assets.

Since 2017, the Master Plan has played a pivotal role in shaping how the city approaches open space, parks, environmental protection, and public realm investment. A key achievement has been the development and implementation of the **Master Plan Evaluation Guide**, a decision-making tool that ensures the City's **five Guiding Principles**—the framework of the Master Plan—are consistently integrated into municipal projects, policies, and long-term planning. This tool increases transparency, establishes consistent evaluation standards, and strengthens the city's ability to make informed, sustainable decisions.

The Master Plan contributed to an update in the **Tree & Open Space Commission Ordinance**, formally recognizing the Commission as the City's Open Meeting body for matters relating to open space, trees, and the natural environment. Through public discussions and deliberation, the Commission now provides structured **advisories to the City Council**, ensuring that decisions affecting Newport's natural resources receive thoughtful, community-centered review.

Looking ahead, this update identifies several critical areas of need and opportunity:

- **Youth Athletic Facilities & Active Recreation:** A shortage of quality youth athletic fields, courts, and active recreation spaces is a major concern. The update reinforces the need for expanded and upgraded facilities to support youth development, healthy lifestyles, and community well-being.
- **Sustainability & Climate Resilience:** As Newport experiences increased climate impacts, the Master Plan highlights the importance of resilient design, green infrastructure, and nature-based solutions across all city projects.
- **Waterfront Access:** Expanding public access to Newport's shoreline remains a priority. The plan outlines opportunities for enhanced recreational use, improved connectivity, and equitable shoreline experiences for residents and visitors.
- **Neighborhood Connectivity:** Strengthening pedestrian and bicycle connections between parks, schools, open spaces, and neighborhoods is essential for expanding equitable access and fostering a more connected citywide park system.

The **Newport Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan** serves as an assessment of what has been accomplished and as a strategic roadmap for what lies ahead. It reaffirms the City's commitment to protecting natural resources, enhancing recreational opportunities, and ensuring that all residents benefit from a vibrant, resilient, and well-maintained open space network. Through continued application of the Evaluation Guide, robust public engagement, and coordinated citywide planning, Newport can build on its progress and advance a future that values both environmental stewardship and community vitality.



Guiding Principles

In 2017, five Guiding Principles, outlined on pages 12-13 of the Master Plan, were identified to structure the path forward for Newport's trees, parks, and open spaces. These Guiding Principles remain valuable for the Master Plan Update.

Great Parks & Open Spaces

A Connected System

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Guiding Principles

These five principles underlie all Master Plan recommendations, supporting a more resilient, connected, and equitable open space system. These principles are the result of public and stakeholder input paired with national standards-based analysis.

A Connected System

Walking and bicycling links between parks, neighborhoods, and other destinations; greenways, welcoming streetscapes, and green and blue connections



Great Parks & Open Spaces

Activation and amenities, balancing active recreation, passive enjoyment, civic and social space, and environmental needs



An Equitable System

A tree, park, and open space system where all citizens have a voice, and all neighborhoods have convenient access to open spaces, recreation opportunities, a healthy community forest, and the waterfront



An Equitable System

A Resilient System

A Living Legacy



A Resilient System

Environment, ecology, tree canopy, wildlife habitat; a system prepared for changing sea levels and climate conditions



A Living Legacy

An enduring/sustaining system. Legally protected open space

IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

From the start, this Master Plan has been a collaborative effort undertaken by a coalition of residents and city, community, and state representatives. The success of this plan will require building on this momentum, and continuing to grow a culture of stewardship for Newport's trees, parks, and open spaces.

Key Projects and Elements:

- Miantonomi Park Enhancements
- Upgrading Basic Park Infrastructure
- New North End Parks, Trees, Recreation, and Waterfront access
- Public Waterfront Park: Navy Hospital Redevelopment
- Harbor Walk Enhancements
- Planning for Sea Level Rise
- Rail with Trail
- Connected Bicycle and Pedestrian Network with Green, Welcoming Streets
- King Park/ Spencer Park
- Special Focus on Trees
- Legal Protection for Open Space

Implementation elements:

- Consistent, best-practice process for public input into future decision-making
- Integrated decision-making with guaranteed public involvement that considers sea level rise, historic legacies, and the diverse roles of trees and open space
- Balancing investments with long-term revenue
- Funding, revenue, and sustainable operations
- Building on and expanding existing public/private partnerships

An excerpt from the 2017 Master Plan outlines the five guiding principles: Great Parks & Open Spaces, A Connected System, An Equitable System, A Resilient System, and A Living Legacy.

Chapter 1

Accomplishments of the 2017 Plan



Since 2017, significant improvements have been made to parks and open spaces throughout Newport. In collaboration with community partners, the City has added recreational amenities, improved ADA access, and a new multi-use path, representing significant progress toward the goals outlined in the 2017 Plan. This chapter summarizes a few highlights of implementation. See Appendix A for a full list of accomplishments since 2017.

Progress on creating more...

Great Parks and Open Spaces



Expanding Ways to Recreate

A new basketball court and skate park at the John Chafee Recreation Area have increased recreation opportunities in the North End.



Updated Playscapes

New and improved playgrounds at Braga Park, Kingston Playground, Morton Park, King Park, Cardines Playground, and Murphy Field.



Reinvesting in Miantonomi Park

Visitors to Miantonomi can enjoy new restrooms, picnic tables, benches, kiosks, musical play features, improved multi-use trails, and a new Pump Track..



An Expanded System

Two new parks, Spring Park and the John Chafee Recreation Area, have been created. The acquisition of an additional parcel expanded the size of Ballard Park.

Progress on creating a more...

Equitable System



Play for All Abilities

ADA improvements have been made for the tennis/pickleball courts at Vernon Park, Murphy Field Playground and Tennis Courts, and the playgrounds at Coggeshall School and Hunter Park.



Accessibility within Parks

Accessible sidewalks to playgrounds at Braga Park and Murphy Field reduce barriers to play. ADA improvements were made to the Vernon Ave sidewalk leading into Vernon Park.

Progress on creating a more...

Connected System



Safer Cycling

The “First Mile” multi-use bike path connects Downtown to the North End with 1.7 miles of protected paths.



Harbor Walk Improvements

Accessibility improvements along Newport’s Harbor Walk include a new reinforced concrete sidewalk near King Park, Storer Park, and the Goat Island Causeway improvements.

Progress on creating a more...

Resilient System



Increasing Resilience at King Park (in-progress)

King Park's concrete seawall is being replaced with an environmentally friendly stone shoreline, and areas have been identified to transition to a native vegetation wetland buffer. The playground has been replaced and elevated to improve resilience at the park.

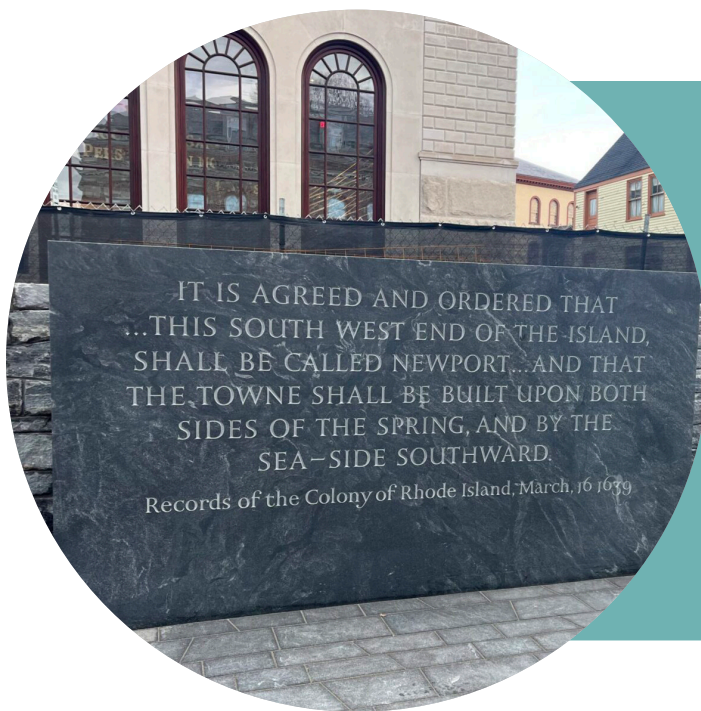


Tending to the Tree Canopy

The City is implementing a reforestation program and invasive species management plan at Miantonomi Park. Morton Park and the Pine Street Driftway underwent maintenance to strengthen the tree canopy and resilience to heat events. Residential tree planting programs are continuing to expand the canopy throughout neighborhoods.

Progress on creating a...

Living Legacy



Enduring Management

An endowment fund has been established to sustain management of Ballard Park. The City initiated a management plan for cemetery properties on Farewell Street. A citywide forestry master plan update is underway.



Permanent Protections

Permanent conservation easements have been established for Ballard Park and Spring Park.

Chapter 2

Introduction

Purpose of Update

The Newport Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan provides a helpful roadmap for decision-making to sustain and enhance the system of blue and green spaces that are so integral to life in Newport.

Since 2017, many of its recommendations have been accomplished, and now, eight years later, it is a timely moment to evaluate progress, understand changing or emerging needs and develop an updated roadmap for the next chapter of park, tree, and open space stewardship. Much has changed since 2017, but our collective commitment to high quality, resilient, and connected parks, trees, and open spaces is stronger than ever.

This update addendum, led by the Newport Open Space Partnership (NOSP), is the product of eight months of collaboration and reflection and considered input from more than 200 stakeholders and community members.

Together, stakeholders, community members, and NOSP partners identified and prioritized remaining needs, while integrating needs that have emerged since 2017. This update continues the momentum of the Master Plan while ensuring that recommendations remain relevant, effective, and timely.



Process Overview

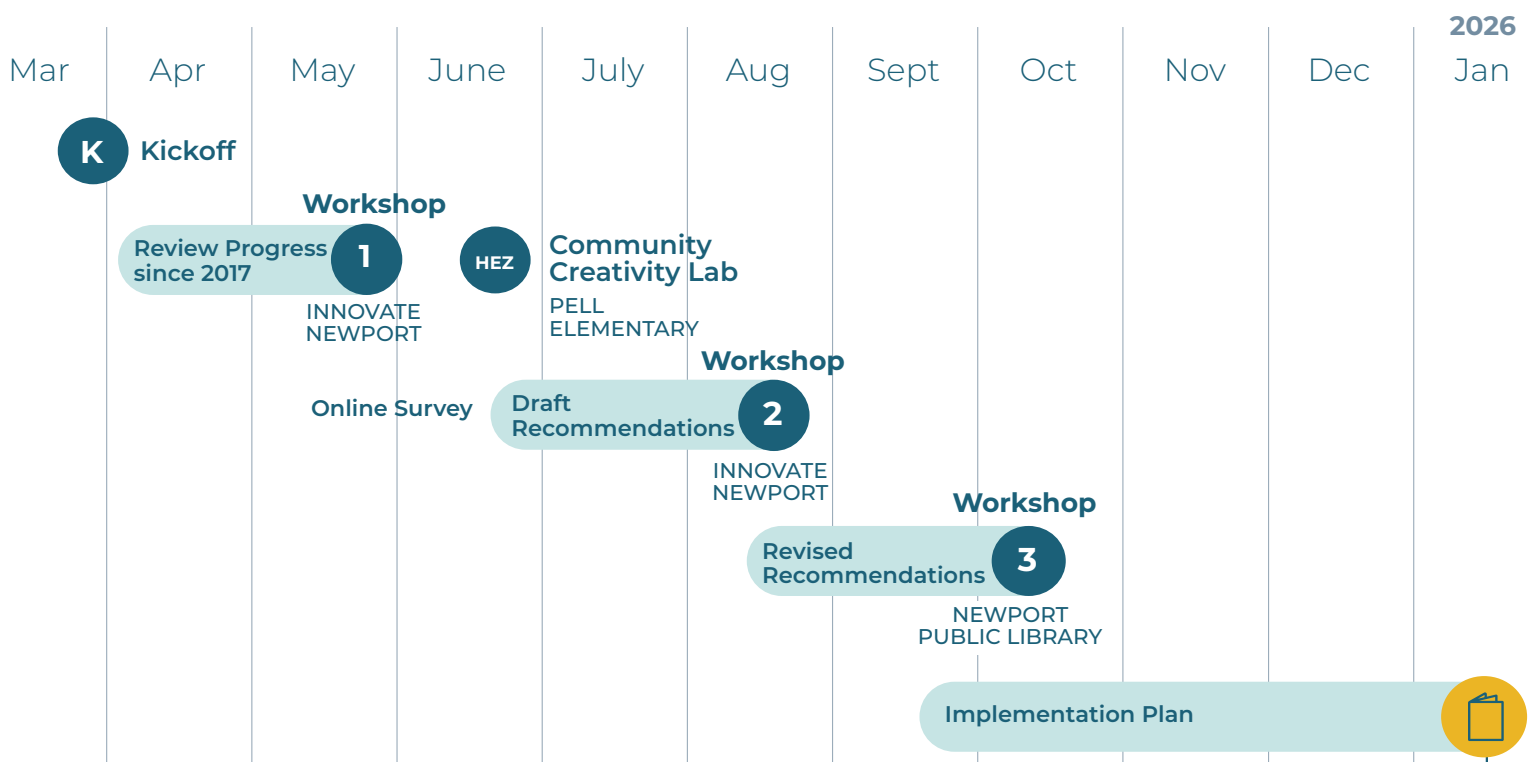
The process of creating this addendum to the 2017 Newport Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan took place over the course of ten months. Stakeholder and community input was essential to creating an updated roadmap for the Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan.

The process was anchored in three collaborative stakeholder workshops and an online survey. In addition, community input was received at the Community Creativity Lab organized by the Newport Health Equity Zone at Pell Elementary School.

The project included four main phases:

- **Phase 1: Review progress since 2017:** Reflect on progress since the completion of the 2017 Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan. Identify what has been accomplished and what remains.
- **Phase 2: Draft Recommendations:** Review remaining needs and identify new needs that have emerged since 2017.
- **Phase 3: Revised Recommendations:** Revise the draft recommendations based on stakeholder feedback.
- **Phase 4: Implementation Plan and Final Documentation**

Project Schedule





65
workshop
attendees



60+
Creativity Lab
participants



77
survey
responses

Top Workshop Themes

The online survey, Workshop 1, and Community Creativity Lab asked participants about their top priority. Here are the top priorities that emerged:

Workshop #1

1. **Permanent Legal Protections**
2. **Tree Canopy**
3. **Sea Level Rise & Coastal Resilience**
4. **Flood Mitigation, Water Quality, & Green Infrastructure**
5. **Wildlife Habitat**



Online Survey

1. **Harbor Walk**
2. **Permanent Legal Protections**
3. **Cliff Walk**
4. **Tree Canopy**
5. **Basic Park Amenities (e.g. shade, restrooms, bottle fillers, bicycle racks, seating, tables, etc.)**



Community Creativity Lab

1. **Splash Pads**
2. **Nature-based Play**
3. **Native Species, Pollinator and Rain Gardens**
4. **Multi-purpose Playfields**
5. **Dog Park & Related Amenities**



Chapter 3

Today's Needs & Priorities

What's Changed Since 2017

Following the completion of the Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan, Newport experienced a global pandemic, rising housing costs, and increased intensity of storms, all trends that have placed new and increasing pressures on the city's blue and green spaces.

Parks in Newport, similar to other communities across the country, have seen record levels of visitation. While this increased use has placed added strain on outdoor resources, it has also strengthened community appreciation for the value of parks.

Additionally, climate and social changes have continued to impact the city. Precipitation events in July 2020, tropical storm Ida in 2021, and September 2022 flooded streets and buildings throughout Newport, underscoring the growing importance of resilient infrastructure. An increase in Newport's unhoused population requires collaborative efforts by the City, service providers, and other partners to develop a compassionate-based approach to provide support to unhoused park users.

Changes at local schools have reduced access to previously available youth athletic recreational resources.

What hasn't changed since 2017, is the community's commitment to stewarding the city's trees, parks, and open spaces. In 2026, Newport's parks remain vital infrastructure for the city's ecological, environmental, and community health. Permanent legal protections appropriate to the City's public parks and open spaces remain a top priority to ensure their long-term preservation while also recognizing the public's rights to enjoy them.



Community Priorities

Across the three workshops, Community Creativity Lab conversations, and online survey results, several common themes emerged. These six themes reflect overarching priorities expressed by community members and stakeholders that directly informed the recommendations included in this 2026 Update.

THEME 1

A Greener Newport

Themes of **environmental sustainability** came up consistently throughout the survey and workshops. A Greener Newport includes:

- **Shade and heat management** through tree canopy improvements.
- **Stormwater management** through **permeable surfaces** and green streets.
- **Wildlife habitat** and **ecological resilience** through native planting and invasive species management.

THEME 2

Access to Water

Water plays an important role in Newport, and Newport residents would like to see **improved waterfront access** for all parts of the City. Access to Water includes:

- Increase **public waterfront access**, especially in the **North End**.
- Complete a resilient and **connected Harbor Walk**.
- Provide places to cool off with **splash pads** and **resilient waterfront spaces**.

THEME 3

Enduring Stewardship

The community cares deeply about **preserving and caring for parks and open space** for current and future generations to enjoy. Enduring Stewardship includes:

- Preserve parks and open space through **permanent legal protections**.
- Keep parks and open spaces beautiful and usable through **ongoing maintenance**.
- Promote community care through **stewardship education**.

THEME 4

Expanded Access

Expanding park access includes considerations of **transportation, geographic location, and accessibility for all ages and abilities**. Expanded Access includes:

- Promote inclusivity through **ADA accessible park features**.
- Create **safe walking and biking** routes to parks.
- Provide **equitable access** to all public parks, waterfront, and nature.

THEME 5

Active & Passive Recreation

Parks should meet the community's **varied recreational needs**, including play, youth sports, and recreation, as well as passive needs. Some of these include:

- **Fields and courts** for youth athletic activities.
- Meet needs for emerging recreation trends such as **skateparks, sports courts, and pickleball**.
- Incorporate more opportunities for **nature-based play**.
- **Amenities** for passive recreation, such as benches, shade structures, and picnic tables.

THEME 6

Connecting Communities

Many stressed the importance of parks as spaces that **bring the community closer together**. Connecting Communities includes:

- **Places to gather** like community gardens, small plazas, and picnic areas.
- Flexibility for **small events**, such as farmers markets.
- Parks should be places that **bring people together**.

Key Needs



Great Parks & Open Spaces

- Provide active recreation and sports facilities for all ages, especially youth.
- Continue to add high quality playgrounds and play spaces.
- Balance varied needs, from active recreation to passive enjoyment.
- Safely meet the needs of dog owners.
- Grow the parks and open space network.



Resilient System

- Mitigate impacts of heat events through a robust tree canopy and plan for heat resilience strategies to improve safety and comfort in parks on high-heat days.
- Continue to adapt parks and open spaces for more frequent and extreme flooding.
- Expand green infrastructure and permeable surfaces to absorb stormwater and improve environmental health.
- Strengthen land-water connectivity and improve access to and within the City's blue open spaces for human-powered boats.
- Support collaborative efforts to address stormwater management to mitigate flooding impacts on public parks and open spaces.

Equitable System

- Continue to expand access to parks, recreation, and tree canopy in underserved areas, including public waterfront access.
- Ensure parks are welcoming and inclusive to people of all abilities and ages.



Connected System

- Expand and enhance the First Mile Multi-use Path.
- Create greater transportation choice for residents to get around on foot or by bike.
- Ensure that pedestrian and cyclist routes are safe and continuous.
- Improve Harbor Walk connectivity and create consistent design standards to enhance access to the waterfront.



Living Legacy

- Secure enduring legal protection for parks and open spaces.
- Collaborate with organizations to steward and care for parks and open space.
- Celebrate and share Newport's historic legacy.



Chapter 4

Updated Recommendations

Overview

Guiding Principles

The 2017 Master Plan centers around five guiding principles based on extensive community input. Now, eight years later, engagement with stakeholders, community members, and assessment of recommendations have confirmed that these principles remain relevant in organizing updated needs.

How recommendations were identified

The following recommendations reflect input from stakeholders, the public, and the Newport Open Space Partnership. They also consider unmet needs since 2017 that are still relevant today, along with needs that have emerged over the past eight years.

The 2017 Master Plan principles continue to be a relevant organizing structure for the 2026 Update.



Great Parks & Open Spaces

Parks and open spaces play a vital role in the wellbeing of the Newport community by providing residents with access to play, recreation, and relaxation. These updated recommendations seek to create parks and open spaces that serve the varied needs of the Newport community.

PRIORITY 1

Expand Recreation Options for All Ages

- P-1** Add additional active and passive recreation amenities.
- P-2** Put additional resources into park activation and programming in outdoor spaces citywide (e.g. scheduled hours for opening of Miantonomi Park Memorial Tower).
- P-3** Expand and modernize youth athletic and sports facilities on or in close proximity to schools. Emphasis should be put on restoring athletic facilities located at or near Rogers High School campus.
- P-4** Reimagine use of underutilized parks and open spaces (e.g. the former softball/multi-purpose field at Hunter Park).
- P-5** Establish a park plan for the development of the entire John Chafee Recreation Area parcel.
- P-6** Establish a capital program to resurface sports courts (e.g. refurbish the basketball court at Storer Park and Braga Park).

- P-7** Develop an ongoing program to improve usability and safety of active athletic fields (e.g. further improve the Murphy Park multi-purpose playfield with irrigation, drainage, and grading; improve the Vernon Park baseball field by updating the backstop and irrigation; expand the multi use play areas between the picnic grove and basketball court at Braga Park).
- P-8** The Martin Recreation Center “The Hut” is due for a major Renovation.

PRIORITY 2

Enhance Play Spaces

- P-9** Create nature-based play areas and inclusive playgrounds that incorporate sensory activities.
- P-10** Sustain program to schedule replacement of playgrounds based on age and condition (e.g. Aquidneck Park and Coggeshall Park).



PRIORITY 3

Grow Green Space and Model Best Practices for Sustainability and Resilience

RECOMMENDATIONS

- P-11** Convert underused parcels into small plazas, gardens, or green play areas. Support creation of small civic gathering spaces and community gardens to link people and neighborhoods.
- P-12** Consider a city bond to purchase property for new or expanded park and open space.
- P-13** Explore opportunities to use natural parks such as Miantonomi Park and Ballard Park for environmental education in partnership with the school department and other relevant organizations.
- P-14** Encourage, strengthen, and promote community support for the beautification and maintenance of neighborhood parks in collaboration with the City (e.g. the renovation of Admiral Luce Park by the Top of the Hill Neighborhood Association).



PRIORITY 4

Foster Comfortable, Safe Parks that Balance Diverse Needs

RECOMMENDATIONS

- P-15** Improve basic park amenities (e.g., shade, restrooms, bottle fillers, bicycle racks, seating, tables, etc.).
- P-16** Investigate sustainable park amenities such as use of recycled materials, compostable dog waste bags, dark sky light fixtures, and solar power where suitable.
- P-17** Encourage park designs that balance varied community needs (quiet space vs. activity).
- P-18** Develop strategies for dealing with uses of parks and open space that limit other users' ability to enjoy the park. Support collaborative efforts of the City, service providers, and other partners to develop a compassionate-based approach to provide support to unhoused park users.
- P-19** Support community arts, outdoor music, and other culture-centered uses in parks.
- P-20** Consider how to appropriately address needs of dog owners. For example:
- Improve the existing North End enclosed dog park.
 - Create a second enclosed dog park.
 - Explore options for off-leash hours in other existing parks as appropriate (e.g. areas with wooded trails), in collaboration with local dog advocacy groups.

Equitable System

All community members deserve access to the benefits that trees, parks, and open space provide. The updated recommendations aim to foster inclusivity throughout the City of Newport and across social, cultural, and geographic lines.

PRIORITY 1

Expand Park, Recreation, and Tree Canopy in High-Need, Underserved Areas

RECOMMENDATIONS

- E-1** Ensure equitable access to nature experiences and recreation citywide.
- E-2** Prioritize park investments in underserved areas (e.g., splash pads and new amenities in North End).
- E-3** Increase public access to waterfront areas. Continue to pursue opportunities to establish a waterfront park at the former Navy Hospital with a combination of active and passive recreation, including opportunities for swimming, fishing, and launching small watercraft (e.g. kayaks and dinghies).

- E-4** Expand the City's tree canopy from current 19% to 21% coverage with focus on areas with low tree-equity index score. This could include partnering with Rhode Island Energy for funding support.
- E-5** Sport stadiums: Cardines and Freebody need capital investment to meet ADA standards and to provide equitable experience for athletes and fans.

PRIORITY 2

Cultivate Inclusive, Welcoming Parks

RECOMMENDATIONS

- E-6** Make parks amenities accessible and enjoyable for all ages and abilities (e.g. ADA upgrades, inclusive play spaces).
- E-7** Continue to advocate for design features, park rules, and policies that welcome everyone to enjoy parks and open spaces.



Connected System

The updated recommendations focus on expanding transportation choice and enhancing existing trails and waterfront paths. A more connected system creates opportunities for people of all skill levels to safely and comfortably walk and bike between parks and open space, and other destinations throughout the city.

PRIORITY 1

Grow the Network of Walking and Bicycling Infrastructure, Focusing on Safety and Connectivity

RECOMMENDATIONS

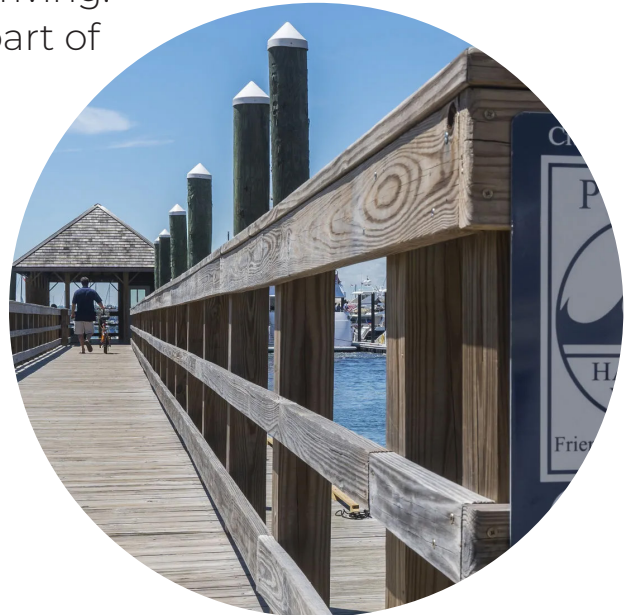
- C-1** Connect neighborhoods to the multi-use path with sidewalks, bike lanes and links through parks (e.g. at Hunter Park and Miantonomi Park).
- C-2** Utilize the replacement of the Van Zandt Bridge with a street level road crossing as an opportunity to establish connections among open spaces including the multi-purpose bike path, Hunter Park, Dog Park, and cemetery corridor. The Cemetery District is beginning to move forward with connections to the bike path.
- C-3** Maintain a continuity of comfort and safety for walking and biking, ensuring that routes do not end abruptly or require users to merge into or cross traffic.
- C-4** Develop green and blue corridors in coordination with other island municipalities.

PRIORITY 2

Enhance Newport's Iconic Waterfront Walks and Increase Multimodal Waterfront Options

RECOMMENDATIONS

- C-5** Complete and activate the Harbor Walk as a continuous, accessible experience.
- C-6** Enhance connectivity across the Cliff Walk and between neighborhoods and waterfront.
- C-7** Develop a Master Plan for the Cliff Walk to include an existing condition report with baseline LIDAR data. Construct additional restroom facilities in collaboration with institutional partners.
- C-8** Expand public transit options such as the beach bus to make it easier to get to Newport's waterfronts without driving. Consider multimodal access as part of Easton's Beach redesign.
- C-9** Integrate green corridors such as Elizabeth Brook and Burma Road daylighting/park plans.



Resilient System

Newport faces the challenges of a changing climate. Trees, parks, and open space play a pivotal role in mitigating impacts such as heat events, changing sea levels, and flood events. These recommendations outline ways to adapt Newport's trees, parks, and open spaces for resiliency and to serve current and future generations.

PRIORITY 1

Grow the Urban Forest and Create a Cooler Newport

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R-1** Expand tree canopy and green infrastructure to mitigate heat and manage stormwater.
- R-2** Set a citywide goal for 21 percent tree canopy cover.
- R-3** Develop 'green streets' that integrate trees, vegetation, and water filtration features.
- R-4** Work with RIDOT to add native/sustainable plants, trees and micro-forests around the bridge realignment area.
- R-5** Create cooling stations and shade for cool and comfortable outdoor spaces. Encourage creative shade solutions (e.g. public art, solar panel canopies).
- R-6** Promote planning, zoning, and ordinances that support efforts for greater resiliency (e.g. limits on impermeable surfaces).

PRIORITY 2

Promote Stewardship of Natural Resources and Wildlife

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R-7** Implement invasive species management plans in nature parks and conservation land, including Miantonomi Park and Ballard Park.
- R-8** Increase native* plantings, pollinator gardens, and nature-based solutions in parks.
- R-9** Permanently protect ecologically valuable lands and support habitat restoration.
- R-10** Coordinate infrastructure upgrades with nature-based solutions in redesigns of stormwater infrastructure.
- R-11** Create a public awareness campaign to support health of migrating birds, including promoting the use of dark sky lighting.
- R-12** Maximize permeable surfaces on public parks and open spaces.
- R-13** Delineate and improve parking to reduce erosion and maximize water infiltration throughout public parks and open spaces.

**or suitable sustainable species adapted to changing climate.*



- R-14** Incorporate green stormwater BMPs into new park designs (e.g. landscaping, trees, permeable surfaces, rain gardens, etc.).
- R-15** Integrate sustainability and resilience into park planning and long-term maintenance strategies. (e.g. expand low-mow areas, green infrastructure/ stormwater management, climate resilient species, etc.)
- R-16** Support the drafting of a comprehensive landscape ordinance that incorporates sustainability and climate resilience standards to mitigate impacts on public parks and open space resources.

PRIORITY 3

Plan Proactively for Coastal Resilience

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R-17** Continue adapting parks and waterfronts for climate resilience, especially coastal and flood-prone zones. (e.g. raise and relocate the restrooms and picnic pavilion at King Park, Harbor Walk improvements).
- R-18** Add resilience-focused improvements to the Harbor Walk. Work with adjacent landowners to identify shared opportunities for Harbor Walk enhancements and flood mitigation. Leverage variance needs as moments arise to incentivize Harbor Walk expansion/enhancements.
- R-19** Integrate educational signage highlighting climate resiliency measures.

R-20 Consider conversion of surplus bridge realignment properties to “floodable” parks that provide open space and increase stormwater capacity.



Living Legacy

Newport is rich with history, embedded in the parks envisioned by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and the lush canopy of trees planted during the Gilded Age. These recommendations emphasize permanent protection and stewardship of parks and open space will ensure that trees, parks, and open space remain a part of Newport's legacy for generations to come.

PRIORITY 1

Ensure the Long-Term Preservation and Care for Newport's Parks

RECOMMENDATIONS

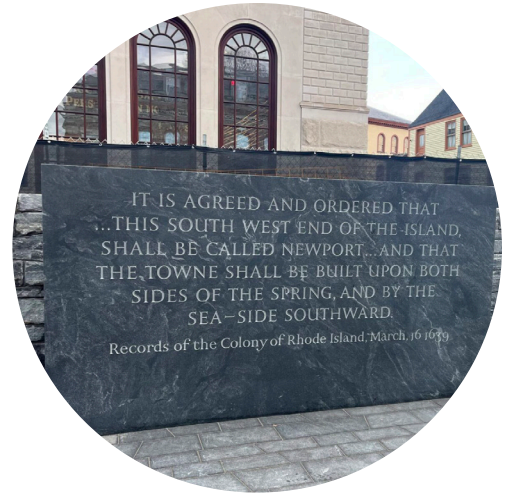
- L-1** Legally conserve public open spaces, including all City parks (e.g. the portion of Miantanomi Park owned by the Housing Authority, the John Chafee Recreation Area). Recognize that deed restrictions alone do not necessarily ensure long-term permanent protections.
- L-2** Establish funding strategies for long-term park maintenance programs.
- L-3** Implement recommended preservation actions for the Touro Park Old Stone Mill.
- L-4** Support efforts to restore and maintain public statues and bronzes.

PRIORITY 2

Promote Collaborative Stewardship

RECOMMENDATIONS

- L-5** Encourage fiscal support, stewardship education and civic involvement in care for public spaces.
- L-6** Incorporate community-driven design and co-stewardship opportunities.
- L-7** Develop public education and interpretation components (e.g., signage, community engagement). Where appropriate, consider using QR code links to minimize sign pollution.



PRIORITY 3

Celebrate Historic Resources

RECOMMENDATION

- L-8** Celebrate local culture and history through interpretive signage, sculpture gardens, and design features. Provide support to relevant organizations or non-profits to ensure accurate historical interpretation.



Appendix

Accomplishments by Park

Active Transportation/ Multi-modal paths

- New path connects Gateway Center to Middletown, connects North-end to the center of the city and abuts many recreation facilities (e.g. dog park, John Chafee Recreation Area, Abbruzzi Sports Complex, etc.)

Almy Pond/Spouting Rock Drive

- Removed asphalt on Spouting Rock Drive
- Implemented land management plan

Aquidneck Park

- New walking paths and landscaping
- “Fit lot” exercise area added

Ballard Park

- Substantially increased size of park with acquisition of Hazard and Wickham Rd corner parcel
- Unified management of park with adjacent wildlife management area
- Park is now under permanent conservation easement with Aquidneck Land Trust
- Endowment fund created to sustain management
- Boardwalk and trail improvements connecting with Rogers High School

Braga Park

- New 2-5-year-old and 5-12-year-old playground
- New ADA accessibility sidewalk to the playground

Broadway Corridor

- Replaced Kingston Playground with 2-5-year-old and 5-12-year-old playground
- Completed upgrades to the MLK/Edward St playgrounds

Cemeteries on Farewell Street

Accomplishments:

- Now linked to multi-purpose bike path
- Progress in establishment of management plan for portion of the properties
- Development of a Cemetery District to better coordinate activities between private island cemeteries, City of Newport cemeteries, and Catholic cemeteries

Cliff Walk

- Funding and designs are in place for slope stabilization and restoration of access between Narragansett Ave. and Webster Ave.
- Funding is in place for improvements to the walking surface between Memorial Blvd. and Ruggles Ave.
- Funding obtained for master plan and data collection on the shoreline and walkway using LIDAR
- Planning underway for expansion of restroom capacity

Coggeshall School

- ADA accessibility improvements to playground

Dog Park

- Permanent dog park installed adjacent to multi-use path and a larger program is in progress to further meet the needs of dog owners

Harbor Walk

- New Storer Park/Goat Island causeway improvements

Hunter Park

- Replaced playground with ADA accessible, 5-12-year-old playground
- Improved access to the park

John Chafee Recreation Area

- New basketball court
- New skate park
- Upcoming installation of sports lighting for both skatepark and basketball court

King Park

- Upcoming replacement of seawall and vegetative edge
- Double the size of the beach
- Replace vertical concrete wall with environmentally friendly stone shoreline
- Areas identified for transition to native vegetation wetland buffer
- Sand core logs and vegetation along the boat ramp
- New reinforced concrete Harbor Walk sidewalk
- Replaced and elevated the playground

Miantonomi Park

- New restrooms
- New picnic tables and benches
- Trail improvements
- Kiosks and interpretive signs
- Pump track on lease land
- “Traffic Garden” at Maher Center lot
- Musical Playground elements
- Sidewalk Improvements
- Restored Girard Ave wall
- Memorial Tower improvements
- Reforestation program/ invasive species control

Morton Park

- New 2–5-year-old and 5-12-year-old playground installed
- ADA improvements
- New drinking water fountains and bottle fillers
- Tree Canopy/Tree maintenance

Murphy Field

- New 2–5-year-old playground installed
- New ADA sidewalks to the playground
- Reconfigured field for more multi-use sports and recreation activities
- Funding secured for 2 basketball courts and tennis courts to be completed in 2025

Vernon Park

- Replaced tennis courts with new Tennis & Pickleball Courts, ADA accessible
- New ADA sidewalks on Vernon St. entrance





Guiding Principle 1

Great Parks & Open Spaces



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“Parks, open spaces, and trees play critical roles in the life of communities – socially, environmentally, culturally, and economically. Recommendations aim to enhance Newport’s open spaces, active recreation, and passive enjoyment opportunities.”

– Newport Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan

What defines Great Parks and Open Spaces?

In Newport, great open spaces come in all sizes and share many common characteristics. Great parks and open spaces include:

- Balance of areas for passive enjoyment, active recreation, social gatherings, and habitat
- Connections to water (where possible)
- Habitat and ecology
- Trees and shade
- Comfort and safety
- Historic legacy (where relevant)
- Economic sustainability and legal protection

Great open spaces can include linear open spaces that improve connections for people.

Value + Benefits

Great parks and open spaces are more enjoyable and comfortable to park goers, promoting active living and healthy lifestyles. By offering a range of things to do, great parks can also appeal to different ages and interests. In this way, they can act as social hubs that bring people together and allow for multi-generational use. Consideration of economic sustainability and legal protection ensures these spaces are set up for long-term success so future generations can enjoy them, too.

Learn More

- See pages 40-51 of the *Newport Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan* for more details on “Great Parks and Open Spaces.”
- [Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan Link*](#)
- [Comprehensive Land Use Plan Link*](#)

*See “Additional Resources” for full website links (page 8).

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. **General Great Parks and Open Spaces:** Has the proponent of this topic or project considered great parks and open spaces under the Master Plan and attempted to improve the existing condition?
2. **Programming/Activities:** Does the project include a diversity of uses that balance active recreation, passive enjoyment, civic and social space, and environmental needs?
3. **Safety:** Does the proposed design provide a safe environment for park goers? (For example, lighting if the park is used at night)
4. **Year-round Use:** Does the project support year-round use?
5. **Comfort & Basic Park Infrastructure:** Does the project offer basic park amenities, including seating, shade, and water fountains?
6. **Restrooms:** Does the project consider restroom availability and safety?
7. **Habitat Connectivity:** Does the project maintain key habitat corridors and linkages?
8. **Identity/Design:** Does the project’s design consider the community context? (For example, providing paths that connect to neighborhood streets, use of materials that reflect neighborhood character, art that reflects neighborhood history and diversity, etc.)
9. **Feasible Design:** Is the project’s proposed site plan technically feasible? (For example, is the design possible with the site’s topography?)

Note: Other elements of great parks and open spaces covered within Resilience, Equity, Connectivity, and Living Legacy principles

** See #4 on right for explanation of “other” responses.



Guiding Principle 2

Equitable System



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“All residents should have practical access to great parks, recreation, passive enjoyment opportunities, and the waterfront in all neighborhoods.”

- Newport Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan

What makes an Equitable System?

Access to parks and recreation should not depend on where someone lives in Newport, their income, nor aspects of their identity (age, race/ethnicity, gender, language spoken, etc.). An equitable system provides access for everyone, with a particular focus on meeting the needs of historically underserved communities and identities. Equity considers:

- Access to high quality parks, open space, recreation amenities, and tree canopy
- Programs and spaces that are physically and financially accessible to residents of varying income levels and different abilities
- Incorporation of diverse community voices into the ideation and design of the project
- Variety of programs and spaces that attract a diversity of park visitors
- Design that is welcoming to diverse park users

Value + Benefits

Research shows that when equity is centered, everyone wins.* Focusing on equitable access ensures all Newport residents can feel welcome in parks and can benefit from the health benefits that recreation provides.

By bringing different kinds of people together, open spaces can also play a role in bridging societal divides by promoting connection among diverse people.

Learn More

- See pages 54-63 of the Newport Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan for more details on “Equitable System.”
- [Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan Link*](#)
- [Comprehensive Land Use Plan Link*](#)

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- 1. General Equity:** Has the proponent of this topic or project considered equity under the Master Plan and attempted to improve the existing condition?
- 2. Community Input - General:** Was the project developed with meaningful community input with all citizens having an opportunity to contribute?
- 3. Community Input - Equity Focus:** Did under-represented perspectives contribute to the project’s formation in a meaningful way?
- 4. Equitable Access - Parks and Open Space:** Do the improvements address a deficiency in the equitable distributions of park and open space identified in the open space master plan?
- 5. Equitable Access - Waterfront Access:** Do the improvements address a deficiency in the equitable distributions of waterfront access identified in the open space master plan?
- 6. Equitable Access - Recreation Amenities:** Do the improvements address a deficiency in the equitable distributions of recreation amenities identified in the open space master plan?
- 7. Equitable Access - Tree Canopy:** Do the improvements address a deficiency in the equitable distributions of trees identified in the open space master plan?
- 8. Equitable and Welcoming Design:** Does the project’s design welcome all users, especially community members that identify with less privileged identities (e.g. people of color, lower income residents, limited English speakers, limited mobility park visitors, etc.)?
- 9. Accessible and Inclusive Design:** Does the project go beyond ADA requirements and create accessible, barrier-free environments that are comfortable for visitors with physical disabilities or other special needs?
- 10. Diverse Use:** Does the project offer a diversity of uses/activities throughout the year to appeal to a diversity of community members?
- 11. Geographic Diversity:** Is the project inclusive to a diversity of users from throughout the city?
- 12. Affordability:** Is the project or program financially accessible to residents of varying income levels?
- 13. Community Benefit:** Does the plan balance the benefit of the abutting residents/businesses with the needs of the community as a whole?

*See “Additional Resources” for additional resources and full website links (page 8).

** See #4 on right for explanation of “other” responses.



“A key element of Olmsted’s 1913 Plan was the creation of great boulevards. The Master Plan suggests building on that legacy, and further expanding green streets and promoting greater transportation choice across Newport.”

– Newport Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan

What makes a Connected System?

A key recommendation of the Master Plan is that bicycling and walking, along with other alternative transit modes like trolleys and water transportation, grow as viable transportation options in Newport. A connected system includes:

- Walking and bicycling links between parks, neighborhoods, and other destinations
- Greenways
- Welcoming streetscapes with green infrastructure
- Green and blue connections

Value + Benefits

Improving walking and bicycling connectivity increases access, provides a recreational amenity, promotes healthy living through increased physical activity, and reduces congestion and pollution associated with personal cars. Additional social and environmental benefits exist as well. Improving the quality of the pedestrian realm by creating green streets with plantings and furniture encourages the streets to become social spaces and connects a sustainable stormwater management system.

Learn More

- See pages 66-83 of the Newport Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan for more details on “Connected System.”
- [Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan Link](#)

*See [Additional Resources](#) for full website links (page 8).

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. **General Connectivity:** Has the proponent of this topic or project considered connectivity under the Master Plan and attempted to improve the existing condition?
2. **Transportation Safety:** Does the project improve safe access for potential park users, reducing conflicts between all road users including pedestrians, wheelchairs, bicyclists, and vehicles?
3. **Pedestrian Connectivity:** Does the project improve the public’s access between parks, neighborhoods, and other destinations by foot?
4. **Bicycle Connectivity:** Does the project improve the public’s access between parks, neighborhoods, and other destinations by bicycle?
5. **Transit Connectivity:** Does the project improve the public’s access between parks, neighborhoods, and other destinations by public transportation including buses and ferries?
6. **Neighborhood Connectivity:** Does the project improve connections between neighborhoods, both physically and culturally?
7. **Accessibility:** Does the project meet ADA requirements and provide access for diverse abilities and multiple languages?
8. **Green Streetscapes:** Does the project improve streetscape conditions, including planning for healthy, diverse, and climate-appropriate street trees and considering green infrastructure where appropriate?
9. **Greenways + Green Connections:** Does the project improve Newport’s greenways (trail corridors and other natural greenspace corridors) and other green connections?
10. **Waterfront + Blue Connections:** Does the project improve Newport’s waterfront connections?
11. **Parking Access - Cars:** Does the project include sufficient car parking for park users?
12. **Parking Access - Bicycle:** Does the project include sufficient bicycle parking for park users?
13. **Proximity:** Does the proposed project connect to community needs?
14. **Flexible Access:** Is the park accessible to potential park users by multiple forms of transportation?
15. **View Corridors:** Does the project preserve important view corridors?
16. **Safe School Routes:** Does the project support accessibility and connectivity to schools?
17. **Safe Mobility Infrastructure:** Does the project include adequate lighting, sidewalks, and crosswalks?

** See #4 on right for explanation of “other” responses.



Guiding Principle 4

Resilient System



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“Newport is known for its expansive ocean views and historic character. Sited on a peninsula with areas of low-lying land, the city must plan for a future with changing environmental conditions and sea levels.”

– Newport Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan

What makes a Resilient System?

The Master Plan places a significant focus on strengthening Newport’s trees, parks, and open spaces as a resilient and sustainable system. **Resiliency** refers to readiness and adaptability to the effects of climate change. **Sustainability** refers to actions that promote long-lasting benefits for the environment, wildlife, and people. A resilient, sustainable system includes:

- Adapting to current and future coastal flood risks and sea level rise
- Planning for heat resilience
- Resilient, durable material choices
- Climate-appropriate, diverse tree and vegetation species
- Stormwater management strategies
- Sustainable management practices that reduce the environmental impact and carbon footprint of projects

Value + Benefits

A citywide network of trees, green infrastructure, and park design enhancements is a nature-based approach to adapt to the effects of climate change and rising sea levels. Plan recommendations aim to ensure the preservation of historic views and vistas, waterfront development, and Newport’s historic waterfront, while also providing protection against coastal flooding, storm surge, and other consequences of climate change.

Learn More

- See pages 86-107 of the *Newport Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan* for more details on “Resilient System.”
- [Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan Link*](#)
- [Comprehensive Land Use Plan Link*](#)

*See “Additional Resources” for additional resources and full website links (page 8).

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. **General Resilience:** Has the proponent of this topic or project considered resilience, environmental sustainability, and environmental health under the Master Plan and attempted to improve the existing condition?
2. **Coastal Flooding - Current Risks:** Does the project plan for current sea levels and coastal flood risk?
3. **Sea level Rise and Coastal Flooding - Future Risk:** Does the project plan for future projected sea levels and coastal flood risk, using [State-recommended methodology and climate projections*](#)?
4. **Off-site Impacts:** Does the project mitigate off-site impact? (For example, by ensuring it will not have the effect of increasing flooding on adjacent sites.)
5. **Heat Resiliency and Comfort:** Does the project consider hotter summer temperatures and provide strategies for human comfort (e.g. sufficient shade)?
6. **Heat Island Mitigation:** Does the project take steps to mitigate the urban heat island effect (e.g. minimizing and shading pavement, white roofs, and vegetation)?
7. **Site-appropriate, Climate-considered Plant Species:** Does the project include site-appropriate, climate-considered plant species (e.g. salt tolerant if near waterfront), prioritizing native species where possible?
8. **Diverse Plant Species:** Are species diverse to increase long-term resilience to pests, disease, and other challenges, prioritizing native species where possible?
9. **Trees and Habitat:** Does the project improve on Newport’s trees and habitat inventory?
10. **Conservation Report:** Has there been a landscape architecture or conservation biology report done to gauge the impact on trees and habitat?
11. **Impervious Surface Reduction:** Does the project minimize new impervious surface to the extent possible?
12. **Stormwater Management:** Does the project manage stormwater runoff in an environmentally friendly manner and limit negative downstream impacts?
13. **Sustainable Management Practices*:** Does the project incorporate environmentally sustainable management practices (for example, reduction of irrigation water use, reduction in pesticides, etc.)
14. **Resilient Materials:** Does the project incorporate materials that are durable to projected impacts of climate change?
15. **Sustainable Materials:** Does the project use environmentally sustainable and healthy materials (e.g.. lower environmental footprint, avoids toxic/unhealthy materials)?

** See #4 on right for explanation of “other” responses.



Guiding Principle 5

Living Legacy



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“Newport’s trees, parks, open spaces, and driftways are a living legacy, reflecting Newport’s rich past while continuing to thrive as vibrant green and blue spaces into the future.”

– Newport Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan

What defines creating a Living Legacy?

Newport today benefits from the foresight of previous generations and visionaries who shaped the city’s parks, green boulevards, and urban forest; and there is still more work to be done. The Master Plan builds upon Olmsted’s framework and the Coastal Resources Management Council designated rights-of-way, recommending additional improvements to further meet Newport’s needs and address long-standing open space needs in the community. Living Legacy refers to:

- Permanent legal protection for open space
- Respecting historic contributions and contributing to ongoing stewardship
- Creating lasting positive benefit for Newport’s community and environment
- Sustainable operations, maintenance, and funding
- Improving open space access in communities that have been historically underserved

Value + Benefits

Considering Living Legacy ensures that today’s decisions will have a lasting positive impact for future generations. This topic embraces sustainability in multiple forms—financial, operational, environmental, and social. The benefits of this approach are more viable near-term implementation as well as design that is more likely to create long-term success.

Learn More

- See pages 110-115 of the *Newport Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan* for more details on “Living Legacy.”
- [Tree, Park, and Open Space Master Plan Link*](#)
- [Comprehensive Land Use Plan Link*](#)

*See “Additional Resources” for full website links (page 8).

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. **General Living Legacy:** Has the proponent of this topic or project considered Living Legacy under the Master Plan and attempted to improve the existing condition?
2. **Permanent Protection:** Is any new open space in the project legally protected from future sale/development?
3. **Protection Balance:** Do the legal restrictions balance the need for permanent open space protection with the future rights of citizens to determine the best uses of open space?
4. **Initial Financial Viability:** Is it economically sustainable to build and maintain the improvements?
5. **Long-term Financial Stewardship:** Does the project include a plan for long-term financial sustainability?
6. **Short-term Impact:** Does the project provide a net positive community benefit in the next one to two years?
7. **Mid-term Impact:** Does the project provide a net positive community benefit in the next three to five years?
8. **Long-term Impact:** Does the project provide a net positive community benefit in the long-term?
9. **Historic Contribution:** Does the project respect or preserve the historic context where appropriate?
10. **Operations & Maintenance:** Does the project plan for sustainable operations and maintenance?
11. **Mitigating Impact:** If the project is anticipated to create a negative effect, does it plan for equivalent or better mitigation opportunities?
12. **Improved Legacy:** Does the project improve a long-standing inequity or other legacy issue related to open space, recreation, tree canopy, or waterfront access?

** See #4 on right for explanation of “other” responses.

