

PREAMBLE

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR COMMUNITY

“**PROTECT JAMESTOWN'S RURAL CHARACTER**” is the driving theme in Conanicut Island’s 2000 Comprehensive Plan. This clear vision emerged from the 1998 Citizen Survey, numerous public meetings, and public workshops dedicated toward the production of this document.

The Planning Commission, understanding the vagueness and vastness of the term, has defined rural character to mean that which is unique to the Island of Jamestown and is infused with a rural feeling, an island spirit and a village identity.

The 1998 Citizen Survey, distributed to 3,675 registered voters and taxpayers, received an overwhelming 31 percent return rate. This survey affirmed the overall goal of protecting the community’s rural character. To maintain Jamestown’s rural character is to preserve our island community’s values, aesthetics and functions. Growth must be managed within the capability of the Island’s natural resources and the Town’s ability to support it. We must strive for development that respects the identity of our community.

Values - What values are we speaking of?

Common values relate to a shared feeling of community and personal identification with the people and physical presence of the Island. The values are a sense of cooperation, caring human contact, volunteerism, involvement, and interest in the future of the community. These values should be reflected by a diversity of citizenry in terms of income, education, occupation, economic activity and lifestyle. Values create a place where respect and consideration for each other, as well as a personal affinity with both the natural and man made physical environment, flourish.

Aesthetics - - What are the aesthetic qualities that should be emphasized in Jamestown?

Active farmland, woodland, coastal, and historic features characterize the small Island community of Jamestown. Historic values apply as much to the context in which landmarks occur as to the landmarks themselves. Other special and unique environments also characterize the Island, including such coastal features as Great Creek, Sheffield Cove, the Dumplings, Clingstone, Beavertail, and others. Also unique to Jamestown are country roads with over-arching trees, summer homes, modest cottages, stone walls, scenic vistas over stretches of farmland, and a low traffic volume.

All of these special qualities can be lost with the application of inappropriate code requirements, development pressures, inappropriate building types, high intensity nighttime illumination, inappropriate traffic solutions and thoughtless development. As we develop land use controls, we must strive to ensure that the unique and special qualities of the Island are considered.

Functions – What functions are appropriate to the community we wish to promote and what are their characteristics?

The village center needs to be pedestrian friendly, low key and provide a sense of place. Commerce needs to be varied to meet local needs, inclusive of the essentials of Island life.

Government should be small, responsive and largely dependent on volunteers.

Sailing, boating and marine related activities are an important aspect of Jamestown's rural character. The features that make boating attractive on Jamestown could attract use beyond our capabilities for accommodation.

Recreation is a major attraction of Jamestown and it requires both physical and visual space and access. Physical access should be focused on areas capable of handling the number of users.

Residential use should continue to be village-like in character. Residential use should also strive to be available to all income levels. Jamestown has been a summer community as well as a farming and fishing village. All of these need to be represented. Housing should not preempt all of the existing open areas; it should be developed within the natural landscape, not apart from it.

Agriculture uses should continue to be encouraged. Agriculture should not be swallowed up by housing, or destroyed by taxation.

The Center Island Watershed should continue to be protected. Development should not exceed on-island natural supplies of water. Conservation of existing water supplies should continue to be emphasized, as well as finding new methods to supplement the existing yield.

Tourism should be compatible with our community. The anticipated revenues should not work to the detriment of the other values set forth in the Comprehensive Community Plan.

Both new and existing roads should remain rural in character and should not be made over to conform to urban norms implemented elsewhere. Old roads should be retrofitted when possible and new roads should be made to accommodate vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.

How do we measure success of this Comprehensive Community Plan?

In accordance with community vision, the Comprehensive Community Plan states a clear set of goals forming the basis for the measurement of value and quality of the future development of Jamestown. The implementation of these goals will gauge success of the 2001 Comprehensive Community Plan. They emulate those adopted in the 1991 Comprehensive Plan and have since been confirmed by the 1998 Community Survey. The goals of the citizens of Jamestown are as follows:

1. First and foremost, to maintain the Island's rural character.
2. Have clean Marine, Freshwater and Groundwater Resources.
3. Preserve and Protect unique, fragile, and scenic coastal areas.
4. Protect public accessibility to the shoreline.
5. Protect natural vegetation and wildlife habitat wherever possible throughout Town.
6. To protect and preserve all significant historical and cultural resources.
7. To protect the rural and historical village character of Jamestown.
8. Preserve significant conservation and open space on the Island.
9. Develop a comprehensive Land Acquisition Action Plan to raise funds through bonding and grants to acquire and/ or protect a substantial portion of the remaining undeveloped land in Jamestown for the preservation of water and coastal resources, access to the shore, scenic vistas and open space.
10. Increase public awareness on the importance of conservation of open space.
11. To protect and where possible increase the current acreage of working farmland.
12. Provide all residents with safe and accessible passive and active recreational opportunities.
13. To achieve a diverse local economy which provides job opportunities as well as basic goods and services for residents and maintains an affordable tax base.
14. To provide safe and efficient local circulation patterns that accommodate existing and future population growth.
15. Maintain Jamestown as a diversified community that provides housing opportunities for all people regardless of age, income, ethnic origin, or ability.
16. Recognize the delicate balance between maintaining the communities island character and the responsibility of providing housing opportunities for all income groups.
17. Provide a high quality of public services to the community that protect the health, safety, and welfare of all residents.
18. Provide orderly and efficient arrangement of public services and facilities that support the existing and future needs of the community.

We hope that this Plan serves the residents of Jamestown to achieve the vision of our future.

CURRENT DATA

The information in this document was compiled and reviewed over a period of 3 years. Unless otherwise noted in the document, the information and data is current as of January 2000. Following are current data for Jamestown.

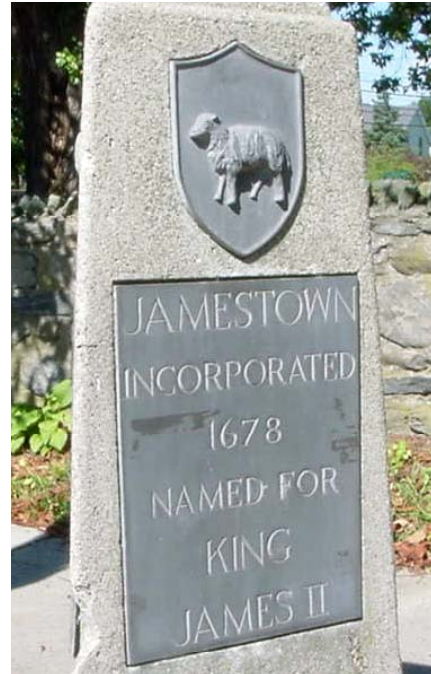
Total Population	5,622	(2000 US Census)
Total Housing Units	2517	(2000 US Census)
	2636	(2002 Tax Assessor)
Average Persons/Household	2.38	(2000 US Census)
Median Age	44.2	(2000 US Census)
Size	9.69 sq. miles of Land, 25.64 sq. miles of Water	(2000 US Census)
Population Density	580 persons/sq. mile	(2000 US Census)
	Jamestown ranks 24 th /39 in Population Density	
FY 2002-2003 Town Budget	\$12,641,340	(Finance Director)
FY 2002-2003 Tax Rate	\$13.28/\$1,000 at 100% Valuation	(Finance Director)

I. EXISTING CONDITIONS

A. DEVELOPMENT HISTORY OF JAMESTOWN

Jamestown is located on Conanicut Island in lower Narragansett Bay, 26 miles south of Providence and two miles west of Newport. Jamestown is bounded on the south by the Atlantic Ocean and is bounded on the north, east and west by Narragansett Bay. Recognized by Aquidneck settlers in 1639 for its good grazing grass, the Island was purchased from Native Americans in 1657. Jamestown was incorporated as an independent Town in 1678. Within Jamestown's jurisdiction are the smaller islands of Dutch, Gould and the dumplings.

Historically, the development patterns of Jamestown are closely related to the Island's undulating topography. Geologically, the Island was separated from the mainland during the carboniferous period. Glaciers cut the East and West Passages into the once fresh water lake of Narragansett Bay, and then receding and melting, left deposits of soil and rock carried from northern New England. The Dumplings are the oldest geological outcrop, connected prior to the Ice Age with Brenton Point across the East Passage in Newport.



Conanicut Island, approximately 8.7 miles long in its entirety and varying from 1 to 1.6 miles in width, is itself virtually divided into three separate landmasses. The largest, occupying the northern half of Conanicut, rises to an elevation of 140 feet in its center, commanding impressive views of the mid-Bay region. The site of Jamestown's most arable land, it was the location of the first intensive farming development on the Island, taking as its own cross axis the North Main Road and old North Ferry Road (today Eldred Avenue and the John Eldred Parkway). Aquipimokuk (today Gould Island) itself a landed farm, lay off shore to the east of this agricultural community.

Separated from the northern section by extensive salt marshes and a tidal creek, the center landmass supports the village center of Jamestown located along Narragansett Avenue. Legendarily an old Native American trail, Narragansett Avenue later became part of the Newport to New York Post Road, traversing the Island between the Newport Ferry and the Saunderstown Ferry, and for years was known simply as Ferry Road. Ferry Meadow was the name given to the tract of land, overlooking the Bay eastward to Newport and Fort Adams, on which much of the village was built. The nonarable rock outcropping of the Dumplings areas, south of the village, remained in an essentially natural state until developed as a summer resort area. Capitalizing on its extraordinary vistas, it was popularly

known as the Ocean Highlands. It is here, too, that Fort Wetherill, the most extensive military fortification on the Island proper, was located.

To the southwest lies the third major section of Conanicut, Beaver Neck, extending into the Atlantic Ocean and connected to the main body of Conanicut by the sand spit of Mackerel Cove beach. Northwest of Beaver Neck lies Aquidnesset (today Dutch Island), enclosing the body of water immediately west of the Old Ferry Wharf, known as Dutch Harbor.

Europeans first settled the Island of Conanicut in 1657, purchasing it from the Narragansett Tribe of Native Americans. Around 1678, a town plan was drawn up for the Island: 6,000 acres were to be divided such that for every 20 acres of farmland, a one-acre town house lot was allotted and 260 acres total were allocated for the town center. 20-acres were set aside in addition for public use as an Artillery Lot and Cemetery. Choice of property was granted by the amount of investment involved and, accordingly, William Coddington and Benedict Arnold were given first choice, the former settling on the north of the Island, the latter on the south end to which he gave the name of Beaver Neck. The town plot was along the old Native American trail between the two ferry landings of Jamestown and Dutch Island Harbors. The plan, however, remained largely unfulfilled, and, ten years later, all land was simply divided among the original purchasers, with each of the 22 properties given a one-acre lot on Ferry Road.

The first real development of Conanicut Island hinged upon the establishment of a ferry to Newport and its market exchange. By at least 1675, a successful ferry ran to the northern community of the Island. In 1678, upon petition of Caleb Carr and Francis Brinley, Conanicut was incorporated as a Town "with the like privileges and liberties granted to New Shoreham" and named in honor of Prince James, later King James II. The Island retained the Native American name of Conanicut.

For the ensuing century, Jamestown would see steady and orderly development of political, religious, and institutional means, chiefly by the Quaker sect that settled in Newport. Highways soon became an issue on the Island. In 1703, action was taken in the general assembly relative to the highway "...which want to be laid forth according to the plat of the Island." By the end of the decade, these roads included North Main Road, North Ferry Road (Eldred Avenue and the John Eldred Parkway), Ferry Road (Narragansett Avenue) and a road southwest to the beach (Southwest Avenue). The first Town Hall was located on the North Main Road just south of North Ferry Road. In 1728, the Town ordered a windmill for grinding grain built near the northern crossroads, situated so as to utilize the prevalent ocean sea breeze. Two years later, in 1741, a schoolhouse was built, also in the northern district.

The first Quaker Meeting House was built in 1709 on the North Ferry Road grounds of the Old Friends Burial Ground. The Meeting House was relocated somewhat south to the present location in 1734, reflecting the eventual population trend southward. The British destroyed the Meeting House, and probably the windmill, during the Revolution; both were subsequently rebuilt on Windmill Hill in 1787 and remain preserved today. The Meeting

House and the Windmill were the Town's earliest public buildings and are both listed on the National Register of Historic Places. No other religious organizations erected churches on the Island until the mid 19th century, and only the Artillery Lot (also listed on the National Register) was located early on the original town plot 4 miles south.

The Beavertail Light, established in 1749, replaced an earlier 1705 watchhouse and 1712 beacon, and was the third lighthouse built on the Atlantic Coast. Destroyed and rebuilt in 1754, Beavertail Light was burned by the British in 1779; rebuilt soon thereafter, it was replaced by the present granite structure in 1856.

Military action had an impact on the history and development of Conanicut and the adjacent islands. In 1775, British and Hessian soldiers seized the Island and subsequently occupied it for almost three years. During this time they maintained the Conanicut Battery located on Prospect Hill on Beaver Neck Road. Fort Dumpling, located on a promontory along the southern Dumplings, was constructed in 1880-1881 on the site of an earlier British battery. Fort Dumpling was demolished in 1898 to make way for the construction of Fort Wetherill, and is now a state park. Jamestown remained primarily a quiet agricultural town until Newport's own revival as an exclusive Victorian resort overflowed to include Conanicut Island.

As the initial development of Jamestown had depended upon the establishment of adequate ferry service, the emergence of Jamestown as a summer resort area late in the 19th century depended upon the creation of a modern transportation system. In 1875, the Jamestown and Newport Ferry Company was formed, and the new steamer "Jamestown" was put into service, landing at the foot of Narragansett Avenue. In the same year, the Ocean Highlands Company was organized to improve the rugged lands in the southern part of the Island for summer estates. Settled largely by wealthy Philadelphia Quaker families and maintaining a safe distance from the flamboyance of Newport society, the area soon became one of the finest residential neighborhoods along the eastern seaboard. Built entirely of "indigenous" Shingle Style and Colonial Revival motifs, with several designs from the firm of McKim, Mead and White, the Ocean Highlands retains its integrity to date. Outstanding among these estates are Horsehead, Highland, and the Round House. The Shoreby Hill area in Town was similarly developed a decade later, with an orderly grouping of fine Shingle Style and Colonial Revival houses overlooking Jamestown Harbor, located along drives named for American authors.

Four Corners, at the intersection of the old Ferry Road (Narragansett Avenue), North Main Road and Southwest Avenue, continued its modest development as a center of civic activity. Already the site of the Artillery Lot, upon which had been built a small schoolhouse, both the Central Baptist and Protestant Episcopal Churches were located here in 1879. A new, simple Town Hall was also erected here in 1884. The earliest Jamestown Post Office was in a residence on the north side of Narragansett Avenue, just west of North Road.

By the turn of the century, Portuguese immigrants began settling in Jamestown. Many of these settlers worked as fishermen, farmers, and gardeners for the Island's large

estates. Crushed stone, used in the construction of Narragansett Avenue and North Main Road, came from a local Portuguese business. In 1927, the Portuguese community organized the Holy Ghost Society of Jamestown, which remains an active civic and social organization today.

The Spanish-American War and World War I saw the extensive fortification of Jamestown property – Fort Wetherill along Highland Drive in the Dumplings, Fort Getty at Beaver Head, and Fort Greble on Dutch Island. During World War II, the Harbor Control Station known as "Mickey" – a reinforced concrete observation post disguised as a summer house – was located on Beavertail in conjunction with Fort Burnside. Meanwhile, a torpedo repair facility and testing station was erected on Gould Island and together with the operations on Goat Island in Newport Harbor, produced 80 percent of the torpedoes used during World War II.

Access to Jamestown, long by ferry, is now almost exclusively by highway bridges. The Jamestown Bridge, opened in 1940, by orienting Jamestown to South County and the Quonset Naval Air Station, significantly altered the social ecology of the Island. In particular, Jamestown Shores, a post-war cottage development at the bridge landing, had introduced the first alteration of the residential pattern of Jamestown since the turn of the century. With the abandonment of Naval owned properties in the 1970s, the Island's population changed again.

The Newport Bridge, completed in 1969, attached Jamestown more securely with Newport, placing it on what eventually became a major regional highway route. The four-lane Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge replaced the two-lane Jamestown Bridge in 1992. In 1994, the upgraded highway connector, named the John Eldred Parkway, was completed between the Jamestown and Newport bridges.

Jamestown has, in the past two decades, faced assimilation into the burgeoning suburban spread moving down along the coast from Providence. Construction of new and improved roads has made Jamestown a more desirable place to live for those employed elsewhere in the State. Subdivisions and in-fill housing development have further changed Jamestown into a more suburban town, although the Town still has many village characteristics. There are still several properties actively farmed on the Island. Historic properties including lighthouses, windmills and military fortifications remain unchanged and old neighborhoods are still intact and thriving.

While land uses and populations have changed over time, Jamestowners have maintained their traditional spirit of community involvement and volunteerism. This community spirit is a quality that has protected hundreds of acres of farmland and open space, improved recreation programs and facilities, and provided public safety with an all-volunteer fire department and ambulance association. The dedication of the people of Jamestown to maintaining the Island's quality of life has been demonstrated many times over; the future of Jamestown depends on our ability to face many more challenges with this same determination and commitment.