

Appendix II - Responses Gathered at Visioning Sessions

Newington Master Plan Visioning Session 1 -- November 1, 2017

Natural Resources

What are the most important Natural Resources in Town?

River

Rural setting near urban center:

- Fields, cows, woods

- No sidewalks or traffic lights

- Great Bay and Little Bay

- Views (medium and long views)

- Wildlife Refuge -- paths and trails- much is accessible to the public

- Fox Point area – public water access

- Access to nature for kids

Weaknesses/Problems: What are the weaknesses regarding natural resources in Town?

Pollution

Development pressure

Power lines

Runoff, High nitrogen levels in water

Aquifer at risk - naturally occurring high water table

Water contamination from Pease

- Issue in past

- Newly discovered or only recently understood contaminants

- .5 million gallons of jet fuel on the site

- Firefighting foam is high in POFA's

Wetlands – Development pressure; real estate buyers may not understand constraints on their property as a result of wetlands.

Physical location of Town on Peninsula

Balancing tax benefits of construction/development with potential negative impacts to natural resources

Low density / open space are attractive areas for realignment of utilities and other infrastructure

Traffic impacts on groundwater and traffic shortcuts hurt rural character of the Town.

Benefits of Natural Resources to the Town.

Low taxes

Adds to sense of community

Recreational Benefits

Tranquility from such a natural setting

Deep water port supports industry

Recreational Boating

Health benefits derived by interaction in nature

Location (Portsmouth side of bridge)

Proximity to beaches and mountains

Ski and surf, fishing, close to Boston

Increased property values as a result of natural resources

Protection: What steps can be taken to protect the Town's natural resources?

Avoid over-paving

Don't let the Town become an urban setting

Don't over-develop like downtown Portsmouth

Land Values are high and so little real estate is affordable

Don't change building height limits (close any loopholes)

Allow public access as a feature of any land protection activity

Be careful about private development blocking views- Protect natural view sheds

Be careful about protecting too much land from development because this drives up land costs

New development has lost New England/ rural character

Dover has taken steps to maintain middle income housing affordability

Workforce housing—where do five-plex's fit?

How to adapt affordable housing to Newington's setting?

Consider capacity of neighboring communities on workforce housing

More houses mean need for more municipal services which means higher taxes

Limited resources in Town, outside pressures need to account for this

Transportation

What are the issues surrounding transportation in Town?

Automobile centric

Lack of bus service in Newington for employment access; limited route connections so trips are cumbersome

COAST access along Shattuck way

Airport is good resource regionally; Newington bears the brunt of the negative impacts of the airport

Newington bears the challenge of hosting significant transportation infrastructure for the regions benefit

Rail and shipping provides service to industry

Town has great diversity of transportation modes (water, trails roads, air corridors); historically the

Town controlled these modes now other entities control them

Local population density does not support public transit (There are major holes in public service provided by COAST, especially in the summer)

Lack of senior transportation

Expensive taxi service (Uber is expensive as well)

Traffic congestion is high

Newington has become a cut-thru community

--There are no traffic signals to slow down commuter traffic

--The Town should investigate ways to inhibit commuter cut-throughs

Work with regional hospitals to provide senior transportation

Better utilize COAST's on-demand service for senior and disabled doctor visits
Lack of sidewalks (Nimblehill Road and Little Bay Road)
Walking trails are needed along roads
Small Town trying to maintain roads being heavily travelled (Woodbury Avenue for example)
Using Woodbury Avenue as a commuter corridor, access management is needed to insure continued levels of service
Road construction practices have made roads less walkable (narrow shoulders, multiple layers of pavement, deep side ditches)
Lack of speed enforcement
Roads made for low volume are becoming high volume, this is very expensive for the Town
Snow removal is detrimental to sidewalks and curbing
Lack of pedestrian facilities
Roads are not conducive to bicycling

Strategies to Address Weaknesses

Comprehensive Town-wide traffic study
 Investigate traffic calming solutions
 Speed reduction alternatives
 Bike paths and trails network development
Intercommunity cooperation
Four-way stop sign in front of Fire Station
Consider using one way street configurations as traffic calming responses
Consider different configurations for Arboretum and Fox Point roads
Reduce speed limit on Little Bay Road to as low as permitted
Add trails parallel to roads (perhaps integrated with bike paths)
Train possibilities? Expensive? Little buy-in by Pease, easement still exists
Complete Shattuck Way Extension, limit cut-through commuter traffic
Beware of unanticipated consequences of what you ask for!

Emergency Planning

What planning is on-going in Town?

Emergency operations plan for Town prepared 3 years ago (Examples include planning for response to fires in the industrial areas; airplane crashes; bridge closures; booms have been placed for possible water spills on the bay; terrorism; shootings at the malls and attacks on propane tanks)
Regional fire chief meetings are held for disaster coordination
Multi-level planning from local to Federal
Planning related to Sea 3 with contingencies
Town Hall is a designated emergency shelter
Seabrook Nuclear Plant emergency planning does not include Newington

Natural Hazards

What are the most pressing natural Hazards in Town?

State Coordination, Emergency Management Center; Challenges of mobilizing

Relatively high elevation of Newington means likely lower impacts from sea level rise

Preparation and Planning for Resiliency

- Culvert inventory

- Better stormwater management requirements

Snowfall and capacity to maintain roads

No Town Department of Public Works – part time road agent limits ability to clean culverts regularly; limits capacity of other road maintenance

MS4 waiver in place meaning the Town does not have to comply currently with EPA requirements for stormwater management

Malls have retention ponds for stormwater management

No buildings down stream of dams

16 acres of trees being cut resulting in snow blowing on runway at airport

What does the Air National Guard use on runways now to handle snow and ice?

Insect borne diseases- mosquitoes and ticks (impacts of warmer winters that do not kill off these insects annually as in the past)

Negative environmental impacts of runoff from salted roads.

Newington Master Plan Visioning Session 2 -- November 15, 2017

Land Use

What is good about the land uses in Newington?

Keep industrial areas industrial for its impact on the tax base tax base

Workforce housing on Eversource land would increase service needs and costs

Concern about densification

Rural character of residential area

Fire Department capacity has not kept up with Town growth; 18 thousand cars travel through Town each day; still have one ambulance

3-acre minimum for duplexes and higher and increased upland requirements serve to limit increases in density Town-wide.

Clear divisions exist between residential, industrial and commercial land uses.

Fire and Police Department growth need remains unclear.

Retail and industry keeps taxes low.

Many will trade housing location / proximity over noise concerns.

What are the weaknesses of Newington's land use?

Not sustainable- too many McMansions
Need the population to grow by another 200 hundred residents
Need mixed use development in commercial area
Need zoning change for future
Newington shouldn't be a bedroom community
Lack of community Town-wide
Property values are too high for young people to afford. \$300,000 dollars for an undeveloped two-acre residential building lot
Malls are having trouble keeping tenants
Need better internal traffic circulation between the Crossings at Fox Run and the Fox Run Mall.
Future of malls is unclear – anchor stores in bankruptcy, hit by on-line commerce competition
Mixing residential land use with industrial land use is not desirable.
Water quality – wells not allowed if Portsmouth municipal water system is available
Inflexible zoning can be a problem... The shogun restaurant was hindered by rigid land use controls.

What opportunities exist to improve Newington's existing land use?

Possible long-term redevelopment of the malls. Incorporate mixed uses, increase building heights to three stories.
Investigate the development concepts in Salem with respect to the Tuscan Village proposal.
Cell tower next to water tower?

What's missing in Newington's current land uses?

Cell coverage is horrible – locating a tower is a challenging. The Town desires better cell phone coverage in residential areas but the industry is interested in capturing drive through traffic because of the high volume.

Community Facilities

What community facilities are most valued?

Fox Point recreation area- trails, launch area
Residents only
Historic barn
Actively farmed; 400 continuous years of agricultural use
Potential for other recreational uses but prior attempts of developing the site further have been stopped by claims that such development would damage the character of the site.
Historic District; how to make more people-friendly? Currently there is no gathering place.
Soccer field is heavily used (Portsmouth/Newington youths, baseball is played on school fields)
Playground located at Old Grove
Old Town Hall used by recreation Committee, also used for weddings.
Library
USAF Building, the Stone School was closed 8 years ago because renovation plan for the building was too expensive and therefore not undertaken.

COI requirement prices Town facilities out of reach for community groups

The Town needs to undertake a review of its building use policies (for example use of the Town Hall without the kitchen costs \$250)

There are two other sites in town that provide public access to waterways.

There is lack of storage capability for Town equipment. There is need for archival storage of Town documents.

Need improvements to the carriage house at Fox Point for Town picnic and other functions.

Newington Residents can utilize Spinnaker Point recreational facilities in Portsmouth and the town will reimburse the cost.

Anything missing?

Cooperation from the Pease Development Authority; need common goals.

No welfare officer, no homeless shelters (Community contributes to Crossroads House) shared with Portsmouth.

No senior center, limited senior services; Recreation Department focuses on kids (for example, Old Home Day which was multi-generational has become September Fest which focuses on kid's activities)

Lack of a community gathering space

- Need to rehabilitate the Stone School

- Activities for seniors

- Add a kitchen

- Likely one million dollars to renovate

Sense of community is missing – many residents commute long distances and are preoccupied

Local theater program is now defunct- priced out

Library has Boardroom, coffee area; needs more parking and plans exist to add 12 additional spaces.

Library does not want to create a parking lot in front of the building.

This dilemma regarding Library parking gets back to the issue that the historic district is attractive but unfriendly/underutilized.

The Town has a very small population (approximately 800) maybe 100 to 120 participate in Town Meeting, these tend to be individuals opposed to new spending opportunities. (for example, the Fox Point Pavilion improvement project failed to get approval after many residents worked for many hours to design an appropriate project proposal; the Library addition passed by only 7 votes)

Newington Master Plan Visioning Session 3 – November 29. 2017

Future Land Use

What should Newington have for future land uses?

Newington should have control of the area north of Arboretum Drive

- Work with our Congressional delegation to accomplish this

- Currently controlled by Pease Development Authority (PDA)

- Maintenance of the road is the responsibility of the City of Portsmouth

- Town of Newington wants more access, the PDA wants less

- Use Arboretum Drive as a traffic by-pass for the Town Center

Use Arboretum Drive as a future utility right-of way since a high-pressure gas line is already there

South Newington should remain a less noisy environment

There should be increased public access to conservation tracts in South Newington

How will the malls change?

Workforce housing and parking around the outskirts of the mall should be encouraged

Advocate for service activities at the mall instead of just retail (these might include medical, pharmacy barbers, etc.)

Impact on municipal services

Transit service needs to be improved

The town should fix up the stone school as a community center

Senior housing could be connected to mall redevelopment, redevelop the malls in a village concept advocating a mix of retail and service enterprises

Increase access between the existing malls

Appropriate redevelopment of power plants

Energy

What policies about energy should the Town consider?

Municipal building efficiency – heating-cooling, lighting

Undertake energy audits of municipal buildings

Review zoning and incorporate allowances for wind and solar development

Town facilities have been converted to natural gas

Further extension of this gas line to all municipal facilities should be investigated (historic area?)

Most of town has Town water supplied by the City of Portsmouth

Enforce the Town's existing dark skies requirements

Selectmen are presently assessing LED street lighting alternatives

Investigate the possibility of using solar panels to power the new LED street lights

Need to select the appropriate color range for LED street lights

Power Plants pay 1/3 of all taxes in Town presently

Master Plan should discuss the Town's role as a regional conduit for gas and electric transmission; the town shoulders a greater burden of this activity than surrounding municipalities

The town should investigate municipal cooperative group purchase of energy (oil)

The Town should investigate the possibility of gas line extension to residential areas

Utilities

Water is provided to nearly everyone in Town

The Town has terrible cell phone service

Height restrictions due to the airport constrain this somewhat

Directionality toward the higher consumer usage along the Spaulding Turnpike impact this as well

The Town should require new towers to radiate in all directions

Tower developers are required to prove that existing infrastructure (stacks) are not viable locations before new towers can be established

Towers are zoned out of residential areas

The Town has good fiber optics service for telephone and broadband internet

Verizon upgraded the Town to 4K for video and then sold out to Fairpoint

Water for the town is supplied by Portsmouth through their Madbury reservoir

The Newington aquifer is polluted

The Town should undertake long range water supply planning

Sewer is provided in industrial areas and some municipal buildings; no private residences are on municipal sewer.

Redevelopment of malls would likely require sewer expansion.

Housing

What kind of housing should be available in Town?

Kids can't afford to live in Town; the housing is skewed towards the rich

Many families only stay for 10 years

The current tax rate is \$9.10/\$1000 of assessed value

People love Newington but there are consequences to the existing housing market

Lack of community

Bedroom community – many have jobs outside of town, long commutes, lack of community engagement

The town should consider 2-3 story buildings if the malls are redeveloped – ground floor retail with residential activity above

Current Use program without agricultural or timber activity is just a subsidy for the rich with large land holdings

Current use preserves open space and open space is cost effective for the Town re: municipal service expenditures

Current standard is one single family home on 2 acres of land

One accessory dwelling unit is allowed in any single-family home

Duplex use requires 3 acres

Duplex units can be condominiumized and subdivided

Duplexes provide low cost extended family housing opportunity

The Town should not be afraid of expanding housing opportunities and increasing in population

The Town has the opportunity to add affordable housing in redeveloped malls while preserving low density residential in the Village center

Segmentation of uses in town is very good

Put additional housing east of the turnpike or near the mall, preserve open space