

POLICY STATEMENT:

RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THE  
REUSE OF SURPLUS NAVY LANDS

STATE GUIDE PLAN ELEMENT 112

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THE RHODE ISLAND  
STATEWIDE PLANNING PROGRAM  
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The objectives of the Program are to plan for the physical, economic, and social development of the state; to coordinate the activities of governmental agencies and private individuals and groups within this framework of plans and programs; and to provide planning assistance to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the agencies of state government. The Program prepares and maintains the State Guide Plan as the principal means of accomplishing these objectives. The State Guide Plan is comprised of a series of functional elements which deal with physical development and environmental concerns, the economy, and human services.

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## 112.01 Land Use and Economic Development

The land use policies element of the State Guide Plan recommends that an area of about 15,000 acres be allocated to future industrial development in order to meet the needs for expansion of existing industrial operations and location of new facilities during the period covered by the plan, to provide for choice among sites when a location is being selected for a specific facility, and to reserve suitable areas for longer - term requirements ((6:109-116,133)). The primary means of carrying out this recommendation is through zoning allocations made by cities and towns. Other means available include the site acquisition and development programs of the Rhode Island Port Authority and Economic Development Corporation, quasi-public corporations and foundations created to undertake similar activities for a specific site or industrial park, and the work of local industrial commissions and private-sector interest groups.

Analyses made as part of the land use plan and subsequent studies and experiences in siting industrial facilities have demonstrated that this is one of the most difficult recommendations of the plan to implement. This is primarily because of a general absence of unbuilt sites which are zoned for industrial use and which have the minimum characteristics essential for industrial development. This problem even impinges upon meeting of short-term needs averaging perhaps 150 to 300 acres of land for industrial use annually.

A recent survey discloses that the total quantity of land zoned for industry substantially exceeds the amount recommended in the State Guide Plan, and should be adequate to meet future needs well into the

twenty-first century ((3:8)):

Land Zoned for Industrial Use: 1977

	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Total area	35,403	100%
Currently in use		
Industrial	6,756	19
Other	7,938	22
Vacant	20,709	59

However, the vast majority of this zoned area does not meet the minimum requirements for industrial development or use by most of the activities which make up the industrial sector of the economy. It is particularly unsuited for manufacturing operations which account for one-third of total employment ((4: III-3, III-7)). The 20,700 acres listed as vacant in the preceding tabulation are reduced to less than 6,900 acres when those areas which do not have access to public water supply or sewage disposal systems are eliminated. Further consideration of natural characteristics of the land, flood hazards, soil capabilities, and topographic factors reduce the area which represents prime sites, ready for construction, to about 1,300 acres.

The conditions used in this analysis may not represent significant obstacles in specific cases. An activity such as a trucking terminal may be able to use onsite water supply and sewage disposal if the topography of the parcel is suitable. Slopes can be modified by grading and/or filling. Acceptance of higher costs for constructing foundations may overcome the limited capabilities of some soils. But the general picture conveyed by the analysis above

is accurate, and is reinforced by the experience of those who deal with prospective industrial developers. And additional factors not considered in this analysis (highway access, rail freight service, multiple ownership of areas) further constrain the development of that land which is available.

#### 112.02 The Role of Surplus Navy Lands

Under these conditions, the importance of the lands made available for industrial reuse as a result of the closing or reduction in operations at Navy bases in the state during 1973-74 is greatly increased. The development plan adopted by the Port Authority and Economic Development Corporation for the Quonset/Davisville area allocates 790 acres for general industrial or commercial development and 523 acres for petroleum related industrial development ((1: I-14 to 15)). Approximately 182 acres are suitable for industrial or commercial development in the Newport and Melville areas ((2: 78-79)). This area of about 1,500 acres exceeds the total area classified as "prime" in the analysis of vacant land zoned for industry in 1977 (disregarding the fact that some former Navy lands will be reused for commercial development with less demanding site requirements than that for industrial reuse).

It is therefore essential that those former Navy lands that are suitable for industrial reuse and are so identified in the State Guide Plan be employed in the most effective manner possible in meeting the state's need for prime industrial sites. The Port Authority and Economic Development Corporation has been created by the General Assembly to achieve this objective. The statute establishing the Port Authority requires that projects undertaken by that body first

be reviewed by the State Planning Council for conformity with the State Guide Plan (Section 42-64-14 (a) of the General Laws). This policy statement is intended to implement this provision in a manner that will promote effective utilization of the economic development opportunity offered by Navy surplus lands.

Rules of Procedure for review of proposals by the Port Authority and Economic Development Corporation have been adopted by the State Planning Council ((5)). These procedures are designed for use in evaluating individual development proposals where the location and time scheduling of proposals is beyond the effective control of either the Port Authority and Economic Development Corporation or the State Planning Council. Action on each of these proposals represents an essentially independent decision, and relationships between projects can be identified and considered within the framework of overall goals, policies, and strategies established in the State Guide Plan.

The reuse of former Navy lands at Quonset Point, Davisville, Newport, and Mellville for economic development purposes presents a significantly different situation. The Port Authority and Economic Development Corporation will act as the development agency for some or all of these areas, acquiring them from the federal government and conveying them to individual project sponsors who will construct or occupy facilities and conduct operations. This development will occur incrementally over an extended period of time.

If the full potential of former Navy lands to contribute to the state's economy is to be realized, the resources available to support development of these areas must be conserved and carefully allocated. Failure to do so can result in development of a small part

f the available area by an operation which consumes so much of the resource base as to seriously limit or preclude optimum development of the remaining area.

### 112.03 Procedures for Resources Allocation

The following procedures will be incorporated into the review of all proposals for reuse of the former Navy lands referenced in this policy statement:

- 1) Identify the resource base that is available to support the entire area in which the specific project under review may be located.
  - a) In most instances this area will be either the Quonset-Davisville area or the Newport-Melville area.
  - b) The resources to be inventoried are those necessary to evaluate the effect of a proposed project on the following:
    - (1) Social factors: labor force, housing, retail sales and services, health facilities and services, recreation, historic preservation.
    - (2) The economy: wage levels, disposable income, tax revenues.
    - (3) The environment: water supply, water quality, air quality, noise, odor, solid waste disposal, special or hazardous waste management, fish and wildlife.
    - (4) Energy: production, distribution, peak loads.
    - (5) Land use: growth patterns, soils, agriculture, wet lands, minerals extraction, flood hazards, vegetation.
    - (6) Transportation: highway (automobile, public transit, truck), air, marine, terminal facilities.

- c) Both existing and planned resources will be considered, and will be separately identified.
- 2) Estimate the amount or proportion of each resource that will be consumed or impacted by the proposal. This estimate will be derived primarily from the Environmental Review Form and Sections 4 and 5 of the Socio-Economic Review Form prepared for each proposal under agreement between the Rhode Island Port Authority and Economic Development Corporation, the Department of Environmental Management, the Coastal Resources Management Council, and the State Planning Council.
  - 3) Appraise the adequacy of the resource base to support the proposal under consideration, development of the area that has already occurred or is committed, planned or probable development of the area, and other demands likely to be made on the resource base by development outside of the area.
  - 4) Make a finding as to the suitability of the proposed project in terms of its impact upon resources available.

The results of this analysis will be reported to the State Planning Council as provided by Section 3.04 of the procedures for review ((5)). Action by the Council on this analysis and the resulting finding shall be in the form of a determination of compliance or non-compliance with the State Guide Plan.

## References

- 1 Keyes Associates, Quonset Point Technical Park Facilities Study, prepared for the Department of Economic Development (Providence: 1977).
- 2 Office of the Governor, State of Rhode Island, Reuse and Development of United States Surplus Military Lands in Rhode Island (Providence: 1975).
- 3 Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, "Land Zoned for Industrial Use: Inventory and Analysis," Technical Paper Number 76 (Providence: 1978).
- 4 Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, Overall Economic Development Program - 1978 (draft) (Providence: 1978).
- 5 Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, "Rules of Procedure: Review of Project Proposals by the Rhode Island Port Authority and Economic Development Corporation," adopted by the State Planning Council on February 26, 1975.
- 6 Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, State Land Use Policies and Plan, Report Number 22 (Providence: 1975). Adopted as an element of the State Guide Plan by the State Planning Council June 5, 1975.