

Waterfront District Permit Application – Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

Prepared for Metacomet Property, LLC

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Introduction

Weston & Sampson was retained to review an application for a Waterfront District for a project located at 500 Veterans Memorial Parkway, East Providence, RI. This report summarizes the proposal's consistency with the East Providence zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan. This is accomplished by providing specific citations from these documents within the report to demonstrate how the various components of this proposal are consistent with the purposes and intent of the City and state's regulatory framework. The review and analysis were conducted by Susan Mara, a project manager with the firm who has over 15 years of experience in municipal planning and related topic areas.

Application Process

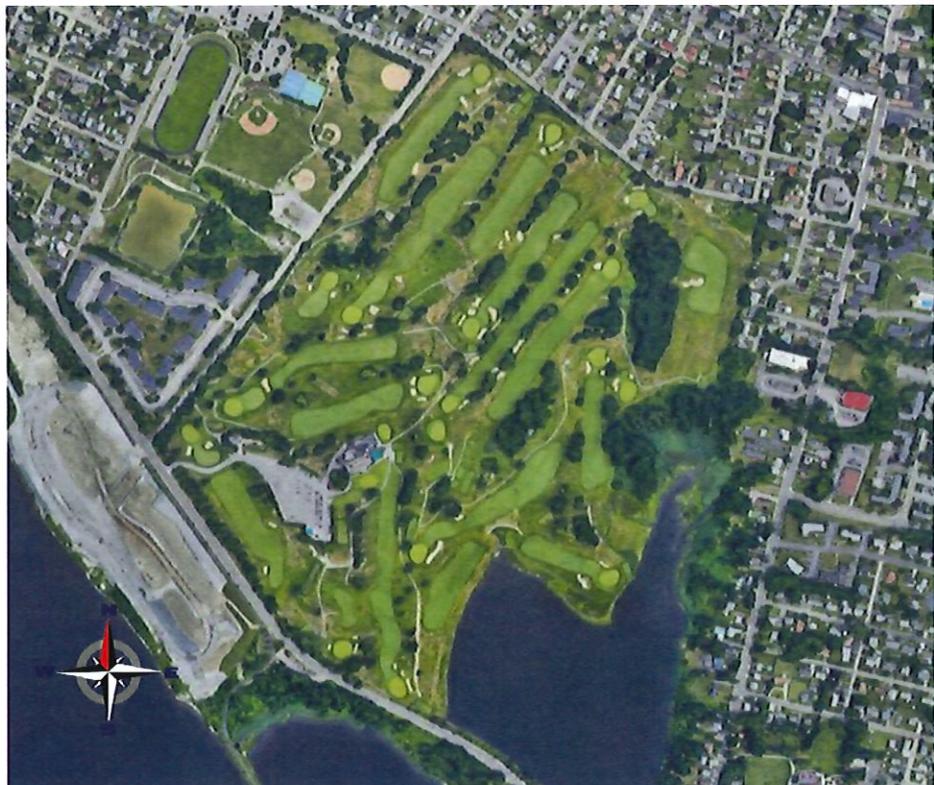
This application for a Waterfront District Application for a Permit has been reviewed by the Waterfront Commission and is now in front of the Planning Board for an updated determination of consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

Proposed District Location

The location of the proposed development is 500 Veterans Memorial Parkway, also identified as Assessor's Map 107, Block 15, Lots 1 and 1-10. The site is located within the Waterfront District and the sub-district is Metacomet.

Most of the site is developed and was utilized as an 18-hole golf course on approximately 105 acres. The use as a golf course was recently terminated and the current owner purchased the property for development. Figure 1 provides an aerial view of the existing golf course location and the surrounding neighborhood.

*Figure 1. Aerial View of Existing Golf Course and Surrounding Area
Source: Google Earth
06/23/21*



Metacomet Sub-district Description

The approved sub-district included three components:

- Area "A" – The permissible uses in this area of the sub-district are governed by the Schedule of Use Regulations (Chapter 19, Article IX, Section 19-481). This sub-district area contains approximately 60.9± acres and will allow for a range of commercial and office-type uses, as well as single and multifamily housing.
- Area "B" – The area of the sub-district identified as "B" will be subdivided as a separate lot and conveyed to the City of East Providence as a condition of any future development plan in the sub-district. The uses allowed in area B, consisting of approximately 9.6± acres, will be consistent with those allowed in the Schedule of Use Regulations for the Opens Space 1 (O-1) zoning district.
- Area "C" – The area of the sub-district identified as "C," consisting of 48.1± acres, will be developed by the property owner into a nine-hole public golf course.

Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the boundaries of these three components.

Figure 2. Aerial View with Metacomet sub district components.



Comprehensive Plan Consistency

The East Providence Comprehensive Plan is the blueprint for development within a community. According to RIGL §45-22.2-3(a)(1):

Comprehensive planning by municipal government is necessary to form a rational basis for the long-term physical development of a municipality and to avoid conflicting requirements and reactive land use regulations and decisions.

This statement in Rhode Island General Law provides the basis for the requirement that all land use decisions must be consistent with the local comprehensive plan.

Table 1 presents sections and direct citations from the City of East Providence Comprehensive Plan that are supportive of the proposed project.

Table 1. Comprehensive Plan Consistency		
Citation	Location	Comment
General		
The challenge for the City is to ensure quality development of the remaining undeveloped lands and the re-development of land for new uses, such as land in the waterfront districts , while protecting the quality of life for residents, protecting the natural resources of the City, and creating an environment that can promote a favorable economic climate.	Intent and Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan	This proposal will provide for re-development opportunities that will enhance and expand the existing waterfront district.
Continue to implement the East Providence Waterfront Special Development District Plan (adopted by the East Providence City Council on December 2, 2003) requiring mixed-use redevelopment with various residential, commercial, office, retail, hospitality, and light manufacturing uses in the northern and southern districts.	Summary of the Comprehensive Plan	This proposal will expand the waterfront district and provide development opportunities related to residential, commercial, office, retail, and hospitality.
Continue to maintain and enhance City parks, playgrounds, and open space properties.	Recreation, Conservation, and Natural Open Space Element	This proposal will result in a golf course.
Require dedication of recreation, open space, and waterfront access as part of new development where appropriate and feasible.	Recreation, Conservation, and Natural Open Space Element	The rezoning of this site to the Metacomet Sub-district included the deeding of approximately 10 acres of open space to the City.
Land Use Element		
East Providence shall seek to make development and investment decisions that promote economic development and broaden the tax base of the City and provide employment opportunities for City residents , that enhance potential downtown and village centers, that provide a range of housing choices, that maintain	Land Use Element	This proposal will provide approximately 60 acres for mixed-use development potential, broadening the City's tax base and providing employment opportunities. Additionally, the proposal will provide almost 10 acres of preserved open space, donated to the City, as well

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the density and character of existing neighborhoods, that provide recreation and open space, parks, playgrounds and linkages such as pedestrian paths and bikeways , that provide new opportunities for public access to the waterfront, and new places to work, live and recreate on the waterfront, that maintain infrastructure, that lessen our community's impact on the environment by becoming more sustainable and that look for opportunities to increase use of renewable energy, and decisions that retain the qualities that residents desire and cite as to why they choose to live in East Providence.		as a continued use of a golf course with preference to East Providence residents. Ten percent of the housing will be deed-restricted affordable housing. The development includes internal auto and pedestrian circulation which link the buildings to an internal Town Center. The development includes retail and service commercial to provide residents with local access to these uses, which are walkable. The development includes bicycle infrastructure, including multi-use paths and bicycle parking. In addition, there will be a safe and efficient connection to the East Bay Bikeway.
Permit infill development or redevelopment of properties provided they are compatible with adjoining land uses in terms of density and the neighborhood's predominant character.	Land Use Element	This proposal will encourage the redevelopment of a portion of the sub-district, enhancing the existing waterfront district, in a manner shown in this report to be compatible with surrounding land uses.
Ensure that remaining vacant land or redeveloped parcels in the City are used for their maximum benefit to the community , and are of high-quality design and in character with the adjoining parcels and neighborhood.	Land Use Goals and Objectives Goal 1.0	The proposed development will result in an increased tax base, additional open space, and recreation opportunities for the direct benefit of the community.
Provide natural or man-made buffers between residential neighborhoods and incompatible adjacent non-residentially zoned properties and/or uses.	Land Use Goals and Objectives Objective 1.3	The proposal includes a 9.6 acre green space parcel, which will be owned by the City, to buffer adjacent existing uses from the new development.
Target future land uses that will increase the tax base of East Providence as municipal costs increase and residential growth decreases	Land Use Goals and Objectives Objective 1.6	This proposal will provide an opportunity for redevelopment that will offer a diversification of the City's tax base.
Target future land uses that will create significant job opportunities in the community, in a manner compatible with surrounding land uses.	Land Use Goals and Objectives Objective 1.7	This proposal will produce the opportunity for new development that will produce jobs in a variety of industries.
Work with private landowners to prepare plans that meet the goals and objectives of the Plan and the developer.	Land Use Goals and Objectives	This proposal is the result of a private landowner requesting to work with the City to design a plan to move forward and assist in implementing many of the goals

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	Objective 2.6	and objectives outlined in the comprehensive plan.
Link the approval of new development proposals, including infill proposals, to the existing capabilities of the infrastructure.	Land Use Goals and Objectives Objective 2.7	The City has identified this general area for infill development and discussed and planned for infrastructure to support such.
Diversify the City's existing tax base to reduce the tax burden on residential properties.	Land Use Goals and Objectives Objective 3.4	This proposal will result in a mix of uses, including commercial and residential apartments.
Continue to encourage a mix of land uses throughout the City.	Land Use Goals and Objectives Objective 3.5	This application is for a mixed-use style development on the site.
Circulation		
Improve access to vacant and underutilized parcels on the waterfront	Circulation Goals Goal 1.0	The proposed development includes a connection to the East Bay Bikeway.
Focus on providing walkable neighborhoods and a development scale that supports pedestrian movement within the City's Waterfront Special Development District.	Circulation Goals and Objectives Objective 2.1	The proposed development will include a Town Center that is walkable for the residents.
Work with RIPTA to monitor and recommend changes in bus service based on ridership patterns.	Circulation Goals and Objectives Objective 2.5	The developer is working with the City and RIPTA to discuss how to best service the proposed development.
Consider options for improving access to key development sites through use of innovative traffic design systems such as roundabouts and dedicated acceleration and deceleration lanes.	Circulation Goals and Objectives Objective 4.2	The develop has proposed a new two-lane roundabout on Veterans Memorial Parking at Lyon Avenue.
Economic Development Element		
The vision of economic development in East Providence includes the development of a diverse tax base predicated on attracting new high-quality industry to the City, as well as maintaining a wide variety of existing businesses	Economic Development Element	This proposal will provide a development opportunity to diversify the City's tax base, provide high-quality development, and enhance the existing business diversity within the City, while respecting

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within the community. New industry should respect existing neighborhoods, maximize the use of existing infrastructure, and positively contribute to the City's tax base. The City should also develop a comprehensive program of support services to encourage the consolidation and expansion of existing businesses through targeted assistance and public infrastructure improvements and should be consistent with the goals and policies identified in the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan.		neighborhood context.
Mixed Use: Development should, in the aggregate, provide a self-sustaining mix of commercial, residential, institutional, light industrial, civic, and recreational uses.	East Providence Waterfront Special Development District	This application is for a mixed-use development that also includes open space and recreation.
Facilitate economic development of appropriate vacant or underutilized parcels of land within the City to broaden the tax base and create local and regional job opportunities.	Economic Development Goals and Objectives Goal 2	This proposal will allow for the expansion of the waterfront district in a manageable and appropriate way, changing an underutilized parcel to an economically viable redevelopment project.
Diversify the economic base of the City of East Providence through a combined effort to market the City in general as a "good place to do business" and pursue targeted economic development opportunities matched to the City's assets.	Economic Development Goals and Objectives Goal 3	This proposal will provide for redevelopment opportunities that will assist in diversifying the City's tax base.
Housing		
Ensure that a diversity of housing exists in the city providing residents with a range of decent, safe, and affordable choices.	Housing Goals and Objectives Goal 1.0	This development will include almost 900 units of multi-unit residential.
Increase the supply of affordable housing for the various household income groups in the City.	Housing Goals and Objectives Goal 2.0	This development will include ten percent deed-restricted affordable housing.
Natural Resources		
Require pedestrian access to the waterfront as part of any private mixed-use development in waterfront areas.	Natural Resources Goals and Objectives Objective 3.1	This development will include pedestrian access, with links to the East Bay Bikeway.
Recreation, Conservation, and Open Space Element		
Identified General Recreation Needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian path systems in neighborhood parks and playgrounds • Preserved natural areas for passive 	Community Standards for the Recreation and Open Space System	The proposed development includes a pedestrian path system throughout, providing for both active and passive recreation opportunities.

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recreation and reflection		
Provide 2.5 acres of developed recreational space for every 1000 persons within a general ½ mile walking distance of individual residences.	Recreation, Conservation, and Open Space Element Goal 1	The donation of almost 10 acres of open space to the City will assist the City in reaching this goal.
Provide City residents with an increased diversity of recreational opportunities close to where they live.	Recreation, Conservation, and Open Space Element Objective 1.3	The overall project will provide almost 10 acres of open space for ownership by the City, as well as the continued use of a portion of the golf course with preference for City residents.
Review major residential and commercial development proposals and other infrequent land use projects, such as the building of new transportation routes and extension of public utilities, for unique opportunities to expand the recreation system through the donation of easements or land , or fee in lieu of donations.	Recreation, Conservation, and Open Space Element Objective 1.4	The overall project will result in almost 10 acres of donated open space to the City and the preservation of a portion of the golf course.
Preserve, expand, and enhance open space within the City of East Providence while broadening access to the public where warranted.	Recreation, Conservation, and Open Space Element Goal 8	The overall project will result in the donation of almost 10 acres of open space to the City expanding public access to open space areas.
Investigate means for the protection and preservation of the City's private golf courses.	Recreation, Conservation, and Open Space Element Objective 9.4	The overall project will result in the preservation of a portion of the existing golf course.
Require all future subdivisions, commercial developments, and Land Development Projects to provide for open space, active recreation space, buffers, and/or landscaping.	Recreation, Conservation, and Open Space Element Objective 9.6	The overall project will result in almost 10 acres of donated open space to the City and the preservation of a portion of the golf course with preference for City residents.
Require open space, buffers and landscaping of all developments.	Recreation, Conservation, and Open Space Element Objective 10.1	The overall project will result in almost 10 acres of donated open space to the City and the preservation of a portion of the golf course with preference for City residents.

Source: Adapted from the City of East Providence Comprehensive Plan Update 2010-2015

The 2003 East Providence Waterfront Special Development District Plan also included the following:

1. Expand the Tax Base - Waterfront development should provide positive fiscal impacts to the City while expanding the tax base and/or reduce the tax burden on residents.
2. Generate New Jobs - Implementation of waterfront development will generate a substantial number of new employment opportunities for the State's economy.

The Fiscal Impact Statement has demonstrated that the annual tax revenue generation, minus the additional service costs for the City, would be \$4.9 million. The commercial development will also provide opportunities for employment.

In summary, the above table of language, goals, and objectives from the comprehensive plan are provided to demonstrate how the existing plan supports the proposed mixed-use development that will embody so many of the goals and policies identified.

Neighborhood Context

Figure 3 provides a context view to consider when assessing neighborhood impacts.

North

To the north of the proposed development the dominating land use is medium density residential development. The two northern boundary lines are flanked by Fort Street and Lyon Avenue. The north side of Fort Street is developed with residential homes that look towards the existing golf course. This dynamic will not change significantly as the portion of the sub-district that faces Fort Street is significantly occupied by the section of the parcel that will be deeded to the City of East Providence for use as open space (area "B"). The northern section of the parcel that borders Lyon Avenue contains a recreation complex known as Pierce Memorial Stadium and contains several recreational play fields, buildings, and associated parking and other amenities.

South

The southern end of the district is bordered by the Veteran's Memorial Parkway and Watchemoket Cove. The cove will be protected from any future development impacts as the portion of the sub-district that borders the cove will remain in use as a golf course (area "C"), essentially preserving the existing status.

East

The eastern sub-district boundary abuts residential homes and occasional non-residential uses that front on S. Broadway and several other small side streets. This area of the sub-district is slated for continued use as a golf course (area "C") and there is expected to be little to no change or impact to those properties abutting this portion of the sub-district.

West

The area to the west of the sub-district is presently developed as an office park which consists of 15 single-story buildings and associated parking. The entrance to this office park is located on Veteran's Memorial Parkway, with a second ingress/egress on Lyon Avenue. The portion of the sub-district that abuts this area is proposed to be developed in the future (area "A"). It is not anticipated that the future development of this portion of the sub-district will have any impacts on the existing office park. Additionally, Lyon

Avenue is between the sub-district boundary and the office park property, providing separation between the two.

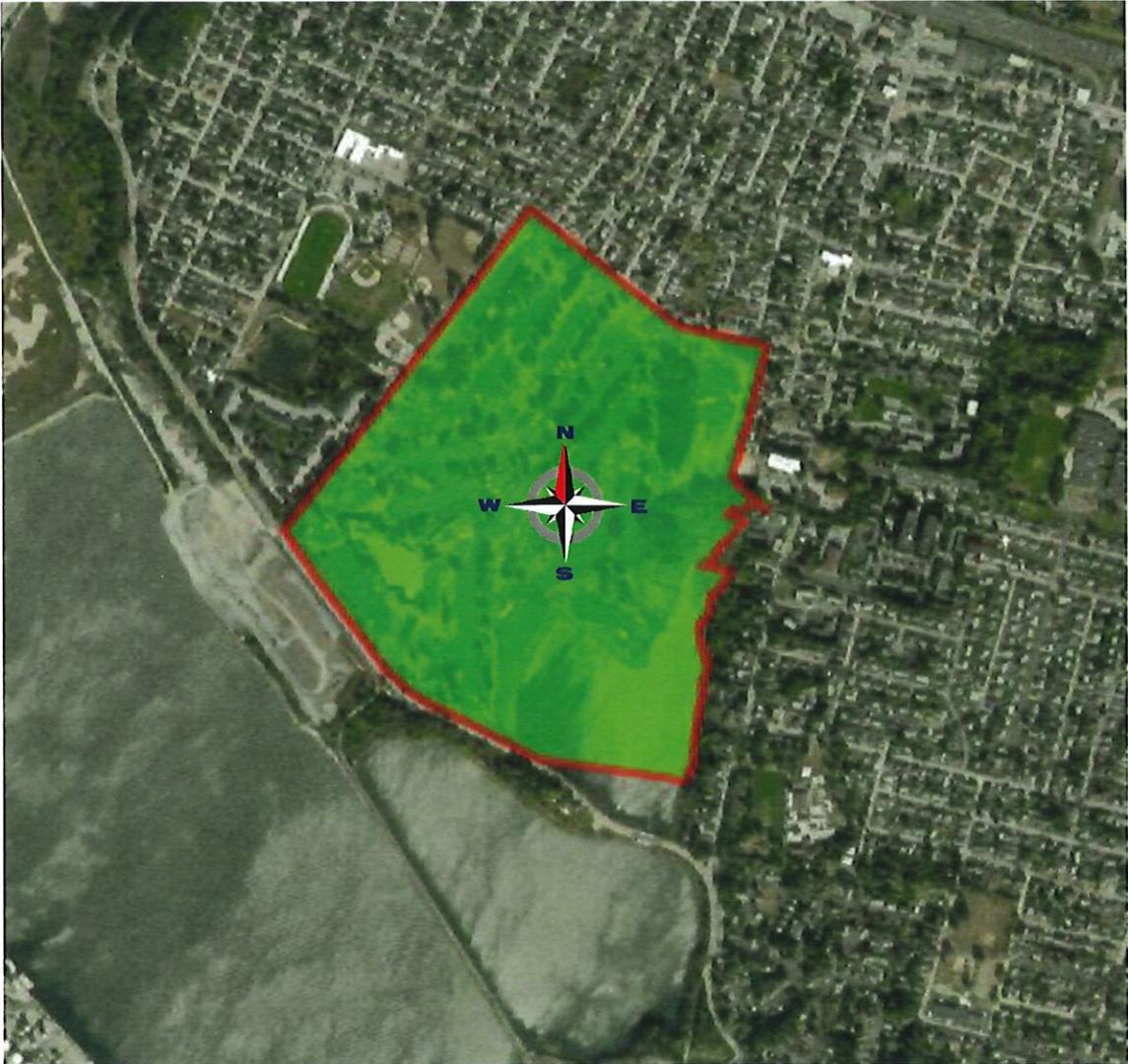


Figure 3. Sub-District Site Context
Source: City of East Providence GIS 06/24/21

Based on the assessments above of each of the areas adjacent to the proposed development it is our professional opinion, that the proposed development will not have a significant impact on the surrounding neighborhood. In some instances, little to no change from the present use will be experienced and in the case of the north and west adjacent areas, an improvement will likely be experienced. The properties fronting Fort Street will enjoy permanently protected open space owned by

the City for use by City residents, the adjacent office park will enjoy complimentary uses, and the eastern adjoining properties will experience little to no change from what they currently enjoy.

Veteran’s Memorial Parkway Corridor Specific Plan

As part of the City of East Providence Comprehensive Plan, the Land Use Element provides a more detailed map of several specific areas of the City. One of the areas highlighted is the Veteran’s Memorial Parkway Corridor Specific Plan Area. Figure 4 represents the map presented in the comprehensive plan of this area.

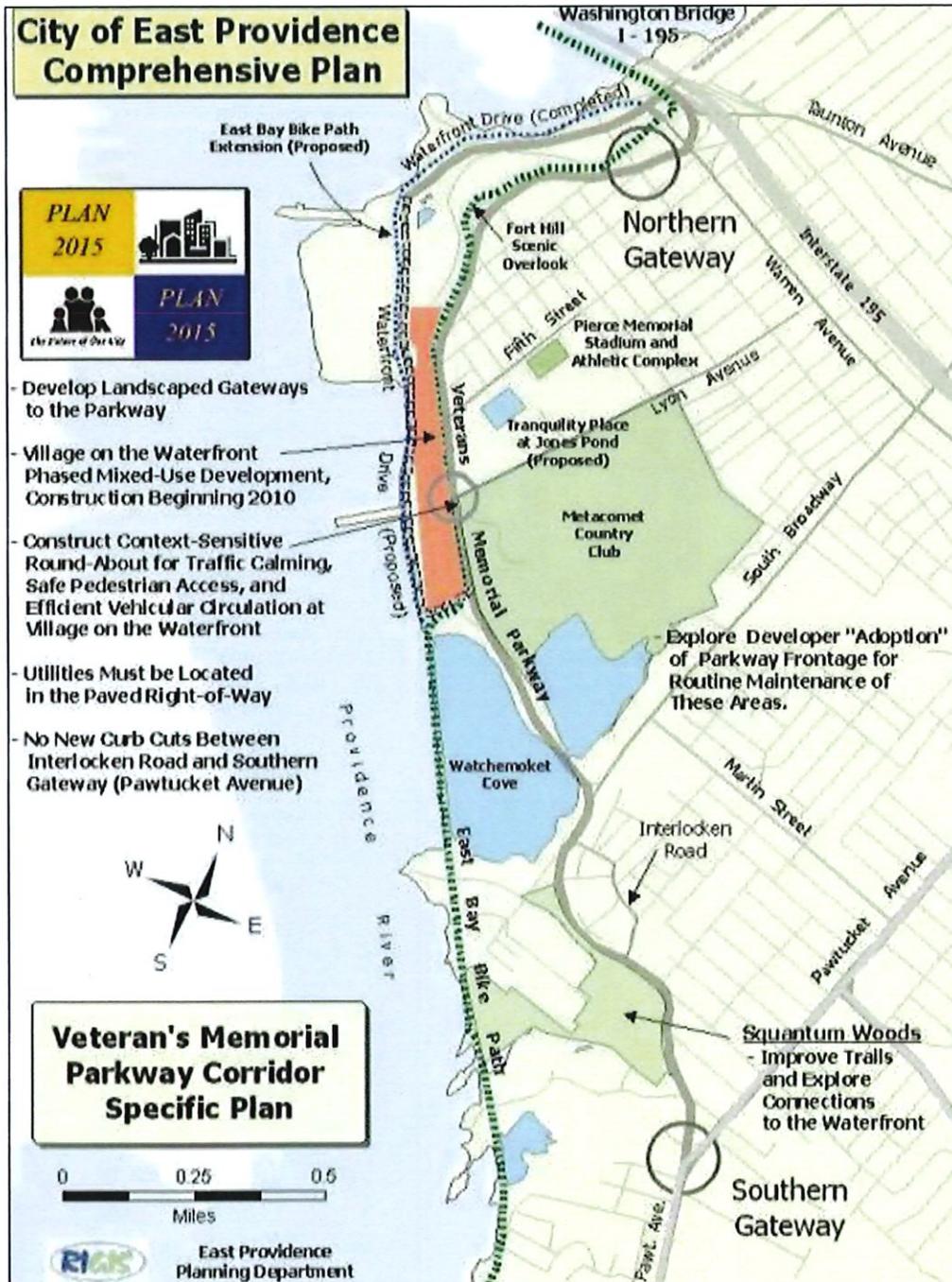


Figure 6. Veteran's Memorial Parkway Corridor Specific Plan

Source: City of East Providence Comprehensive Plan Update 2010-2015

The map depicted in Figure 4 provides details regarding development plans for the area surrounding the Metacomet Sub-district area (identified in green and labeled "Metacomet Country Club"). These details clearly show the intent of the City to provide for a phased mix-use development directly across the street from the sub-district parcel. The map includes details of traffic calming measures, pedestrian access, and provisions for utilities. This map represents the clear intent of the City to enhance the development options in this area and to provide the appropriate infrastructure to manage and serve these development opportunities. This map from the comprehensive plan provides further support for the development intent of this area by the City.

Conclusion

The City of East Providence has presented a clear and realistic vision for land development through its zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan. The Waterfront District was designed and created over 15 years ago to express a clear vision for redevelopment opportunities for the City.

East Providence approved an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan in 2021 which established the Metacomet Sub-District as part of the Waterfront District.

This proposed development is consistent with the Metacomet Sub-District zone, as well as the future land use map in the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, as demonstrated in this report, the proposed development is consistent with several of the goals and objectives in the 2010-2015 Comprehensive Plan.