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New comprehensive plan guides city of East Providence's future - by Roberto DaSilva

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Roberto DaSilva

The city recently reached a major milestone when, after years of preparation, outreach, and review, the East Providence city council formally voted to adopt the city's new comprehensive plan. Last adopted in 2010, the comprehensive plan is a guidance document that sets the course for the city's future. The plan expresses the community's aspirations to protect and support what residents love about living in East Providence. The plan serves as a policy framework for decisions around public and private investments and helps the city be proactive and strategic about its future over the next twenty years

The comprehensive plan looks at where we are through an analysis of current trends and sets a vision for where we want to go by setting goals, policies, and action items that get us where we want to be. Policies include providing more housing options, maintaining a robust local economy, providing a safe transportation network with expanded options for bicycle and pedestrian trips, protecting our natural resources, and preparing for climate change. The plan's future land use map recommends predominant uses for various areas of the city and guides the city's zoning map. The plan also includes an ambitious implementation schedule with several recommended action items that detail how these goals can be met. Action items include high, medium, and low priorities and detail the responsible parties. Per the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act, the plan serves as the basis for the city's land use regulations and all land use decisions must be consistent with the plan. The plan is prepared and approved by the city's planning board and formally adopted by the city council.

As an expression of the city's future, the comprehensive plan was developed with the community. To hear from residents and the business community, the city used a multi-pronged approach of digital and in-person activities. Public input was received through a series of workshops held for each of the city's four wards, in addition to workshops held on various topics, community surveys, and public hearings before the planning board and city council. One of the community surveys was targeted toward the city's youth and distributed through local schools and youth programs. Input was also received from the city's boards and committees to understand the issues and challenges they see in East Providence and approaches to help them meet their goals. A webpage was also dedicated to the comprehensive plan on the city's website. Upcoming events were posted and materials from public meetings, such as handouts and presentation slides, were available. The site included frequently asked questions with links to relevant reports and studies.

Thank you to the East Providence Planning Board, city council, and many other municipal boards and commissions for their work over the past several years. The city is also very grateful to the residents of East Providence for their input that made the plan much more valuable.

Roberto DaSilva is the mayor of the city of East Providence, R.I.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540