

## **A. OVERVIEW**

### **A-1.0 Purpose of Comprehensive Plan**

The major purposes of the North Smithfield Comprehensive Plan are as follows:

The Plan is a guide to the future growth and development of North Smithfield; this is an Update of the Town's 1992 Comprehensive Plan (which replaced the Town's first Plan dated 1969).

The Plan sets forth a vision of what the community wishes to become during the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Plan is a document to be used as a guide by elected and appointed officials in making decisions relating to the use of land and the provision of community facilities.

The Plan is designed to improve the quality of the living, working and recreational environment as well as to promote the health, welfare and safety of all citizens and residents of North Smithfield regardless of age, sex, income or race.

The Plan is to be used as a reference by State and local agencies in developing consistent plans and projects.

### **A-2.0 Legal Basis of Comprehensive Plan**

Pursuant to the provisions of the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act of 1988 as amended, all Rhode Island towns and cities are required to update and/or replace prior Comprehensive Plans. The act prescribes the following:

Nine required plan elements.

Coordination with the planning of neighboring communities.

Participation by the general public in the planning process.

Procedures for adopting and amending the plan.

Procedures for State review and appeals of State decisions.

Consistency with the State Guide Plan

Bringing the zoning ordinance and map into conformance with the Comprehensive Plan within eighteen months of the plan's adoption.

### **A-3.0 Planning Process**

The 1992 Plan, adopted by the State of Rhode Island in 1995, was the result of extensive public participation. Given that the last Comprehensive Plan was dated 1969, the Council saw fit to appoint a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to work with the Planning Department, Planning Board and consultant, Burk Ketcham and Associates, on the Plan. A series of public workshops were used to test the Plan's conclusions and proposals.

The Plan's updating began, as the State required, in the year 2000. However, primarily as a result of wanting to utilize the new Census data, the Update's completion was postponed. Public input on the Update has taken several forms, ranging from a survey to community workshops to the Plan's review by land use consultants. As a result of the delayed submission to the State, the Update has become stronger and better reflects the needs of the citizens and growth pressures that have significantly accelerated over the past five years.

A written survey sent out in early 2001 to approximately 7,900 of the Town's registered voters was a component of the Visioning Study and served as critical input to this Update. An analysis of the respondents indicated that the survey, in fact, reached a representative cross-section of the population. The survey generated a response rate of 13%. Responses to particular questions have been woven through this document.

Another opportunity for citizens to provide input into the Town's planning process was provided on January 20, 2001. Dr. John Mullin of the University of Massachusetts was hired to facilitate a charette designed to help citizens articulate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing North Smithfield. The forum also provided an opportunity to determine preliminary actions as they relate to sustainable development and long-term planning. Findings and recommendations from the charette have also been incorporated into this document.

Also included in this Comprehensive Plan Update are the suggestions from land use planner Randall Arendt pertaining primarily to the protection of North Smithfield's natural and cultural resources. This effort, paid for through the RI Department of Environmental Management (DEM), was geared toward helping the Town identify how more innovative land use mechanisms could be incorporated in the Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. The mechanisms reflect North Smithfield's approach to all land use policies contained within, i.e., how to offer the development community more flexibility while protecting and preserving scenic, historic, and natural characteristics that if lost would adversely impact the quality of life the residents of North Smithfield currently enjoy.

A direct benefit from Mr. Arendt's work and partnering with the DEM are the consolidated natural resource maps contained in this Update. In 2004, the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council hosted a series of meetings and workshops to help citizens in the watershed identify their most critical natural, cultural and recreational resources areas and to consider how to preserve them. The project was funded by the US Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and resulted, in part, in the composite maps contained in this Update.

In addition to those public efforts identified above, the Town's Planning Board and Planning Department have held a series of meetings and workshops during which this Update was discussed/drafted.

#### **A-4.0 Organization of Comprehensive Plan**

The North Smithfield Comprehensive Plan has been organized into thirteen (13) sections as follows: Section A introduces the plan and Section B provides an area where amendments may be recorded; Sections C through L are the nine planning elements required by the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act plus a special element for the John H. Chaffee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. The 1992 Plan and its format served as the base document. Text has been updated, as appropriate. The Implementation Element is comprised of two parts to help bridge the old and new proposals. Specifically, there is a 2005 Action Table which lists current goals, policies and actions, their timeframes, costs and who is responsible for their implementation; the second section provides a list of the proposed actions contained in the 1992 document and their status. Incomplete or ongoing proposed actions from 1992 are brought forward and are contained in the 2005 Action Table.

### **A-5.0 Consistency**

In recognition that North Smithfield is one part of a broader regional community, the Comprehensive Plan has been developed to be consistent with the goals and policies of the State Guide Plan and the plans of adjoining communities. Each element of the Plan has a section which validates consistency.

### **A-6.0 Affirmative Action**

This Comprehensive Plan has been developed to consider the needs of all present and future residents and employees of the Town of North Smithfield without regard to their age, race, color religion, sex or national origin.

### **A-7.0 Adoption**

The North Smithfield Comprehensive Plan and its Five-Year Update were adopted as follows:

Following a November 7, 1991 public hearing and receipt of the Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Planning Board, the North Smithfield Town Council, on March 16, 1992, adopted the Comprehensive Plan. A copy of the adopting resolution can be found in the Appendix. The Director of the Rhode Island Department of Administration approved the North Smithfield Comprehensive Plan on November 20, 1995. A copy of the approval letter to the Town of North Smithfield may also be found in the Appendix.

Following a November 22, 2005 public hearing and receipt of the Comprehensive Plan Five-Year Update adopted by the Planning Board, the North Smithfield Town Council, on March 20, 2006 adopted the Comprehensive Plan Update. A copy of the adopting resolution can be found in the Appendix. The Director of the Rhode Island Department of Administration approved the North Smithfield Comprehensive Plan on\_\_\_\_\_.