

SHETLAND PARK | SALEM, MA

COMPARABLE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Scale, Context, and Community Outcomes



HISTORIC SALEM INC

Prepared by Historic Salem, Inc. (HSI)
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January 7, 2026

Dear Mayor Pangallo,

Thank you again for meeting with Historic Salem, Inc. (HSI) in October 2025 to discuss the future of Shetland Park. As requested, we have compiled a short set of comparable redevelopment examples from coastal cities that may be useful as the City of Salem considers early decisions around scale, phasing, infrastructure, neighborhood, and waterfront impacts of this high-impact project.

Urban waterfronts across Massachusetts and the Northeast have undergone significant transformation in recent decades, often delivering new housing, public access, and economic activity. At the same time, many of these projects have revealed challenges that are difficult to fully anticipate at the outset. The examples included here highlight both positive outcomes and cautionary lessons—particularly related to infrastructure costs and delays, exposure to coastal flooding and sea level rise, impacts on adjacent historic neighborhoods, public response to changes in height and density, and the importance of housing mix and long-term affordability.

As the City moves forward with zoning actions under Chapter 40R at Shetland Park, HSI believes it is critical that decisions about allowable density and entitlements be carefully sequenced with planning for coastal resilience, flood mitigation, and infrastructure capacity. While Chapter 40R provides tools for housing production, it does not itself address climate change or flooding risks. Experience from other coastal cities shows that advancing zoning ahead of seawall planning, sea level rise analysis, or environmental review can lead to long-term challenges that are difficult and costly to resolve.

We recognize that the Prime Development proposal for Shetland Park continues to evolve and that many important questions remain under active review. Our hope is that this reference document can help inform forthcoming decisions by providing context from other cities' experiences—both what has worked well and what has proven more challenging—so that Salem is better informed to plan proactively and thoughtfully.

We appreciate the city's invitation for HSI to participate in the Shetland Design Standards Working Group and look forward to continued engagement. As the project progresses, we share the goal of ensuring it becomes a success that also complements Salem's historic character, neighborhoods, and working waterfront.

Sincerely,

Richard Lindeman
President

Historic Salem, Inc. | *Preservation at Work*

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Salem Snapshot

Historic Salem, Inc.

Since its inception in 1944, Historic Salem, Inc. (HSI) has been dedicated to the preservation of Salem’s unique historic character. Our preservation advocacy has brought about many positive results, including saving numerous historic buildings from demolition as well as greatly influencing the compatible design of new structures and the streetscapes in Salem.

Shetland Park Redevelopment Project

The Shetland Park project involves a proposed large-scale, mixed-use redevelopment of Shetland Park, a privately owned, 27-acre waterfront property in The Point neighborhood. Historically the site of the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company, it's currently Salem's largest office complex and a hub for various businesses, nonprofits, and public agencies. The redevelopment planning, currently spearheaded by Prime Group Developers in collaboration with the City of Salem, aims to transform the site by introducing approximately 1,200 residential rental units, a 13-story hotel, and an academic building for the Salem Charter Academy School, along with retail businesses, open space, and waterfront access. This would be the largest residential development project in Salem’s 400 year history.

Salem Stats

The baseline figures below are included to make the scale of the following redevelopment examples easier to understand relative to Salem.

Population	Land Area	Households	Persons per Household	Median Household Income	Median Gross Rent
45,677	8.29	19,789	2.13	\$85,137	\$1,800

Potential change with proposed Shetland density of 1,200 housing units.

48,269*	--	20,989	2.13	--	--
↑ 5.7%		↑ 6.1%			

**This does not account for other housing development in Salem, anticipated to add over 2,000 units between 2025–2035.*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Quick facts (population, land area, housing units).

INFRASTRUCTURE NOTE

[Salem & Beverly Water Supply Board](#) has reported an estimated \$84M capital renewal plan for aging treatment infrastructure and emphasized statewide challenges aligning water/wastewater capacity with housing growth. [Salem News Article](#). [Article on Ipswich River Watershed investment needs](#).

Comparable Redevelopment Projects

Salem is not unique in its efforts to address the housing crisis. The following examples examine how other coastal cities have approached large or transformative redevelopment projects, highlighting outcomes related to scale, infrastructure, affordability, and neighborhood impact. Through considerable research, no completed or proposed projects were identified with comparable housing unit density on a site of this size within a city the size of Salem; however, these examples still offer important insight into planning decisions, tradeoffs, and long-term impacts.

Featured Project City Comparison Table

The table below shows baseline information for each of the cities with an included project.

	Salem MA	Portland ME	Quincy MA*	Portsmouth NH	Newport RI	Boston MA
Population	45,677	69,568	103,434	22,332	24,482	673,458
Land Area (sq mi)	8.29	21.54	16.57	15.7	7.9	48.3
Households	19,789	34,067	45,571	10,556	10,675	288,129
Persons per Household	2.13	2.05	2.2	2.07	2.06	2.1
Median Household Income	\$85,137	\$76,174	\$90,668	\$105,756	\$83,562	\$95,000
Median Gross Rent	\$1,800	\$1,487	\$1,998	\$1,778	\$1,612	\$2,093
Project Size (acres)	27	10	400	These examples reflect cumulative or citywide development patterns rather than a single master-planned project.		
Type	Mixed-use	Mixed-use	Mixed-use			
Waterfront?	✓	✓	✓			
Housing Units	1,200 rental only	400 owner 180 rental	650 owner 800 rental			
Hotel?	13 story	128 rooms	No			
Complete?	No	No	Yes			

Source: 2024 U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts (population, land area, housing units).

*Housing tenure figures are approximate and compiled from individual project approvals and public sources.



The Portland Foreside (often referred to as the Maine Foreside) is a proposed mixed-use redevelopment of a roughly 10-acre historic waterfront site in Portland, Maine—one of the fastest-growing metro areas in the northeastern United States. The project envisions approximately 400 residential units, including oceanfront condominiums, multi-story townhouses, and roughly 180 rental apartments, alongside a 128-room luxury hotel. Plans also include 50,000 square feet of retail, dining, and service uses, a 150-slip marina, and an ambitious commitment to 60% open space, with public parks, waterfront paths, and access for walking, biking, paddling, and fishing. Historic industrial buildings on the site are slated for adaptive reuse as a nationally recognized public market celebrating Maine’s food and beverage economy.

“If people can tell where the old city ends and our development begins, we’ve failed.” - Casey Prentice, Developer

After acquiring the property in 2013, the developer spent approximately five years on rezoning and entitlements, followed by early infrastructure investment, including construction of the Fore Points Marina between 2018 and 2020. While the project has been widely praised for its design ambition and public-realm focus—emphasizing human-scale architecture, durable materials, and experiences intended to feel “timeless” rather than new—the development has also faced significant financial challenges. A [2020 Portland Press Herald article](#) noted that the project required as much as \$70 million in unanticipated public infrastructure improvements, including roads, utilities, and waterfront infrastructure, prompting the developer to seek the creation of a new tax business improvement district to help finance costs that would otherwise fall outside the private development budget.

As of the early 2020s, progress on broader new building construction has slowed or stalled, reflecting the difficulty of delivering large-scale mixed-use waterfront projects that combine housing, public access, historic preservation, and infrastructure upgrades—particularly when affordability goals and public-realm expectations intersect with rising construction and financing costs. While the long-term vision for Portland Foreside remains intact, the project illustrates how even thoughtfully designed, modest-scale waterfront redevelopment can face prolonged timelines and unresolved questions around who ultimately pays for infrastructure, resilience, and public benefits.

Strengths of the Project

- **Phased development** allows infrastructure and transportation improvements to be aligned with the delivery of new buildings.
- **Strong “public realm” focus**, including walkable streets, waterfront access, and destination uses that activate the area beyond standard office hours.
- Demonstrates how a **working waterfront and historic buildings** can transition to mixed-use while retaining character.
- Includes a **mix of owner-occupied and rental housing**, supporting long-term neighborhood stability alongside new development.

Challenges of the Project

- **Unexpected infrastructure costs led to delays and requests for public financial support**, underscoring the complexity of funding major waterfront improvements.
- High-amenity, high-cost development risks accelerating **waterfront gentrification** unless affordability measures and local-serving retail are secured early.
- Even with thoughtful design, a **large development phase can feel “big city” in scale**, offering a cautionary example for communities seeking more modest height, massing, and traffic impacts.

Relevance to Salem

Illustrates how infrastructure financing and phased development can challenge even well-designed, well-intentioned waterfront projects in smaller coastal cities.

Project Reference Material + Articles

- [Official Project Site | Bruner/Cott \(Architectural Firm\) Project Page](#)
- [Portland Press Herald | February 18, 2020 - *Portland Co. property developers propose new business, tax district*](#)
- [BlooLoop | April 24, 2025 - *Portland Foreside: a new vision for mixed-use development*](#)
- [Will Van Wickler \(Local Realtor\) | October 31, 2025 - *This Project Will Change Portland Maine Forever*](#)
- [David Marshall Team \(Local Realtor\) | December 2, 2025 - *Portland Foreside Development Stalled?*](#)



Marina Bay is a large-scale, mixed-use waterfront redevelopment located on a former naval air station site in Quincy, Massachusetts. Developed incrementally beginning in the late 1980s, the project spans approximately 400 acres and includes between 1,350 and 1,450 housing units distributed across a range of building types and scales. Major residential components include Windsor Marina Bay, with 352 luxury apartment units in two five-story buildings; Marina Point, comprising 245 condominium units in two ten-story towers; Metro Marina Bay, with 141 apartment units in a six-story building; and The Seaport at Marina Bay, which includes 125 condominium units in a six-story structure. Additional housing is provided through several hundred townhouses, detached homes, and low-rise residential complexes such as Harbourside and Chapmans Reach. Notably, unlike many waterfront redevelopments, Marina Bay does not include a hotel component.

The project has unfolded over multiple decades through a phased master plan that paired residential growth with marina facilities, restaurants, office uses, and extensive public waterfront open space. Public access along the harbor, including promenades, marinas, and recreational areas, has helped establish Marina Bay as a regional destination. Transportation access, however, has remained a defining constraint. The site is located approximately two miles from the nearest MBTA Red Line station, and while a privately operated shuttle service provides connections to transit, the development remains largely automobile-dependent. Seasonal ferry service (May through November) offers direct connections to Boston’s Aquarium and Seaport Districts, and MBTA bus service is available nearby, but these options operate with limited frequency or seasonal availability.

Marina Bay offers a useful example of how phased waterfront redevelopment can succeed in creating a vibrant mixed-use environment while also illustrating the long-term consequences of distance from high-capacity transit and early infrastructure decisions. The project demonstrates how transportation, infrastructure, and land-use choices made in initial phases can shape travel behavior, public costs, and development patterns for decades to follow.

Strengths of the Project

- **Phased Development:** Long-term phasing strategy allowed gradual build out across a large waterfront site.
- Strong emphasis on **public waterfront access and recreational amenities** helped activate the harbor edge creating a tangible community benefit.
- **Diverse housing types** provide a range of rental and ownership unit types and building scales.

Challenges of the Project

- **Exposure to coastal flooding and sea level rise** has increased the need for long-term resilience planning and costly retrofits with over 67% of the properties currently facing flood risks. This is expected to grow to 73% in the next 30 years.
- Distance from rapid transit has resulted in **ongoing auto-dependence** despite shuttle, bus, and seasonal ferry service.
- **Predominantly market-rate housing can function as an enclave**, increasing affordability pressure in adjacent neighborhoods without parallel investment in income-restricted housing.
- **Cumulative residential density over time has placed growing pressure on local infrastructure**, illustrating how phased development can still produce large-scale effects if not paired with early, comprehensive planning.

Relevance to Salem

Highlights the importance of aligning housing density, transportation access, and infrastructure capacity early in the planning of large waterfront redevelopment sites.

Project Reference Material + Articles

- [Marina Bay Association](#)
- [Squantum Point and Marina Bay Flooding Vulnerability](#)
- [The Patriot Ledger | November 2, 2022 - Could Marina Bay be the new downtown Quincy? This business group wants to make it happen](#)
- [The Patriot Ledger | July 27, 2023 - Tenant of Marina Bay luxury apartment files class-action lawsuit: Here's what we know](#)



Portsmouth, New Hampshire is a compact, historic coastal city of approximately 22,000 residents, occupying roughly 15 square miles—about half Salem’s population but nearly twice its land area. Over the past several years, Portsmouth has experienced a significant surge in development activity, driven largely by market-rate housing demand, tourism, and limited developable land. Rather than one large waterfront redevelopment, growth has occurred through multiple concurrent projects, particularly concentrated in the North End and downtown- adjacent areas, including new residential buildings, mixed-use developments, and at least one new hotel currently under construction.

As of early 2025, Portsmouth has hundreds of housing units approved, under construction, or moving toward construction, the majority of which are market-rate. Notable projects include several mid-rise condominium and apartment buildings ranging from five to six stories, a 117-room hotel, multiple mixed-use downtown infill developments adding 50–80 units at a time, and a series of larger residential approvals outside the historic core, including a 360-unit apartment complex on a former big-box retail site. While some developments include limited workforce or below-market-rate units, city officials have acknowledged that most new housing production remains market-rate, contributing to rising costs in one of New Hampshire’s most expensive housing markets. Portsmouth’s current development trajectory is shaped by a deep history of preservation advocacy that emerged in response to urban renewal-era demolition in the North End during the 1960s, when hundreds of buildings were cleared and hundreds of families displaced. That experience catalyzed the formation of local preservation organizations and the creation of historic districts that now

strongly influence development review. Today, the city relies on design review, height limits, and public process to manage growth, yet the pace and scale of recent approvals have renewed public debate about affordability, infrastructure capacity, and the cumulative impact of incremental development in a constrained historic city.

Strengths of the Development Pattern

- Demonstrates how a small historic coastal city can accommodate growth through **incremental, mixed-use development** rather than a single transformative project.
- **Strong design review and height controls** have helped maintain downtown character and walkability.
- **Integration of housing, commercial uses, and public waterfront access** supports an active, year-round urban core.
- **Ongoing attention to flood resilience and climate adaptation**, particularly along the waterfront and low-lying areas.

Challenges of the Development Pattern

- Persistent development pressure has contributed to **significant housing affordability challenges**, with market-rate projects dominating new construction.
- Even modest increases in height and density have generated **intense public opposition**, reflecting the limits of incremental growth in a constrained historic city.
- **Infrastructure systems**—including transportation, utilities, and parking—**face increasing strain** as development accumulates over time.
- **Balancing tourism, second-home ownership, and year-round residential** needs remains an ongoing challenge.

Relevance to Salem

Portsmouth illustrates how incremental development alone can generate sustained pressure on affordability, infrastructure, and neighborhood character—an experience that is particularly relevant given Salem’s already projected housing growth of over 2,000 units between 2025 and 2035, before any redevelopment at Shetland Park.

Reference Material + Articles

- [City of Portsmouth - Development Project Pages](#)
- [Portsmouth Herald | January 7, 2025 - Portsmouth development surges into 2025: Here are big projects you will see](#)
- [Boston Real Estate Times | November 3, 2025 - \\$96.8 Million Secured for 360-Unit Apartment Project in Portsmouth, NH](#)



Newport, Rhode Island is a historic coastal city of approximately 25,000 residents, with a globally recognized tourism economy and a dense, walkable downtown surrounded by long-established residential neighborhoods. In recent years, Newport has faced intensified development pressure driven by housing demand, tourism, and limited available land—particularly in the North End, a historically working-class area adjacent to the waterfront and downtown core. A major inflection point in this pressure was the 2019 proposed redevelopment of the former Newport Grand property into a \$100 million mixed-use development, including housing, commercial space, and public amenities. That proposal heightened citywide debate over scale, affordability, and neighborhood change, and helped catalyze broader planning efforts.

In response, the City undertook the North End Urban Plan, a comprehensive planning initiative intended to guide redevelopment while addressing long-standing inequities in housing, infrastructure, and access to the waterfront. The plan emphasizes mixed-income housing, improved public realm and open space, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, and reintegration of the North End with the rest of the city. However, implementation has proven complex. While individual projects have advanced, many have remained predominantly market-rate, raising concerns among residents and advocates about displacement, rising rents, and whether redevelopment outcomes align with the plan’s stated equity goals.

Newport’s experience underscores the tension between aspirational planning frameworks and market-driven development in desirable coastal cities. Even with a clear vision and strong public engagement, redevelopment has continued to generate controversy—particularly where large sites or former institutional properties introduce sudden change into historically stable neighborhoods.

The city's ongoing debates illustrate how waterfront-adjacent redevelopment can reshape housing access and neighborhood identity if affordability, infrastructure investment, and community protections are not firmly embedded from the outset.

Strengths of the Development Pattern

- The North End Urban Plan provides a clear, **community-informed framework** for addressing housing, connectivity, and neighborhood reintegration.
- Strong recognition of the need to **pair housing development with infrastructure, open space, and social equity goals.**
- Emphasis on **reconnecting historically marginalized neighborhoods to the waterfront** and downtown core.
- **Active public discourse and civic engagement** around development outcomes.

Challenges of the Development Pattern

- Proposed and approved developments have **skewed heavily toward market-rate housing**, intensifying affordability and displacement concerns.
- **Community trust has been strained** where development outcomes appear misaligned with stated equity and affordability goals.
- Incremental project approvals have produced **cumulative impacts on neighborhood character, infrastructure, and housing costs.**
- Heavy tourism demand **complicates efforts to prioritize year-round residents and workforce housing.**

Relevance to Salem

Newport demonstrates how development pressure in a historic coastal city can concentrate in working-class waterfront neighborhoods, highlighting the importance of aligning large-scale redevelopment with enforceable affordability, infrastructure investment, and community access commitments from the outset.

Reference Material + Articles

- [City of Newport - North End Urban Plan | Newport North End Urban Plan \(Q&A\)](#)
- [Whats Up Newport | July 23, 2019 - Newport Grand property to become 'Newport North End', \\$100-million mixed use development](#)
- [Bloomberg | September 10, 2020 - History and Gentrification Clash in a Gilded Age Resort](#)
- [Go Local Prov | December 5, 2025 - Battle Over Development in RI Communities Plays Out in Newport](#)



East Boston is a historically working-class, immigrant-rich neighborhood of Boston that has experienced rapid waterfront redevelopment over the past two decades. Once dominated by industrial, maritime, and port-related uses, the East Boston harbor edge has been transformed through a series of large-scale residential and mixed-use projects, including developments at Jeffries Point, Clippership Wharf, and along the East Boston Greenway. These projects have added new housing, open space, and Harborwalk segments while significantly reshaping the neighborhood’s relationship to the waterfront.

Although redevelopment has delivered new parks, resilience investments, and public access infrastructure, it has also coincided with sharp increases in housing costs and demographic change. Community organizations, residents, and journalists have documented concerns that portions of the redeveloped waterfront function as quasi-private or “privatized public” space, where design choices, building orientation, and management practices subtly discourage use by long-standing residents. While formal access requirements are often met, lived experience has not always aligned with policy intent, leading to perceptions that the harbor has become oriented toward new, higher-income residents rather than the broader community.

East Boston’s experience is widely cited as an example of how waterfront redevelopment—particularly when driven by luxury or amenity-focused housing—can accelerate gentrification and weaken historic neighborhood connections to the harbor, even as public

investments are made. The case highlights the limits of regulatory access requirements alone, and the importance of designing waterfronts that remain socially, culturally, and physically accessible over time.

Strengths of the Development Pattern

- Significant investment in **harborwalks, parks, and open space** expanded physical waterfront access.
- Redevelopment remediated former industrial land and improved **climate resilience** along the harbor edge.
- Demonstrates how **urban waterfronts can be reconnected to the city** through new infrastructure, public realm improvements, and clear wayfinding to the water.

Challenges of the Development Pattern

- Expanded waterfront access **has not translated into a sense of inclusive or shared use**, due to design and management choices.
- Fragmented, rapid redevelopment has contributed to **displacement and affordability loss** in a historically lower-income, immigrant neighborhood.
- Large-scale, amenity-driven housing **altered neighborhood character** and shifted who the waterfront primarily serves.
- **Community benefits and protections lagged** behind the pace of private development.

Relevance to Salem

East Boston illustrates how waterfront redevelopment can unintentionally sever long-standing neighborhood connections to the harbor and accelerate displacement if equity, access, and community-serving uses are not explicitly protected from the outset.

Reference Material + Articles

- [City of Boston - Plan: East Boston | Resilient East Boston Waterfront Project](#)
- [Storymaps ArcGIS | The Harborkeepers | December 11, 2019 - *The East Boston Waterfront: Mapping the Access Rights of the Public*](#)
- [Boston.com | February 7, 2022 - *With sea level rise to come, Mayor Wu is turning her attention to East Boston's waterfront. Here's what to know.*](#)
- [PBS | June 6, 2022 - *How 'green gentrification' is pricing out longtime East Boston residents*](#)
- [Boston Globe | March 31, 2022 - *'Gentrification is destroying the community': In Eastie, first-generation Bostonians lament a changing neighborhood*](#)