



Summary of Draft Zoning Assessment Recommendations

The Providence Climate Justice Plan (2019) includes broad policy recommendations in the following topic areas: transportation and connectivity, open space and landscape, stormwater and flooding, housing, administration, uses, and the Port of Providence. Building on the CJP’s recommendations, the Draft Zoning Assessment provides recommended actions to implement those policies.

Transportation & Connectivity: To reduce fossil fuel emissions, increase access to public transit and other active modes of transportation, and reduce health disparities from air pollutants, the Zoning Assessment recommends:

Zoning Action	Electric Vehicles	Update zoning ordinance to require new or expanded parking facilities over a certain number of spaces to install electric vehicle spaces.
Zoning Action	Increased Connectivity	(1) Include review criteria for site design that creates pathways through and along a development for pedestrians and/or bicyclists. (2) Include review criteria for site designs that offer safe access to bus stops, as well as private amenities such as transit stop shelters. (3) Include a percentage reduction in required parking for developments w/cross-access agreements allowing connections between parking lots. (4) Include design standards that incorporate bus stops/shelters as part of their plazas and similar elements.
Zoning Action	Truck Idling	(1) Require on-site loading areas to be distanced from residential areas. (2) Include a reference to the Rhode Island Diesel Engine Anti-Idling Program within the ordinance’s environmental performance standards.

Open Space & Landscape: To preserve open space, prioritize green infrastructure, focus on ecological restoration, improve health outcomes, and reduce conflict between incompatible uses the Zoning Assessment recommends:

Zoning Action	Landscape Standards	Include requirements for the use of a diversity of native species to ensure the long-term health of buffers and other open spaces.
Zoning Action	Buffer Yards	Require a buffer yard between incompatible uses (residential vs. nonresidential) on larger sites. Encourage green stormwater management techniques in buffer yards.

Stormwater & Flooding: To improve stormwater management regulations to limit stress on existing infrastructure, and to reduce the occurrences of and risk from flooding, the Zoning Assessment recommends:

Stormwater Management Ordinance Actions	Green Infra. & Low-Impact Development	Review, evaluate, and potentially revise the City’s stormwater management ordinance. In particular, green infrastructure techniques and low impact development should be required/encouraged.
	On-Site Stormwater Mngmnt	Consider revising the stormwater management ordinance to require more new developments to manage stormwater on-site.
Comprehensive Plan Action	Elevation Zoning	Include language to study elevation zoning in the comp plan update. Elevation zoning, which is distinct from flood zone building requirements, protects areas affected by flooding and minimizes risk to development from sea level rise, storm surge, and increased precipitation/stormwater. It requires research and modeling to determine the proper standards. Depending on the outcome of the studies, a zoning amendment could be introduced.
Zoning Action		



Housing: To help ensure housing affordability and avoid displacement, the Zoning Assessment recommends:

Comprehensive Plan Action	Increased Housing Density	<p>The following recommendations must be adopted within the Comp Plan. Then, a zoning amendment can be introduced to implement the policy.</p> <p>(1) Allow more density & height in critical areas, such as transit corridors.</p> <p>(2) In neighborhoods, allow flexibility in the development of new housing types to meet a variety of needs/preferences, including clarifying where & how accessory dwelling units are permitted.</p> <p>(3) Consider standards for cottage courts or pocket neighborhoods. These allow small lot residential development where various dwelling types surround a common open space. Such a development form can incentivize smaller, potentially more affordable units by encouraging smaller square footage in exchange for additional development potential. This is intended to create a gentle increase in density in single-family neighborhoods. It is not intended for multi-family districts.</p> <p>(4) Facilitate the development of middle density housing –between traditional single-family and more intense multi-family or mixed-use development. These forms are a critical tool in providing expanded options in a manner that respects established neighborhood context.</p>
Zoning Action		

Administration: To help ensure robust community engagement, the Zoning Assessment recommends:

Zoning Action	Additional Opportunities for Input	Require a developer-organized neighborhood meeting for larger development projects. Documentation of input would be required as a part of the formal application submittal. Establish a project threshold to determine which developments would be subject to such a requirement.
Zoning Action	Expand Inter-Dept. Review	Expand the Interdepartmental Review Committee membership to include representation from the Sustainability Commission and/or Dept.

Uses: To encourage uses that have a positive environmental and quality-of-life impact, and to prohibit polluting and potentially hazardous uses, especially near frontline communities, the Zoning Assessment recommends:

Zoning Action	Add Sustainable Uses	<p>Evaluate the use table and incorporate sustainable uses, including:</p> <p>(1) permitting limited encroachment of energy efficiency or energy producing equipment into setbacks.</p> <p>(2) permitting composting operations and food scrap drop off locations.</p> <p>(3) permitting clean/green industrial uses.</p>
Historic District Design Req. Action	Add Sustainable Uses	Work with the HDC to create more opportunities and flexibilities to incorporate solar panels on historic structures.
Zoning Action	Transparency Regarding Impacts of Industrial Uses	<p>To increase transparency, require an informational report for certain uses that may have significant environmental impact to disclose impacts and mitigation efforts. Examples of requested information can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A layperson’s summary of how the use is complying with required state and federal permits, when applicable • Air pollution reduction technologies for stacks, exhaust pipes, etc. • Plans to minimize odors, emissions, noise, dust, and glare • Flooding controls (assessment and adaptation/mitigation) • Energy efficiency or renewable energy elements • Waste minimization or re-use programs



Port of Providence: To restrict polluting or hazardous uses within the port, reduce emissions from port operations, and better balance the needs of the port and neighboring communities, the Zoning Assessment recommends:

<p>Comprehensive Plan Action</p>	<p>Balancing Economic, Social, and Environmental Priorities in the Port</p>	<p>The Climate Justice Plan recommends significant changes to waterfront activities and uses. These recommendations run counter to many of the Comprehensive Plan’s main economic objectives. Prior to any substantial zoning changes being considered within the area, such policies must be incorporated and adopted within an updated Comprehensive Plan.</p> <p>CJP Policies Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work towards a zero-emissions, pollution-free port: Implement strategies to reduce climate and other pollution from port operations including vessels, trucks, cargo-handling equipment, and other industrial processes. • Work towards a clean port economy: Restrict the import and storage of hazardous and polluting materials in the Port with a goal to phase out such materials by 2040. • Update zoning ordinance to prohibit new fossil fuel infrastructure and address cumulative health impacts.
---	---	---

Special Topic Areas: The assessment also includes reviews of two special topic areas:

- *Community Benefits Agreements:* CBAs promote inclusiveness by ensuring that community concerns are heard and addressed during the development stage of a project and that all parties are held accountable for fulfilling their commitments. They impose requirements on a developer to reduce negative externalities of projects and establish community development obligations. Obligations can include commitments such as affordable housing requirements, local training and hiring requirements, community services, open space, etc. They can also address inequities and public health concerns.

<p>Comprehensive Plan Action</p>	<p>Community Benefits Agreements</p>	<p>Include language in the comprehensive plan to explore the future use of CBAs within the City of Providence.</p> <p>Newport and Detroit illustrate the use of CBAs as an effective catalyst for the reconsideration of zoning in ways that acknowledge equity and public health, and may help to address impacts of future industrial uses or large scale development.</p>
---	--------------------------------------	--

- *Green Justice Zones:* GJZs promote environmental justice by identifying communities where the health of residents may be disproportionately affected by major sources of pollution and where targeted investment in sustainability and equity can be made by the municipality. Investments could include items like establishing resilience hubs, participatory budgeting, improvements in weatherization and energy efficiency in housing stock, training and job opportunities, and policy and regulatory changes to prevent further burden from pollution.

<p>Comprehensive Plan Action</p>	<p>Green Justice Zones</p>	<p>Establishing policies within the Comprehensive Plan for the allocation of resources from the City and other agencies can set the stage for the implementation of Green Justice Zones.</p>
---	----------------------------	--