

John Michael

Newport City Council **FIRST WARD**

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Thank you Newport This Week for the opportunity to submit a statement regarding the City of Newport housing issues.

I am so fortunate to live in Newport, which I believe is one of the greatest cities in the world. Housing issues in Newport will not be solved overnight as it took years to get where it currently is. With a declining population, Newport housing consists of approximately 50% owner-occupied units and approximately 50% renter-occupied units. Low- and moderate-income housing is the second-highest in the state.

A good starting point is to use internal resources to quickly define and execute a Plan Of Actions and Milestones to establish and support economic growth and job creation that can contribute to reducing the cost to live here.

First, as a lifelong resident, I believe having an excellent school system is a cornerstone to a thriving community. Our education system is essential to attracting and retaining middle-income, year-round residents and requires an immediate plan of action with measurable improvements.

Second, use internal resources to revise (where warranted) and enforce current zoning ordinances in order to sustain and grow year-round residency that support small business and income growth. Identify opportunities to streamline permitting and reduce unnecessary administrative requirements, helping to lower building and renovation costs while maintaining appropriate standards for safety, quality, and neighborhood character.

Third, enact policies that retain the middle-income population and encourage local families as well as those who work but don't live in Newport to make the City their home. Work with the Navy leadership from Naval Station Newport, Naval War College, Coast Guard, Naval Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Naval Undersea Warfare Center, the Naval Health Clinic New England and Newport Hospital to offer incentives that encourage its workforce to live in Newport.

Lastly, reduce the tax burden, generating additional revenue by collaborating with state leaders to further increase Newport's hotel tax percentage, and share of the state hotel

tax. Engage with the RI Bridge and Turnpike Authority to further reduce the tolls paid by Newport residents who live here year-round and provide an agreed upon percentage of toll revenue to the City to fund Newport's infrastructure maintenance and improvements.

By focusing and acting quickly on targeted strategies, with strong City Council leadership and community partnerships, I feel we can make a difference in the quality of life for all Newporters.



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