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TO: **City Council / Planning & Development Committee
Planning Board**

FROM: **Andrew R. Port, Director of Planning & Development**

DATE: **July 13, 2017**

RE: **Newburyport's Master Plan – Final Document (Revised to Address Infill & Preservation Concerns)**

At our last meeting to discuss the Master Plan update the Planning Board and Planning & Development Committee requested that this office edit the final draft of the 2017 Master Plan to address concerns raised by the Newburyport Preservation Trust (NPT), primarily with respect to infill development in denser historic areas of the City corresponding to the National Register Historic District (NRHD). A “markup” version of the final 2017 Master Plan (*revised to address these infill & preservation concerns as well as minor edits requested by others*) is posted on the City website for your review. We are providing the “markup” version so that you can easily identify where changes have been made. The entire document (*also by individual chapters*) is posted at the following URL:

<http://www.cityofnewburyport.com/master-plan-steering-committee>

Following is a summary of the substantive changes we have made:

1. **We have eliminated the lengthy “Work Plan” appendix.** Key recommendations can now be found in the narrative and goals listed within each individual chapter as well as in the matrix included within Chapter 14 entitled “Plan Implementation & Monitoring.” While the “Work Plan” appendix will not be incorporated within the plan adopted by the Planning Board and City Council, this office will continue to consult this document as a checklist to monitor the City’s progress on plan implementation.
2. **The Plan now explicitly recommends revisions to the Newburyport Zoning Ordinance (NZO) to address the compatibility of infill development.** Specifically, the Master Plan recommends that the City adopt architectural design standards (*and guidelines*) to ensure the compatibility of new construction, infill construction and alterations to existing structures, with a focus on residential districts (*particularly within the denser and more sensitive R2 and R3 Districts overlapping the National Register Historic District*). The Plan also recommends additional design standards and guidelines for commercial areas of the City. Council adoption of these standards will provide guidance and support for the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals during their permitting processes. As a result, board members will be expected to approve *only* those projects which are compatible in scale and architecture to the surrounding streetscapes and neighborhoods.
3. **The Plan now recommends the development of an architectural pattern book** unique to Newburyport so that developers and board members can refer to typical architectural forms and patterns found in

historic Newburyport when undertaking (*and authorizing*) any infill or redevelopment, particularly for residential districts coinciding with the National Register Historic District (NRHD) and Demolition Control Overlay District (DCOD). The Plan also recommends that the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals consult with the Newburyport Historical Commission (NHC) on permit applications involving historic structures to ensure that Preservation Restrictions (PRs) are properly incorporated into project approvals.

4. **The Plan now explicitly recommends that the City restrict further subdivision of land and infill development along the scenic High Street corridor and ridgeline.**
5. **The Plan now explicitly recommends that the City prohibit new structures or the expansion of existing homes on Plum Island** to: (a) prevent additional public and private infrastructure loss from storm events and changing coastlines; and (b) limit additional bedrooms and bathrooms which could exacerbate the cost of maintaining fragile water and sewer infrastructure servicing the island.
6. **The Plan now recommends that the City adopt regulations, licensing and permitting procedures for short-term rentals** such as those advertised on websites like Airbnb and HomeAway.
7. **The Plan now recommends that the City conduct a comprehensive study of the City's public water and sewer systems**, particularly with respect to overall capacity, to provide guidance when evaluating development proposals. The Plan also recommends that the City consistently monitor the capacity of these systems as new developments come online.
8. **The Plan now explicitly addresses creation of the City's new "Zoning Enforcement Officer"** and the expansion of that position (*consistent with the Council's recent adoption of a Zoning Amendment defining the roles of a "Zoning Administrator" beginning in January 2018*). The Zoning Administrator/Enforcement Officer will be responsible for day-to-day inspections of private development projects and monitoring compliance with both the Zoning Ordinance and the many permit conditions required by various permitting boards. This position will address the shortage of staff time currently available (*in either the Building Department or Office of Planning & Development*) to adequately monitor and enforce developer compliance "in the field".
9. **The Plan now recommends that the City actively support its volunteer board and commission members** through training sessions focused on board roles and jurisdiction, educational seminars regarding current regulations and case law, and by providing legal and technical expertise, particularly during complex project reviews.

During the past six months we have worked with our consultant, Community Opportunities Group (COG) to revise the draft Master Plan based upon input received from elected and appointed officials as well as the general public. The process of developing an update to the 2001 Master Plan has been long and has involved stakeholders from all areas of the City. During this time there has been ample time for interested parties to provide input on various Chapters within the Plan and feedback on the final draft of this Plan. We believe the attached revised Master Plan addresses concerns raised by the NPT while balancing that with interests expressed by other stakeholders throughout the City.

We respectfully request that the Planning Board and Planning & Development Committee review this final draft and recommend adoption to the City Council (along with the Planning Board). A final "clean" copy of the

document can be provided for reference, posting and reproduction. While State law does not require Council approval of the Master Plan (only Planning Board adoption is mandatory) it is important that the Council adopt the Master Plan as evidence to state agencies regarding the City's priorities when applying for grant programs during the next ten (10) years.

After Council and Planning Board adoption of the Master Plan our office, and others, may begin working on related projects and initiatives, including but not limited to zoning changes for the purpose of implementing plan priorities such as standards for the compatibility of new and infill development within Newburyport's historic neighborhoods.

We intend to monitor Plan implementation on a yearly basis moving forward, in order to assess progress being made each year in implementation of the Master Plan, as well as to identify shortcomings which may be improved in future years. This yearly progress report will be provided to the Planning Board and City Council and made available on the City website.

We will make ourselves available to address any questions the Council or Planning & Development Committee may have. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding the Master Plan or any other planning initiative. Thank you.