



# The State Guide Plan: Rhode Island's Big-Picture Policy Guide for Agencies and Municipalities

Presented to the Special Legislative Commission  
to Study the Low and Moderate Income  
Housing Act

Meredith E. Brady,  
Associate Director,  
Division of Statewide Planning  
*(the State's Unified Planning Agency & Single MPO)*

April 26, 2022

APA American Planning Association  
PCS Planning Commissioners Service

# Planning *made easy*

William Toner  
Efraim Gil  
Enid Lucchesi  
*with*  
Carol Barrett, AICP  
Robert Joice, AICP



# I'll Tell You About

- 1) The Division of Statewide Planning
- 2) The State Guide Plan
- 3) Local Comprehensive Planning (and the State's Role)
- 4) Land Use 2025
  - a) Where We Were
  - b) What We Knew
  - c) What's Changing

**Objective: inform future discussion about land use and subdivision statutes and local regulation, tools to help implement local goals and objectives.**



## **Division of Statewide Planning**

The Statewide Planning Program consists of the State Planning Council, and the Division of Statewide Planning, a division within the Department of Administration.

- *The State Planning Council (27 members) is comprised of federal, state, local, public representatives, and other advisors, and guides the work of the Program.*
- *The Division of Statewide Planning is the staff agency of the State Planning Council.*



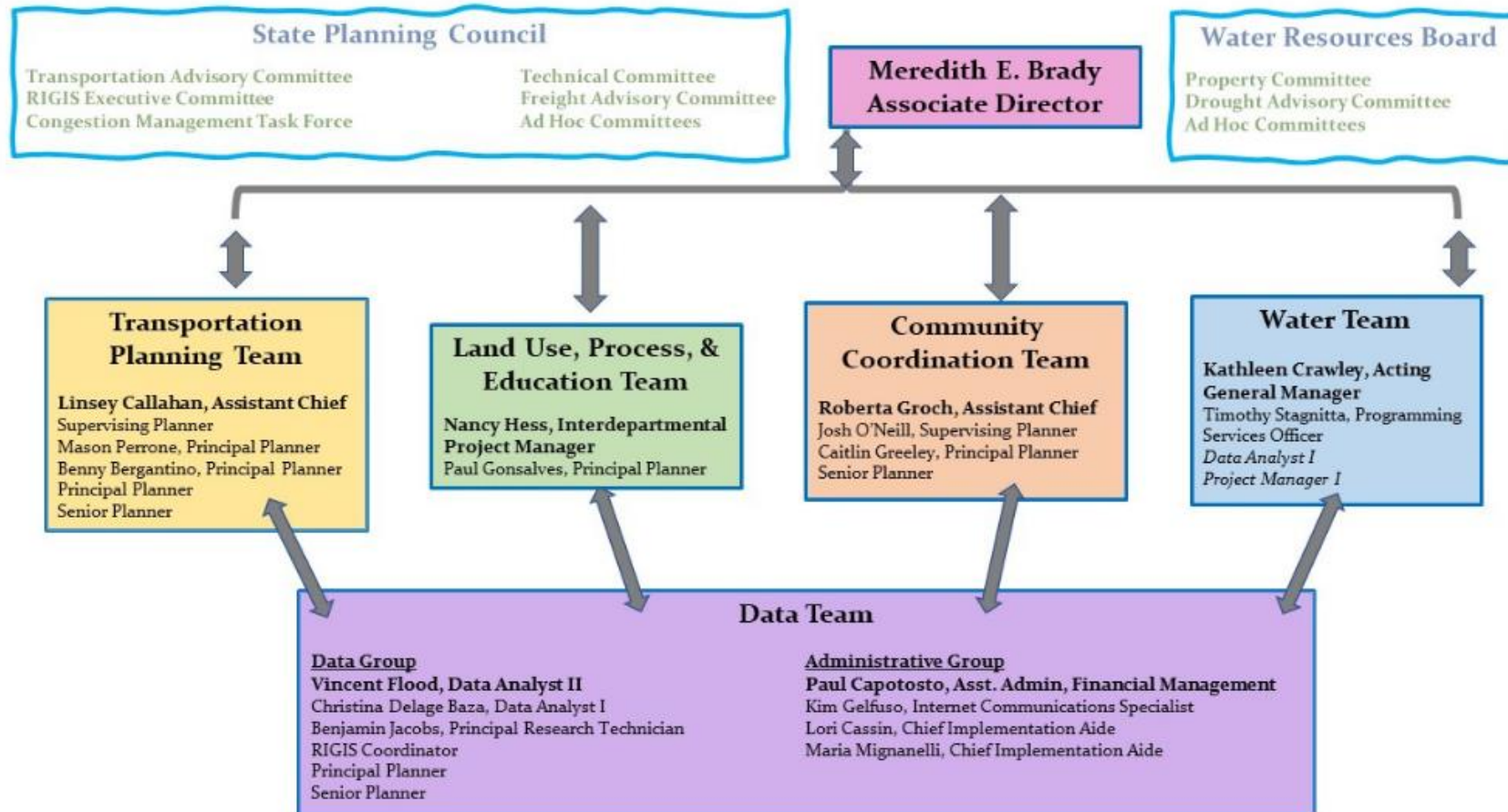
"We've got to stop meeting like this."



# Division of Statewide Planning

## State MPO- Department of Administration

### Organization Chart





# The Division of Statewide Planning

Planning for Rhode Island's  
physical, economic, and social development since 1964

Central state  
planning  
agency  
established by  
R.I.  
General  
Law 42-11

Coordinate the  
activities of  
government  
agencies,  
communities, &  
organizations  
through the State  
Guide Plan

Provide planning  
assistance to the  
Governor, the  
General Assembly,  
municipalities,  
and other state  
agencies

Review local  
comprehensive  
plans, proposed  
projects, and  
activities for  
consistency with  
the State Guide  
Plan

Metropolitan  
Planning  
Organization  
(MPO) for federal  
transportation  
planning and  
funding

## **Division of Statewide Planning Mission Statement**

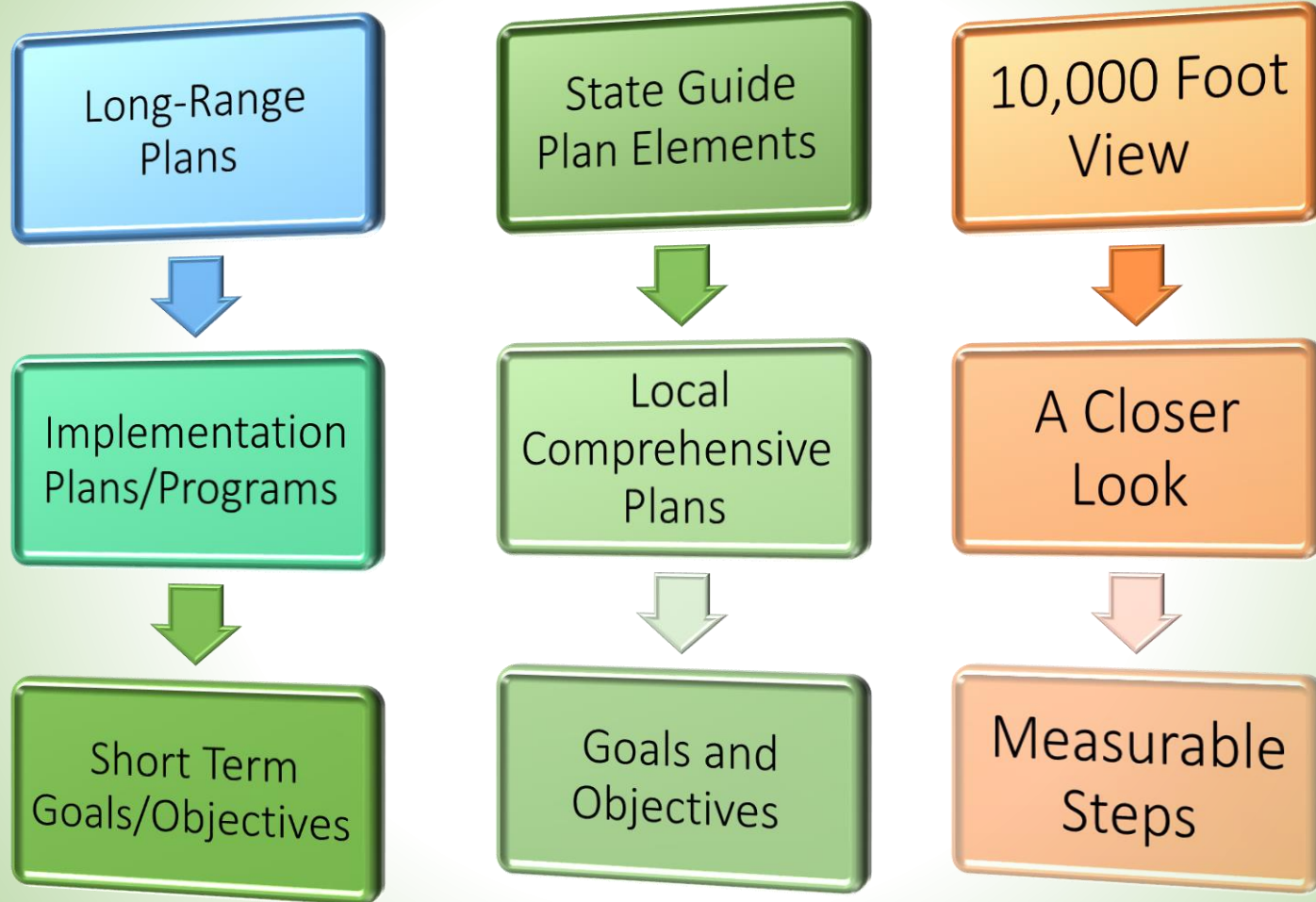
The Division of Statewide Planning promotes and encourages best practices for the balanced growth and development of the State of Rhode Island. We do so by:

- Connecting agencies, communities, and organizations;
- Guiding land use, water, and transportation choices; and
- Promoting continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive application of planning principles, along with data-driven analysis, to create and implement State, regional, and local plans.

**Our goal is to ensure equitable, sustainable, and resilient development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future**



## Fitting the Pieces Together





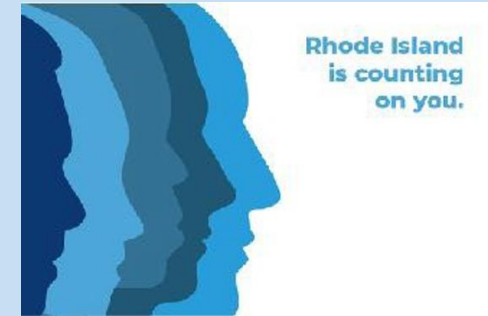
- Move to the Foundry (accessibility)
- Long Range Transportation Plan
- Bike & Pedestrian Mobility Plan
- Congestion Management Plan
- Transit Master Plan
- Equity Benefit Analysis for the STIP & LRTP
- State Freight Committee
- Port of Providence Community Engagement
- Small Business Resilience
- I-95 Corridor Coalition (The Eastern Transportation Coalition) Training and Involvement
- TRB & NCHRP Involvement
- Regional MPO Outreach and Coordination
- STIP adoption & 32 amendments (including 1 major and 4 minor)
- Migration to an E-STIP and PMG STIP Manager Platform
- Tri-Party Agreement
- STIP MOU in Changing Times
- Continuing Education of Decisionmakers and Committees
- Training and Professional Development
- FHWA Climate Change Webinars
- Annual Obligation Report
- Census Data and Census 2020
- Update of Public Participation Plan & LEP
- Contact Database Development
- Continuous Development of Map Data and Map Products
- Local Partnerships
- Revolving Terms Re-Established
- State Planning Council Membership Changes
- Pivot to Virtual Public Meetings due to COVID

## 2022 Recertification - Rhode Island MPO



## Census – State Complete Count Committee

- Established by EO in December 2018
- 63 members, 7 subcommittees, 3 committees
- Outreach – pre-COVID
- Outreach – post-COVID
- Changing Census dates



# 2020 Census Timeline

The Long and Winding Road

## 2020 Census Begins

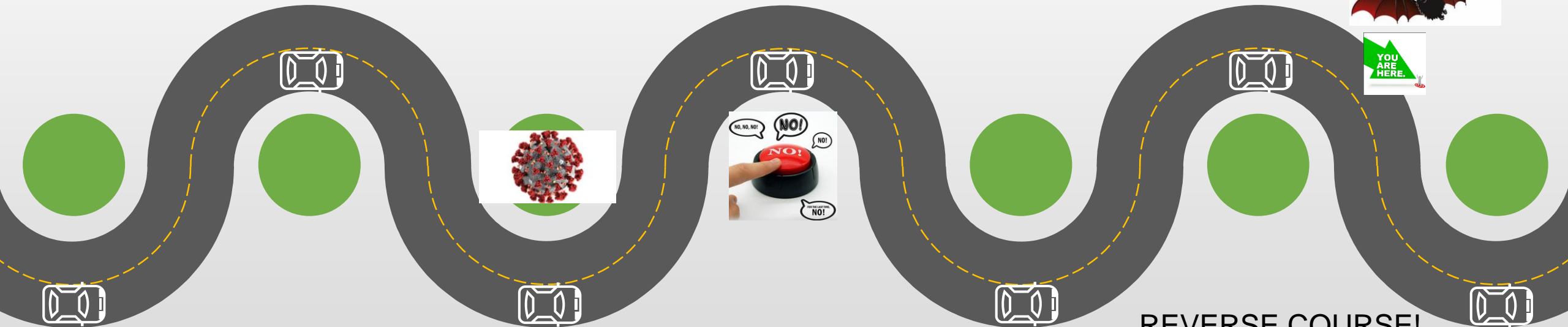
- Late March 2020

## July 31, 2020

- Original 2020 Census End Date

## October 31, 2020

- New 2020 Census End Date (Announced in May)
- And also end date required by Court Order
- And also Halloween



Rhode Island Census  
Complete Count Committee  
Established

- Governor's Executive Order, December 2018

## COVID-19

- Postpones 2020 Census Field Operations

## August 2020

- Census Field Work Begins

REVERSE COURSE!  
September 30, 2020  
End Date

- Announced in August



## Risk Reduction for Small Business Resiliency Project



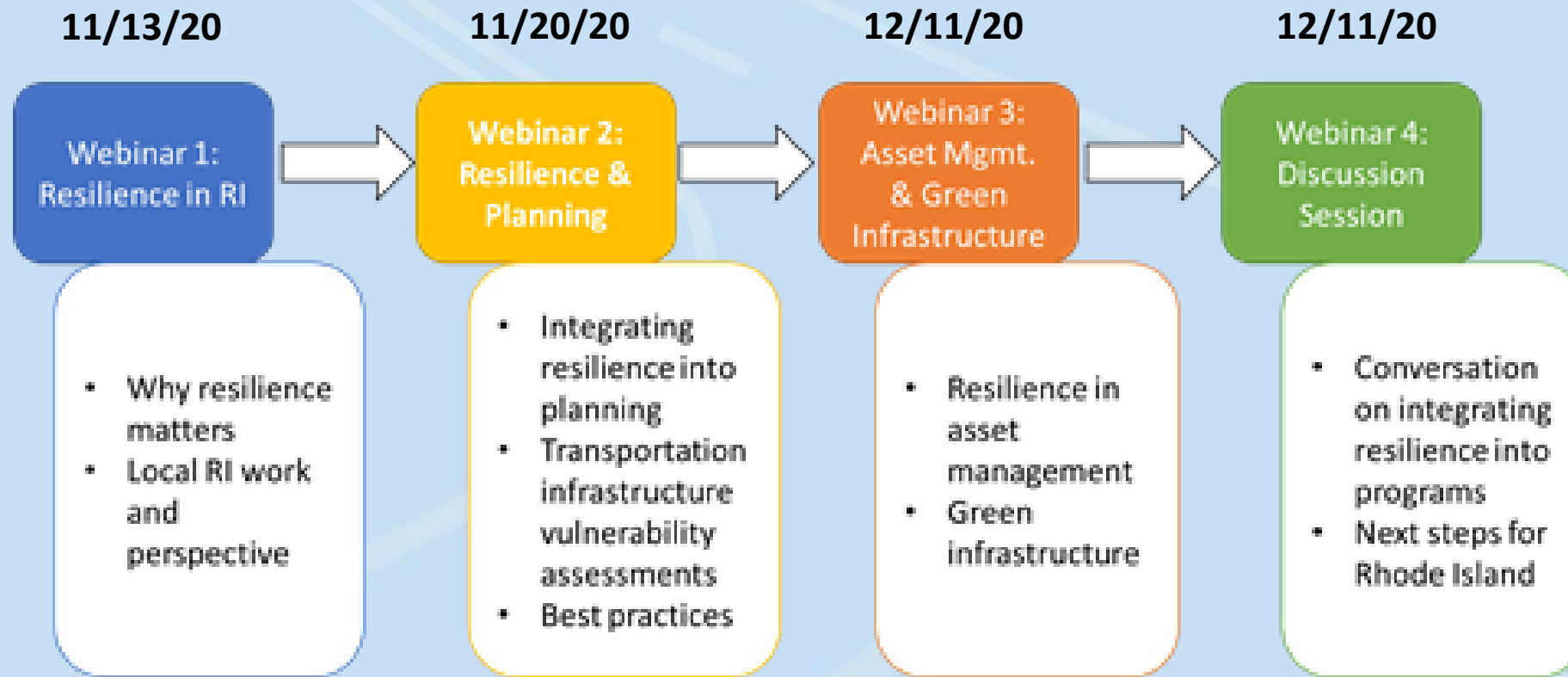
Identified, assessed, and addressed vulnerabilities of small businesses in Rhode Island.

Developed Risk Reduction Guides with practical information to help small businesses become more resilient.

Developed recommendations for municipal and state governments to support business resilience.



# Transportation Planning & Natural Hazard Resilience Seminar Series In cooperation with FHWA



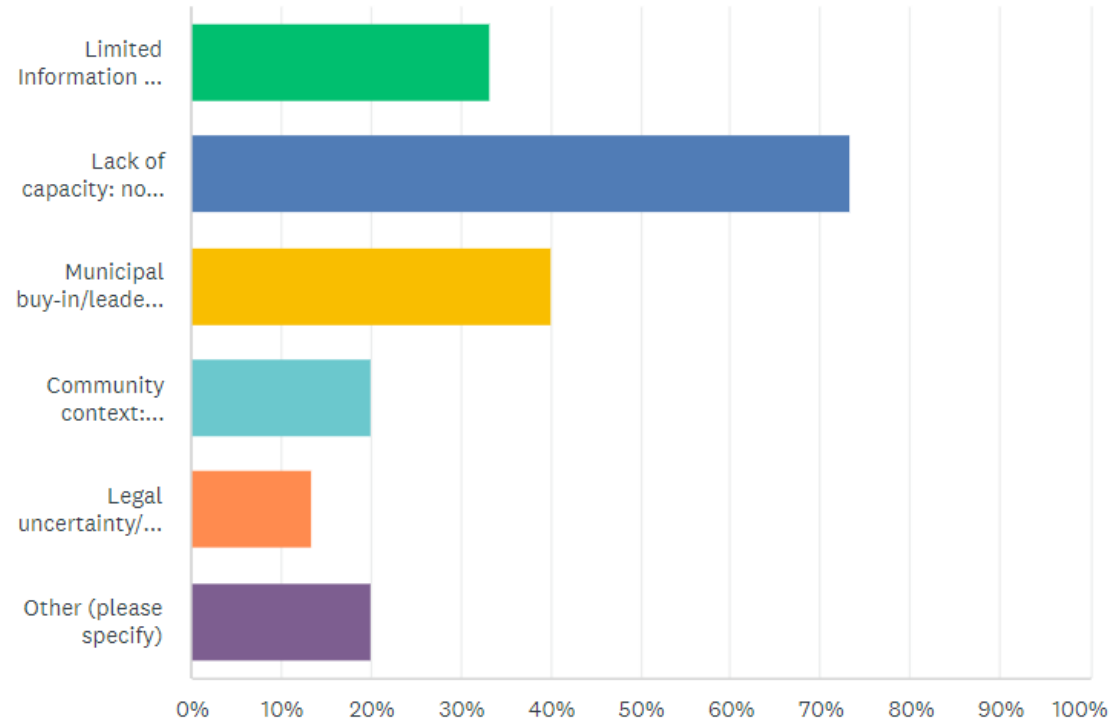
2022 Recertification - Rhode Island MPO



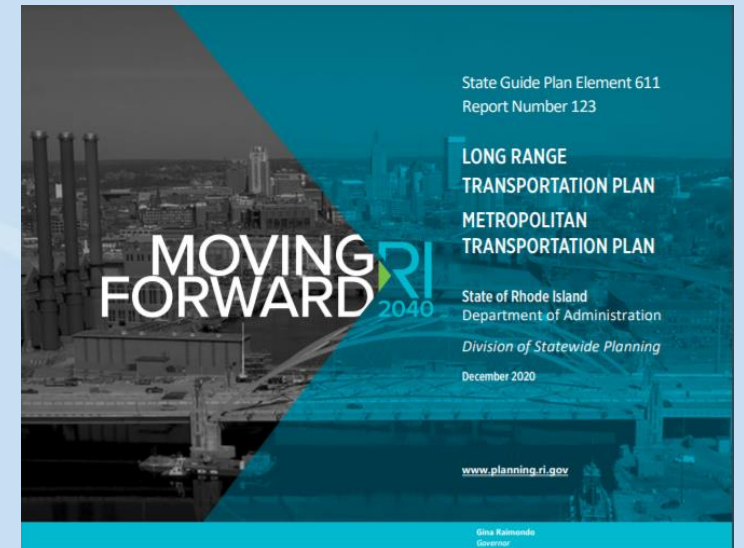
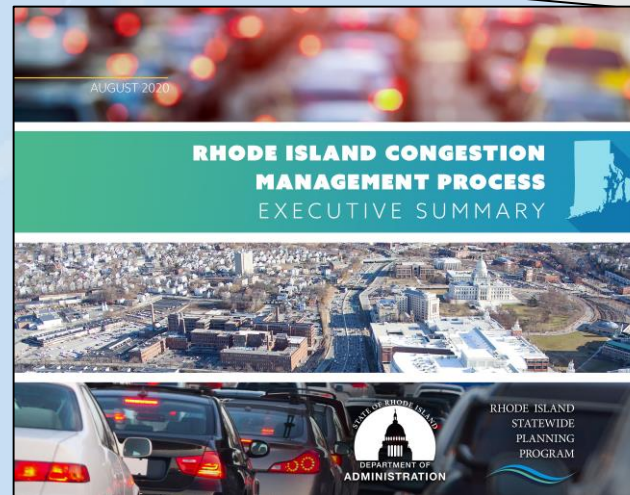
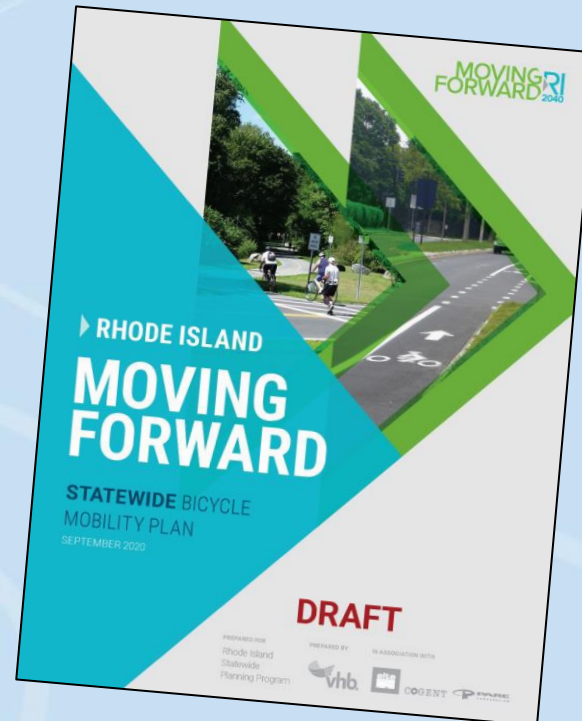
# Barriers to Climate Adaptation Survey

What are the main reasons that your municipality has not implemented climate change adaptation strategies, especially through land use regulations or local ordinances? (Choose top two reasons):

Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



# Long Range Plans Completed



2022 Recertification - Rhode Island MPO



# State Guide Plan

## 42-11-10 – State Guide Plan Law

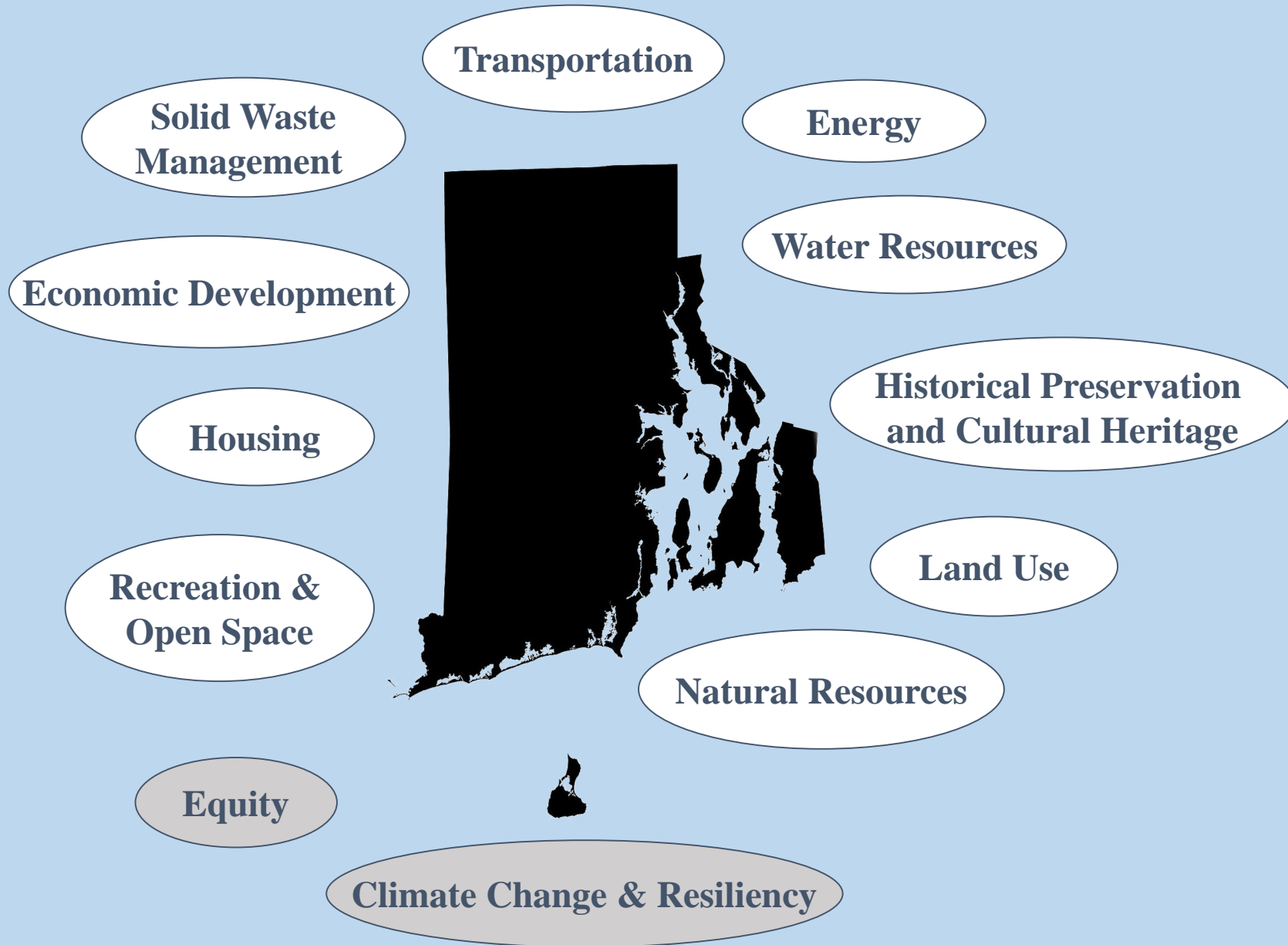
Series of topical plans used to centralize long-range goals, policies, plans, and implementation activities. for the State

The [State Planning Council](#) is responsible for approval of elements of the State Guide Plan.

Currently there are 17 Elements of State Guide Plan







## **What is the State Guide Plan?**

The SGP provides a degree of continuity and permanent policy direction for the State's future development.

The SPC is responsible for approval of all elements of the SGP, which has four primary functions:

- It sets long-range goals and policy positions (generally twenty years);
- It provides a means to evaluate and coordinate projects or proposals of State importance;
- It sets standards for comprehensive community plans; and
- It serves as a source of information on various topics of statewide importance.

# How Do We Review Local Community Comprehensive Plans?

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
1. General Standards .....	2
2. Planning for Natural Resources .....	3
3. Planning for Outdoor Recreation and Open Space .....	4
4. Planning for Historical and Cultural Resources.....	5
5. Planning for Housing .....	6
6. Planning for Economic Development.....	10
7. Planning for Services and Facilities.....	11
8. Planning for Transportation .....	18
9. Planning for Natural Hazards and Climate Change .....	20
10. Planning for Land Use.....	21
10A. Designating a Local Growth Center.....	24
10B. Maintaining Local Growth Center Designation .....	25
11. The Implementation Program.....	26
12. Mapping Standards.....	27
13. The Formal Adoption Process .....	28
Appendix – Comprehensive Plan Content Completion Checklist.....	29

# Local Comprehensive Plans



- ✓ 26 fully-approved
- 11 expired
- ✗ 2 denied



- 
- In 2011 revisions were made to the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulations Act. A major change was that State approvals were extended from 5 years to 10 years. Also added was a new requirement for an implementation report.
- 
- Municipalities are now required to submit an; “Informational report on the status of the comprehensive plan implementation program with the Division of Planning not more than five (5) years from the date of municipal approval” (§ 45-22.2-12).
- 
- Ensures municipalities are assessing progress toward achieving actions identified in their implementation program

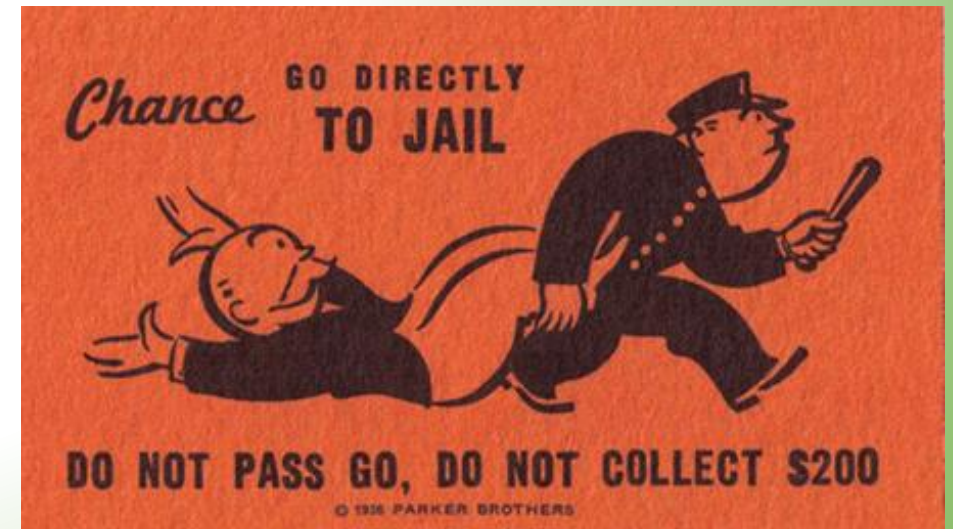


# Why a Status Report?



# Are Communities Penalized If They Don't Have An Approved Comp Plan or Exceed the 5 Year Reporting Deadline ?

- Although the required by law, **there is no specific penalty** for failure to comply.
- Per RIGL 45-22.2-13 “(h) Upon approval by the chief or superior court, the municipality is eligible for all benefits and incentives conditioned on an approved comprehensive plan pursuant to this chapter, and the municipality is allowed to submit the approved comprehensive plan or relevant section thereof to any state agency which requires the submission of a plan as part of its requirements, and the plan or relevant section thereof shall satisfy that requirement.”



**Where  
does the  
power to  
protect  
the public  
interest  
come  
from?**





An aerial photograph of a coastal region. A large body of water, likely a bay or harbor, occupies the upper and central portions of the image. A long bridge spans across the water, connecting the mainland to a large island. The island is densely populated with buildings and infrastructure. To the right of the island, there is a large airport with a prominent runway. The surrounding land is a mix of urban development, agricultural fields, and natural vegetation. The text "Land Use 2025" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# Land Use 2025



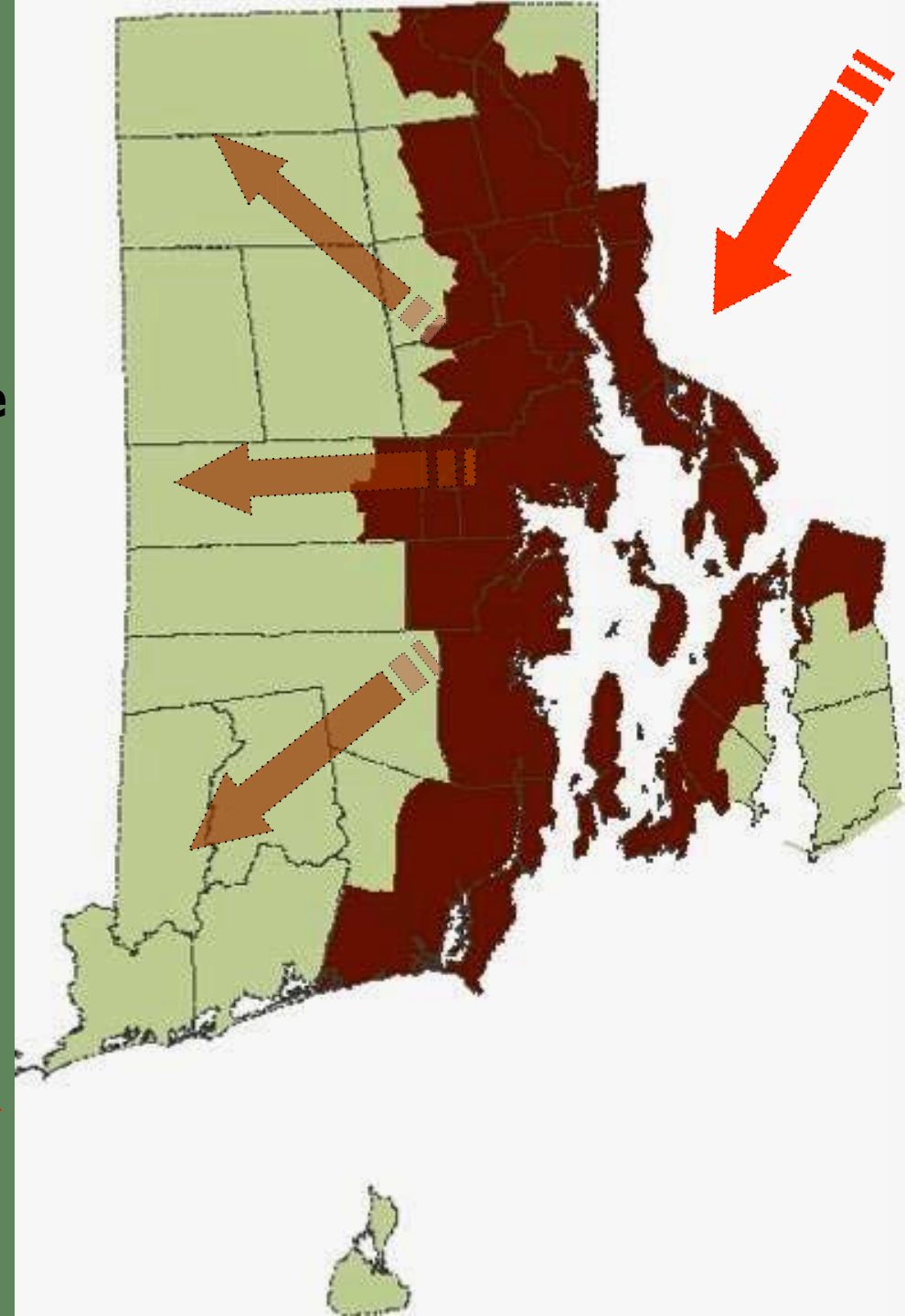
# Land Use 2025

- ◆ **Where are we, and where are we going?**
- ◆ **Where do we want to be in 2025?**
- ◆ **Issues to be concerned while getting there?**
- ◆ **How do we get there?**
- ◆ **What must be done to achieve vision?**



# Where are we?

- ◆ **80%+ Rhode Islanders still live in urbanized areas along the Bay & major rivers**
- ◆ **In recent decades, growth has been both outward from this core; and coming into the state from neighboring states**
- ◆ **More significant is the way we are growing and impacting on the RI landscape**



# Changes in Land Use

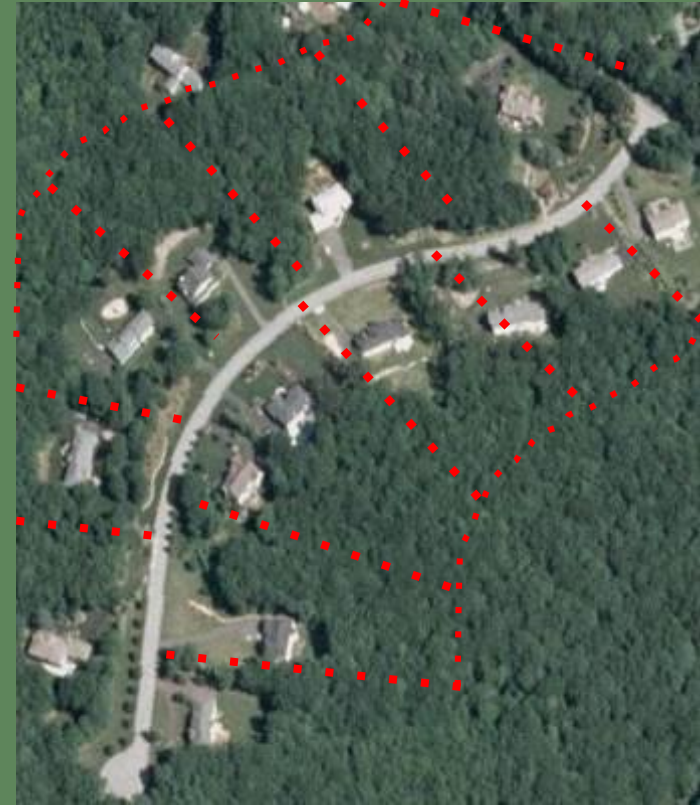


**We Used to Live and Work in Compact Communities....**

- ◆ **Small house lots**
- ◆ **Mix of housing types**
- ◆ **Interconnected street network to disperse traffic**
- ◆ **Mixed uses; Housing, shopping and civic functions**

# What is Different Now?

- ◆ **Lots have larger footprints than traditional development**
- ◆ **One dominant housing type (single family)**
- ◆ **Single-use areas – separation of industrial, business & civic uses**
- ◆ **Roads have few interconnections**
- ◆ **Traffic concentrated on collectors and arterials**





# Results

- ◆ **Developed land increasing 9 times faster than population**
- ◆ **Population and jobs moving away From Urban Core**
- ◆ **Unsustainable sprawl**
- ◆ **~ 30% of state's land currently developed**



**It took 330 years to develop the first 20% of our land, but just over 25 years to develop the next 10%.**

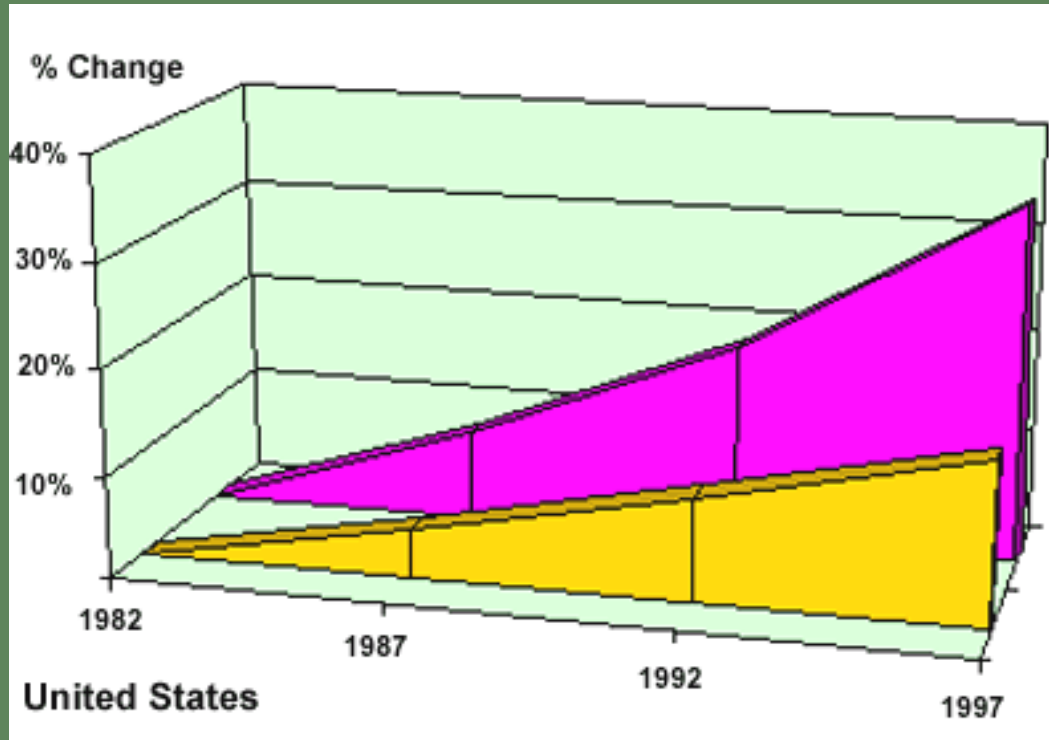
# Total New Developed Land by 2025

**109,000 acres or 16% of  
state area**





# Population & Land Development Rates in the United States

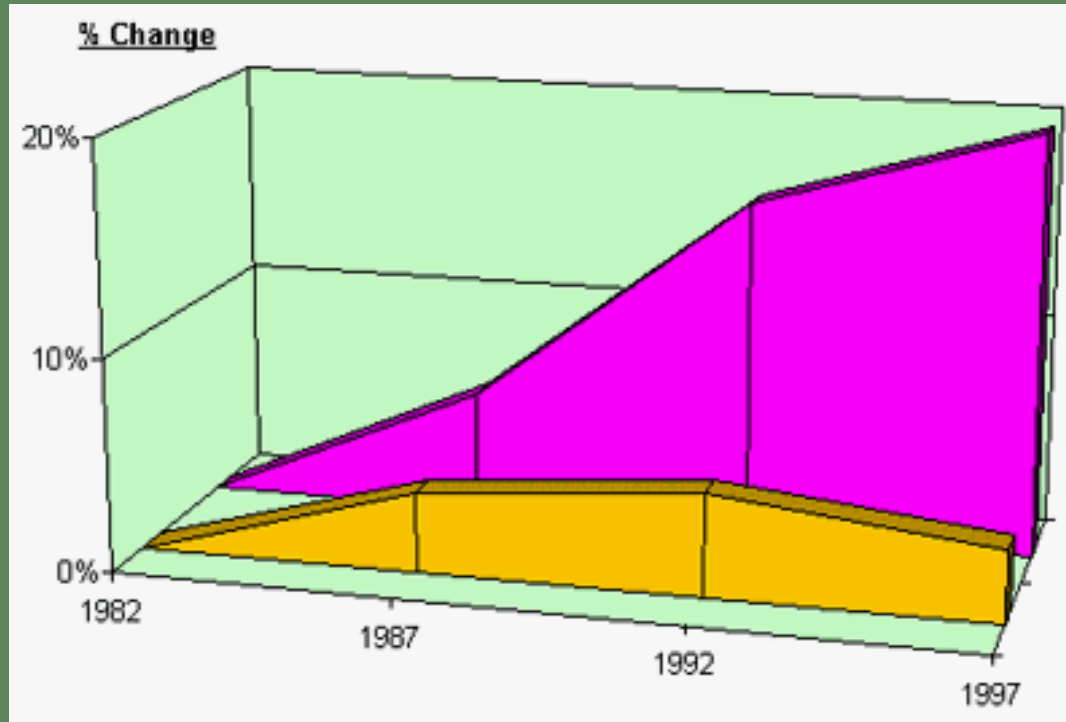


Population Change  
Development



**Changes in Population & Newly  
Developed Land from 1982-1997**

# Rhode Island Population & Land Development Rates

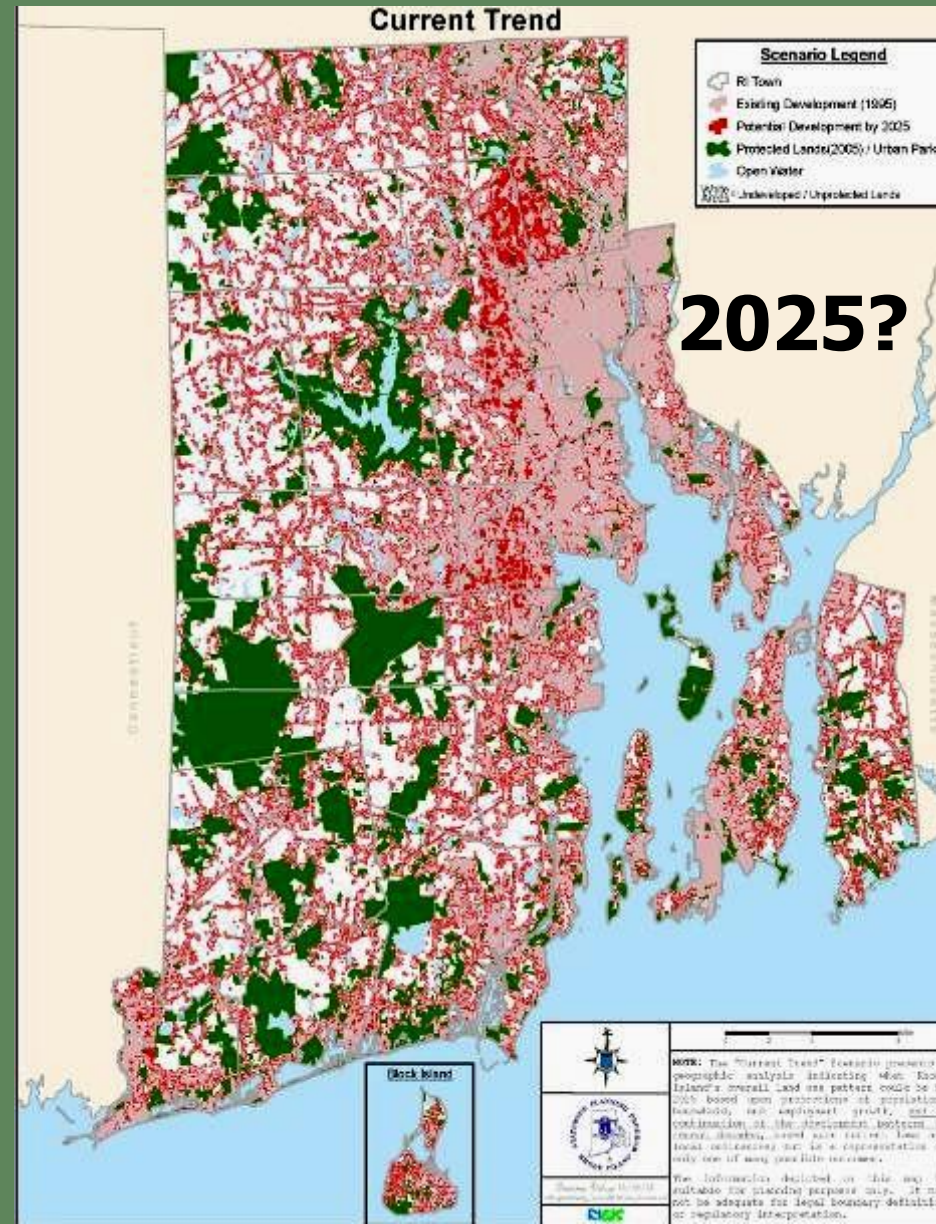
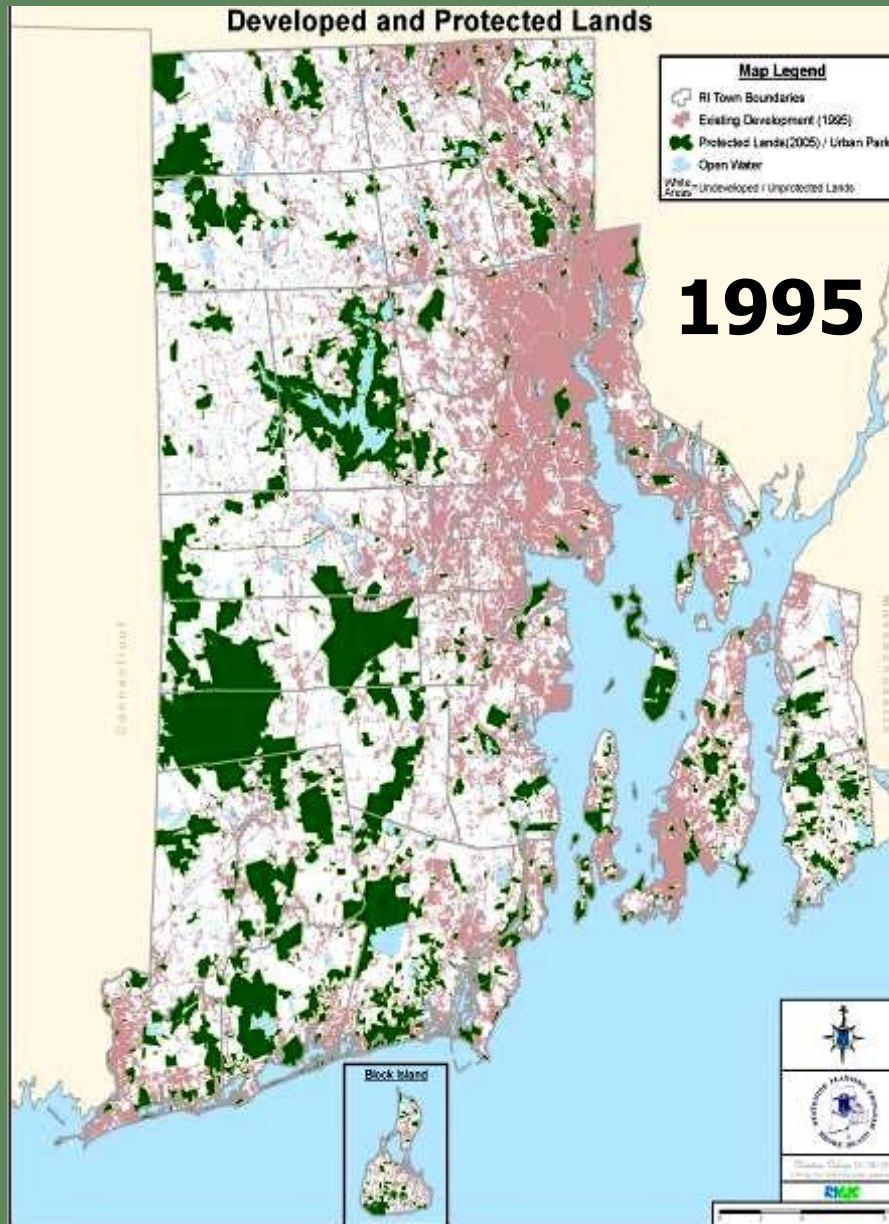


- Population Change
- Development



**Changes from 1982-1997**

# Where are we going?





# Primary Goals

## A Sustainable Rhode Island



## Greenspace & Greenways



## Excellence in Community Design

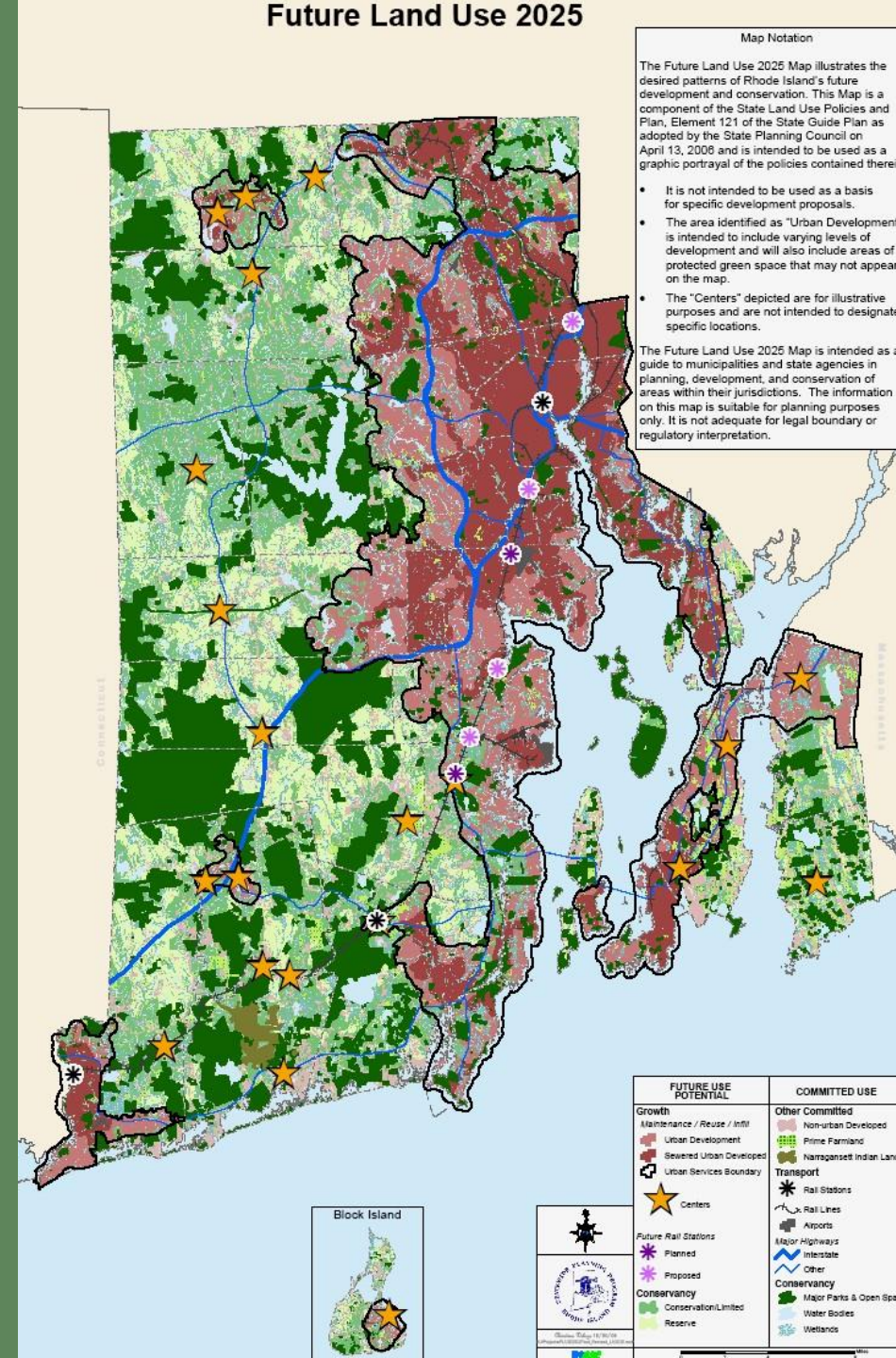


## First Class Infrastructure



# What Does This Look Like?

- ◆ **Concentrates growth in:**
  - Urban Service Boundary
  - Growth Centers
- ◆ **Maximizes investment in existing infrastructure**
- ◆ **Promotes more efficient development:**
  - Infill
  - Rehabilitation
  - Higher Densities
- ◆ **Maintains Green and Open Space**



# **Not all new ideas**

**Relate state land use policies to anticipated population growth to enhance the distinction between urban and rural places.**

**Use open space to control and shape urban growth.**

**Promote the use of higher residential densities and smaller lot frontages in urban and suburban areas, and town centers, where public water and sewer service is present or planned.**

**Promote low overall density where public service are not planned. Promote the clustering of development in these areas.**



# What Needs To Be Done?

**State Investment Strategy that focuses support for  
growth- inducing development investment within the  
Urban Services Boundary and in Growth Centers**



# State Investments

**Discretionary public infrastructure investments which can help shape Smart growth:**

- 🕒 **Community Development – CDBG**
- 🕒 **Housing – Neighborhood Opportunities Program**
- 🕒 **Economic Development – CEDS**
- 🕒 **Land Preservation – Open Space grants, Bikeways**
- 🕒 **Drinking Water – Clean Water SRF**
- 🕒 **Wastewater – RI Clean Water Finance SRF**
- 🕒 **Transportation – Transportation Enhancement Program, CMAQ**
- 🕒 **Education – School Housing Aid**

# What Are Some Of The Other Issues?

- ◆ **Affordable Housing**
- ◆ **Economic Development**
- ◆ **Resource Constraints**
  - **Water**
  - **Sewer**
- ◆ **Open Space Protection**
- ◆ **Transportation**



*A plan without data is a guess;*

*A plan isn't just a list of hopes  
and wishes, it develops  
measurable, achievable criteria.*



# The Challenge Ahead

**How do we measure  
success?**

**Or lack of ?**



# Land Use Performance Measures

## **To be measured within the Urban Services Boundary:**

- ◆ \$\$ Investments
- ◆ # of Housing Units permitted
- ◆ Amount of Commercial/industrial square footage constructed
- ◆ Density of housing units
- ◆ # of current Comprehensive Plans
- ◆ # of Towns with full-time planning staff

## **To be measured outside of Urban Services Boundary**

- ◆ # of lost acres of farmland
- ◆ # of Growth Centers
- ◆ # of current Comprehensive Plans
- ◆ # of Towns with full-time planning staff

# Tools to Promote Compact Development

**Community Comprehensive Plans**

**Form based Codes**

**Transit Oriented Development**

**Projects of Regional Significance**

**Transfer of Development Rights**

**Permit Allocation Systems**

**Historic Tax Credits**







# **Tools to Promote Preservation**

**Comprehensive Plans**

**Land Acquisition**

**Farmland Zoning**

**Historic Overlay Zoning**

**Buying Development Rights**

**Cluster Development**

**Conservation Development**





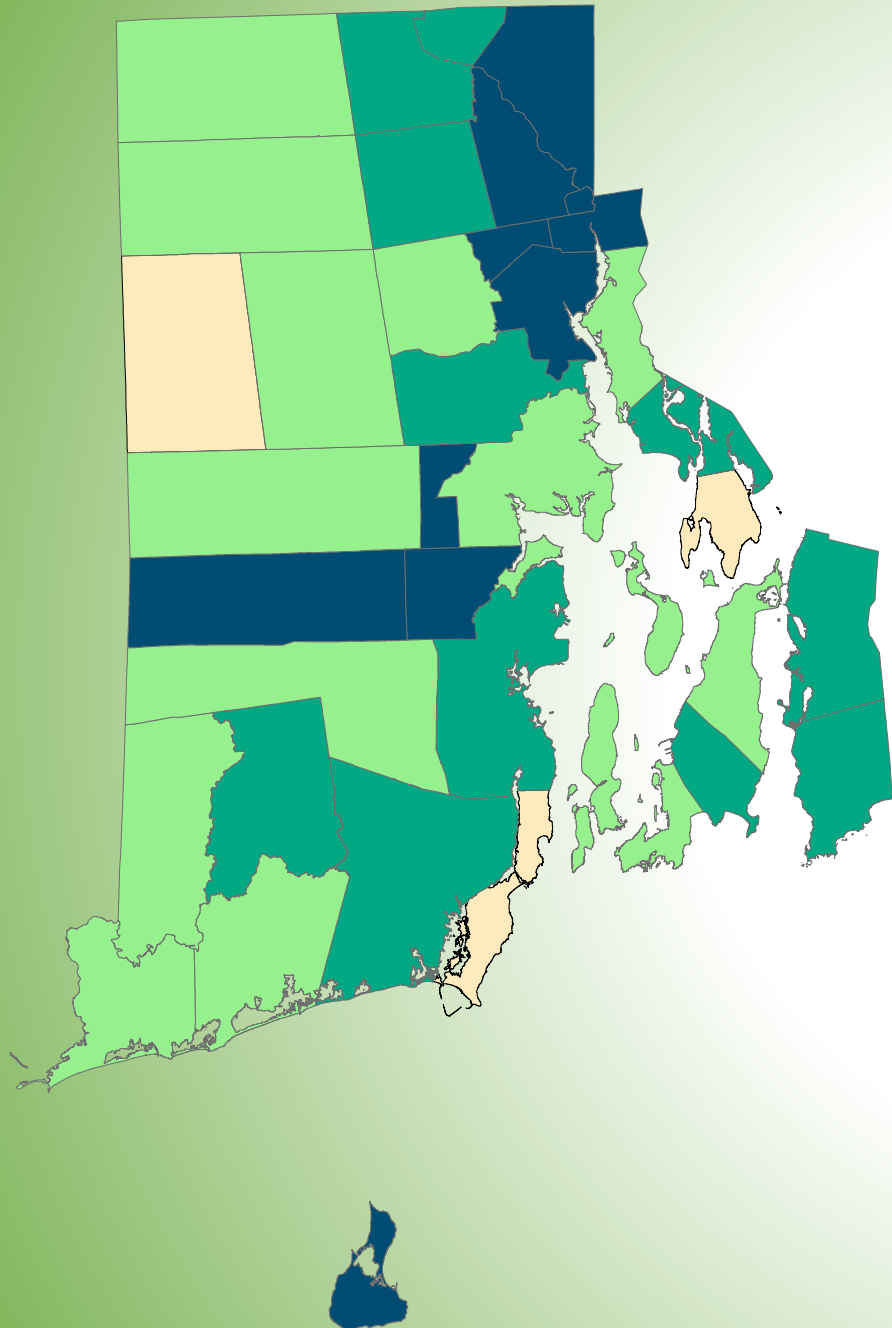
# Planning Board Survey Response

Q7 What is most important land use related issue facing Rhode Island today?



A word cloud of responses to the question "What is most important land use related issue facing Rhode Island today?". The words are in various sizes and orientations, with the most prominent words being "development", "climate change", "infrastructure", "solar", "housing", "sea level rise", "planning", "communities", "need", "green", "energy", "encourage", "State", "Keep", "areas", "land use", "plans", "residential", "sustainable", "rural", "issues", "make", and "development".

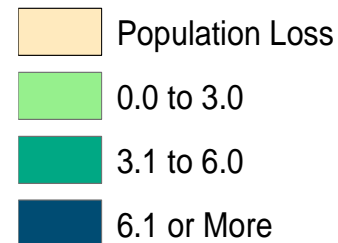
issues land use plans make residential infrastructure sustainable  
planning rural housing sea level rise solar  
communities development land use  
climate change energy need encourage State Keep areas  
green



This map shows the percent change in total population from the 2010 Census to the 2020 Census at the municipality level.

- Top 5 in terms of population growth were New Shoreham, Central Falls, East Greenwich, Cumberland and Providence
- Strong growth in northeast urban core cities
- Narragansett, Foster and Bristol lost population.

#### Percent Change by Municipality



Rhode Island percent = 4.3

# Rhode Island's Population Grew 4.3% Last Decade

## Rhode Island

Click a value to the right to change the map and table.

Total Population (2020):

1,097,379

Numeric Change in Population (2010–2020):

44,812

Percent Change in Population (2010–2020):

4.3%

Housing Units (2020):

483,474

Housing Unit Vacancy Rate (2020):

8.7%

Percent Change in Housing Units (2010–2020):

4.3%

## Population Density in Rhode Island Counties: 2020



People per square mile

- 500.0 or more
- 200.0 to 499.9

## Rhode Island Counties

(Ranked by 2020 total population)

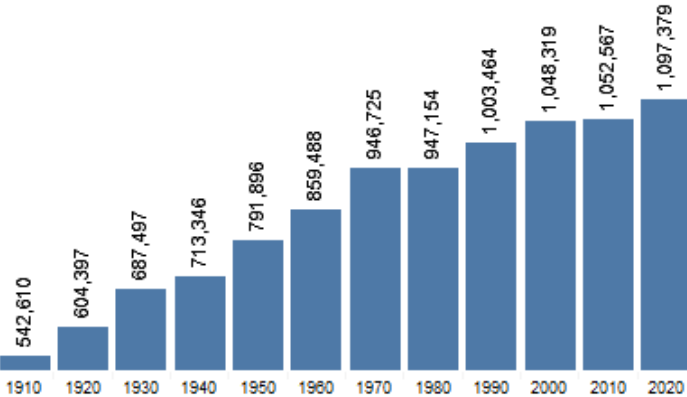
1.	Providence County	660,741
2.	Kent County	170,363
3.	Washington County	129,839
4.	Newport County	85,643
5.	Bristol County	50,793

## Rhode Island Counties

(Ranked by percent change in population, 2010–2020)

1.	Providence County	5.4
2.	Newport County	3.3
3.	Kent County	2.5
4.	Washington County	2.3
5.	Bristol County	1.8

## Population (1910–2020)



# OTHER DATA RESOURCES

The screenshot displays the Rhode Island Maps and Data website. The header features the RIGIS logo and navigation links: Rhode Island Geographic Information System, Map Collections, Getting Started, User Groups, and Blog. The main banner includes the title "Rhode Island Maps and Data", the subtitle "Geospatial Data Hub", and a search bar labeled "search RIGIS open data". Below the banner, a section titled "RIGIS Online Database" explains that the system distributes open geographically-referenced datasets covering transportation, infrastructure, and the environment. A secondary navigation bar lists categories like ABOUT RIGIS, DATA, DOCUMENT LIBRARY, BLOG, OTHER RESOURCES, FAQ, and CALENDAR. The "Data Collections" section is highlighted, showing a grid of icons and labels for various data types: RIGIS DATA, IMAGERY, ELEVATION & BATHYMETRY, BASEMAPS, MUNICIPAL GIS, and RI DEPARTMENT RESOURCES.

**Rhode Island Maps and Data**  
Geospatial Data Hub

search RIGIS open data

RIGIS Online Database

The Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS) distributes open geographically-referenced datasets that represent a wide range of topics, including transportation, infrastructure, and the environment.

Rhode Island Geographic Information System

ABOUT RIGIS ▾ DATA ▾ DOCUMENT LIBRARY ▾ BLOG OTHER RESOURCES ▾ FAQ CALENDAR 🔍

Data Collections  
Metadata Resources  
What's New

### Data Collections

- RIGIS DATA
- IMAGERY
- ELEVATION & BATHYMETRY
- BASEMAPS
- MUNICIPAL GIS
- RI DEPARTMENT RESOURCES

- **Free access and downloads**
- **Several Hundred Spatial Datasets, Categories**
- **Many Contributors**
- **Managed by URI Geospatial Extension Specialists**
- **Aerial Photography – RIDSP, RIDOT, RIDEM...**



Resources?

<http://www.planning.ri.gov> or  
<http://www.census.ri.gov>

We've got reports and aerial photographs going back to the 1930s. We'll be happy to walk you through our data tools or provide documents from our library.

It takes real  
planning to  
organize this kind  
of chaos.

*Mel Odom*

meetville.com

**Thank You!**



**Questions?**

**[Meredith.Brady@doa.ri.gov](mailto:Meredith.Brady@doa.ri.gov)**

**(401) 368-7601 (cell)**