

NEWBURY PLANNING PROGRAM

SECTION I: SUMMARY & ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVES OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROGRAM

The Newbury Annual Town Meeting of 1978 voted to raise and appropriate funds for the development of an updated Comprehensive Plan for the town. This action was an outgrowth of work accomplished by Newbury's Local Growth Policy Committee in 1976, recognition by the Newbury Planning Board of the need for a coherent planning program, and a growing realization on the part of many citizens and town officials that sound planning was needed to help the town to deal with current and future problems and needs.

In May, 1978, the Planning Board published specifications for the planning program, and invited professional planning firms to submit proposals. Six firms responded. After review of the proposals and interviews of the finalists, the Planning Board chose Townscape Associates of Arlington, Massachusetts to assist them with the program.

Townscape Associates' original proposal summarized objectives for the study as follows:

"Newbury's primary goal is to preserve the integrity and quality of the land. Related objectives are to reduce the growth rate and to develop zoning and other controls that will ensure effective use of the land and conservation of important natural resources. Plans for future land use, town services, capital improvements and financial management are also needed. The overall need is thus for a comprehensive planning and town management program that will provide Newbury with tools for guiding growth as well as with practical solutions to specific problems."

The Planning Board endorsed these objectives, and further stated that the program would be guided by two over-riding concerns:

1. The theme of preserving Newbury's rural quality.
2. The maximum feasible level of public participation in the planning process.

Planning work began in August, 1978, and work was substantially completed by August, 1980. During this two year planning period, the Planning Board, the Long-Range Planning Committee, several special subcommittees, and the consultants met several dozen times to discuss, review and resolve the many pieces of the planning program. The program was organized in

five basic parts:

1. Overview of Major Issues
2. Analysis of Existing Conditions and Trends
3. Plans for the Future
4. Zoning Ordinance
5. Assistance in Implementation

The participants in the program devoted an aggregate of literally thousands of hours to the completion of the various planning tasks. The consultants worked closely with the Planning Board and the Long-Range Planning Committee, and produced several hundred pages of memos, working papers and draft plans, as well as a dozen large-scale data and analysis maps.

This report documents the highlights of the comprehensive planning program. It is intended to serve as a readable, useful guide for future actions by town boards and officials. If Newbury's planning program can continue with purpose and clarity during the 1980's, the 1978-1980 planning effort will have achieved its purpose.

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ACTION PLAN FOR 1980-1981

This Action Plan provides information on six priority projects that should be undertaken by the Newbury Planning Board during the program period July 1, 1980 through June 30, 1981. The identification of these priorities has emerged from Newbury's two-year comprehensive planning program.

For each of the priority projects, we have provided details on objectives, project details (description), products, cost and funding, and immediate actions needed. Priority and longer-range projects to be potentially undertaken by other town boards and committees, as well as longer-range projects for the Planning Board, are discussed in Section III of this report.

Project No. 1 - Zoning Bylaw Refinements

Objectives: To revise and refine the proposed new Zoning Bylaw in order to ensure Special Town Meeting approval in the fall of 1980. Thereafter, to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and impacts of the new Zoning Bylaw, on a case by case basis.

Description: The Planning Board and the Zoning Subcommittee worked long and hard on the development of a new Zoning Bylaw for the town. The proposed Bylaw was narrowly defeated at a Special Town Meeting in May, 1980. Refinements, revisions and more public education are needed to ensure eventual Town Meeting approval of this important planning tool. The Planning Board has already established a special working committee to undertake this work during the summer of 1980. A public hearing on the revised ordinance will be held in September, and the Bylaw will be presented for consideration by a Special Town Meeting in October.

Once the new Zoning Bylaw has been enacted, the Board should develop some basic procedures for monitoring and evaluation over the next year (or two). This program will enable the Board to identify areas in which the new Bylaw may need to be clarified, modified or supplemented.

The monitoring program should include:

1. A procedure whereby other town boards and officials - especially the Board of Appeals, the Building Inspector and the Conservation Commission - can advise the Planning Board (in writing) of any problems that they may experience with the new Bylaw.

2. A procedure whereby one or two Planning Board members will provide a written analysis of the effects, whether positive or negative, of the new Zoning Bylaw on subdivision plans and other development plans brought before the Board.
3. A year-end review and evaluation workshop in October of 1981 involving all major boards and departments. The object of the workshop will be to develop a consensus on changes or additions that the Planning Board should begin to work on for consideration by the 1982 Annual Town Meeting.

Products: A new Zoning Bylaw for Newbury; a file of notes and memoranda on the effectiveness of the new Bylaw, and a strategy for developing changes and refinements, as needed.

Cost and Funding: A budget of perhaps \$1,000 for assistance from town planning professionals will be needed.

Actions Needed: Proceed with refinements during the summer of 1980.

Project No. 2 - Industrial Development Feasibility Study

Objective: To determine the desirability and feasibility of encouraging certain kinds of industrial development within the town of Newbury.

Description: One of the policies established by the comprehensive planning program was to "broaden the town's tax base by encouraging compatible industrial and commercial development. . .". The Industrial Development Study Committee, created by action of the Annual Town Meeting in June, 1979, has studied the feasibility of an Industrial Park, and has recommended that the town establish an Industrial Development Commission to plan for such a park. To date, however, the Committee has not provided the town with any details on specific actions that are needed.

It seems clear that a more thorough feasibility study is needed. It also seems clear that an established, activist board like the Planning Board is best suited to carrying forward the work that was begun by the Industrial Development Study Committee. The scope of the feasibility study should include the following:

1. Gather data on industrial and commercial development trends in the immediate region.
2. Evaluate trends - what companies are locating where? Which communities are significantly expanding their commercial and industrial tax base? How and why? What have been the costs and benefits?

3. Special analysis of Newburyport Industrial Park - financial structure, current uses, tax benefit, etc.
4. Analysis of existing commercial and industrial uses in Newbury - employment, growth potential, problems, etc.
5. Analysis of available commercial and industrial sites in Newbury - size, raw land costs, access, utilities, problems and potentials.
6. Outline specifications for the kinds of new commercial and industrial uses that may be desirable and feasible in Newbury. Identify potential costs and benefits.
7. Determine town government actions that may be needed to encourage such development.
8. Identify sources of funds to proceed with the development program.

Product: The product of this study should be a succinct (20 to 30 pages) report on findings and recommendations.

Cost and Funding: The Planning Board will undoubtedly need professional assistance to develop this feasibility study. We recommend a budget of approximately \$2,500 for the services of an economist and a town planner to assist the Board in this effort. Funds can come from the Planning Board's budget for special projects. The 1980 Annual Town Meeting voted to approve \$5,000 in special planning funds with the understanding that some of these funds would be used for an Industrial Development Feasibility Study. Some funding assistance may also be available from the Executive Office of Communities and Development.

Actions Needed: The Planning Board and the Long-Range Planning Committee should develop a detailed work program for the feasibility study. Consultants can then be retained, and work can begin.

Project No. 3 - Planning Board Handbook

Objective: To develop a Handbook containing details on policies and procedures that are or should be used by the Planning Board in the conduct of its business.

Description: Newbury has a new set of Subdivision Regulations, and will soon have a new Zoning Bylaw. Planning Board members - both recent and long-time members - should have an official written guide that provides details on policies and procedures relating to these and other planning tools and duties.

As is the case with many small town Planning Boards, Newbury's Board is sometimes hampered in its proceedings because of uncertainty about the requirements of state laws and local ordinances. This problem is understandable - but it can and should be alleviated.

The Planning Board Handbook would be required reading for any new members, and would serve as a constant guide for current members as well. The Handbook could include sections on:

1. Voting rules and procedures.
2. Subdivision plans - rules on filings and reviews.
3. Zoning Bylaw administration procedures.
4. Procedures for amending the Zoning Bylaw.
5. Rules pertaining to zoning appeals.
6. Procedures for seeking outside advice on legal, engineering and planning questions.
7. Coordination procedures relative to other town boards and committees.

A Planning Board Handbook tailored to Newbury's bylaws, concerns and needs should be a valuable planning tool.

Product: A written Handbook, with illustrations as necessary, and in a form that can be updated from time to time: perhaps 20 or 30 pages.

Cost and Funding: A budget of perhaps \$500 for assistance from a town planning professional will be needed. The Board's budget for special projects can be used.

Actions Needed: The Planning Board should discuss the format and content of the Handbook, develop a detailed outline, and proceed with the work.

Project No. 4 - Personnel Needs Study

Objectives: To assess present and possible future needs for expanded Town Government Personnel.

Description: The need for one or more professional staff people for planning and administration has been discussed numerous times during the comprehensive planning program. The Planning Board feels that this set of questions and issues requires further careful study.

The Board of Selectmen and Personnel Board would be the appropriate coordinators of such a study. The Planning Board would participate - especially in the area of defining on-going planning needs.

The Personnel Needs Study should include the following elements:

1. A town-wide survey to determine what residents think of the present effectiveness of Newbury's town government, with emphasis on personnel needs.
2. A similar survey of town boards, departments and committees.
3. An evaluation of town personnel and positions typical of neighboring small towns.
4. Analysis of various options for improving town government, including possible new part-time or full-time positions.
5. Determine costs and benefits for these options.
6. Develop recommendations for administrative or Town Meeting action.

Product: A brief report (10 - 15 pages) summarizing the study process and major findings and recommendations.

Cost and Funding: We recommend a budget of about \$500 for outside professional assistance, to be drawn from the Planning Board's budget for special projects. Here again, supplementary funds from the Department of Communities and Development may be available.

Actions Needed: The Planning Board, the Board of Selectmen and the Personnel Board should meet to discuss the objectives and scope of a Personnel Needs Study. A Study Committee should then be established, and work can begin.

Project No. 5 - Plum Island Planning and Development

Objective: To assist in the planning and implementation of the Plum Island community development program.

Description: The CZM-funded Plum Island Management Plan is now nearing completion. The final planning report will provide details on about twenty planning and development projects that must be pursued. Thus far, the Newbury Planning Board has been involved in the Plum Island planning program via two liaison Board members who have attended most of the Plum Island Planning sessions.

The Planning Board should continue to play an active role in the program as it moves from overall plans to detailed planning and

project implementation. Plum Island leaders will need the cooperation, input and support of the Planning Board in order to achieve their priority objectives.

Cost and Funding: No cash cost to the Planning Board. However, the Board should consider the possibility of developing a 701 Planning Grant application to the Department of Communities and Development for one or more priority detailed planning items for Plum Island.

Actions Needed: The Planning Board should review the draft management plan for Plum Island - to be published in late May - and develop a specific set of guidelines for continued Planning Board participation in the process.

Project No. 6 - Environmental Impact Monitoring

Objective: To develop a coordinated procedure for monitoring - and, where necessary, correcting - adverse environmental impacts caused by any major development projects.

Description: During the comprehensive planning program, a number of environmental impact problems were discussed, including siltation in the Little River, shoaling at Plum Island Bridge and the Highfields Subdivision. Newbury does not have a Natural Resources Officer or other staff person who could monitor or act to correct such environmental problems. Thus, some form of organized procedure should be established for dealing with major environmental problems and impacts.

Minimally, the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission should work out a joint statement of policies and procedures that spells out who will do what to monitor and correct such problems.

Product: Policies and procedures for monitoring and correcting adverse environmental impacts.

Cost and Funding: No direct cost. However, implementation of the policies and procedures will probably involve costs from time to time for testing and for outside professional assistance.

Actions Needed: The Planning Board should develop an agenda for a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen and the Conservation Commission, then conduct such a meeting. Specific objectives, work tasks, work assignments and schedule can be determined at that meeting. The work can then proceed.