

Overview

West Side Master Plan Summit

May 13, 2019

On May 13th, the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission (AIPC) gathered a group of the original individuals and organizations involved in the drafting of the 2005 *West Side Master Plan* (WSMP) for a summit held in Middletown to review progress made on the implementation of the Plan since its release and discuss current opportunities for regional initiatives. Including municipal, state & national, business, foundational, and civic/non-profit organizational representation, the summit suggested a number of Island-wide priorities for development on the West Side. It also charted an initial path forward for engaging all Island residents and building the case for the vast potential for West Side development.

Following an introduction by historian Jim Garman, Ashley Medeiros of Connect Greater Newport outlined the economic significance of the West Side to both the Island and the state as a whole. Then Bob Andrews, a member of the AIPC Board of Directors and Portsmouth's West Side Development Committee, provided a virtual tour of key areas on the West Side in all three municipalities, highlighting spots with particular significance and development interest.

Municipal planners Gary Crosby (Newport) and Peter Friedrichs (Newport, joined by Sarah Atkins) provided updates on the status of WSMP implementation in their jurisdictions, followed by updates from Middletown by Councilor Rick Lombardi and others. Cornelia Mueller provided the perspective of Naval Station Newport.

The third portion of the meeting was devoted to an open discussion of the potential opportunities for West Side development, pending decisions by the Naval Station, municipalities, state and federal officials and agencies and other stakeholders. A broad range of perspectives were presented, but key site and planning areas identified as focuses for regional initiatives on the West Side included:

- 1) Highway Access & Connectivity (Burma Road / Stringham Roads Corridor)
- 2) Workforce housing
- 3) Transit/Transportation
- 4) Commercial/Industrial growth potential
- 5) Resilience & Sea-level rise
- 6) Broadband, water, sewer and other infrastructure
- 7) Utilize existing models for development (such as the Newport Innovation District) as appropriate

In order to take the next step in an Island-wide approach to West Side development it was noted that the economic development case and the importance of the West Side not just to Aquidneck Island but to all of Rhode Island needed to be made in the state legislature, with appropriate state agencies and with other key stakeholders like the business community and federal agencies (and the Rhode Island congressional delegation).

In order to provide Aquidneck Island's state representatives with this support that they will need to lobby for state financial engagement, it was proposed that a consultant be engaged to do the economic development and cost-benefit analysis. The AIPC would take the lead in identifying funds, selecting the contractor and managing the project.

Coupled with this effort and subsequent work, the AIPC will work together with the Island municipalities and their respective planning staff and commissions to create a public, open and all-inclusive process to ensure that the development of the West Side proceeds in a way that incorporates the varying needs of all Island residents.

The AIPC will follow-up with stakeholders in early-Summer 2019 to consider immediate next steps in this process.



Meeting Summary West Side Master Plan Summit 13 May 2019 – 12:00 – 3:30 PM

The Summit was held at Bank Newport’s Conference Center, John Clarke Road. The agenda and participants are listed in the Appendix.

1. Welcome and Introductions

AIPC Chair Sara Churgin welcomed all participants and thanked them for their interest and participation.

2. Purpose of the Summit

John Shea, AIPC Director, also thanked all attending this important session to assess the status of the West Side Master Plan. Fifteen years have elapsed since the Plan was released; there has been much progress, but more work remains. The Summit’s purpose is to bring together some of the original stakeholders who contributed to the development of the Plan to see if there is a critical mass of interest for further regional efforts to advance the Plan’s outstanding recommendations. He thanked Chris Sheehan of Bank Newport for use of the Bank’s conference facilities. He asked all in attendance to introduce themselves and the organization they are representing (see Appendix for participants).

Bob Andrews reflected on the importance of the Summit, by noting that in 1941, 5 days following the Pearl Harbor attack, the federal government took much of the West Side by eminent domain. It has been almost 70 years since then, and now the land is going to be released for reuse, so it is time to ensure that our plans for the area are adequate and current.

3. Overview of the West Side Master Plan

a. History of the West Side

Jim Garman provided a capsule history of the West Side, offering participants a perspective of significant events that have shaped the area over time. Highlights recounted by Jim included:

- Colonial Settlement in 1638 by Coddington, Clarke and Hutchinson.
- Fall River Line steamships served the area beginning in the 1840s.
- Old Colony Railroad built from 1862-64; passenger service ended in 1938; freight in 1986.
- Trolleys, ferries and later bridges were also important features.
- Military significance dates back to the Civil War when there was a hospital at Portsmouth Grove (Melville) from 1862-65.

- Coal Mines at Arnold's Point which operated from 1809-1913 intermittently.
- Navy Coaling Station established in 1901 at Bradford (Melville); oil depot added in 1914.
- Portsmouth Priory (Abbey) began as monastery in 1919; the school was begun in 1926. 500+ Acre campus. Part of land leased to Carnegie Abbey in 1999; now The Aquidneck Club.
- In 1881 Coaster's Harbor Island (formerly Newport's Poor Farm), converted to Navy Recruit Training Command; late teens expanded across Coddington Cove to Coddington Point and beyond.
- Naval War College established in 1884.
- Naval Hospital built in 1913.
- Melville Oil Depot enlarged at beginning of World War II.
- As World War began after Pearl Harbor the Government took over considerable farmland in Portsmouth and Middletown beginning on 12 December 1941.
- Population of Portsmouth after World War II was only 4,500.
- Melville Park (later including Campground) was given to the Town of Portsmouth for recreational purposes only-140 Acres-1979. Nine ponds and nature trails. Several ponds dammed up by WPA in 1943.
- Wanumetonomy Golf Course was created in 1922 on lands formerly owned by Chase, Brown and Bailey families.
- Navy housing was established at Greene Lane. Some removed and others rebuilt around 2010.
- Naval Motor Torpedo Boat Training Center and Net Depot at Melville from 1942-45.
- Tank Farms expanded and Defense Highway created during World War II.
- Piers at Coddington Cove built in 1951 and 1958; housed mostly destroyers and COMCRUDESANT until 1973.
- BRAC in 1973; ships moved away; many shifts in Navy land.

In summary, the West Side has changed dramatically over time and it will continue to do so. Planners should be well aware of its history as they seek to shape the future.

b. Economic Significance of the West Side

Ashley Medieros of Connect Greater Newport discussed the significance of the West Side within the context of the Island's economy. She made the following points:

- Currently 21 % of the Island's jobs are in the Food and Accommodations sector, 18% in Government, and 8% in Professional and Technical.
- However, looking at wages and income, Professional and Technical generates 12% of island income, the same as Food and Accommodations, which has lower-paying jobs. Professional-Technical sector average salaries are 3.3 times the average salary of Food and Accommodations.
- Overall, Aquidneck Island provides 8% of all the jobs in Rhode Island. The West Side offers an opportunity to expand the regional share of jobs and income and improve on the mix of jobs to emphasize higher-paying sectors.
- Need to re-develop the available land with these workforce issues in mind. Don't look to just build buildings and hope for the best. Be strategic, target industries with the highest returns.
- Use Smart Growth concepts – Create "Live, Work, Play"- type communities with amenities that younger workforce seeks – shops, trails, bike paths, etc.

- It can be done. Successful examples of BRAC Reuse projects include Baldwin Park near Orlando, which now offers 15 styles of housing and over 50 miles of trails, and Lowry AFB near Denver, which has a population of 25,000 and over 100 employers.

c. Virtual Tour of the West Side

Bob Andrews narrated a Google Earth tour of the West Side, beginning at Tank Farm #1 on the north. Cornelia Mueller, Terri Cortvriend, Rick Lombardi, Sen. Lou DiPalma, Sarah Atkins, and Peter Friedrichs added comments regarding specific areas. Highlights, from North to South, included:

- i. Tank Farms - #1 is 50 acres in size. The Navy has cleanup underway. The oil contamination is being cleaned under State regulations; the hazardous materials must be cleaned to EPA/Superfund requirements. The Plan is to demolish all structures on Farms 1, 2, and 3 – this has a separate schedule and funding. Having the Navy remove the tanks is a positive for the communities. Tank Farms 1 & 2 are very close to the Marina District and could help make the District the marine trades center for all New England. These areas can be reused for marine trade, tourism and defense industries when cleaned.
- ii. Stringham and Burma Roads – Maintained by the Navy. Provides essential access and infrastructure for the Marina District. Water and sewer are provided by the Navy under prior agreements and deeds; however no additional capacity is available. The Navy would like to get out of the infrastructure business. It requested federal funding for a privatization study, but it did not make the cut. There are also abandoned oil lines on Defense Highway. The hairpin curve on Stringham at Burma Road needs to be re-aligned. It is 4.3 miles from this intersection to the Piers. This Road is critically important to the reuse plan. A study is needed of Burma Road infrastructure. Getting grants for that study is an important first step towards reuse.
- iii. Melville Marina District – This includes New England Boat Works, which was recently sold to Safe Harbor Marinas of Texas, one of the largest marina operators in the world. They have plans to dredge for expansion of the marina.
- iv. The “Backyard” area is 32 acres between New England Boat Works and Hinckley Shipyard – a major US Boat-builder. They have 10 other shipyards, but they want to keep their headquarters in Portsmouth. There are several smaller businesses in the area, and they have been working to acquire the land for over 20 years through the Navy and RI Commerce so they will have long-term stability (they are now on short-term leases). The latest issue is PFOS contamination, which the agencies (Navy, EPA, DEM, Commerce) are all collaborating to find a cleanup solution.
- v. Weaver Cove – includes 44 acres of waterfront on both sides of Burma Road. The land was purchased by Marshall Properties for \$1.1 million, but a \$3-4 million brownfield cleanup must still take place. Prior owners, Carnegie Abbey, had received Portsmouth and CRMC approvals for a proposed 1,300 boat slips and 400 condos. Portsmouth approved this plan with a mile-long boardwalk, providing public access. Plans should also include such considerations for the public benefit.
- vi. Greene Lane, Middletown – The Town is pursuing acquisition of this site to construct a pier offering the Town access to the Bay. It is estimated that construction is about a year away. Funding is available from DEM to construct the pier once the land is received from the Navy. Plans include a passive park along the shoreline. In 2005 or 2006 the Town put into place zoning that will require all the land conveyed west of Burma Road to be for open space or public use. Middletown does not have significant available land for commercial reuse on the West Side.
- vii. Piers – This area has a defense cluster, with NUWC recent growth adding 500 jobs to the 5-7,000 it provides. Pier 1 is structurally unsound with no Navy operations. Pier 2 is home

- port to two NOAA ships, three Coast Guard cutters, and a Coast Guard Tiger Shark. A third NOAA ship may be in the offering. Gate 17 is the major entry control point to Naval Station Newport, providing the entry and security check for trucks. It operates 12 hours a day/five days a week. Gate 1 cannot handle all the base traffic, due to its constrained footprint and the security check requirements since 9/11. The Navy strives to maintain Pier 2, and has succeeded in getting funds for its maintenance based on its use for an International Sea Power Symposium held at the War College every two years.
- viii. Tank Farms 4 & 5 – These are retained by the Navy and are being leased for 37 years to BQ Energy-a private entity - for solar energy development. Farm 4 has had trees cleared and will see solar construction starting this Fall. Farm 5's tree clearing will start in the Fall. Wetlands permits are pending. The solar installations will generate 21 MW, which will feed into the grid, sourced to private and public educational institutions such as Salve and URI. The Navy is getting a combined heat and power plant through the deal, but will not directly get the solar energy. Another solar farm, of 5 MW, is being built on 72 acres of private land (Vanicek Farm) adjoining the base.
 - ix. Burma Road and Coddington Highway Connection – The Navy will not allow public through-traffic crossing the base. The railroad has deeded access to come through the base, but this but only trains, not explorer cars. Currently, they have decided not to send trains through.
 - x. Naval Hospital in Newport – The City has been pursuing this surplus area for over 12 years. The last issue is lead abatement that must be cleaned up. The RI Historic Preservation Commission has ruled that the exterior of the main building is significant and must be preserved. The City is planning research and development reuse and there is public interest in waterfront access and a park and a pier. There is a plan to connect the walkways under the Newport Bridge. Relative to the cleanup, the Navy has tested the soil and found higher levels than anticipated, so additional testing is needed. It is still being decided if clean up can be done under State regs, which would be quicker and the City could manage it, or under the Superfund federal regs, which would be longer and more costly, and the property cannot be transferred while cleanup is going on.
 - xi. Pell Bridge Realignment – the City is looking to having this area redeveloped in support of the goals of the West Side Plan. RIDOT is finalizing plans for the highway work which will free up the land for redevelopment. RIDOT held four workshops last year and is finalizing its plans over the next few months. The City's priorities are economic development, social equity, and slowing of traffic with bicycle/pedestrian improvements. A multi-use area is the desired reuse. Improving resiliency is also a goal, as parts of the area are affected by flooding. Reknitting the low- and moderate-income area which is isolated is also a priority. A new transportation center is a potential to intercept vehicles coming off the Bridge before they head downtown. RIDOT's last plan had a satellite parking area for 300 cars being considered. Restoration of a marsh in the ramp area is also being planned. The City is also looking at a zone change for the North End area to encourage commercial/technical reuse that offers high-wage jobs.
 - xii. Newport Grand Casino - Carpionato Corporation has purchased the former Casino and is planning a mixed-use redevelopment like Chapel Hill in Cranston. The west side of the site is formerly a landfill, so this may limit options. The City's waste transfer site is also to the south of this site, so this may also figure into the reuse plan. The First Mile Bike Path is moving along in planning. It is approved in the TIP and would be the first piece of a future Aquidneck Island Bike path that would run along the west shoreline from the Sakonnet and Mt. Hope Bridges south to the City.
 - xiii. Navy Lodge Property - Senator Lou DiPalma noted that Middletown has been working on another area that is not on the shoreline but was part of the West Side Master Plan – the

Navy Lodge property on West Main Road at Coddington Highway. The Town has taken ownership of this property from the Navy, and combined with other adjoining Town land, could be redeveloped for mixed use in the future. The Town has a Master Plan for the area, but market conditions will also dictate the timing and future use of these properties. This is a success story for the West Side Plan.

4. Progress Report on Implementation Since 2005

- a. Portsmouth – Gary Crosby updated the group on progress made by the Town of Portsmouth in pursuing the recommendations of the Plan. He noted that the West Side Master Plan embodies many planning issues and progress has been made on some:
 - Prescott Point on the Middletown border has a new development approved for planned resort PUD.
 - Tank Farm #4 – cooperating with the Navy to support its mission by planning for solar farm on this site; issues with the fence line not being the property line are being worked on with the Restoration Advisory Board.
 - Raytheon is the island’s biggest employer, and the Town’s Comprehensive Plan support’s business needs.
 - Stringham and Burma Roads – the Navy would like to dispose of these, and the Stringham roadway is important to the Town as it serves Melville and Tank Farms 1 & 2 which the Town would like to see re-developed.
 - Rail corridor – the Town is supportive of options for its future use
 - Bikeway on the rail corridor – has been a long-standing objective of the Town; while not realized, Town pursued an alternative interim route.
 - Weaver Cove – property has just been sold. Its prior permits have expired, but the Town will work with the new owners if they re-apply for development.
 - Tank Farms 1 & 2 – working with the Navy to re-develop. Town concluded that its goals do not require that the Town take control of the property. The best route is for the BRAC process to sell the land to private developers for private cleanup and redevelopment under Town zoning controls. Future uses could include planned urban development, research and development, outside storage/marine trade support.
 - Melville Campground and Park – this area is leased to a private operator who is improving the campground. DEM is requiring an inspection of the dam on the lower pond and the Town is cooperating to get brush cleared so that can occur.
 - Carnegie Tower / Newport Beach Club – Public access is required in the permit. This development provides good tax revenues for the Town, and the barrier beach and salt marsh are important natural features.

Sen. DiPalma commented that the past several budgets had requested funds to study infrastructure on Defense Highway/Burma Road north of the base. These funds have not materialized yet, but there is hope for this year. The Chamber study several years ago inventoried the infrastructure, but a detailed study is needed. DOT studied traffic counts on West Main Road when Burma was closed in the winter. The Navy does not have an interest in it north of Greene Lane. Others felt that the corridor must be considered as a regional resource that is essential to redevelopment of the West Side and whose loss would affect traffic all along West Main Road.
- b. Newport – Sarah Atkins and Peter Friedrichs reviewed the progress that Newport has made on elements of the West Side Plan in their community. Many of the goals of the Plan were

complemented by policies in the City's Comprehensive Plan and are being worked toward. Highlights include:

- Open Space remains an important issue – community-wide studies, West Side area remains a priority.
- Economic development – the plan called for public-private partnerships and Newport is working to expand access and attract investors
- RIDOT's plans for realigning the Pell Bridge area will improve circulation as recommended in the Plan and offer an off-site parking area tied by the bikeway to downtown – all recommended in the Plan. Coddington and JT Connell Highways are also being addressed, to provide a major route to the north and improve bicycle and pedestrian access. A future road behind Stop & Shop and Walmart is also being considered. The project will have bicycle infrastructure throughout.
- The Providence- Newport Ferry service is now in place.
- Housing – the City is working to repurpose a school site on Broadway for housing and is looking to have micro housing options included in the Jai Alai /Casino reuse.
- The Army COE is studying the impacts of sea level rise on the water system and downtown core, and the City is looking to resiliency in all its plans. The reuse of West Side areas will include resiliency features.
- The City also has an Opportunity Zone in the West Side area and is working through the Health Equity Zone program to expand opportunities for the North End.
- The City is searching for a new Director of Planning and Development to restructure how the City can help plans for the West Side move forward.

c. Middletown – Rick Lombardi and Sen. DiPalma described the progress Middletown has seen as it advanced the goals of the West Side Plan, including the following:

- The West Main Road property (Navy Lodge and adjoining Town land) has a plan in place. This may have to change due to market conditions. Community development is a tough sell, and the focus may have to be on filling existing retail first before more is constructed.
- Burma Road is very important to Middletown as West Main Road is overtaxed with traffic. It should be considered as important to everyone on the island.
- Workforce housing development requires higher densities; but no one wants to talk about that. Affordable housing for Seniors also remains a priority. About 80% of the open land on the east side of town is not buildable, or certainly not for higher density that workforce housing requires. Most people are not aware that over 60% of Middletown's housing consists of rental units. If these are converted to short-term rentals, the impact will be significant. The West Side properties have potential to help in this regard. The Kyriakides property and the Town's parcel are key.
- Rail corridor – it is key to preserve access through the Navy Base and connect to Melville and downtown Newport with a parking lot at the Pell Bridge. Learning that there is deeded right of way for the railroad is important news, as the Town has not known this, and the railroad has been saying that they could not get through. It was clarified that this right only applies to railroad trains, not to the Newport Explorer rail cars.

Sen. DiPalma noted that the National Grid natural gas outage that affected the island was a wake-up call on infrastructure. Prescott Point is being looked at by National Grid, which has threatened to put a moratorium on hookups for new developments, but for now has backed-off. He also stated, that in terms of economic development, the guiding principle must be the Brookings Study, which the State's Commerce folks are following in terms of what kinds of

development make sense to try to attract to Rhode Island. The Island's efforts need to complement the State's.

Peter Freidrichs noted that, in terms of a future Shoreline Drive, Newport is committed to getting auto and pedestrian traffic up to the CCRI area via the Pell Bridge Ramps and bike path project, but beyond that will take regional cooperation.

Matt Vargas stated that CommerceRI is approached daily by industries, both Rhode Island and out-of-state looking for sites to expand. Industries like the wind energy sector need large sites and are a good fit with marine industries. The key consideration, however, is that the sites be ready to build on – so-called “pad-ready”. Efforts need to focus on getting the potential West Side sites ready to market.

George Johnson suggested that the West Side be compared with Quonset which has been a great success. The State invested millions in getting Quonset redeveloped to “pad-ready” status. Will the State be able to bring forth similar investments for the West Side, even though it is not State-owned and controlled? The statewide benefit is to realize marketable, pad-ready, prime sites for economic development benefiting the entire state.

Matt Vargas replied that the key is specifically aligning the site characteristics with the needs of clients seeking sites. Continuing this discussion will advance things towards that objective.

Ashley Medeiros agreed that review of the West Side Plan is a place to start, so that it can be updated where needed and focused on current needs of target industries.

Bob Andrews asked how a redevelopment agency like Quonset is funded. BRAC authorizes these agencies; one was created for the West Side, but it disbanded after it did initial work.

Sen. DiPalma cited the law changes last session which allows TIP (tax increment financing) bonds to be used by communities that lack redevelopment agencies (previously only redevelopment agencies could issue TIF bonds).

5. Moving Forward with Updating and Implementing the WSMP

To move forward, John Shea asked those assembled to suggest 3 or 4 regional priorities for the West Side that could be the focus of regional efforts.

Gary Crosby suggested that getting action on the status and improvement of Burma Road and Stringham Road be considered a priority.

Dick Adams stated that, to him, the entire West Side Plan must be considered as a package. The pieces all work together and really cannot be separated. He suggested that if the municipal Councils support the idea of moving ahead, each be asked to decide if advancing the plan is a priority, and that they designate appointees to work on reviewing and updating the plan and moving forward on a regional basis. The Towns have previously endorsed the West Side Plan and incorporated appropriate recommendations from it into their respective Comprehensive Plans. Reviewing the original 30+ page Implementation Matrix could be a place to start. The West Side Plan continues to be guidance to the towns, as they pursue it through several means.

Linda Ujifusa suggested considering that this effort is still in a research phase, and not form formal committees at this point. For example, talking with Church Community Housing, it was learned that a project through them might be shaped to address affordable housing development in all three communities, offering a funding and grant-competition advantages. This is the kind of informal information-gathering that needs to be done for other aspects of the plan, such as the roadways and utilities; get several folks – the topical experts, a representative from the community, and staff - in a room and have informal discussions of what the possibilities are for cooperation.

Bob Andrews suggested that Burma/Stringham roads are the top priority.

Len Katzman stated that the involvement of the State and State resources is the key. Municipalities cannot do this alone – they are financially strapped in terms of limits on their financial levies.

Matt Vargas noted that the State assistance is available but is within the context of specific activities for retaining or attracting a specific industry or company.

Terri Cortvriend asked if RI Commerce could be of assistance in the clean-up of the contaminated sites, such as the “Backyard”. Or, do the communities have to just wait for the Navy, since they relinquished their rights to the sites?

Ashley Medeiros stated that the State can help when the Navy is ready to market the sites. What we need now is to look at the plan and understand what the best industries to focus on are. We need someone to come in and assess what resources we have, and what are the priorities for moving things along.

Keith Humphreys stated that what is needed most is to get funding so that a professional groups, such as Matrix or Cecil Group, could be brought back in to refresh the plan after 15 years - to do the research to help us focus implementation, and to update the statistics and data of the plan, investigate the utilities and make recommendations on key industries and a way forward. Some objectives, such as workforce housing, must be addressed Island-wide, and may or may not be a priority for the West Side area.

Keith noted that in order to support state legislatures, analysis that demonstrates the return-on-investment (ROI) in the West Side and what a huge economic benefit would accrue to the state needs to be done.

Peter Friedrichs noted, from the discussion, other priorities should include public access to the shore, bicycle connectivity, commercial and business growth, and rising sea level adaptation. Sarah Atkins suggested that a new study was not needed. Matrix did a feasibility study for the City and how the City could look at changes in the economy and look at them as opportunities. Look, she suggested, at what we already have too work with, such as NUWC and the Navy.

Rick Lombardi stated that the existing Plan is an excellent foundation; it just needs some updating. We do not need a new Committee, just look at the plan and examine what needs to be refreshed. He also commented that Towns do not like to hear the word “control” regarding the State taking over. It is better that the State provide resources and advice; but the Towns need to retain control over the development.

Bob Andrews asked Sen. DiPalma about the need to do an economic impact study as justification for State investments.

Sen. DiPalma replied that what is needed first is not an impact study, but rather a professional analysis of the key infrastructure systems to allow informed decisions to be made about them. The Chamber's inventory work a few years ago – the Woodward and Curran Report – was a start. The Senator noted he has asked for the past few years that funds be added to budget to continue the work of looking at the infrastructure on Shoreline Drive, but it has not been funded yet. \$300,000 has been proposed in this year's budget, but decisions have not been made. The key is to drive this forward from an economic development perspective. Make the case that investing in the infrastructure will yield a return. We should know within a month if the study gets funding in this budget. The Island delegation is behind it and talks with key budget figures are continuing, but no promises can be made. The study of infrastructure is needed to make the case to the Governor and to key agency directors of what is needed to invest to realize a positive economic return. No one currently wants just "a road" (Burma), because it represents a liability and its economic potential and cost-benefit have not been documented.

Peter Janaros asked how AIPC could help support this effort.

Sen. DiPalma indicated that he will send information to John Shea and Bob Andrews. The Revenue Estimating Conference just returned a bit of good news about the budget overall, but there is no assurance until the budget is finalized that funds can be found. Key legislators, including Rep. Bucci and Rep. Abney are aware of the need and sensitive to the importance of the defense sector for island, and how this request relates to that, but again no promises can be made at this point until the budget is final.

He also noted that another infrastructure issue in the mix is that Raytheon has a permitted sewage treatment discharge system that it is not using. He also stressed that the plan is a good plan; while updating the plan where needed is important, making progress a bit-by-bit over time is crucial. The Middletown property is a big win. The Navy Hospital, Greene Lane Pier, all of these are potential wins but there are obstacles to work on, and all of them, especially the Tank Farms, require a long-term perspective and commitment.

Dick Adams asked if there is consensus that AIPC should continue taking a role in pushing things along. What exactly does the AIPC Board need to tell the staff to do to move things ahead?

John Shea stated that he would be updating the Board at its meeting tomorrow evening, and that from its discussion and input, he would identify some items on how to move forward and share them back with the group.

Sen. DiPalma stated that it is important that dialogue be broadened beyond the 39 people who were involved in today's meeting. The public needs to be brought up to date. Fifteen years have gone by since the plan was approved. There has been some progress, but not a continuing high profile in the news. Some new folks may not even know what the WSMP is. We need to continue to communicate as much as possible to let the public know that work is continuing.

Elizabeth Lynn suggested looking at the bottlenecks and identifying shared mechanisms for the whole island to work together to advance the plan could be productive.

George Johnson reflected that previously the State had advanced the idea of Growth Centers – areas which municipalities identify as priorities for growth -- and thereafter state agencies collaborate to offer technical assistance and funding. He questioned if that approach was still available from the State.

Matt Vargas replied that the State still does that. He noted that, in his experience, Rhode Island is unique in having such cohesion and ability to get diverse agencies to coordinate and focus on an area when the specifics of “where” and “what” are identified, and what specifically is needed from the State.

Elizabeth Lynn stated that she was hearing that the municipalities need help with identifying the “where and what”.

Sen. DiPalma stated that compared to 15 years ago, Commerce RI is great and has more capabilities than its predecessors did.

Ashley Medieros noted that the empty plazas on West Main Road are an opportunity for mixed redevelopment. Strip malls are the old way and are no longer in vogue. It is a chance to rework open sites to make them usable with coffee shops integrated with housing.

John Shea noted that many new partners have joined the dialogue since 2005 and he welcomed their support.

He again thanked everyone for attending and sharing their input today. He offered that notes from the meeting will be shared with all in a few weeks, as well as some initial ideas on moving forward.

6. Adjourn

The Summit was adjourned at 3:30 P.M.

APPENDIX

SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS

Name:	Organization:
Richard Adams	AICP Board
Chuck Allott	Aquidneck Land Trust
Bob Andrews	AIPC Board
Mike Asciola	Town of Portsmouth
Sarah Atkins	City of Newport
Arthur Bovis	RI DOT
Karen Bradbury	Sen. Whitehouse's Office
Sara Churgin	AIPC Board
Terri Cortvriend	RI General Assembly
Gary Crosby	Town of Portsmouth
Lou DiPalma	RI General Assembly
Dorienne Farzan	McBean Foundation
Peter Friedrichs	City of Newport
Jim Garman	Historian
Nancy Hess	RI Statewide Planning
Keith Humphreys	AIPC Board
Peter Janaros	AIPC Board
George Johnson	AIPC
Len Katzman	Town of Portsmouth
Rick Lombardi	Town of Middletown
Elizabeth Lynn	van Buren Charitable Foundation
Jen McCann	URI Coastal Resources Center
Allison McNally	AIPC
Ashley Medeiros	Connect Greater Newport
Cornelia Mueller	Naval Station Newport
Claire Nelson	AIPC
John Shea	AIPC
Chris Sheehan	Bank Newport
Bob Silva	Town of Middletown
Linda Ujifusa	Town of Portsmouth
Matt Vargas	Commerce RI



**Aquidneck Island Planning Commission
West Side Master Plan Summit**

Monday, May 13, 2019
12:00 noon – 3:30 pm

BankNewport Administration & Operations Center
184 John Clarke Road, Middletown, RI 02842

Agenda

12:00 pm **Welcome, Introductions, Lunch & Informal Conversation**
Sara Churgin, Chair, AIPC

12:30 pm **Purpose of the Summit**
(John Shea, AIPC; Bob Andrews, AIPC Board of Directors)

12:40 pm **Overview of the West Side Master Plan**

History of the West Side
Jim Garman, Historian

Business and Economic Significance of the West Side
Ashley Medeiros, Connect Greater Newport

Virtual Tour of the West Side
Bob Andrews, AIPC Board of Directors

1:15 pm **Progress Report on Implementation since 2005**

Portsmouth (*Gary Crosby, Portsmouth Town Planner*)

Middletown (*tbd*)

Newport (*Peter Friedrichs, Newport Planner & Sarah Atkins, Sustainability Manager*)

Naval Station Newport (*Cornelia Mueller, NSN Planner*)

2:15 pm **Moving Forward with Updating and Implementing the WSMP**

Moderator – John Shea, AIPC

- Why now, after 15 years?
- What are the biggest opportunities and priorities (3-4) for regional action?
- What other partners should be engaged?
- What is the scope of work for regional action, and what resources could be available?
- What are the next steps for AIPC and moving forward?

3:30 pm **Adjourn**