



West Warwick, Comprehensive Plan Update
West Warwick, Rhode Island
DRAFT Communication Strategy

December 2015

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Purpose of Communication Strategy

The Town of West Warwick is undertaking a process to update its Comprehensive Plan, last updated in 2005. The Town Planner, Mark Carruolo, is managing this process on behalf of the Town. The lead consultant for this project is The Cecil Group, who will be the point of contact between the Town and the other team members.

The governing legislation for comprehensive planning is RIGL 45-22.2, known as "The Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act." The State is still in the process of updating its guidance on meeting the requirements, after recent legislative changes. This process of updating this plan will move in parallel with the State's update.

The purpose of this planning process is to create a well-written, well-documented plan that identifies specific actions needed to guide the Town of Warwick over the next twenty years. This plan should be based on the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, a strong public process, and analysis of data from the Town, State of Rhode Island, and other sources that will contribute to an understanding of the future impacts on the Town's growth.

As part of the planning process, The Cecil Group Team (the consultant team) and the Town Planner have developed this Communication Strategy to provide a framework within which the Town Planner, other stakeholders and the consultant team can coordinate the dissemination of information and ensure that the public is engaged in an informed, inclusive and open discussion about the updated of the comprehensive plan for the Town of West Warwick..

Specifically, this plan describes roles and responsibilities related to meetings and external communications. It also provides a description of the planning study that should be used in all communication materials.

This plan may be amended from time to time to respond to specific needs or requests that have not yet been identified.

Goals of this Communication Strategy

Goals of this Communication Plan include the following:

- Provide a clear and consistent description of the planning study
- Define roles and responsibilities for coordination of and communications related to meetings with the Steering Committee, meetings with other boards and committees and public workshops
- Support an effective Steering Committee to provide stakeholder input
- Conduct meetings related to the approval process in a timely manner

The Town Planner and the consultant team should use a standard, consistent description of the planning study for all public notices, briefings and progress reports for the planning study. The following statement has been prepared for this purpose. If it is amended, it should be redistributed internally, so that a current version is always available.

Additional information regarding upcoming meetings, available drafts and other public communications can be added to accompany this statement as required.

1. Standard Statement for Direct Copying and Distribution

The Town of Warwick is updating its Comprehensive Plan as required by State law (RIGL 45-22.2). The purpose of a comprehensive plan is to guide the Town's decision-making process over the next twenty years and ensure that those decisions support the community's vision for the future.

The Town Planner is guiding this process and hired a professional consultant team, led by the planning and urban design firm The Cecil Group, to assist with update of the comprehensive plan.

As part of this process, the consultant team will seek significant and varied input from the community to better understand the issues and opportunities in the Town of West Warwick and to help shape recommendations that can be implemented by the Town. The consultant team will reach out to a broad range of stakeholders, including town officials, area businesses and property owners, residents, and local nonprofit organizations. The consultant team will facilitate a series of public workshops and will work with a Steering Committee, appointed by the Town.

The project is expected to be complete during the fall of 2016, with the following schedule:

- Fall 2015-Winter 2016: Existing Conditions Update and Analysis
- Winter-Spring 2016: Public Input and Refinement of Plan Elements
- Spring-Summer 2016: Draft Report and Public Comment Period
- Fall 2016: Municipal and State Approval Process

Additional Information

More detailed information about the project is available on the Town Planner's page at: <http://www.westwarwickri.org/>

For additional information, contact: **Mark Carruolo, Town Planner/Economic Development Coordinator** (401) 827-9025/ Mcarruolo@westwarwickri.org

The consultant team will provide a schedule and work plan separately; this may be revised as the project moves forward and will include the meetings described below and a meeting with the Statewide Planning Office.

Steering Committee Meetings

The consultant team will hold a series of meetings with the Steering Committee to obtain direction and advice at key points during the planning process. We have included up to six Steering Committee meetings in the Scope of Services, and these meetings are expected to take place on the *second Tuesday* evening approximately *every month* until the beginning of the approval process. The schedule of regular meetings will be confirmed with the Steering Committee at the first meeting.

The consultant team will coordinate agendas for each Steering Committee meeting, and the Town Planner will distribute the agendas to the Steering Committee members. The consultant team will provide its notes of the meeting which may be incorporated into the meeting minutes of the Steering Committee and distributed to the consultant team, Steering Committee members, and the Town Planner after each meeting. The consultant team will provide agendas and advance meeting materials to the the Town Planner the *Wednesday* prior to the meeting; the Town Planner will be responsible for distributing project materials, agendas and other information to the Steering Committee as well as for general coordination of meetings and communication with the Steering Committee.

Coordination and Presentation Meetings

The consultant team will conduct one update with the Town Council and the Planning Board after the first public forum. We will provide an update on the current status of the project to each board and request input on alternatives and plan requirements.

The consultant team will coordinate agendas for each meeting, and the Town Planner will distribute the agendas to the respective Board clerks or members. The consultant team will provide its notes of the meeting which may be incorporated into the meeting minutes for the respective boards and distributed to the consultant team and board members after each meeting. The consultant team will provide agendas and advance meeting materials to the Town Planner no later than one week before to the meeting; the Town Planner will be responsible for distributing project materials, agendas and other information to each board.

Approval Process Meetings

The approval process will require two public hearings – one with the Planning Board and one with the Town Council. The Planning Board must submit a recommendation to the Town Council; the Town Council must accept the plan as an ordinance of the Town. The consultant team will work with the Town Planner to establish the dates for these meetings as part of the work plan. The Town Council usually meets on the first and third Tuesday of the month; the Planning Board meets on the first Monday of the month unless it is a holiday.

The consultant team will coordinate the agendas and materials for each meeting as described above. Meeting minutes for the public hearings will be included in the appendix to the final comprehensive plan as evidence of public input into the process.

Purpose and Goals of Public Engagement Plan

Purpose

As part of the planning process, The Cecil Group Team (the consultant team) and the Town Planner have developed this Public Engagement Plan to identify both formal and informal methods of reaching out to the public to inform them of the process of developing the plan and its implications and of gathering information from both the general public and people with a specific interest in or knowledge of the elements in a comprehensive plan as they relate to West Warwick.

Goals

The goals of this Public Engagement Plan are to ensure the following criteria are met:

- Clear understanding of who is responsible for communication about the project with the media and to the general public
- Communication products provided to the general public are consistent in their message about the process and content of the plan
- Information about the planning process and updates is readily available to the public online
- Public participation is encouraged and supported throughout the planning process
- Public input is recorded and included in the draft and final Comprehensive Plan Update

Media and Website Support

Media and website support will include the following:

- Media Support – The Cecil Group will provide support in reaching out to the media, including writing press releases for distribution to the media by the Town Planner. If a member of the media specifically requests an interview with The Cecil Group, we will obtain approval from the Town Planner before granting an interview.
- Website – The Cecil Group will provide the Town Planner with project-specific information to post on his page on the Town's website. This information may include project documents and deliverables, links, and graphics. This website will be publicized throughout the planning process in press releases, fliers, and other materials produced by the consultant team. It will be a place where stakeholders can learn about the ongoing project and receive up-to-date information.

Public Workshops

The consultant team will facilitate three public forums/workshops at key points in the planning process as outlined in the Scope of Services. At these workshops, the public will get the opportunity to learn about the study area, hear updates on the study itself, ask questions

and provide their input. The consultant team will work with the Town Planner and the Steering Committee to develop an appropriate format for each forum.

The consultant team will provide draft agendas for each forum and discuss appropriate methods of engagement with the Town Planner and the Steering Committee. Town Planner and Steering Committee members will be responsible for implementing the engagement methods. Public forums may be open to all members of the public or may involve specific topics for a selected group (members of the public will receive a general invitation, but certain groups or individuals will receive invitations based on the topic to be discussed).

The consultant team will record the input gathered from the public during participatory exercises and distribute the notes to the Town Planner and Steering Committee. Presentation materials may be formatted for inclusion on the Town Planner's website.

The location for public forums designed for over 100 people will be the Senior Center at 145 Washington Street. There is one large room for all attendees and smaller rooms appropriate for breakout sessions.

For smaller public forums or stakeholder meetings, there are other meeting rooms that may be appropriate, including the TC Chambers, the Senior Center on Main Street and the Youth Center on Factory Street.

Public Hearings

Public hearings will be conducted by the Town Council and the Planning Board. The Communication Plan lists the requirements for providing draft agendas and materials for the public hearings. The TC Chamber has a new recording system that allows on-line hosting and digital archiving of meetings.

List of Stakeholders

The input of the Town's department heads is critical for the success of the comprehensive plan. The Town has provided a list of department heads, their phone numbers, and their email addresses.

Other stakeholders who may have useful information or input for this process include local business, nonprofits, and community groups. The Steering Committee will help identify the appropriate people to contact and the best methods.

Additional Engagement Methods

The consultant team will discuss additional methods for public engagement that will be employed during the planning process. Some already mentioned include the following:

- Email list – The consultant team will compile a list of attendees at each public meeting which can be used to create an email distribution list to advertise future public meetings

- Mobile message sign – The Town of West Warwick *has a mobile message sign* that can advertise dates of public meetings
- Other media – The Kent County Daily Times (print) and Warwick Beacon (online) are local media outlets that many residents use
- Farmer’s Market – The West Warwick Farmer’s Market is held from 3 pm to 6 pm every Thursday at at the Thundermist Health Center on 186 Providence Street. The market runs from July-October. (<http://www.farmfresh.org/markets/>)
- Facebook Pages – Local departments/organizations with Facebook pages:
 - Town of West Warwick
 - West Warwick Animal Shelter
 - West Warwick Fire Prevention Division
 - West Warwick Public Library
 - West Warwick Steelers
 - *Others?*
- Email lists – *Several organizations have email lists:*
 - *Schools?*
 - *Town Hall (department heads)?*
 - *Arctic Village Business Association?*
- Other ideas – Other ideas include the following:
 - Establish a Facebook page for the Town Planner
 - Jpegs are more useful for social media than pdfs
 - *Locations for flyers?*