

GZA's Planning Practice



GZA's Land Use and Environmental Planning practice is a multidisciplinary group dedicated to analyzing and organizing the physical, economic, and social development of places, towns, cities, and regions, as well as the potential environmental impacts of site-specific projects. By integrating land use strategy with environmental stewardship, we help clients navigate complex regulatory landscapes, balance competing priorities, and create plans that are not only feasible today, but adaptable for tomorrow's challenges. Our multidisciplinary team brings technical expertise, innovative tools, and a collaborative spirit to every project—whether revitalizing an urban neighborhood, protecting critical natural resources, or guiding large-scale infrastructure development. In every engagement, we strive to deliver solutions that respect the environment, strengthen communities, and support long-term economic vitality.

Land Use and Environmental Planning is a process that shapes the environments in which people live, travel, work, and play. It addresses the layout of buildings, access to transportation systems, public spaces, infrastructure, and the distribution, density, and arrangement of land for various uses. **Our planners consider the current needs of populations, while anticipating future growth and change, aiming to create sustainable, livable, and equitable communities.**

Land use planning is a process that considers the assessment of land and water potential, alternative patterns of land use, and other physical, social, and economic conditions. It involves the development of policies and procedures to manage how specific areas of land are used—whether for residential, commercial, agricultural, industrial, recreational, or conservation purposes, as well as the interplay between such land uses.

Environmental planning is a process that considers the environmental impacts of land use decisions and strives to integrate ecological, social, and economic factors into the planning and management of land and resources. The goal is to minimize negative environmental effects, while supporting sustainable development and human well-being, through appropriate mitigation or changes in land use approaches.

While land use planning focuses on organizing human activities on the landscape, environmental planning ensures these activities are compatible with the natural environment. Over time, these fields have become increasingly linked, and GZA's planning practice integrates both in everything we do. This integration is necessary due to the fact that land use decisions often have profound and long-lasting effects on air and water quality, biodiversity, community resilience, and public health. For example, designating wetlands as protected areas not only preserves wildlife habitat, but also helps mitigate flooding and improve water quality for nearby communities.

HOW DOES GZA'S PLANNING TEAM HELP CLIENTS?

- **Brownfield Redevelopment Planning:** A collaborative process that transforms abandoned, potentially contaminated sites into valuable community assets. Our integrated approach combines environmental site assessments and site investigations, stakeholder engagement, market analysis, and strategic planning for remediation, funding, and future land use.
- **Ecological Restoration & Natural Resource Planning:** Rehabilitating degraded environments to return them to a natural or functional state and protecting and restoring habitats, biodiversity, and ecosystem services. Developing strategies for the sustainable use of water, soil, minerals, forests, and other natural resources. This includes tasks such as wetland delineation, biodiversity assessments, and permitting for construction and development activities.
- **Geographic Information Systems (GIS):** Advanced mapping and analysis tools that help planners visualize patterns, identify risks, and make data-driven decisions.
- **Environmental Assessments:** Evaluating the potential effects of a proposed project or land use change on the environment before decisions are made. They help clients comply with federal, state, and municipal regulations such as NEPA, New York State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR), New York City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR), Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA), and Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA).
- **Hazard Mitigation & Resiliency Planning:** Identifying and reducing risks associated with natural hazards such as floods, earthquakes, and wildfires.
- **Land Use & Zoning:** Provides strategic advice on zoning analysis, development feasibility, discretionary actions, and municipal board applications. Zoning regulations control the types of activities permissible in different geographic areas, such as residential, commercial, or industrial zones.
- **Master Planning & Comprehensive Plans:** Long-term policy documents that guide the overall growth and development of a region, balancing land use, infrastructure, housing, environment, and economic development.
- **Noise & Acoustics:** Provide noise and vibration analyses, offering mitigation strategies to address regulatory requirements and protect sensitive areas.
- **Public Outreach:** Engaging communities through workshops, surveys, and hearings to ensure that local values and knowledge shape planning outcomes.
- **Scenario Planning:** Exploring different development paths to anticipate the long-term consequences of today's choices.
- **Socioeconomic & Community Services:** Assessing the impact of new development or increased density in a district and potential impact of public services such as schools, libraries, fire, and police departments, as well as evaluating the impact of new development on affordability and gentrification.
- **Sustainability Planning:** Balancing economic development, resilience, social equity, and environmental protection to create livable and resilient communities. Incorporating sustainable practices such as nature-based solutions and building decarbonization into urban and rural landscapes to manage stormwater, conserve energy, lower emissions, reduce heat, and improve air quality.
- **Transportation Planning:** Conduct studies to evaluate traffic generation and impact for development plans and areas and identify approaches to mitigate congestion, enhance mobility, improve safety, and optimize land use.
- **Urban Design:** Evaluating and analyzing the impact of bulk form, land use, and amenities on place or space to create and support healthy, well-scaled communities and streets.

At GZA, our Land Use and Environmental Planning practice is built on the belief that thoughtful, science-based, and community-informed planning is the foundation for resilient, thriving, and sustainable places.

CURRENT PROJECTS



JOHNSON POND REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

This planning effort is a community-driven process and involves defining a boundary for the district, gathering public input, and developing actionable strategies for access, recreation, and environmental protection.

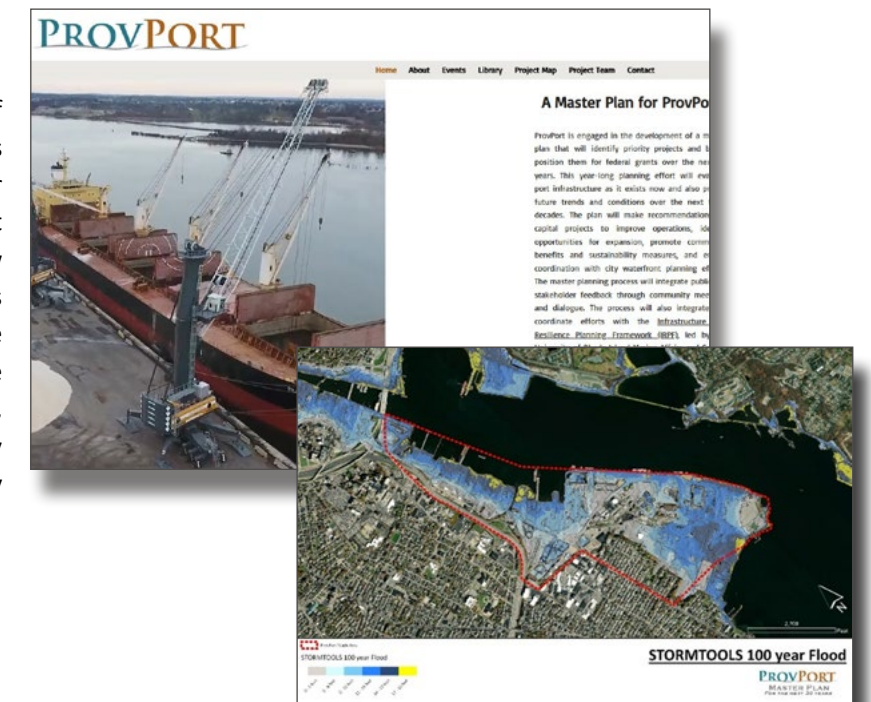
Johnson's Pond, also known as Flat River Reservoir, was originally created in 1873 as a mill pond to power the textile mills along the Pawtuxet River in Coventry, Rhode Island. The Quidnick Reservoir Company dammed a branch of the river to ensure a consistent water supply for the mills. Over time, it became a popular recreation spot, with fishing and summer cottages developing along its shoreline.

<https://www.johnsonpondrp.org/>

PROVPORT MASTER PLAN

GZA is assisting ProvPort in the development of a master plan that will identify priority projects and better position them for federal grants over the next 30 years. This in-depth planning effort is evaluating port infrastructure as it exists now and also predict future trends and conditions over the next three decades. The plan will make recommendations for capital projects to improve operations, identify opportunities for expansion, promote community benefits and sustainability measures, and ensure coordination with city waterfront planning efforts.

<https://www.provportmasterplan.org/>



GZA is uniquely positioned, as a firm of scientists, planners, and engineers, to provide the foresight and understanding to respond to the challenges of today to create solutions for equitable, sustainable, and resilient development that fosters better regions, communities, and places of tomorrow.



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