

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is the Tiverton Comprehensive Community Plan?

The Tiverton Comprehensive Community Plan is a long-range guide to the physical development and preservation of the Town of Tiverton, Rhode Island. It is intended as a framework for accomplishing community aspirations and intentions. It states goals and objectives and recommends courses of action in the areas of natural and cultural resources, land use, housing, services and facilities, open space and recreation, circulation and economic development. Taken in its entirety, the original Comprehensive Community Plan presents a vision for the future of the town, an advisory policy guide, and an agenda for future actions by the town and its citizens. When reviewing development proposals, considering amendments to the town's zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations, and making policy decisions that affect land use and development, town officials rely on the plan to guide their actions.

Planning is not a new activity in Tiverton. In 1967, the State of Rhode Island completed a community plan inventory and analysis for the town. In 1985, the state again assisted the town by preparing the Town of Tiverton, Rhode Island, Comprehensive Community Plan. Numerous analyses and reports concerning many aspects of the community have been consulted in the preparation of this document.

The current Tiverton Comprehensive Community Plan was prepared in the 1990's and received approval from the Statewide Planning Program of the RI Department of Administration on July 14, 1997. State law governing comprehensive plans mandates that each community undergo a review and update of its plan every five years. This version of the plan represents the first such major update. Each chapter was examined in detail and updated according to new Census and other data. All objectives and policies were reviewed, and if necessary modified or removed to reflect changes in circumstances since 2006. Many objectives and policies were added in response to new issues. It is the town's intent to have the plan be a flexible document which evolves over time, but remains as the policy document which expresses the town's most fundamental goal – to preserve Tiverton's character, scenic beauty and high quality of life.



Tiverton is defined by its small town character

1.2 The Planning Process

This comprehensive plan was prepared under the 1988 state enabling statute related to land use planning (RIGL Title 45, Chapter 22). This law stipulates the plan's format and content, and requires community participation in the planning process.

The planning process for the Comprehensive Community Plan began in 1989 with a grant from the State of Rhode Island for funding to begin the plan. The town then selected the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. This committee, composed of over 70 residents as well as representatives of the town's boards and commissions, served to guide the preparation of the plan and coordinate public participation in the planning process.



Citizens and volunteer board members work to plan Tiverton's future.

A six-step planning process was used to prepare the plan. The first two steps included gaining an understanding of existing conditions and the major issues that confront the community. These steps involved interviews, field surveys and research into existing plans and documents. In addition, broader involvement was obtained through two public workshops and a survey questionnaire distributed throughout the town. The first workshop was an opportunity for citizens to raise concerns and articulate visions for the future of Tiverton. Eight public steering committee meetings and numerous smaller working sessions provided another forum for citizen input. The survey questionnaire, distributed throughout the community by the steering committee, enabled citizens to comment on the major issues confronting the community. Over 650 questionnaires were returned and tabulated.

Steps three and four of the planning process involved the elaboration of goals and objectives and the evaluation of various approaches to achieve them. The steering committee was organized into subcommittees to focus on each of the plan's functional elements and develop the plan's goals, objectives and policies.

Step five synthesized the initial steps into the draft comprehensive plan report. A second public workshop was held at this stage to evaluate mechanisms to implement the policies of the plan. The draft plan was circulated to adjoining municipalities in Rhode Island, and the City of Fall River and Town of Westport in Massachusetts. They were all asked to comment on specific aspects of the plan.

The final step in the plan's preparation involved the formal review and approval of the Comprehensive Community Plan by the Planning Board, Town Council and the State of Rhode Island. Following state approval, the Comprehensive Community Plan was implemented as a public policy document by the town.

Because the Comprehensive Community Plan was developed through a community-wide participation process that sought to build consensus on how to address critical issues facing Tiverton in the future, its implementation should be reflected in the actions of the Town Council, Planning Board and other boards and commissions.

The 2005-2006 update was done by a subcommittee of the Planning Board that consisted principally of active citizens in town. The committee met over the duration of a year and a half to carefully review and update each chapter. All town committees and departments were contacted to ensure a broad-based and accurate update. The recommended amendments were forwarded to the Planning Board who then reviewed and either approved or modified each proposed amended element. The process of formal amendment of the Comprehensive Community Plan was done in the format of a public hearing on the part of both the Planning Board and the Town Council, as required by state law.

The 2016 update was initiated by the Town Council in late 2013 with the appointment of a 13-member Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) representing the general public, town boards and commissions and town officials and chaired by Planning Board chair Steven Hughes. A grant was secured to fund the services of The Cecil Group, a Boston-based professional planning firm. Two well-attended open forums were conducted on June 11 and 14, 2014 where the general public expressed their views regarding the content and policy substance of the updated Plan.

Subsequently, CPAC established smaller working groups to update and improve specific Elements based on public input. About 12 CPAC plenary sessions and many more working group meetings were conducted between 2014 and 2015. Updated draft Elements were then forwarded to the Planning Board for review and improvement. A draft updated Plan was then approved by the Planning Board, following a public hearing, and forwarded to the Town Council.



The Tiverton Planning Board

1.3 State Consistency

After a public hearing and adoption by the Town Council, the plan is reviewed by the state to ensure compliance with state goals, completion of required elements, and compliance with the rules and regulations of the state planning council. The plan is adopted in accordance with RIGL Chapter 45, and submitted for review by the state in accordance with statutory requirements. The 2016 update requires a similar process of review and approval by the appropriate state agencies.

1.4 Comprehensive Plan Maps

The maps in this plan have been collected from a variety of sources; all have been replaced and brought up to date as part of the 2016 update. Some of the maps have been reproduced in larger versions. These may be viewed at the Town Hall.



The Comprehensive Community Plan aims to conserve natural features while accommodating future growth.