

# Community Conversations

*Topic: Where Are We Now? Where Should We Be Headed?*

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*East Providence: Pathway to 2040* will be an update of the City’s comprehensive plan. It will describe a shared vision for East Providence’s future for the next 20 years, a “roadmap” that guides how we get there together, and a tool that can be used by City leaders, staff, boards, and committees to make decisions about:

- What new development looks like and where it happens,
- How the City can protect environmentally sensitive areas and historic sites,
- How to support strong neighborhoods and community connections,
- How to prioritize future investments in community services and infrastructure that promote fairness and equity across the City, and
- How to better support local business development and entrepreneurship.

## Why Should We Have a Plan?

East Providence is a unique place full of diverse people, stories, and traditions. By planning together, we hope that the community understands that each of us is part of what makes East Providence special, and residents take ownership of the City’s future. We all should have a place at the table. Through this plan, the community will outline a future that treats everyone fairly and equitably, providing resources and giving support where it is needed most.

Throughout the update process there will be many opportunities to share ideas and experiences through the project website (<https://eastprovidenceri.gov/community>), surveys, public forums, and focus group meetings.

**Community Conversations** is another opportunity.

A **Community Conversation** brings neighbors and families together to discuss key questions and provide their viewpoints and experiences about East Providence. Because of the gathering restrictions to reduce the spread of COVID-19, we are unable to hold in-person public workshops and small group discussions at this time. However, many of us have smaller circles of people we see on a regular basis. Holding a **Community Conversation** gives us an opportunity to talk about issues important to East Providence and its future in a way that is safe.

### Purposes of a Community Conversation:

- To encourage small group conversations about East Providence today and what East Providence should be in the future,
- To identify the things about East Providence that are most important to residents,
- To identify the things that are missing or could be improved to make East Providence a better place, and
- To make this planning process more equitable and inclusive by making sure the voices of everyone in East Providence are heard.

*We appreciate your help!*

Sincerely,

The City of East Providence

Initials:

Date:

## Community Conversation Support Team

Do you need help with materials, running the meeting, or other things to make your Community Conversation successful? Contact:

William Fazioli

East Providence Department of Planning and Economic Development  
(401) 435-7500 or wfazioli@eastprovidenceri.gov

## Community Conversation Packet

- Community Conversation Process Overview
- Invitation Template
- Host Instructions
- Participant Worksheets
- Community Conversation Summary Sheet
- Participant Feedback Sheet
- Host Feedback Sheet

## Community Conversation Process Overview

### 1. Invite

Think about the people you would like to have a conversation about the City with. Invite no more than 5 or 6 people. This is within the current limit for gatherings set by the RI Department of Health,\* but also a manageable number to have a meaningful conversation where everyone can have a chance to talk.

Connect with people as you typically would (text, email, call) and set a date for 1 to 2 hours. The location should be a place where everyone feels comfortable. People should be able to socially distance from each other, at least 6 feet. If weather allows, consider meeting outside. You might also want to consider meeting virtually on Google Chat, Zoom, or any other virtual platform you may have access to.

### 2. Remind

A week ahead, remind your invitees of the date and time. Also remind them to wear a mask and bring their own pens and paper.

### 3. Set Up

On Conversation day, set up your space so people can sit at a distance, ideally in a circle. Have copies of the Participant Worksheets for those that do not bring paper, extra pens, and hand sanitizer.

### 4. Talk

Have a conversation! Make sure everyone has a chance to contribute, and the group stays on topic.

### 5. Return

Collect everyone's notes, worksheets, and feedback sheets. Send the packet to or drop it off at the East Providence Department of Planning and Economic Development in City Hall.

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\* This guidance assumes social gathering restrictions to limit the spread of COVID-19 and hosts should refer to the State of Rhode Island Department of Health for most current updates: <https://health.ri.gov/covid/>.

Initials:

Date:

## Invitation Template

Sample language for a written invitation:

### **You're invited!**

I am/We are hosting a small group conversation to seek your thoughts and ideas about the future of East Providence.

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### **Why Should We Have a Plan?**

East Providence is a unique place full of diverse people, stories, and traditions. By planning together, we hope that the community understands that each of us is part of what makes East Providence special and residents take ownership of the City's future. We all should have a place at the table. Through this plan, the community will outline a future that treats everyone fairly and equitably, providing resources and giving support where it is needed most.

The voices of everyone in East Providence need to be heard!

We need you to be part of this process. Please join us to share your stories, thoughts, and ideas with neighbors, friends, and other East Providence residents.

<https://eastprovidenceri.gov/community>

Initials:

Date:

## Host Instructions

These meetings are designed to encourage group conversations. As host, you will lead the discussion and will be responsible for keeping everyone on topic and ensuring everyone has a chance to speak. Asking someone to take notes will be extremely helpful. Participants are encouraged to write down all their ideas, even if there may not be enough time to discuss them with the group, and you will collect them at the end of the meeting.

The following are step-by-step instructions and a suggested script to make sure participants understand the purpose of the conversation and expectations of its outcome.

### Welcome and Introductions

#### 1. *Who's in the room?*

[If everyone doesn't know each other, ask them to introduce themselves.]

#### 2. *What is East Providence: Pathway to 2040?*

*East Providence: Pathway to 2040* will be an update of the City's comprehensive plan. It will describe a shared vision for East Providence's future, a "roadmap" that guides how we get there together, and a tool that can be used by City leaders, staff, boards, and committees to make decisions about:

- What new development looks like and where it happens,
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- How to better support local business development and entrepreneurship.

#### 3. *Conversation Overview*

The City is encouraging residents to hold these Community Conversations to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to share their ideas and concerns about the City and its future. There are 3 focus areas for our conversation today:

- the City's strengths and opportunities,
- the City's current and future challenges, and
- how we want to see our City in the future.

#### 4. *How will the input from this meeting be used?*

The City will use public input to develop city-wide policies that will be part of the updated comprehensive plan.

#### 5. *Group Discussion Guidelines*

These guidelines will help us stay on topic and keep within the time we plan to be here. [Ask the group if they would like to add anything that will help everyone participate. Ask if everyone agrees to these discussion guidelines. Clarify as needed and address any concerns.]

- Everyone should have an equal opportunity to talk and be heard.
- Listen to others and avoid criticizing.
- Respect limited time and keep your answers to the point.
- Be honest and try to understand other viewpoints.
- It's ok to disagree.

Initials:

Date:

## Discussion Questions

Spend about 15 minutes on each question, for a total of 45 minutes. Participants can use their own paper or Participant Worksheets you provide. If using their own paper, make sure the question is written clearly. Ask someone to volunteer to be the note taker for the group discussion and write down what is said.

Question 1: What are the City's strengths today and opportunities for the future?

### Reflect

- Read the question out loud and ask if anyone has questions about the question. Some inspiration questions are provided in the Participant Worksheets.
- Give participants a couple of minutes to think about and list answers on their paper/worksheet before beginning to go around the group for answers. Participants may fill out the worksheet as individuals or in pairs, whichever they prefer.

### Discuss

Ask for a volunteer to share one or two of the thoughts written down. Ask why they think this is important. Ask if others agree or disagree and why. Then go to the next person. It's ok to pass if a person is not ready when it's their turn. Once you get around the circle, be sure to go back to anyone who passed. After everyone has spoken, go back to anyone who has an additional thought that didn't come up.

During this time, the note taker should write down each of the thoughts, confirming with the group that the thought has been correctly captured by reading it back. Ask the note taker to use participants' exact words to the greatest extent possible.

YOU are also a participant and can share your opinions as an equal member of the discussion, but make sure everyone has a chance to express his/her opinion. Try to make the meeting relaxed and enjoyable for everyone.

### Review

After everyone has had a chance to speak, briefly review all the thoughts and ideas shared and ask participants to write down three that most resonated with them. People may pick their own ideas and/or those that other people shared. Ask the note taker to mark in their notes how many times an idea is identified.

NOTE: This is not an attempt to build consensus on top ideas. There is no need to get the group to agree. The purpose is to get an understanding of community priorities.

Question 2: What are the City's biggest challenges today and in the future?

Repeat the above process for the second discussion question.

Question 3: If you were gone for 20 years and returned to East Providence, what would you hope the City would look like?

Repeat the above process for the third discussion question.

## Wrap Up

After you have finished your conversation, ask participants to complete the Participant Feedback Sheets. Collect emails if they would like to receive email updates on *East Providence: Pathway to 2040*.

Ask participants if they would like to host their own Community Conversation. Refer them to the contact at the Planning and Economic Development Department at City Hall.

Initials:

Date:

## Participant Worksheet

Question 1: What are the City's strengths today and opportunities for the future?

Some inspiration... What are your favorite places in East Providence? ... What has East Providence as a community been doing successfully? ... What makes East Providence a great place to live/work/play? ... What are your favorite programs, events, or traditions that happen in East Providence? ... Do we have resources, facilities, or assets that are underutilized or could be better used?

Of all the answers my group identified, these are my TOP THREE:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Initials:  
Date:

## Participant Worksheet

Question 2: What are the City's biggest challenges today and in the future?

Some inspiration... What is missing in our city? ... Are there residents being underserved? ... What areas need to be improved? ... What did we use to have that we liked? ... What things do other cities do better than us? ... What future events could impact the quality of life in our city?

Of all the answers my group identified, these are my TOP THREE:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Initials:  
Date:

# Participant Worksheet

Question 3: If you were gone for 20 years and returned to East Providence, what would you hope to see?

Of all the answers my group identified, these are my TOP THREE:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Initials:  
Date:



## Community Conversation Summary Sheet

Please return this sheet along with notes from your note taker and participants (either on their own paper or Participant Worksheets), Participant Feedback Sheets, and Host Feedback Sheet.

**Make sure every piece of paper you are returning to the City is marked at the bottom with your initials and the date of the meeting.**

### Participant Sign In

Name	Email if you would like updates on <i>East Providence: Pathway to 2040</i>

\*Include name of host

### Send your materials to:

William Fazioli  
East Providence City Hall  
Dept. of Planning and Economic Development  
**RE: Community Conversation**  
145 Taunton Ave  
East Providence, RI 02914

Initials:  
Date:

## Host Feedback

What did you think about Community Conversations? Help us improve this outreach method.

1. How useful is the Community Conversations concept for broadening the range of public input?

Very Poor    Poor    Fair    Good    Very Good

2. Were the Community Conversations materials easy to understand and use?

Very Poor    Poor    Fair    Good    Very Good

3. What did you like about Community Conversations?

4. How should we improve Community Conversations?

5. Please rate the following aspects of your meeting:

Participant engagement

Very Poor    Poor    Fair    Good    Very Good

Quality of group discussion(s)

Very Poor    Poor    Fair    Good    Very Good

Group satisfaction with outcomes

Very Poor    Poor    Fair    Good    Very Good

6. Would you host a Community Conversation event again?    Yes    No

7. If "No," why not?

8. Would you recommend Community Conversations to others?    Yes    No

Initials:

Date:

## Participant Feedback - Tell us about yourself

It is important that we reach all East Providence residents. By understanding who is participating in our Community Conversations, we also understand who we have not heard from yet. This information allows us to direct further outreach to under-represented voices. **All information collected is kept anonymous. Completion of this form is optional.**

What part of the City do you live in?

- Rumford
- City Center
- Riverside

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Nonbinary

How long have you lived in East Providence?

- Less than 5 years
- 5 – 9 years
- 10 – 14 years
- 15 – 19 years
- 20 – 24 years
- 25 years or more
- I am not a resident of East Providence

What is your age?

- 18 years and under
- 19 – 24 years
- 25 – 34 years
- 35 – 44 years
- 45 – 54 years
- 55 – 64 years
- 65 – 74 years
- 75 years and older

What is the primary language spoken in your home?

- English
- Spanish
- Portuguese
- Creole
- Other:

What was your total household income in 2019?

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 to \$14,999
- \$15,000 to \$24,999
- \$25,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 to \$199,999
- \$200,000 or more

What best describes you? Check all that apply.

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Portuguese
- Cape Verdean
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other:

Do you own your home or rent?

- Own
- Rent
- Other:

Initials:

Date:

## Participant Feedback – Meeting Evaluation

Tell us what you thought about today's Community Conversation.

1. Please rate the effectiveness of the meeting:

- Very Poor
- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good

2. What did you like about the meeting?

3. How can we improve meetings like this in the future?

4. Do you have any other comments?

Initials:  
Date: