



GREATER NEWPORT
Chamber of Commerce

GREATER NEWPORT
ECONOMIC
RECOVERY AND
RESILIENCE

A 10-YEAR STRATEGY TO SECURE A STRONGER ECONOMY

August 2021



Acknowledgements

The Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce would like to thank all of the stakeholders who actively contributed their time and insights to the development of this plan. We also want to thank the organizations that are investing in the Connect Greater Newport Initiative which provided the staff capacity to facilitate conversations, research and write this document. These include:

- ▷ Bank Newport
- ▷ City of Newport
- ▷ Discover Newport
- ▷ Rhode Island Foundation
- ▷ Rhode Island Realtors Foundation
- ▷ Town of Middletown
- ▷ Town of Portsmouth
- ▷ Town of Tiverton
- ▷ Town of Warren
- ▷ van Beuren Charitable Foundation
- ▷ WADK

These organizations are supporting regional collaboration and the capacity to act on pressing needs while planning for a stronger economic future.

For more information on this plan and the organizations involved please see ConnectGreaterNewport.com.

A 10-Year Strategy to Secure a Stronger Economy

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Executive Summary

The following strategy document has been developed by Connect Greater Newport staff in consultation with regional stakeholders. This plan is informed by a series of engagement sessions, research and analysis, and promising practice review. This plan identifies opportunities and challenges present in the Greater Newport, Rhode Island region and offers strategy and action recommendations. It is delivered to the community as a document that is intended to 'live' as the community and economy evolve. Annual updates and associated work plans are expected.

The plan recommends the following strategies to support a stronger economy:

- ▷ Enhance Small Business Support Infrastructure
- ▷ Invest in Talent and Labor Force Actions
- ▷ Improve the Economic Ecosystem
- ▷ Advance Projects of Regional Significance

Under each strategy is a set of actionable priorities to advance work in these areas. The resources and capacity of the Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce, Connect Greater Newport, and their partners can support some, but not all of these priorities. Therefore, additional public and private resources will be sought to augment capacity.

About Connect Greater Newport and the Greater Newport Regional Chamber

Connect Greater Newport is a division of the Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce. Formed in 2018, the division serves all economic development interests in the Greater Newport, Rhode Island region. The work of Connect Greater Newport is supported by regional investors that contribute annually to support staff capacity, planning activities, and convenings.

The Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce is one of the state's largest business advocacy organizations, whose mission is to connect, innovate, enhance and advocate for the businesses of Greater Newport. As a trusted and reliable institution for 100 years, the Greater Newport Chamber is a vibrant collective body of the Greater Newport business community, with nearly 1,100 members representing over 50,000 employees. The chamber works to create valuable strategic partnerships, promote strong economic growth, diversity, and prosperity to serve its members and the Greater Newport region.

The chamber's long-standing relationships and reputation throughout the region put us in an excellent position to lead the implementation of this economic development strategy. Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce has received numerous grants through its non-profit 501c3 organization, Newport County Development Council, including high profile and impactful projects like the rehabilitation of a historic building now called Innovate Newport, which is a co-working facility with dynamic programming; the Connect Greater Newport initiative, which developed the Regional Economic Development Division; and the most recent Restore Greater Newport initiative aimed at ensuring the recovery of the local economy and development of resiliency strategies.

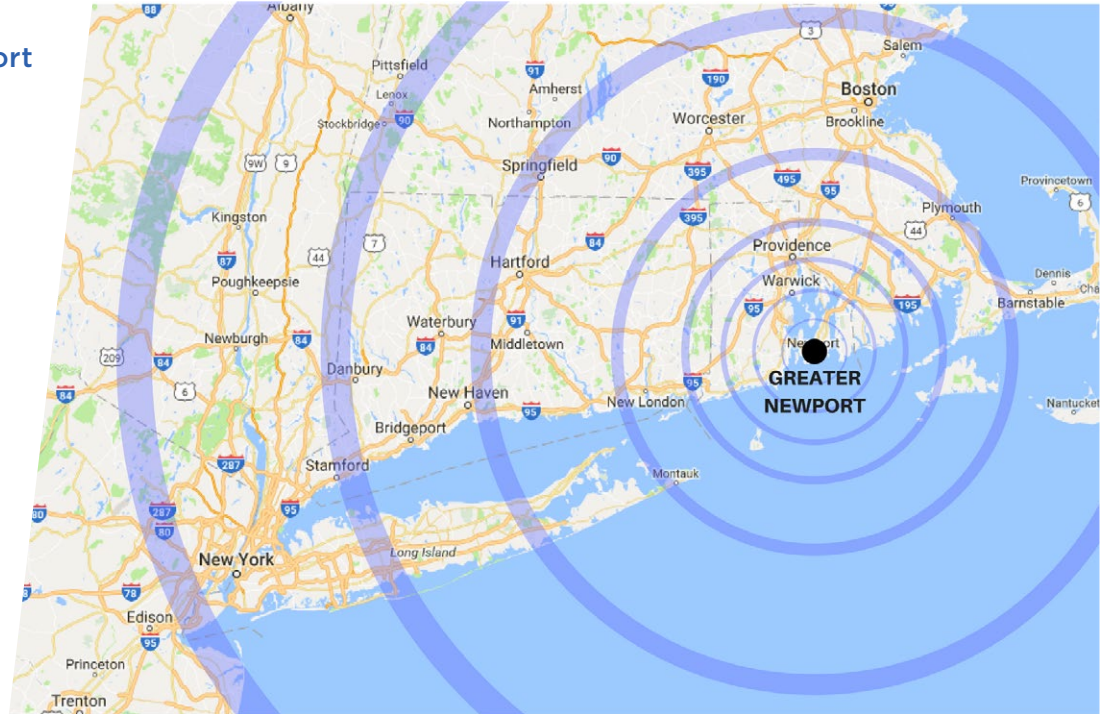
The chamber holds more than 50 events each year through its multiple programs, serving over 3,500 individuals. Additionally, the chamber has always hosted a series of workshops to help small businesses access the resources they need to nurture, grow, and sustain their businesses. These workshops have been delivered in conjunction with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Small Business Development Center, the Center for Women and Enterprise, Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, and more.

The Greater Newport Economy

The Greater Newport region consists of Newport and Bristol Counties, anchored by cities of the same name, and seven other coastal communities that are part of the New England Region of the United States. The region offers high quality of life and coastal living within 70 miles of Boston and 15 miles of Providence.

The nine towns in the Greater Newport region include:

- ▷ Bristol
- ▷ Barrington
- ▷ Jamestown
- ▷ Little Compton
- ▷ Middletown
- ▷ Newport
- ▷ Portsmouth
- ▷ Tiverton
- ▷ Warren



KEY STATS for Greater Newport

(Newport and Bristol Counties)

131,975
POPULATION
(Source: Census 2019)

67,000
RESIDENTS IN THE
LABOR FORCE
(Source: RI DLT 2020)

MEDIAN
AGE OF **45**
(Source: Census 2019)

49% OF RESIDENTS
WITH A BACHELOR'S
DEGREE OR HIGHER
(Source: Census 2019)

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME
OF **\$83,092** IN BRISTOL &
\$79,454 IN NEWPORT
(Source: Rhode Island Housing 2020)

MEDIAN HOUSING VALUE OF
\$358,100 IN BRISTOL &
\$387,900 IN NEWPORT
(Source: Rhode Island Housing 2020)

Newport County



Since 2000, the population in **Newport County** has gradually decreased by approximately **3,200 people, or -3.72 percent**. During that period, the **Providence Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)**, which includes **Newport County**, saw an **increase of 35,252 people, or 2.2 percent**. These growth rates pale in comparison to the US population's growth rate of 16 percent since 2000, highlighting the region's relatively stagnant net migration. Moreover, half of Greater Newport's population is 45 or older, with high levels of domestic out-migration. **Greater Newport saw a decline in domestic net migration of -2,198 and an increase in international net migration of +1,884 international net migrations between 2000 and 2018**. This indicates that there is a need for new talent in the region, as its population is both older than average and shrinking. This population stagnation will be a barrier for economic growth as potential employers will lack a ready workforce.

NEWPORT COUNTY IS ABOUT **50%** OF WORKING-AGE ADULTS HOLD BACHELOR'S DEGREES COMPARED TO ONLY **35%** OF THE US

Greater Newport has a higher percentage of white, non-Hispanic residents than the Providence MSA. Greater Newport and the MSA's largest non-white group is Hispanic or Latino, making up 6 and 13 percent of its population, respectively, and these percentages are expected to increase as the region attracts a larger population of Hispanic/Latino immigrants.

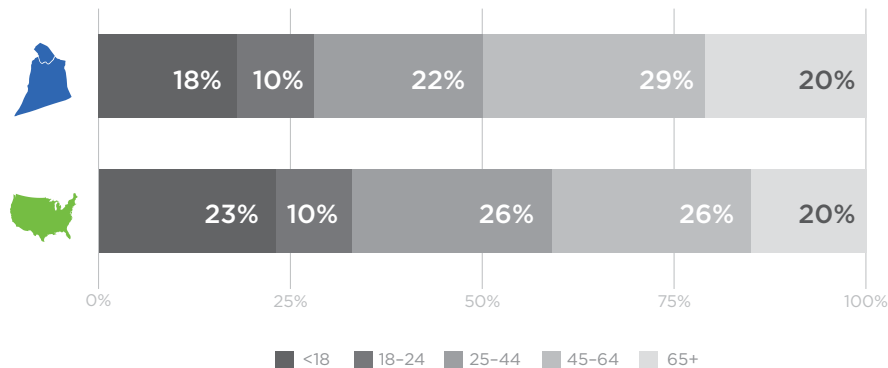
Similar to the decline in Greater Newport's population, the median household income in Newport County has

decreased by one percent since 2013. In 2018 dollars, the county's median household income is \$77,300. In 2018 dollars, the county's median household income is \$77,300. As of 2018, poverty rates in the Newport region were 8.3 percent, less than both the Providence MSA's rate of 13.2 percent and the US average. However, Greater Newport experienced a slight increase in poverty rates since 2013, while Providence and the US experienced a decline in poverty during that same time period. **One possible explanation for Newport County's increased poverty is relatively low wages coupled with high median monthly housing costs**. Wages are 13 percent lower in Newport County compared to Rhode Island, while housing costs are 18 percent higher. **Furthermore, the average home value in 2018 was \$375,000, and since the pandemic began in March 2020 it has increased by more than 20% (as of mid-2021)**. This is higher than in the Providence MSA and US, with averages of \$266,700 and \$204,900, respectively. As of Q3 2020 in Rhode Island, there has been a 9.2 percent increase in sales of single-family homes.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population by Age, 2018

Half of the population in the region is 45 or older, compared to 41% nationally.



Source: Census Estimates of the Components of Resident Population Change, 2010-2018

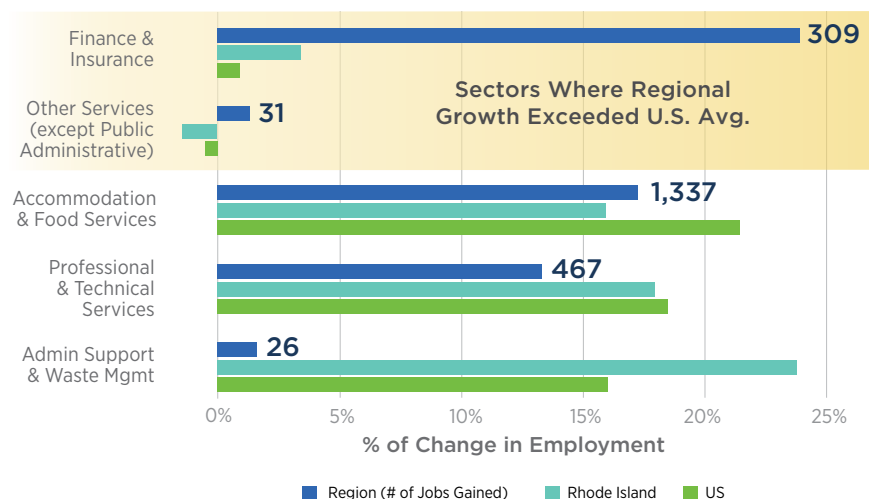
The Region's Workforce

Between 2016 and 2018, Greater Newport added 1,386 jobs and median wages increased from \$42,207 to \$46,254, exceeding Rhode Island by approximately \$6,000. Nearly 11 percent of the jobs in

Rhode Island are located in Greater Newport, while two-thirds are based in Providence County. Industries in Greater Newport that saw the greatest increase in jobs between 2017 and 2018 were in the accommodation and food services industry. Unfortunately, declining sectors during this period saw greater decreases in jobs compared to the sectors' respective US averages. Although two of the five sectors with increases in jobs outpaced the US averages, the decline of others risks canceling any positive effects. Furthermore, **Greater Newport has a low concentration of jobs in the management industry but particularly high concentrations in Accommodation and Food as well as in Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation industries** - industries that historically have generally lower-paying and less stable jobs.

THE POSITIVE - 2/5 GROWTH SECTORS EXCEEDED U.S. AVERAGE

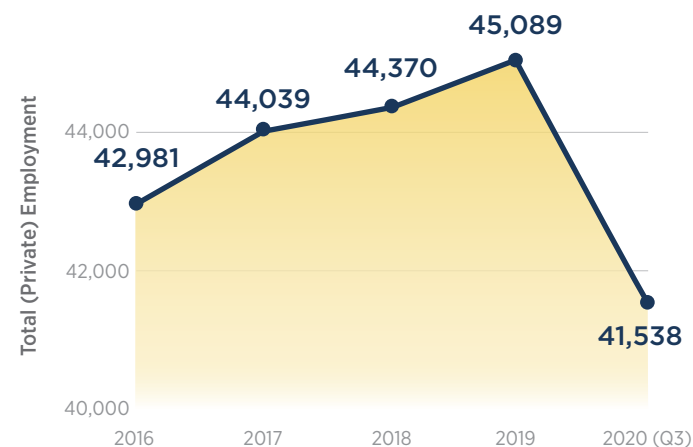
Growing Industries in the Region 2008-2018



Source: US-Quarterly Workforce Indicators, Private Employment
RI and Region - Rhode Island Department of Labor & Training

REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

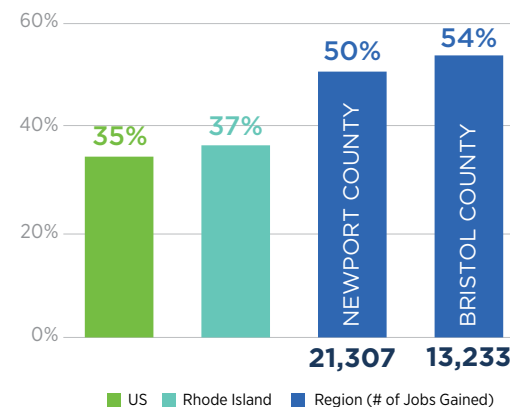
Total (Private) Employment in the Region, 2016-2020



Source: Rhode Island Department of Labor & Training via QCEW, Private Employment only

GROWING WAGES DUE IN PART TO A WELL-EDUCATED WORKFORCE

Percent of Working Age Population (25-64 Years) with Bachelor's or Higher



Source: US Census, ACS 5-Year Estimates

WORKFORCE INFLOW MAP

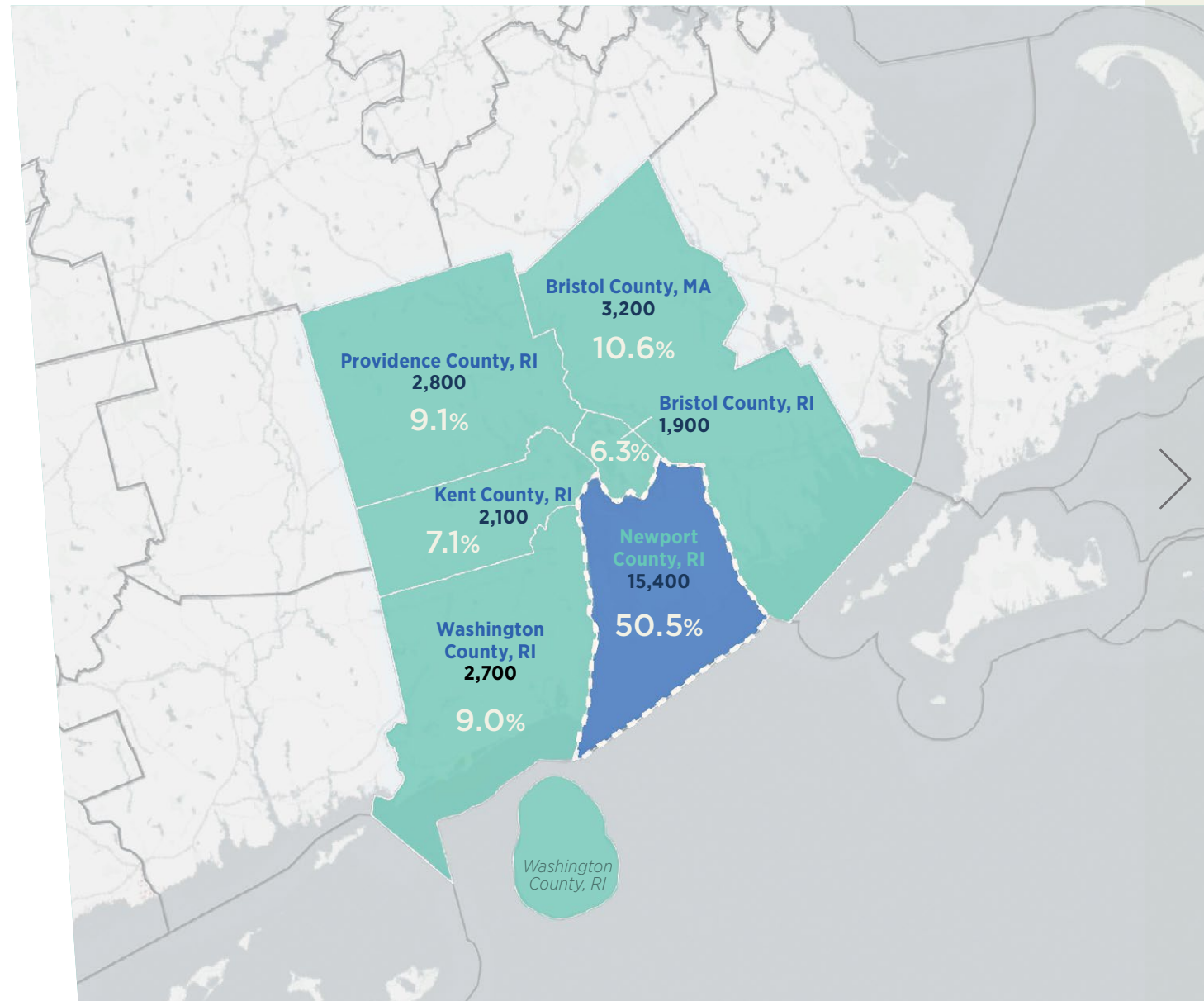
5,000 people from the surrounding region commute to Newport County for work

There are 15,000 people who live outside of Newport County but commute there for work, which is known as workforce inflow.

Meanwhile, 17,757 people live in the county but commute outside of it – the workforce outflow. 15,300 residents live and work in the county, and this number has gradually decreased by 17.4 percent since 2002.

This indicates that, pre-COVID, more commuters exited Newport County during a given workday than entered it. Since 2011, inflow and outflow have increased by 35 percent and 15 percent, respectively.

While cause and effect have not been formally identified, the rise in housing costs is assumed to be the largest contributing factor.



Source: US Census Bureau, LODES Program, 2017 data

Impacts of the Pandemic

While the full story has not yet unfolded, the COVID-19 pandemic is having severe impacts on Greater Newport. In April 2020, unemployment rates soared to 17.9 percent, three percentage points higher than the US average unemployment rate, indicating Greater Newport's hardships during the pandemic's early months. This can be attributed to Greater Newport and Rhode Island's relatively high proportion of workers in industries vulnerable to the pandemic.

Economically vulnerable workers, who account for half of the state's workforce, are defined as those who work part-time jobs as their primary form of employment, work full-time jobs earning less than \$40,000 a year, or are self-employed. Out of all jobs in the Accommodation and Food Services industry, 78.6 percent are economically vulnerable in the Greater Newport region.. Because Greater Newport has a higher percentage of jobs in this industry than average, the region's workforce was particularly susceptible to pandemic-induced unemployment. Between October 2019 and October 2020, this industry lost over 10,000 jobs in Rhode Island, the most of any industry in the state. At the time of this strategy's publication, those industries are continuing to struggle and the region and state continue to see higher unemployment rates and lower labor force participation than we did prior to the start of the pandemic.

CONSUMER SPENDING

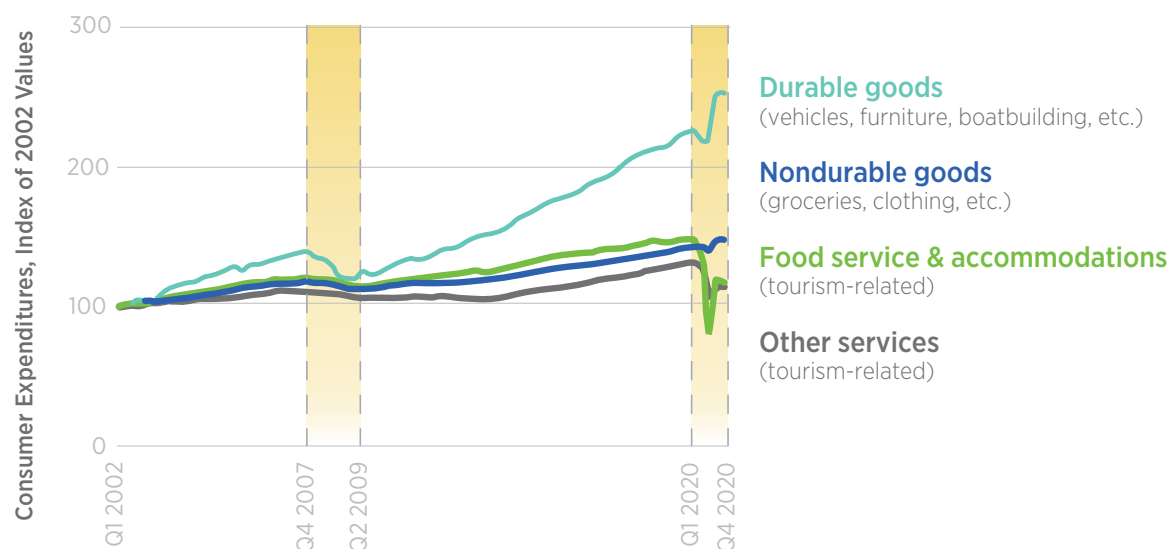
The pandemic has impacted consumer spending. This could be bad news for tourism, but good news for the Blue Economy, with spending on services negatively impacted, and durable goods positively impacted

The pandemic has shifted consumer spending **away from services and to consumer goods**.

Whereas the Great Recession saw drops across all consumer spending categories, impacts on consumer spending have diverged.

Spending on food services and accommodation fell by 39% in the early pandemic, and by late 2020, spending was down 20% compared to pre-pandemic levels.

By late 2020, **spending on durable goods reached an all-time high**, with spending on recreational goods and vehicles rising 21% from Q4 2019 to Q4 2020.



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table 2.3.6. Real Personal Consumption Expenditures by Major Type.

Many workers in Rhode Island and Greater Newport had to risk contracting COVID-19 due to an inability to work from home. It is estimated that only 28 percent of workers in the state could work remotely. Industries with the highest rates of fully remote workers include software developers and computer programmers. Unfortunately, these occupations only make up 4.5 percent of the Rhode Island workforce. Furthermore, White workers are 1.5 times as likely as Black workers to work remotely, and non-Hispanic workers are twice as likely as Hispanic highlighting inequities in which workers are more likely to be at risk of COVID-19 exposure. It is also important to note the racial and ethnic inequities in the state's uninsured population. While there are 54,000 uninsured Rhode Islanders, African Americans are twice as likely to be uninsured as whites; the Hispanic and Latino population is more than three times as likely to be uninsured as their white, non-Hispanic counterparts.

During the beginning of the pandemic, Rhode Island was the only state to mandate all childcare providers close. As a result, over 800 licensed child care providers temporarily shut down and 2,500 child care workers stopped working, leading to 46,700 children ages five and younger who needed child care. Of them, 13,000 came from low-income families. As of February 2021, there were still an estimated

BUSINESS RECOVERY FUNDING (2020)

	RESTORE RI		
	Total Funding	Loans	Median Value
Rhode Island	\$52M	4,353	\$9,000
Greater Newport Region	\$8.8M (16%)	682 (15.7%)	\$9,000

	PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM		
	Total Funding	Loans	Median Value
Rhode Island	\$1.9B	17,875	\$28,040
Greater Newport Region	\$229M (12% of RI)	2,732 (15.3% of RI)	\$26,595
United States	\$522B	5.2M	\$22,880

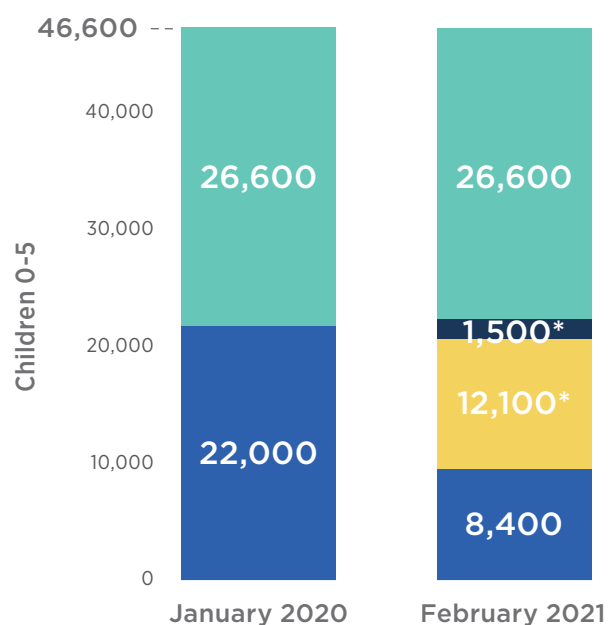
Source: Restore RI data and SBA PPP data

13,600 fewer child care “seats” than before the pandemic. Because of this, some parents will leave the workforce, with estimates predicting as many as 12 percent. Childcare is essential to the economy and the pandemic has highlighted this fact for parents and businesses. Public school closures had adverse effects, as well. The 67,200 students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch had to rely on other sources of food during the pandemic’s early months.

Fortunately, many businesses were able to receive financial assistance from federal and state relief programs, including the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program (EIDL). 2,727 entities in Greater Newport received \$228.5 million in PPP funding, averaging \$5,000 per employee. This surpassed the state average of \$4,602 per employee. Construction sectors in the State received the most PPP dollars per private employee. Still, it is estimated that between 25-33 percent of Rhode Island businesses did not receive any assistance from PPP and EIDL.

CHILD CARE NEED & CAPACITY, RHODE ISLAND

Covid-19 is causing further dips in licensed child care capacity.



Unlicensed, Family, Friend, & Neighbor Care

At a minimum. We expect this number has increased and will continue to increase as licensed providers decrease capacity.

Providers Currently Closed

Not available, forced to close permanently due to lack of funding or temporarily while they cannot operate under current conditions, whether due to revenue restrictions or COVID-19 exposures. We can expect this number to increase as the industry continues to suffer from increased costs and decreased enrollment.

Decreased Capacity - COVID-Related Challenges

May be temporarily lost as providers decrease capacity for health and safety concerns, and parents keep children home for health concerns or because of a change in employment/need for care.

Uninterrupted Licensed Provider Capacity

*Estimates based on data from Procare Solutions, which only includes child care centers using Procare’s software. May not necessarily be a statistical representation of the entire state.

Greater Newport Economic Sectors



TOURISM

Greater Newport has always heavily relied on tourism to sustain its economy. Despite making up only 11 percent of statewide employment, Greater Newport accounts for 15 percent of total tourism employment in Rhode Island. This is especially significant since tourism is also a major generator of economic activity for Rhode Island. In 2018, Rhode Island saw 25.4 million visitors that accounted for \$6.8 billion in spending and \$811 million in state and local taxes. In addition, tourism supports 27,277 jobs in the Accommodation and Food Services industry as well as 43,000 jobs supported by direct tourism spending. This amounts to nine percent of all jobs in the state. Specifically in Greater Newport, 13 percent of jobs are supported by direct tourism, totaling 7,100 workers. Unfortunately, the tourism sector was hit especially hard during the pandemic, and monthly occupancy rates for hotels in September 2020 were 30 percent below September 2019 rates.



DEFENSE SECTOR

The economies of Rhode Island and Greater Newport rely on the defense sector to provide thousands of well-paying jobs. The Navy has a long history in the Greater Newport region and has been a significant contributor to the economy for many years. Key Newport County defense sector entities include the Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC) Division Newport, which has an annual budget of \$1.3 billion and a workforce of 3500+ civilian government workers, and the Naval Station Newport, whose 30+ training schools and programs – including the Naval War College, Surface Warfare Officers School, and Officer Candidate School – educate over 17,000 transient students per year. The defense sector is also a highly educated and qualified workforce: 77 percent of civilians working for NUWC are classified in STEM occupations, and 33 percent have advanced degrees. A significant number of defense companies reside in Newport County, including Raytheon Technologies, SeaCorp, Purvis Systems, and many more. In 2016, the defense sector produced \$4.3 billion in total annual output for Rhode Island, accounting for 7.6 percent of the state's GDP. It supported 29,196 jobs – 6.2 percent of total employment in Rhode Island. It is also a growing industry. Between 2010 and 2016, employment increased by 18 percent. This is especially important because the defense sector is the highest-paying sector in the state, with an average wage 59 percent higher than in any other non-farm industries. NUWC Division Newport has also contributed to the development of a strong defense contractor sector. Jobs in this section are highly skilled and highly paid.

The defense sector has a strong multiplier, meaning jobs in the industry produce external benefits in other areas of the economy. For instance, every 100 jobs in the sector help support 119 jobs in other sectors. Therefore, it is essential for Greater Newport to focus on increasing jobs in the defense sector, because it will create jobs in the supply chain.

Unlike other Newport County sectors, the defense sector never shut down during the pandemic and actually saw significant growth.

In 2020, the Greater Newport Region had 439 blue economy establishments. The largest number of these establishments are concentrated in the IT-Software, Cyber-Physical Systems and Defense, Shipbuilding, and Maritime subindustries.



BLUE ECONOMY

According to URI, the blue economy is defined as “economic sectors with a direct or indirect link to RI’s coasts and ocean, defense, marine trades, tourism and recreation, fisheries, aquaculture, ports and shipping, and offshore renewable energy.”

Considering Rhode Island has 400 miles of coastline, the blue economy is a vital component of the state and Greater Newport’s economy.

URI estimates that the blue economy is responsible for nearly nine percent of the state’s GDP, totaling \$5.2 billion. Furthermore, it accounts for 36,500 jobs, more than neighboring Massachusetts and Connecticut. When tourism is included, the blue economy produces \$2.8 billion in wages. Twenty-four percent of jobs in Greater Newport, or 13,000, are in the blue economy compared to 14 percent in Rhode Island.

In 2020, the Greater Newport Region had 439 blue economy establishments. The largest number of these establishments are concentrated in IT-Software, Cyber-Physical Systems and Defense, Shipbuilding, and Maritime sub industries. Median Annual Pay across Blue Economy jobs remains high. In 2020, the median pay across all industries in Rhode Island was \$40,000. In 2014, four of the five blue economy sub industries paid above that rate, and by 2020, all sub industries had median annual pay above the statewide median.

COMMUNITY COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

Each of the Greater Newport Region’s communities has an adopted comprehensive plan that sets out their community vision, identifies needs, and articulates activities that can improve their community. The plans were consulted in forming this economic development strategy and are expected to be influenced by the work described in this document.

The plans can be found here:

▷ [Newport](#)

▷ [Middletown](#)

▷ [Tiverton](#)

▷ [Warren](#)

▷ [Jamestown](#)

▷ [Portsmouth](#)

▷ [Bristol](#)

▷ [Little Compton](#)

▷ [Barrington](#)

Greater Newport Benchmarking

To determine Greater Newport's advantages and disadvantages, it is necessary to compare it to other metropolitan areas with similar characteristics. For Greater Newport, these include locations that are popular tourist destinations, have a robust military presence, are located on the East Coast, and are relatively close to a major city.

Out of the nine similar benchmark regions, Greater Newport is the most educated and has the second-highest median household income. However, its population decline of -4.3 percent since 2000 and modest increase in employment of 14.4 percent lag behind most benchmark regions.

Ultimately, Cape May, NJ, appears to be the most similar benchmark region. Cape May has an equivalent median household income but performs worse in most other categories, including median household income and educational attainment. Furthermore, the population decline in Cape May resembles Greater Newport and is due to homes being converted to secondary residences, as well as an aging population.

REGIONAL BENCHMARKING

Demographic Overview

County	Population	% Non-White	% Foreign-Born	Median Age	% Bachelor's Degree or Higher (25+)	Median Household Income	% of People Living in Poverty	Median Housing Value
Bristol/Newport, RI	131,565	12.1%	9.3%/7.2%	44/45	49%/48%	\$83,092/ \$79,454	7.5%/8.7%	\$358,100/ \$387,900
Cape May, NJ	93,086	14.7%	4.7%	50	33%	\$67,074	9.8%	\$300,500
Charleston, SC	401,165	35.5%	5.4%	38	44%	\$64,022	13.7%	\$315,600
Escambia (Pensacola), FL	313,491	35.7%	5.1%	37	27%	\$50,915	14.0%	\$146,200
Horry (Myrtle Beach), SC	332,172	22.7%	6.2%	46	24%	\$50,704	15.0%	\$181,500
Rockingham (Portsmouth), NH	306,359	7.5%	4.9%	45	41%	\$93,756	4.6%	\$326,300
Sarasota, FL	419,496	17.0%	12.4%	56	35%	\$62,236	9.0%	\$251,600
York, ME	204,316	5.8%	3.2%	45	33%	\$67,830	7.4%	\$252,300
Essex (Gloucester), MA	789,034	31.4%	19%	41	41%	\$83,810	8.7%	\$409,900
Chatham (Savannah), GA	289,430	52.4%	6.5%	36	34%	\$57,611	14.0%	\$194,500

Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2015-2019

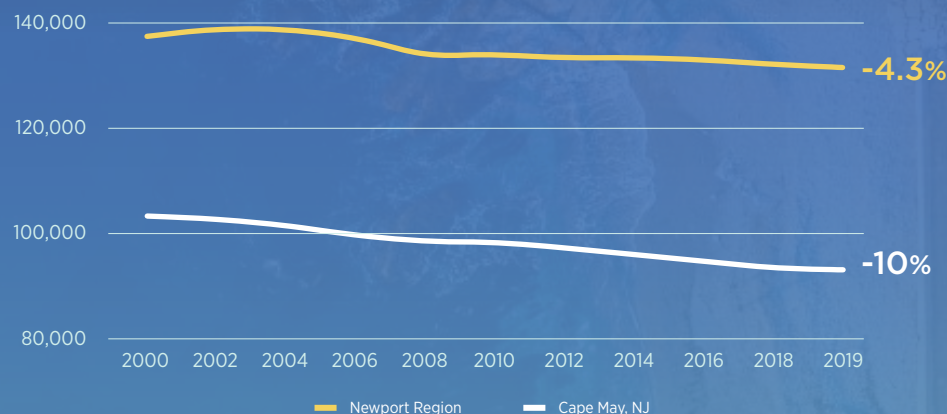
Other comparable regions in New England include York, ME, and Portsmouth, NH. The former has experienced population decline, and both have also served as summer tourist attractions for over 100 years. Portsmouth has enjoyed a 24.4 percent increase in employment since 2001, which could be attributed to the Naval Shipyard's success. The shipyard has an economic impact of \$1.159 billion and is slightly less than the defense sector's impact in Rhode Island. This indicates that if Greater Newport can further attract investment in the defense sector, it could continue to see gains in employment similar to Portsmouth.

In the American South, benchmark regions have experienced higher increases in population and employment than New England and the mid-Atlantic. For example, Charleston, SC's population and employment have increased by 32.4 percent and 51.4 percent, respectively. Air traffic in the region has increased by 69 percent, and the Port of Charleston ranks among the top ten busiest in the country. Myrtle Beach has experienced even more significant growth, ranking as the second-fastest-growing metropolitan area in the country since 2000 with a 78.8 percent increase. It also enjoyed a 50 percent increase in employment. Both of these regions are vastly outpacing Greater Newport's performance in both jobs and population growth.

COMPARING CHANGE IN POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT

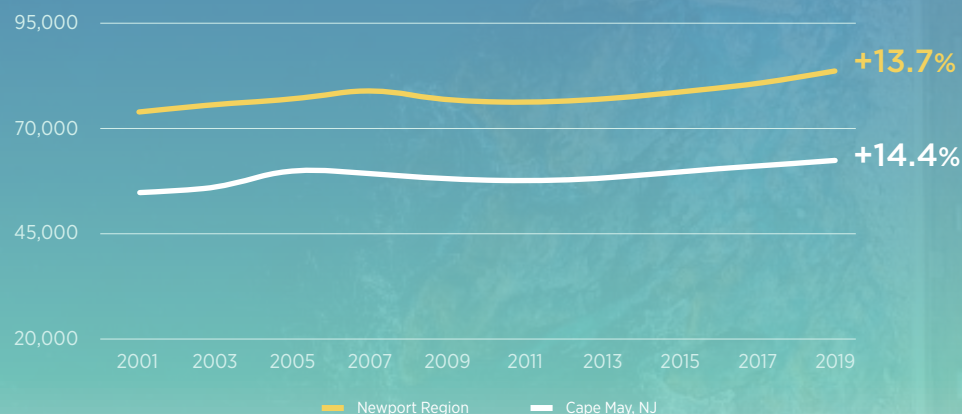
Greater Newport compared to Cape May, NJ

POPULATION, 2000-2019



Population decline in Cape May caused by homes being converted to secondary residences, as well as an aging population

EMPLOYMENT, 2001-2019



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Total Full-Time and Part-Time Employment & Population

The Economic Development Assets

Greater Newport has several organizations that serve as conveners, catalysts, and advocates for various industry sectors operating in the region. These groups demonstrate a significant level of collaboration and leadership and serve the region well. They include:

The Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce

is one of Rhode Island's largest business advocacy organizations, formed to enhance the business, civic and economic vitality of the city of Newport and the surrounding towns of Middletown, Portsmouth, Bristol, Warren, Little Compton, Barrington, Tiverton, Jamestown, and beyond.



The chamber is an independent, non-profit organization with over 1,100 member companies employing more than 50,000 workers throughout the Greater Newport region and Rhode Island. Its purpose is to leverage the region's core assets to find solutions in the areas that matter most to the business community: quality jobs, quality growth, and quality of life. The Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce has a wide variety of programs, publications, events, and business resources that directly improve members' bottom line.

The chamber hosts a regional economic division known as Connect Greater Newport that serves businesses and organizations throughout the region regardless of their membership in the chamber. In the past year, the chamber and staff of Connect Greater Newport have managed a series of efforts designed to mitigate the economic impacts of the pandemic. One initiative that will continue is the [Shop Greater Newport](#) initiative, intended to promote local businesses to the region and beyond.

The Southeastern New England Defense Industry Alliance (SENEDIA),

with headquarters in Middletown, RI, was formed in 2002 to identify, champion, and coordinate issues that contribute to US national security and benefit SENEDIA members, local communities, the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security, and other federal government agencies.



SENEDIA's vision is to be a catalyst for thought leadership and technical innovation in undersea technology, cybersecurity, and other critical defense technologies, with a mission to enable the development of innovative technology, foster thought leadership, and facilitate required workforce development. SENEDIA has strong workforce development and economic development in support of the RI Defense sector. SENEDIA has established a strong STEM and veteran based internship program. To date, it has facilitated 200+ internships resulting in over 90 percent of participants being placed into career positions in the defense sector.

SENEDIA has also created the Next Gen Partnership for Submarine Shipbuilding Supply Chain Workforce Development ([Next Gen Partnership](#)) project to facilitate working across state lines to tackle the regional need for skilled trade and industrial skilled workers in support of the Submarine Shipbuilding Supply Chain. SENEDIA collaborates with the regional Manufacturing Extension Partnerships, Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, and other key state stakeholders to ensure a robust training pipeline. In support of this effort, SENEDIA was awarded a Department of Defense contract for \$18.2M in August 2020.

Through July 2021, SENEDIA has approved over 100 courses and trained more than 800 individuals in maritime trades such as pipefitting, welding, shipfitting, machining, sheet metal, and electrical. SENEDIA is expanding this training across all the New England states.

“The Next Gen Partnership addresses the enormous challenge to find and hire a combined 14,000 new skilled tradespeople over the next five years in support of Department of Defense shipbuilding requirements. SENEDIA has demonstrated the ability to convene organizations across state lines to develop our essential industrial workforce,” said Mr. Jesse Salazar, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Policy.

SENEDIA hosts a nationally recognized annual Defense Innovation Days event in Newport, RI focused on thought leadership, in partnership with the Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division Newport’s Advanced Naval Technology Exercise.

The Undersea Technology Innovation



UNDERSEA TECHNOLOGY
INNOVATION CONSORTIUM **UTIC**

Consortium (UTIC), headquartered in Middletown, RI, is a 501(c)3 research organization focused on building a national community of resources and relationships to accelerate undersea and maritime technology innovation. In 2018, UTIC was awarded a 10-year Other Transaction Agreement with the Department of the Navy. This is an “enterprise partnership” between the federal government and a consortium of technology developers/providers to prototype technology solutions in support of the Department of the Navy. There are over 300 consortium members. Through July 2021, over 100 industry prototype projects have been funded by the Department of the Navy with a value of over \$300M.

IYRS School of Technology & Trades



is a non-profit, post-secondary experiential learning institution in Newport, Rhode Island, and is the premier marine trades and modern manufacturing school in the United States.

Founded on the Newport harbor front in 1993 as the International Yacht Restoration School, it intended to teach students the fine craftsmanship and restoration skills necessary to preserve maritime heritage through the restoration of historically significant wooden sailing yachts. Today, IYRS offers education & training programs for people with a passion for thinking and working through their hands.

Our students are aspiring craftspeople, designers, makers, and technicians who come to IYRS to learn advanced craftsmanship and technical skills to create successful careers and more prosperous lives. IYRS has grown into a world-class learning institution offering four full-time, accredited experiential programs:

- ▶ Boatbuilding & Restoration
- ▶ Composites Technology
- ▶ Digital Modeling & Fabrication
- ▶ Marine Systems

The IYRS student body is diverse, composed of women and men, high school and college graduates, veterans, career changers, and up-skilled. Our students come from across the United States and the world and range in age from 18-78. The unique viewpoints of IYRS students and faculty contribute to a rich learning culture and educational experience.

IYRS students go on to careers across a wide range of industries, including yacht building, historic restoration, fine furniture making, wind energy, aerospace, consumer goods prototyping, and more.



Founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1934, **Salve University** is a private university fully accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education. The university's 80-acre campus features 21 buildings of historic significance that border Newport's famed Cliff Walk, just minutes away from the city's iconic beaches and historic downtown. More than 2,700 undergraduate and graduate students from across the U.S. and around the world pursue diverse academic opportunities across 46 undergraduate majors and 14 master's degree programs, while also cultivating their talents through numerous student organizations, service initiatives and athletic teams.

Salve University's students embrace impactful partnerships with a wide range of Aquidneck Island businesses and nonprofits through research opportunities, collaborative mentorships, hands-on learning, fieldwork, internship experiences and leadership development programs. Some examples include:

- ▶ Econometrics' students researched the impact of Covid-19 on Rhode Island's hospitality and tourism industries, a study commissioned by the Rhode Island Hospitality Association.
- ▶ Students previously completed impact studies for Newport's Cliff Walk Commission, the Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC), Salve University, The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Fall River, Massachusetts, and for five U.S. Naval Undersea Warfare and Surface Warfare Centers located throughout the country.
- ▶ The Center for Business Outreach partners students with business owners, civic and nonprofit organizations, entrepreneurs and the public sector to tackle real-world workflows.
- ▶ Salve students in the departments of history and cultural and historic preservation conduct archeological investigations

throughout the region, most recently at historic Newport Spring, the site upon which the city was founded.

- ▶ Students in environmental studies and science routinely partner with agencies throughout the country to explore practical approaches to protecting and restoring sensitive biological communities.

Roger Williams University (RWU)

is a private university in Bristol, Rhode Island. Founded in 1956, it was named for theologian and Rhode Island co-founder Roger Williams. The school enrolls over 5,000 students and employs over 480 academic staff. Roger Williams University has several unique degree programs:

**Roger Williams
University**

- ▶ **Marine Biology program:** offers a B.S. in Marine Biology, one of about fifteen in the country.
- ▶ **Architecture program:** One of a few M. Arch. (Masters of Architecture) in a traditional liberal arts environment.
- ▶ **Historic Preservation program:** the B.S. in Historic Preservation is one of seven offered in the country, and the M.S. in Historic Preservation is one of about 35 offered in the country.
- ▶ **Construction Management program:** offers a B.S. in Construction Management. RWU's Construction Management program is accredited by the American Council for Construction Education (ACCE) and is a member of ASC's Northeast Region .
- ▶ **Law program:** Only Juris Doctor available in Rhode Island; offers a Master of Studies in Law (MSL)

Just over 60% of students live on RWU's campus, while the rest live throughout the region.

Innovate Newport is a recently transformed historic school building in the heart of Newport, Rhode Island.

It now serves as a hub for the region's growing innovation economy. With 33,000-square feet of Class A coworking, private office, and meeting space, Innovate Newport is more than just a building. It is a regional catalyst designed to spark innovation and build community.



Innovate Newport offers dynamic workspaces that fuel productivity, programming that ignites collaboration, and networking aimed at helping businesses grow. Innovate Newport serves entrepreneurs and small businesses whether they are just starting out, or are part of an established organization looking for private office space, and is designed to meet the region's needs.

401 Tech Bridge, a non-profit economic development organization, serves as a super-connector for companies that are developing leading-edge advanced materials, technologies, and products, enabling business growth, and speeding the process of finding commercial and dual-use applications for technologies.



401 Tech Bridge facilitates collaboration across industry, government, and academia and leverages the resources and expertise of the region's vibrant advanced materials and technology ecosystem, which spans industries and activities ranging from infrastructure development and naval research to oceanographic and offshore wind enterprises. It creates bridges between innovators, major corporations, governmental and defense organizations with funded projects, and research divisions at the University of Rhode Island and other universities and institutions across the region that offer facilities for research,

prototyping, testing, and validation of concepts alongside faculty researchers and students. 401 Tech Bridge acts as a one-stop resource to help companies accelerate the journey from concept to prototype to commercialization while making the transfer of technology faster, easier, and more collaborative.

401 Tech Bridge was the first entity to partner with the **NavalX Tech Bridge Initiative**, and this collaboration is now a national model. 401 Tech Bridge is a hub for **NavalX North East Tech Bridge** activities, building partnerships to innovate in the Navy's focus areas: maritime composites and textiles, undersea vehicles, sensors, and technologies. In addition, it serves as a model for 401 Tech Bridge's relationships with other defense agencies, federal labs, and large companies innovating in the areas of national defense, infrastructure, and healthcare.

Founded in 1964, the **Rhode Island Marine Trades Association (RIMTA)**



represents all aspects of the recreational boating industry in its home state. The organization works to position Rhode Island as a worldwide leader in the marine industry and grow the Rhode Island marine industry through advocacy, education, and promotion

To carry out its mission, RIMTA advocates for legislation that supports the industry, partners with businesses and educators to cultivate a skilled workforce, links members to information that gives them an edge in the marketplace, promotes the statewide industry, and creates networking opportunities so members can share ideas and even do business. Membership includes boat builders, manufacturers, marinas, boatyards, service providers, retail and wholesale outfits, educational institutions, and other organizations.

The Association is working on several initiatives that can create economic opportunity and also preserve the environment.

These include:

- ▶ R.I. Fiberglass Vessel Recycling (RIFVR) Pilot Program - which seeks to pilot a recycling program for the tens of thousands of recreational boats that are retired each year.
- ▶ Shrink Wrap Program - collecting and recycling this material to keep it out of landfills.
- ▶ Clean Marina Program - differentiating marinas and their environmental impacts.

Discover Newport is a non-profit destination management organization dedicated to the promotion of the City of Newport and eight surrounding townships in Newport and Bristol counties, Rhode Island, including Barrington, Bristol, Jamestown, Little Compton, Middletown, Newport, Portsmouth, Tiverton, and Warren, as a premier destination for business and leisure travel. Discover Newport aspires to provide an innovative, accessible, and authentic experience that will enrich the lives of visitors to and residents of these nine coastal communities.



University of Rhode Island is the State's public land-grant research University. The region continues to collaborate and benefit from the University's strength in the Blue Economy and engineering fields.



The Community College of Rhode Island is a critical partner in the offering of degrees and certifications for a variety of careers in the Greater Newport region. Their Newport campus is an important asset for the region.



The Economic Development Opportunities & Challenges

The Greater Newport region is a component of the larger New England region and, as a result, shares many opportunities and challenges. In summary, the region exhibits:

Economic Opportunities

- ▷ High educational attainment
- ▷ Proximity of higher education institutions
- ▷ Good student-teacher ratio in public schools
- ▷ High health indicators
- ▷ Strong defense cluster
- ▷ Substantial recreational assets and opportunities
- ▷ Maritime assets and industries
- ▷ Proximity to major markets and job centers
- ▷ Blue Economy and off-shore wind supply chain
- ▷ Increasing opportunities related to the University of Rhode Island

Economic Challenges

- ▷ Population loss
- ▷ Aging population
- ▷ Low paying industries are growing
- ▷ High paying industries are not growing
- ▷ Overall, industries are under-performing the US
- ▷ Limited housing stock compared to demand
- ▷ Housing is getting less affordable
- ▷ Limited development-ready sites (housing, industrial)
- ▷ Broadband limitations (cost, reliability, access)
- ▷ Transportation infrastructure limitations

This 10-year strategy is being written as the region and country emerge from a global pandemic that affected every person and business. While the final chapters of the economic impacts of the pandemic and resulting workforce and supply chain disruptions are unknown, this plan considers areas that have exposed further economic success and stressors.

Economic Success

- ▷ Growing confidence levels in a return of the tourism industry
- ▷ Federal and state programs mitigated severe impacts
- ▷ Significant adaptation of business models allowed for companies to remain in operation
- ▷ A 'what can we do to help' attitude by elected officials and town administrators allowed for rule exceptions to support a business-friendly environment
- ▷ Growth of the outdoor recreation industry, including boating and the supporting industry

Economic Stressors

- ▷ Several businesses closed or have been weakened as a result of the loss of revenue, customers, and labor
- ▷ Significant loss of labor force due to a combination of lost economic ecosystem supports (e.g., childcare), accelerated retirements in an aging population, and more still to be understood
- ▷ Difficulty in attracting workers across sectors but especially in tourism and hospitality
- ▷ Housing costs are seeing significant increases – further challenging the region's middle-class workforce
- ▷ Childcare limitations overall, and especially for nontraditional business hours
- ▷ Significant federal expenditures to mitigate the pandemic's impacts will most likely require budget reductions in future years, and the Defense budget will be impacted
- ▷ The region's utility infrastructure has suffered outages

Strategies & Actions

The concept that a region is the scale at which economic development should operate is a more recent perspective and recognizes that the assets needed to support vibrant businesses are significant. It recognizes that the mantra of creating live, work, play communities can not be done at a municipal scale and requires the focus and resources of connected communities. As the preceding data and summary indicate, there is room for improvement in the Greater Newport region, and there are opportunities that Greater Newport is not fully leveraging.

The Greater Newport region enjoys the opportunities that come with being a coastal community – as well as the threats including climate change, real estate prices and labor force. Today, economic development is more often driven by quality of life considerations than by incentives and taxes. A place like Greater Newport can ‘win’ the location decision for new residents and businesses. The natural beauty and related amenities (trails, water recreation, sunshine) that the region provides drive economic competitiveness. These are the qualities that other regions are investing in to make ‘manufactured assets’. What stands in the way for Greater Newport is a lack of capacity, a lack of resources, and a decentralized view of the labor force, housing, and amenities.

The following are strategies and actions to advance economic opportunities and reduce challenges. They are grouped into four categories:

**Small Business
Support
Infrastructure**

**Talent &
Labor Force**

**The Economic
Ecosystem**

**Projects of
Regional
Significance**

The following information provides an overview of the strategy and expected actions.

Small Business Support Infrastructure

Small businesses are the economic lifeblood of the Greater Newport region. Before 2020, we saw very little growth in the number of small businesses, which speaks to overall stability, but also underscores possible stagnation. Over the past year and a half, these businesses have faced unprecedented disruption, as the pandemic and health responses required a continually evolving set of operating rules and safety requirements.

	Newport County	Bristol County	Greater Newport Region
Number of Small Businesses			
2019	2,756	1,266	4,022
2015	2,748	1,237	3,985
2012	2,701	1,228	3,929

This most recent economic period, as well as analysis of prior cycles and activities, informs our recommended strategies and actions.

Strategy:

Increase Digital Competency

Action:

As technology, including the adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies (such as artificial intelligence, robotics, automation, etc.), advances the connectivity of businesses to their customers, it is critical that the region's businesses evolve. The pandemic forced many to pivot, and ongoing digital competency support is needed.

- ▷ Build or partner with shared platforms to improve access to digital tools and advance the digital competency of small businesses. This includes e-commerce, remote sales, new product opportunities, and more.
- ▷ Scale efforts that have been piloted in the last year to assist businesses with technology adoption (eg. online ordering, registration management etc).
- ▷ Create or partner with a third-party app or software service provider to help small businesses scale their digital offerings. Representing businesses across the region would offset some of the expense that individual businesses would incur. For example, at the beginning of the pandemic, Hope and Main, a food incubator based in Warren RI, partnered with the What's Good ecommerce app to help businesses in their community set up or expand online ordering, takeout, and delivery services. Newport Dine Out offers local delivery service to regional restaurants and helps to offset the fees paid by individual restaurants to delivery service platforms.

Strategy:

Offer shared services to support business health and profitability

Action:

- ▷ Develop and/or offer shared benefits such as 401K and health insurance to leverage the region's businesses and to offer cost savings to businesses by pooling resources. As an example the Chamber launched a new retirement savings exchange that is expected to appeal to small businesses in Rhode Island that either do not currently offer a retirement plan or have an existing plan and are looking to benefit from economies of scale, improve administrative efficiencies and mitigate certain risks.

Strategy:

Provide business scale-up services

Action:

- ▷ Provide support for businesses, including market research, analysis, business plan support, and programming, through Innovate Newport.

Strategy:

Develop a regional business directory, and include a strategic element to capture “home-based” businesses and e-businesses that do not have “brick and mortar” presence

Action:

Municipalities, the Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations have realized they do not have direct contact information on local businesses. Lists have been improving, but they will need to be maintained.

- ▷ Partner Connect Greater Newport (CGN) with town clerks and municipal tax offices to create a more accurate directory.
- ▷ Continue discussions between CGN and the is in discussion with the Rhode Island Secretary of State’s office and the Department of Business Regulation to pilot an electronic business registration process for the region that would not require an in-person or notarized business application.
- ▷ Include a process to periodically ‘renew’ the list to capture those that have gone out of business or changed status.

Strategy:

Continue a proactive and responsive business calling program

Action:

The business calling program is the primary support infrastructure for business recovery, retention, and expansion activities. This role allows CGN to understand the opportunities and challenges that the region’s businesses face.

- ▷ Adapt the program to industry sectors, recognizing that some businesses are recovering at a different pace than others and new issues might be emerging – for example, supply chain shortages or labor shortages.
- ▷ Produce ongoing summaries to inform how support services might need to evolve.
- ▷ Coordinate efforts with partners to broaden the type of information gathered about businesses (for example, Lifespan/Newport Hospital’s community health assessment).

Strategy:

Conduct an annual Business Walk/ celebration of the region’s businesses

Action:

Begun in 2019 but postponed in 2020, the Business Walk will provide an opportunity for regional stakeholders to engage with local businesses and seek to understand their opportunities and challenges firsthand.

- ▷ Resume the Business Walk in late 2021, and continue to hold at least once annually.
- ▷ Digitize the process of collecting data and sharing insights more effectively among businesses, volunteers and community leaders. Establish a process to track actionable items.
- ▷ Establish a methodology to “walk” home-based and other non-“brick and mortar” businesses to capture their unique issues.
- ▷ Highlight businesses from the region, shine a spotlight on industry, and celebrate successes.

Strategy:

Support higher education efforts to engage businesses and serve as resources for the business community

Action:

The Greater Newport region is fortunate to have several excellent higher education institutions that are interested in increasing their connection to the business community. Currently, each institution coordinates its own engagement of businesses, and this is often further siloed within the institution. Many programs and departments could potentially engage businesses, but simply lack the capacity to identify opportunities and relationships with the appropriate companies.

- ▷ Work with each institution to identify opportunities to enhance connections to research and leadership development such as Salve University's Center for Business Outreach, Roger Williams University's Workforce Development programs and CCRI.
- ▷ Leverage purchasing power and operations of anchor institutions (schools, hospitals, larger tourist attractions) to support the region's businesses, and partner with state initiatives (Supply RI).

Strategy:

Seek to create a sustainable tourism model

Action:

While there were many negative economic impacts in 2020 that have continued into 2021, it is clear that the region's amenities were able to adapt and survive. The stresses exposed weaknesses in operations, the labor force, and supply chains that compel Greater Newport to seek a more sustainable tourism model.

- ▷ Convene stakeholders to assess both operating and workforce-related issues, the needs for investment in amenities and resources, and more.
- ▷ Develop an action plan to support the hospitality and tourism sector and its workers for the next decade.

Strategy:

Collaborate with Commerce RI and individual municipalities on business attraction

Action:

- ▷ Greater Newport is an ideal location for next-phase entrepreneurs in the professional, scientific and technical fields that want to build their small companies in the region.
- ▷ Define the support system in place - like events, investor outreach, etc. - and promote through Commerce RI and other channels
- ▷ Support larger company conversations for appropriate sites, as noted in the Projects of Regional Impact section.

Talent and Labor Force

The region has been gradually seeing an increase in concerns over the existing and future labor force, and the corresponding issues reached new levels in the past year. There is no single solution or actor that can work to alleviate the problems and therefore a consortium of regional leaders will need to advance the following strategies and actions.

Strategy:

Engage the labor force

Action:

With continued labor force reductions anticipated, there is a pressing need to engage workers currently on the sideline.

- ▷ Communicate the immediate and expected ongoing labor force needs (model retirement patterns) and enhance multi-entity recruitment efforts.
- ▷ Seek to understand if people who left the workforce would return with supports.
- ▷ Seek to promote career path opportunities to existing workers in the region.

Strategy:

Explore J-1 Visa and other immigration options to increase the labor pool

Action:

While the J1 Visa program is currently not a significant resource for accessing workers - it can be a potential source of new workers.

- ▷ Explore other opportunities to attract immigration to the region.

Strategy:

Promote resources

Action:

- ▷ Promote [RI WorkShare](#) as an option for employers to bring back employees.
- ▷ Continue to promote Real Jobs RI to regional partners and employees.
- ▷ Promote [Skills for RI's Future](#) to the region's unemployed and underemployed.
- ▷ Promote [PrepareRI](#) to encourage Rhode Island's youth to develop critical job skills. Seek to replicate programs such as the P-Tech program at Roger High School, which is training students in cybersecurity.



Strategy:

Retain college and university graduates

Action:

Between Salve Regina University, Roger Williams University, CCRI Newport, and IYRS, the region is home to roughly 9,500 students. Many of these graduates are in careers that can align with the existing industry base and are also in emerging areas.

- ▷ Work with schools to analyze post-graduation retention rates to create a baseline perspective and a targeted goal.
- ▷ Conduct a student perception survey to gauge how they view and interact with the communities in the region.
- ▷ Enhance recruitment structures to increase the placement of students with local businesses for internships – work with colleges and universities and industry associations to identify businesses. Create ‘opportunity fairs’ where small business owners come to campus and speak to students about their business and the realities they are facing.
- ▷ Work to identify housing that is budget appropriate to the opportunities that these students will receive.
- ▷ Increase engagement between students and community-related activities and opportunities: recreational, social, and environmental.
- ▷ Work with schools to identify gaps between skills learned and skills needed by Greater Newport companies and how training programs might be tailored by sector to help reduce labor shortages.

Strategy:

Support employers and municipalities in attracting talent

Action:

The region has lost population in recent years and is aging without any clear sign of an influx of replacement workforce; this trend will continue. Population loss has repercussions for employers, taxing bodies, school districts, and social service delivery.

- ▷ Develop a targeted talent attraction strategy that aligns with employer needs.
- ▷ Communicate opportunities to regional ‘alumni’ from colleges, universities, and Naval centers.

Economic Ecosystem

Traditional economic development has limited its focus to businesses and jobs, but a people-centered economic development approach recognizes that there is an economic ecosystem that can support people or limit their potential. This economic development strategy seeks to create a more supportive economic development ecosystem that promotes economic mobility for all residents.

Strategy:

Develop additional financial resources for businesses

Action:

The region has limited access to economic development-related financing options. Create a Revolving Loan Fund or Community Development Financial Institute (CDFI) that can complement local bank lending.

Strategy:

Address the workforce housing crisis

Action:

The workforce housing situation has reached a crisis level in the past year as prices skyrocket and workers are forced to move further and further from employment centers.

- ▷ Provide access to resources to build a complete inventory of the housing needs and the challenges to existing housing stock, and a tool kit for communities and developers to respond.
- ▷ Create a pool of incentives (e.g., relocation packages) to attract talent.
- ▷ Make sure zoning works for density in communities amenable to it to help provide housing solutions.
- ▷ Help to educate the community about what housing needs are for the area's workforce, so that they become supporters.

Strategy:

Enhance transportation options

Action:

There are limited options for affordable transportation in the region, and the majority of workers are car-dependent. This limits economic mobility and prevents many from accessing existing opportunities.

- ▷ With regional (RI and MA) stakeholders, discuss the need to improve transportation links among the region's communities. The goal will be to develop an enhanced multi-modal system (e.g. shuttle, commuter ferries) that serves residents, workers, and visitors.

Strategy:

Pursue state and federal support to grow the Blue Economy through program-related and infrastructure investments

Action:

The Blue Economy is a rallying point for the region and an opportunity for growth.

- ▷ Create a Blue Economy Director that brings together assets for leveraging and collaboration.
- ▷ Support existing businesses and new, growing industries that are related to Blue Economy infrastructure opportunities like off-shore wind and clean transportation.
- ▷ Define the blue collar job opportunities that offshore wind will provide, and collaborate across borders.
- ▷ Support the Blue Venture Forum.

Strategy:**Attract and retain
remote workers****Action:**

- ▷ Ensure that the region is ready for remote work employees who will need high-speed internet access, housing that is suitable for creating a dedicated workspace at home, and greater access to shared work facilities.
- ▷ Profile and promote companies that are successfully creating remote work options for their employees.
- ▷ Create a standing 'forum' for new resident and long-term visitor engagement – welcoming events that introduce various social, nonprofit, and cultural activities.

Strategy:**Improve
Broadband****Action:**

Regional challenges with the existing broadband infrastructure and service have only gotten worse, and targeted action has begun to solve the issues. Planning and feasibility work are underway that will inform a set of specific actions, but they will include:

- ▷ Access American Rescue Plan Act funding to support the implementation of solutions.
- ▷ Consider the needs of broadband end-users from a program or equipment perspective and develop suitable on-ramp programs. This will serve education, employment, and telehealth services.

Strategy:**Office and
manufacturing
use planning****Action:**

- ▷ Work to define the region's real estate assets and use profiles.
- ▷ Consider the next phase of Innovate Newport and profile other regional flex space opportunities.
- ▷ Define areas for light manufacturing/assembly and assess their condition (turnkey to pad development needed).
- ▷ Survey and interview property owners for plans post-pandemic.
- ▷ Based on findings, develop a short- to long-term strategy for ongoing space identification and promotion, tools for modifications, etc.

Strategy:**Re-invigorate
the Defense
Economy Planning
Commission****Action:**

With the potential for future federal budget restrictions, especially related to the Department of Defense, the region must ensure that its defense assets are supported and any location-based competitive issues are being addressed (e.g., energy costs, workforce recruitment potential, etc.)

Strategy:**Leverage events &
digital platforms****Action:**

- ▷ Use domestic and international events occurring in the region to sell attendees on the opportunity to locate their next business in the region. Define the value proposition for smaller companies.
- ▷ Create a digital marketing plan to attract remote workers and investors.

Projects of Regional Significance

Existing and planned developments, such as Tiverton Industrial Park, Newport's North End Urban Plan, and decommissioned Navy properties, all offer significant opportunities for economic growth – but a broader focus is required to leverage these assets. In some cases, communities are continuing to develop consensus on desired uses (e.g., commercial, residential, recreational, etc.). However, conversations about desired uses often occur without regional consideration, despite the fact that communities across the region face similar issues: short-term rental growth, small business issues, and the need for public infrastructure and amenities.

The scale of these sites or issues means that the impacts will likely be regional in scale, and therefore should be developed at least with consideration for regional needs and opportunities. Furthermore, the scale of workload, from a project management perspective, of these developments is such that additional capacity may be necessary to ensure timely planning and advancement.

Connect Greater Newport has identified the following list of projects or issues, in consultation with regional municipal leaders and others. It is not an exhaustive list, but is representative of the point in time of this plan's development. It is an example of the need to maintain such a list and seek resources to advance these priorities and those that will follow over the next 10-years. Connect Greater Newport will continue to maintain this list and update as status and priorities change and include as a component of the annual workplan.

Greater Newport Projects of Regional Impact Potential - June 2021

Project of Regional Opportunity/Impact (with location noted)

Broadband upgrades (Region)

Description:

Better Broadband access, increased reliability, and reduced costs will increase the economic competitiveness of the region. Provide a market study to establish a likely market penetration rate and clarify which benefits from a new region-wide network and/or issue mitigation strategies might be most important to residents and businesses. A specific focus on last-mile-related issues and barriers is critical to the diagnosis of the various possible solutions and value to “home-based” businesses.

Actions:

- ▷ Broadband Assessment & Planning Effort to start summer 2021.
- ▷ Seek financial support for the implementation of recommendations.
- ▷ Explore the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC). OLDCC leverages the capabilities of state and local partners through grants and technical assistance to enhance readiness of Navy installations and ranges, and to deliver safe places for Navy members and their families where capabilities in DoD do not otherwise exist.

Housing development (Region)

Description:

There is broad recognition that the region needs to have new housing developed and upgrades to the existing housing stock. The current situation is limiting the attraction of new residents.

Actions:

- ▷ Form a multi-municipal stakeholder group to advance understanding of need.
- ▷ Identify communities open to supporting new housing development.
- ▷ Recruit developers from throughout New England to engage in planning.
- ▷ Work with state policy leaders as they develop new initiatives and offer the region as a host for piloting.
- ▷ Educate the community about the need and opportunity of workforce housing to reduce negative stigma.

Greater Newport Projects of Regional Impact Potential - June 2021 cont.

Project of Regional Opportunity/Impact (with location noted)

West Main redevelopment (Middletown)

Description:

Mixed development opportunity on a 15.27-acre site.

Actions:

Seeking developer interest.

Naval Hospital Property – a component of Newport’s North End Urban Plan (Newport)

Description:

Property still in Navy control and has remediation needs. The property is part of Newport’s North End Urban Plan and is one part of a larger project to create an innovation hub.

Actions:

The City of Newport is assessing options; development scenarios have been presented, but final plans will be required.

Pell Bridge realignment and development (Newport)

Description:

A reconfiguration of the interchange exiting the Pell Bridge will create new development opportunities.

Actions:

Ongoing planning and assessment.

Tiverton Business Park (Tiverton)

Description:

Tiverton is looking to support more development at the Tiverton Business Park site. A short- to long-range vision for what the park can be is needed to avoid decisions that will create future barriers.

Actions:

Planning and support for ‘pad ready’ development.

Metacom Avenue redevelopment (Warren)

Description:

Comprehensive economic development initiative creating a revitalized Transit Orientated Development Corridor utilizing Form Based Code and Tax Increment Financing.

Actions:

More information is [HERE](#).

Restoring historical properties (Region)

Description:

Throughout the region, there is a need to restore historical structures and convert them to new uses (Hutchens Senior Center, Coggeshall School, Discover Newport building)

Actions:

Create an inventory of properties in need of restoration.

Greater Newport Projects of Regional Impact Potential - June 2021 cont.

Project of Regional Opportunity/Impact (with location noted)

Transportation Infrastructure (Region)

Description:

Specific transportation needs include improving mobility within the Greater Newport region and throughout the rest of the Northeast Corridor. This includes Ferry, Newport State Airport and Coastal Highway.

Actions:

A multi-state, multi-community planning effort could be held to understand the current and future needs of the region's coastal communities.

Atlantic Beach (Middletown)

Description:

District development, public improvement, beautification projects, and the construction of underground utilities.

Actions:

The town is advancing this project.

Short-term rentals (Newport, Middletown, and more)

Description:

Throughout the region, short-term rentals continue to increase. There is a need to analyze the impact of short-term rentals on the housing market. Municipalities can collaborate to:

- ▷ Explore options to monitor the growing presence of short-term rentals
- ▷ Enforce ordinances that ban unregistered short term rentals; limit the number of short term rentals.

Actions:

Connect Greater Newport should convene a working group of municipal representatives.

Bristol Unity Park (Bristol)

Description:

230,000 square ft. mixed use redevelopment.

Actions:

Rhode Island business expansion and attraction efforts ongoing.

Redevelopment of former Zion Bible Institute campus (Barrington)

Description:

Approximately 280 senior housing units and other uses on approximately 35 acres.

Actions:

Amendments to approved master plan.

Greater Newport Projects of Regional Impact Potential - June 2021 cont.

Project of Regional Opportunity/Impact (with location noted)

Belton Court (Barrington)

Description:

Potential economic development opportunity to repurpose Belton Court, an historic 50,000-square-foot former residence on the campus (to be determined).

Actions:

Amendments to approved master plan.

North End Urban Plan (Newport)

Description:

The North End Urban Plan builds on two decades of economic development planning, which identified this area as a suitable location for high-wage, year-round jobs in the blue (marine technology) and green (sustainable) economic sectors.

Actions:

Work with Newport as the plan moves to implementation.

Burma Road/Defense Highway

Description:

This road is maintained by the Navy and provides critical access to the Marina District and the Tank Farms that can be redeveloped in the future.

Actions:

Work with partners to identify options for upgrades.

While there may be significant near-term resources to advance some of these efforts and an 'opportunistic' approach can be pursued, a longer-term strategy includes developing a prioritization process for all investors in Connect Greater Newport to rank the projects they would want to allocate resources to advance. Support for advancement can include project management capacity (e.g., market analysis, partner identification/convening, grant writing) that could support projects, land use, feasibility assessments, zoning/code modifications, and more. The Connect Greater Newport staff and committee will work to prioritize and fast track the most impactful opportunities.



CONCLUSION

The Greater Newport economic development strategy will be an evolving document as we emerge from the pandemic-related economic issues and take actions to secure economic recovery and resilience. As noted in this document the Greater Newport region has significant economic assets, a globally recognized brand, quality of life and place that draw visitors and new residents. There is an underlying community pride that strives for greatness. As we move from plan development to implementation, collaboration will be key to help preserve the region's history, culture, place assets and economic infrastructure so that all residents can prosper. The partnerships that have been fostered during the last few years can now be leveraged as we act as a region and aggressively pursue the resources required to implement the recommendations of this plan.