

PLANNING DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

TO: Coventry Planning Commission

FROM: Doug McLean, Director of Planning and Development

DATE: August 21, 2026

SUBJECT: 2026 Housing Chapter and Land Use Chapter Updates

I. Background Information

The Town of Coventry proposes amendments to the locally adopted 2026 Comprehensive Plan, specifically the Housing and Land Use Chapters pursuant to the process described below.

The DRAFT Housing Chapter Update is a full re-write and replacement of the locally adopted Chapter 5 – Housing within the Comprehensive Plan. The revised Housing Chapter provides a profile and assessment of local housing needs, an analysis of barriers to housing development, a new implementation matrix with goals, policies, and action items, and an updated affordable housing production plan. An additional DRAFT amendment to the Land Use Chapter will insert a new appendix that provides an updated buildout and housing capacity analysis for future residential growth, among related changes. In association with the updated buildout analysis, Staff has also provided targeted edits to the Town’s language around its Future Land Use Map (FLUM) categories. Those new revisions have been proposed with the attached four pages of the Land Use Chapter that have edits to show.

The full 2026 Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the Town Council in June, is currently being reviewed by the Division of Statewide Planning, which will take several months. The DRAFT updates to the Housing and Land Use Chapter will be inserted into the full Comprehensive Plan as part of the Town’s response to anticipated comments from Statewide Planning in pursuit of final State approval.

II. Local and State Adoption Process

The local Comprehensive Plan amendment process is further outlined in **RIGL § 45-22.2-8**, which tasks the Planning Commission with preparing the draft comprehensive plan, including the implementation program. The Commission is also tasked with gathering oral or written feedback from citizens, conducting a minimum of one public hearing, and submit recommendations to the municipal legislative body (the Town Council) regarding the adoption of the plan.

Following the Planning Commission’s recommendation, the Coventry Town Council will hold a separate public hearing and vote on the adoption of the DRAFT 2026 Housing Chapter and Land Use Chapter Updates. At this time, no Town Council hearings on this matter have been scheduled. The Division of Statewide Planning is the agency responsible for the state-level review and adoption of this document. The state adoption process is further detailed in RIGL § 45-22.2-9.

IV. Comprehensive Planning Goals

Staff has conducted an orderly, thorough, and expeditious review of this proposed DRAFT Comprehensive Plan Update for alignment with the specific goals of the **Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act**, RIGL 45-22.2-3(c) and finds as follows:

RIGL § 45-22.2-3(c) Goals. *The general assembly hereby establishes a series of goals to provide overall direction and consistency for state and municipal agencies in the comprehensive planning process established by this chapter. The goals have equal priority and are numbered for reference only.*

(1) To promote orderly growth and development that recognizes the natural characteristics of the land, its suitability for use, the availability of existing and proposed public and/or private services and facilities, and is consistent with available resources and the need to protect public health, including drinking water supply, drinking water safety, and environmental quality.

1. The DRAFT amendment to the Land Use Chapter provides a revised buildout analysis and related changes to FLUM categories that promote orderly growth and development, which the Housing Chapter draws upon.

(2) To promote an economic climate which increases quality job opportunities and overall economic well being of each municipality and the state.

2. This goal is mostly intended for the Economic Development Chapter, although the relationship between economic development and housing strategies are described in the DRAFT revised Housing Chapter, Section 9.1.

(3) To promote the production and rehabilitation of year-round housing and to preserve government subsidized housing for persons and families of low- and moderate-income in a manner that: considers local, regional, and statewide needs; housing that achieves a balance of housing choices, for all income levels and age groups; recognizes the affordability of housing as the responsibility of each municipality and the state; takes into account growth management and the need to phase and pace development in areas of rapid growth; and facilitates economic growth in the state.

3. The DRAFT revised Housing Chapter promotes the production of year-round housing and the preservation of government-subsidized housing in Coventry for persons and families of low- and moderate-income.
4. The DRAFT revised Housing Chapter considers local, regional, and statewide needs through action items A-35 and A-36, which encourage regional collaboration between Coventry and its neighbors on various housing issues.
5. The DRAFT revised Housing Chapter will help achieve a balance of housing choices in Coventry through policies within Section 13.0 and associated action items:
 - a. Policy 2.1, which promotes smaller and more diverse housing types (ADUs, duplexes, townhouses, cottage courts, multi-family) in designated growth areas
 - b. Policy 2.2, which encourages housing that is accessible, adaptable, visitable, and suited for older adults and adults with disabilities;
 - c. Policy 2.3, which supports development of housing for older adults, persons with disabilities, veterans, and residents needing supportive services.
6. The DRAFT revised full Housing Element and the DRAFT Land Use Chapter revisions to buildout analysis and related revisions to FLUM categories take into account growth

management in Coventry and the need to phase and pace development in areas of rapid growth through action items and preferred site characteristics.

- a. Action items call for advancing proposals in target areas consistent with site criteria (A-7), rezoning Route 3 to allow mixed-use development (A-29), investigating Transit-Oriented Development along the main bus route (A-30), and other relevant actions associated with growth management.
 - b. Preferred site characteristics include roadway and infrastructure access, proximity to existing development, density appropriate to context, reuse before greenfield development, walkability and connectivity, and character preservation.
7. The DRAFT revised Housing Chapter addresses economic growth through action item A-9, which asks staff, the Economic Development Commission, and major employers to examine tools such as down-payment or closing-cost assistance, homebuyer education, employer matching contributions, and land partnerships.

(4) To promote the protection of the natural, historic and cultural resources of each municipality and the state.

8. This goal is intended for the Cultural and Historical Resources Chapter, though the DRAFT revised Housing Chapter includes adaptive reuse as one of its housing strategies (see Sections 11.3 and 11.5 for reference). Adaptive reuse will preserve historic industrial and commercial properties, such as mill buildings, as viable residential uses.

(5) To promote the preservation of the open space and recreational resources of each municipality and the state.

9. This goal is intended for the Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Chapter, although the DRAFT revised Housing Chapter (see Section 11.3) cautions against increased density in rural areas and prioritizes redevelopment or adaptive reuse of underutilized industrial and commercial properties over greenfield development.

(6) To provide for the use of performance-based standards for development and to encourage the use of innovative development regulations and techniques that promote the development of land suitable for development while protecting our natural, cultural, historical, and recreational resources, and achieving a balanced pattern of land uses.

10. The DRAFT revised Housing Chapter provides performance-based standards for development through Sections 11.3 and 11.4, which detail preferred site and design characteristics for future residential development in Coventry.
11. The DRAFT revised Housing Chapter encourages the use of innovative development regulations and techniques in Section 13.0, with action items focused on negotiating LMIH commitments for proposed developments where the Town has discretionary leverage, addressing 'missing middle housing' in dense residential areas, and updating dimensional standards for designated growth areas.

(7) To promote consistency of state actions and programs with municipal comprehensive plans, and provide for review procedures to ensure that state goals and policies are reflected in municipal comprehensive plans and state guide plans.

12. This DRAFT Housing Chapter and Land Use Chapter Updates are consistent with the state guide plans entitled *Housing 2030* and *Land Use 2025* respectively, and the state goals and policies contained therein.

(8) To ensure that adequate and uniform data are available to municipal and state government as the basis for comprehensive planning and land use regulation.

13. The DRAFT revised Housing Chapter contains adequate and uniform data, especially within its Housing Needs Assessment (Sections 1.0 through 8.0).
14. The DRAFT amendment to the Land Use Chapter provides a more reliable buildout analysis that estimates 2119 will be the year at which Coventry will reach residential buildout, based on the rate of housing growth and amount of developable land. It also makes additional revision to FLUM categories based on review of buildout analysis.

(9) To ensure that municipal land use regulations and decisions are consistent with the comprehensive plan of the municipality, and to ensure state land use regulations and decisions are consistent with state guide plans.

15. This goal is focused on land use, though the DRAFT revised Housing Chapter lays out new guidance for municipal land use regulations and decisions for housing development. Additionally, the DRAFT buildout analysis and related DRAFT Land Use Chapter revisions take into account how developable land could yield future residential growth and revision to FLUM categories given existing municipal land use regulations.

(10) To encourage the involvement of all citizens in the formulation, review, and adoption, or amendment of the comprehensive plan.

16. The DRAFT full revised Housing Chapter and DRAFT revisions to the Land Use Chapter were informed by the results of a community-wide Housing Needs Survey conducted by Planning staff between July and December 2025, which received over 350 responses.
17. Planning staff sought feedback from local stakeholders and housing policy experts on the full revised Housing Chapter and targeted revisions to Land Use Chapter, specifically the goals, policies, and action items.
18. Planning staff held a community-wide Public Workshop on July 20, 2026, entitled “A Coventry Housing Listening Session,” that was attended by local decisionmakers and members of the public and featured interactive dot surveys and mapping exercises.

V. Planning Department Recommendation

Staff finds proposed Comprehensive Plan Update to be consistent with the State goals set forth in RIGL § 45-22.2-3(c). Staff therefore recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the documented findings of fact and forward a **positive recommendation** to the Town Council.