

# ARCTIC VILLAGE REVITALIZATION PLAN

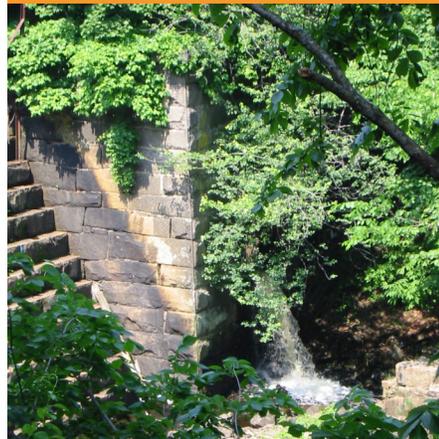


West Warwick, Rhode Island | January 2006

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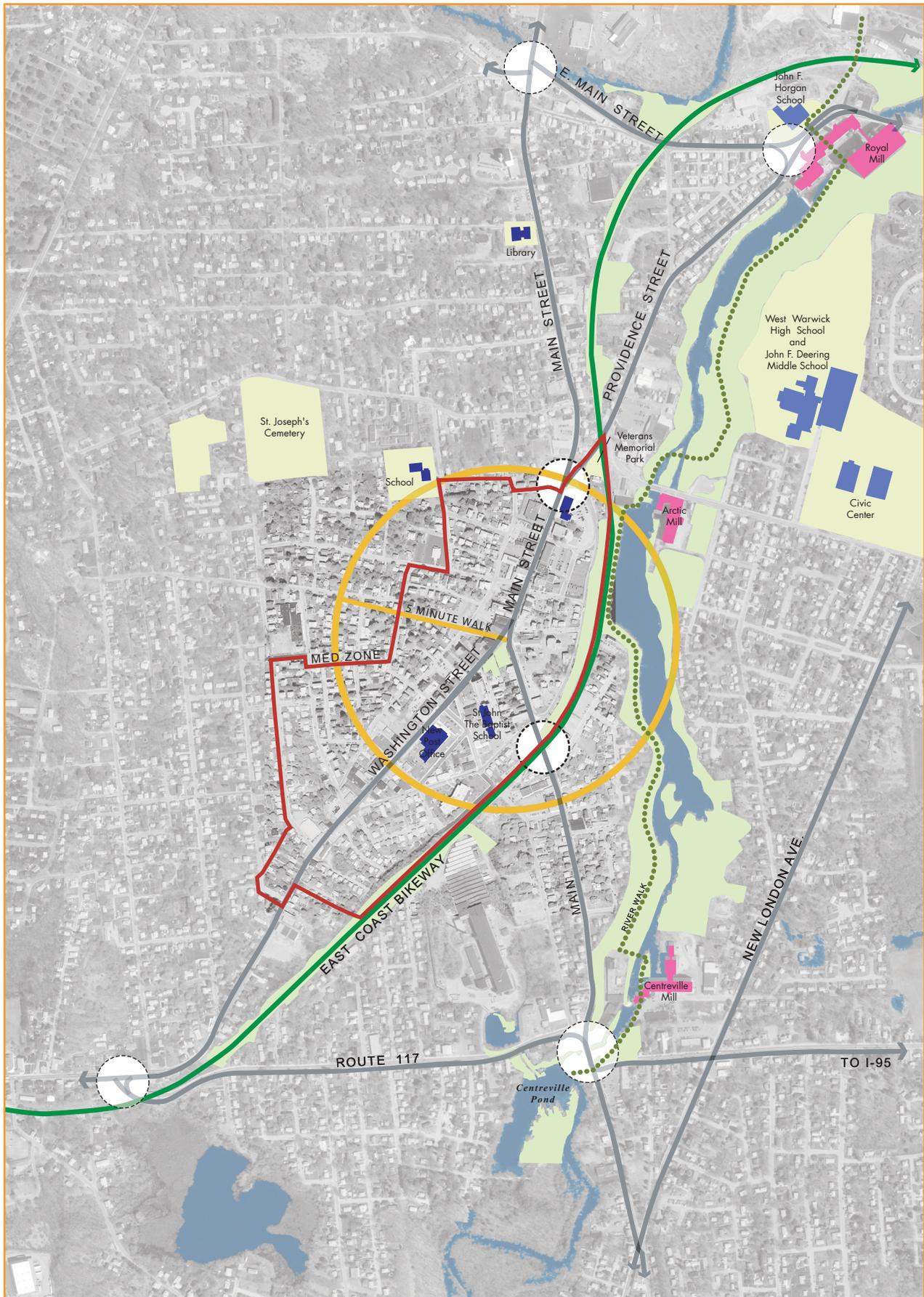


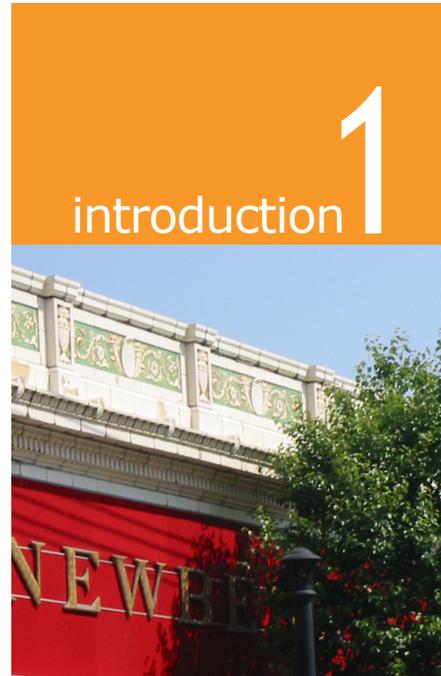
FIGURE 1 Arctic Village Site Context

In a Town with many villages, Arctic Village represents an important center for the Town of West Warwick. Once the primary shopping district, the Village remains the seat of Town government and still has banking, shops, the main post office, and several churches. The Pawtuxet River flows quietly nearby, and the East Coast Greenway Bicycle Path passes along the entire length of the Village, following a former rail corridor. Residential neighborhoods surround the village, with single family homes rising on the hill above and with some multifamily housing along the immediate edge of the commercial center. T. F. Green Airport, downtown Providence, and the shores of Narragansett Bay are all within a 20 to 25 minute drive.

The concept plan for Arctic Village establishes a shared vision for the area based on the inherent assets of the center and its context, the market forces, and the aspirations of the residents, stakeholders, and town leaders. The narrative and the illustrative plan provide a framework for public improvements and private renovation, reinvestment, and new development. The revitalization of the Village can begin immediately with a few key projects and targeted changes in policy. The realization of the vision, however, may take many years. While suggesting the scale and possibilities for change, the framework must be flexible to accommodate unforeseen market forces, technological changes, and new ideas that grow out of a critical mass of activity.

The development framework plan addresses the following:

- 1.The scale and character of the village, including development principles and guidelines to promote compatible new development
- 2.Significant architectural and open space resources to be protected
- 3.Potential for private redevelopment, including location and likely program
- 4.Definition of public improvement projects
- 5.Phasing and implementation strategy, including policy changes and necessary development incentives.





*Gazebo Park near St. John's Church*

The ongoing revitalization effort for Arctic Village was triggered by its designation as a one of only three Municipal Economic Development Zones (MEDZone) in Rhode Island. While this incentive was designed to encourage only retail development, the designation prompted the Town Council and the Development Commission to consider the future of the Village overall. An important goal for the town leaders is economic development that will increase the Town's tax revenues and restore the vitality that Arctic once enjoyed. The need for new and/or expanded municipal facilities, including town government offices, the central fire station, and the police station has also been discussed.

The study area follows the MEDZone boundaries, encompassing generally the area known as Arctic Village, and bounded on the east by the Northeast Rail Corridor, on the west by neighborhoods, and extending north along Main Street to Factory Street and south along Washington Street to West Street (FIGURE 1 Arctic Village Site Context).

## PROCESS

The MEDZone was enacted in 2003, and as a result, the Town issued two developer Request for Proposals (RFP) in 2003 and 2004. The unsatisfactory response to these RFPs convinced the Town to engage a master planner to look more broadly at the vision and the strategy for the revitalization of Arctic Village. Through a selection process and interviews with the Development Commission, Sasaki Associates was hired in Fall 2004.

During the fall, the project team met with Town leaders, including the Development Commission and the Town Council, prepared site analyses of the Village, and studied market and real estate conditions. In December 2004, these findings were presented at a public meeting in Town Council chambers. In March, a series of alternatives became the basis for public discussion about the choices between mixed use infill development and the use of the MEDZone incentive to clear the entire village to build a big box retail center. Based on these discussions, the preferred plan focused on mixed use redevelopment in and around the Town Hall site (North Main Street) and in and around the Saint James site (South Main Street). Since the desire to maximize the MEDZone incentive for retail development remained a goal, the North Washington area was identified as the area where larger buildings suitable for retail could be possible. Main Street, with its historic buildings and proximity to parks, the river, and the bicycle trail, was identified as an area more suitable to infill development and adaptive reuse.

Under pressure to move forward on the MEDZone incentives, the Town issued a third developer RFP in Summer 2005. With similar responses, the Town rejected the proposals, both of which called for substantial redevelopment to create a big box retail center. After considerable public debate and careful deliberation, the Town requested that the master plan proceed as described in this report, promoting mixed use incremental development that enhances the village character.

## REGIONAL SETTING

Arctic Village is situated close to several major destinations in Rhode Island; however, it is quietly tucked away off the beaten path. Located at the confluence of the Pawtuxet River, the East Coast Greenway Bicycle Path, a proposed riverfront walk, and several historic mills, Arctic Village is also less than 14 miles southwest of Providence, adjacent to Warwick and the T.F. Green Airport, two miles from Interstate 95, and minutes from the retail centers along the Route 2 corridor. The Town of West Warwick has the 10th largest population in Rhode Island and occupies eight square miles of land.

West Warwick is part of the larger Providence metropolitan area. Providence, as the capital of Rhode Island and its largest city, is the heart of social and economic activity in the state. The economic activity in the city is a bellwether for the economic health of the state. Providence has always been tied into the economic life of New England, but in recent years, it has gained more attention as an alternative to Boston. Workers in Boston who want a less expensive lifestyle, and companies looking for less expensive operating costs and economic development incentives have turned their sights to Providence. Providence is approximately one-hour from Boston by train or highway, making access relatively easy. It is also positioned on the I-95 corridor, giving it strategic access to all the major population and economic centers along the East Coast.

Wayfinding to the Arctic District (FIGURE 2 Highway Access and Wayfinding) is challenging, but the primary routes connecting to the regional highways are:

- Interstate 95 via Route 117 to Main Street (from the west)
- Interstate 295 via Route 2 and Route 115 to Providence Street (from the north)
- Interstate 95 via the New London Turnpike and Route 117 to Main Street (from the south).



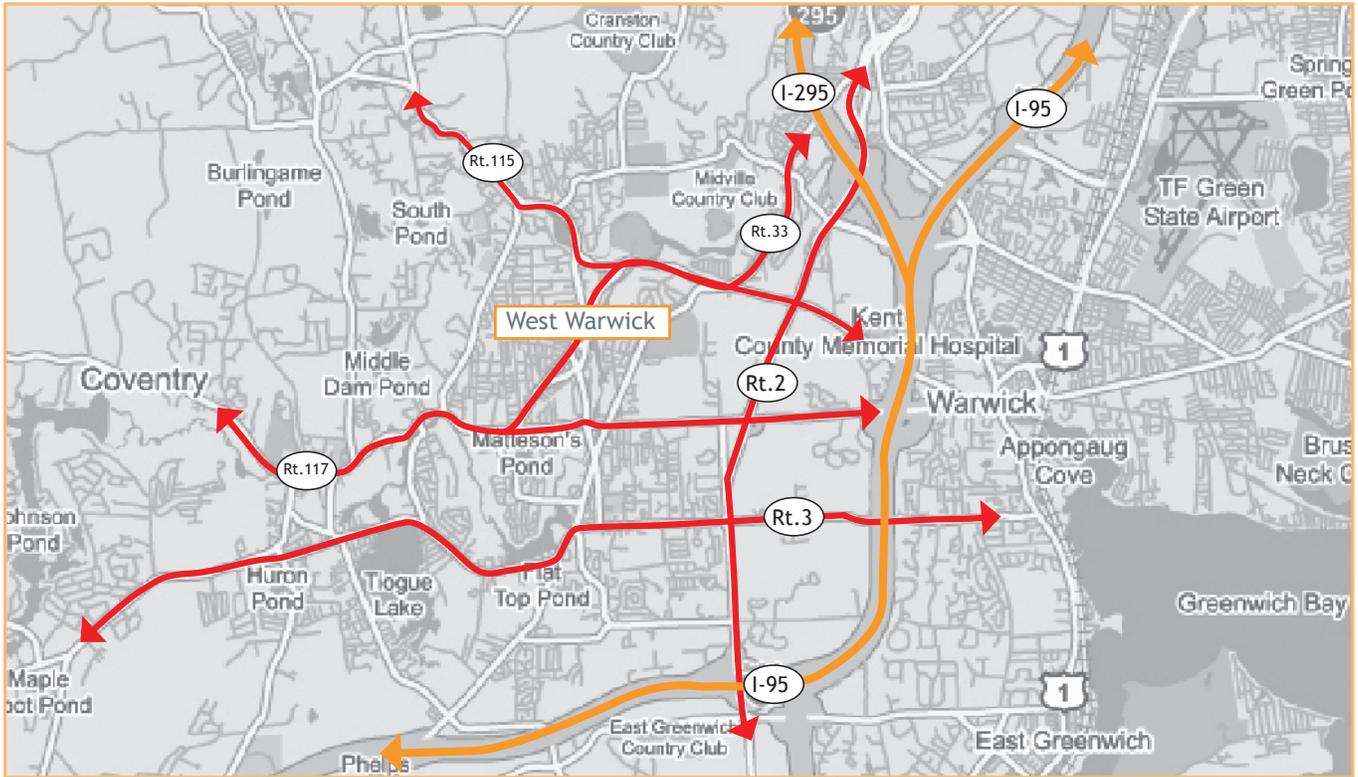
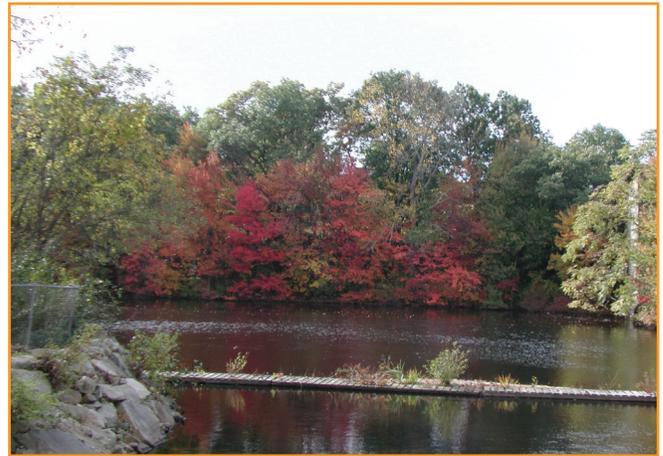


FIGURE 2 Highway Access and Wayfinding

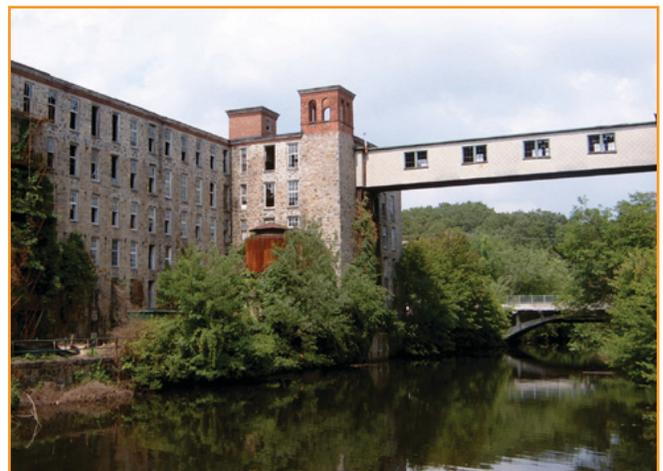
The Royal Mill and the Centerville Mill are key points of arrival. Specific gateways into the Arctic Village itself occur on the south where Main Street crosses the bicycle path and on the north where Route 33 (Providence Street) crosses the bicycle path.

The Pawtuxet River passes along the east side of the Village flowing past the Royal, the Arctic, the Centerville and other mills in the valley. The design and development of the West Warwick River Walk is underway, eventually tying the recent Royal Mill residential conversion to Arctic Village and the Centerville Mill along the scenic Pawtuxet River.

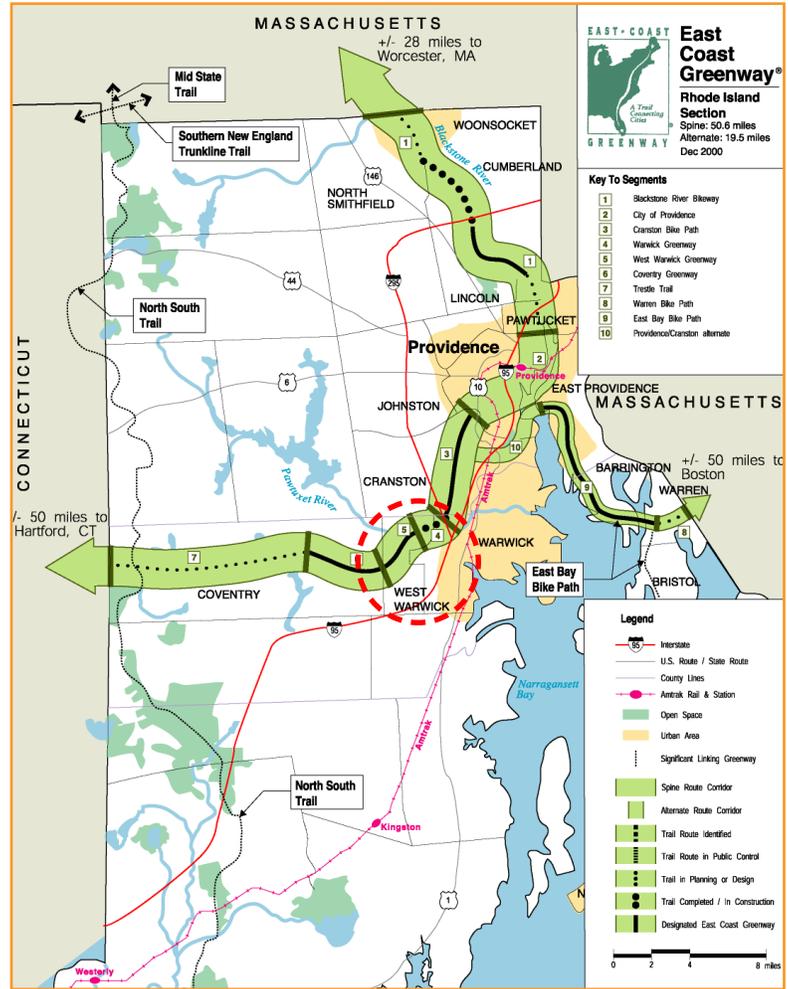
Just upriver from Arctic Village, the Royal Mill is being adapted to residential use. To the south, the Centerville Mill is being considered for residential and mixed use development. Other residential development in the area includes the Crompton Mill, approximately 1.5 miles south of the village center. Like the Arctic Mill, these mills offer striking architecture, historic character, and direct access and views of the river.



Pawtuxet River



Royal Mills

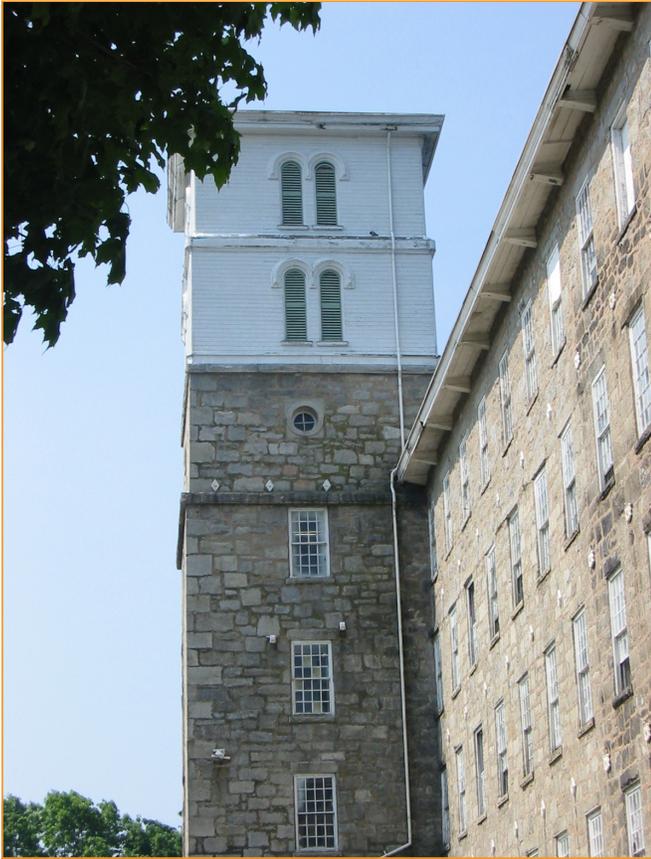


Eastcoast Greenway Alliance Maps



The Bike Path near Arctic Village

The East Coast Greenway passes directly through the heart of West Warwick and the edge of Arctic Village. The East Coast Greenway in Rhode Island is part of a planned trail linking the major East Coast cities from Maine to Florida. The Rhode Island part of this expansive greenway will traverse 55 miles through 10 cities and towns. As part of the Valley & Village Greenway, the West Warwick section completed a major connection between Coventry and Providence and is one of the few locations that is directly adjacent to the river.



*Arctic Mill*

## HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Town of West Warwick was not incorporated until 1913 when it split from Warwick under political circumstances. Nestled in a low lying valley, the land located in the heart of Rhode Island lent itself to farming and throughout the 1700s the population consisted of a handful of family farms. The Pawtuxet River, which the Narragansett tribe called “river of little falls,” provided the waterpower that attracted early industrialists to build mills along its shores. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the mills of West Warwick thrived with the production of cotton and textiles for clothing. The people working in the mills created a number of villages nearby, and these thriving business districts eventually made up the town of West Warwick.

The Village of Arctic was the last of West Warwick’s mill villages to be developed. In 1834, Rufus Wakefield, a builder and developer, constructed a stone mill and leased space to small producers of textiles. In 1852, the property was bought by the great commercial and manufacturing



*Pawtuxet River*

firm of A.W. Sprague and the development of Arctic grew quickly. Along the side of Wakefield’s Mill, the Sprague’s erected a large cotton mill and workers’ housing to the north along the east slope of Main Street. By 1862, Arctic was a well-established village. In 1869, Albert K. Barnes established a trading post at present day Arctic Square on a sizeable amount of acreage. Several new buildings were constructed along Main Street between Gough Avenue and Birch Hill. Originally known as Quidnick Street, Washington Street was laid out between 1862 and 1870.

According to the Pawtuxet Valley Preservation and Historical Society, large groups of immigrants, drawn by the promise of mill jobs, began settling in the area by the 1880’s. French-Canadians and Irish were the two largest groups to arrive. The French settled into the heart of Arctic Center and dominated the cultural and political life for several generations. Throughout the early twentieth century, several commercial, industrial and community improvements made Arctic Square as the civic center and the most densely settled village in western Rhode Island. Finally, in 1913, West Warwick was officially incorporated as a town separate from Warwick, and Arctic continued to grow as a commercial center until its heyday in the 1950s when it, like much of Main Street America, succumbed to strip shopping centers and mall development.



*Gazebo Park*



*Centerville National Bank*

## THE TOWN TODAY

Arctic Village of West Warwick has the quintessential “main street” feel. Main Street and its extension onto Washington Street makes up the principal retail corridor, interspersed with some professional offices and some houses. Surrounding the retail corridor are residential neighborhoods, with small single family homes higher on the hill and tending toward multi-family houses closer to the village. A seven-story apartment building is the highest building in the village.

At the center of the downtown is a public park with a gazebo situated between the Saint John Church and School and the now vacant Saint James Church. The blocks in this area are tightly organized, and the street network makes for interesting block configurations and access. There are several landmark buildings and buildings with historic character, including some that may have historic significance. Many of these buildings offer opportunities for adaptive reuse. Several of the buildings identified by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission are located within the district and should be considered for the National Register. Vacant and underutilized lots provide the perfect opportunity for infill development along the town’s main street and several key properties have been recently placed on the market.



*Citizens Bank on Main Street*

The majority of West Warwick’s public institutions are located within Arctic Village. The Municipal Building, consisting of the town hall, police station, and fire station, is located at the northern entrance to the area. The recently constructed Main Post Office is located along Washington Street in the southern portion of Arctic Village. A school, a senior housing complex, and several churches are also located within the Village.



## CONTEXT

West Warwick is located in Kent County, one of the predominant areas of suburban development in the Providence metropolitan area. The County's population has grown steadily from 1990-2004, but has not experienced the same rate of growth as the Providence Metro area overall. Kent County tends to have a higher average household income than the average in the Providence metropolitan area. The population in the County tends to be weighted toward the 35 to 60-year old age bracket, a powerful demographic for families, home buying, and purchasing.

## RESIDENTIAL

Most of the new housing being developed in Kent County is single-family homes. Real estate news has indicated that Coventry has become a very popular location for new housing in the past few years. These single-family homes in the County are being developed on scattered sites in existing developments/neighborhoods, and on new cul-de-sac subdivisions. The asking prices for the homes in these new subdivisions start at \$180/square feet and climb to \$260/square feet and higher (approximately \$300,000 to \$500,000 depending on the size of the house).

In Arctic Village, housing is typically in small wood frame apartment buildings. Census information on the residents both in the development area and in a 20-minute drive time confirms this observation. Over sixty percent of households are in buildings of two to nine units in Arctic Village, as compared to only 30 percent in the 20-minute drive.

The buildings in Arctic Village are also older than in the surrounding area. Over half were built prior to 1939. Only three percent were built between 1999 and 2003. While the structures are older in the development area, the residents are not. Most have moved in within the last five years. Seventy-two percent of those living in renter-occupied housing units have moved in within the last five years, while for those living in owner-occupied units, 33 percent have moved in during the same time frame. While the 20-minute drive area had a similar percentage of its owners and renters moving in the last five years, Arctic's high percentage of renters means a higher amount of overall turnover.



One of the newer projects under construction is the Royal Mill development, the original location of the “Fruit of the Loom” company. Situated along the Pawtuxet River, the grounds and riverfront are an essential part of the proposed riverwalk, providing a trail along the Pawtuxet River for bikers, walkers, and runners and creating a prime opportunity for the Town to capitalize on additional consumers. With revitalization efforts by Struever Brothers, Eccles and Rouse, The Royal Mills at Riverpoint is currently projected to have 153 apartments and 78 condominiums. The project will take approximately one year for each of its three phases. The units will be sold and rented at market rate for the area, but a price point has not been publicly established as of yet.

## RETAIL

Arctic Village is adjacent to the Route 2 regional retail corridor. The millions of square feet on Route 2 service the Providence Metro Area. The Town would like to capitalize on the MedZone incentives to attract a regional retail center to Arctic Village. The private sector will have to determine whether a regional retail center is feasible at this location.

Until the mid-1950s, Arctic Village was the second largest shopping district in Rhode Island. Retail in the Village today, however, exists only in pockets and suffers from a lack of critical mass of stores, variety, and curb appeal. A recent market analysis concludes, that though there is capacity for additional retail development in West

Warwick, Arctic Village should be positioned for specialty retail of high value quality products. Specialty retailers similarly draw from a large trade area, but often are found in traditional downtowns, which have entertainment appeal, and often feature independent and local retailers. These establishments sell books, music, stationery, jewelry, and other miscellaneous goods. Specialty retail also includes eating and drinking. The study concludes that this kind of retail best capitalizes on Arctic Village appeal and central location.

The market analysis also concludes that in order for a specialty retail cluster to prosper in West Warwick, the development area needs more density. The most compatible use for this purpose is additional newly-built residential.

## SUMMARY

There is potential for development in West Warwick’s Arctic Village, using its relative strengths in the area, and leveraging new investment and amenities, such as the greenway. Though there is capacity for retail development, it is in the form of specialty retail, not a regional shopping center. Approximately 19,000-38,000 square feet of specialty retail could be supported in the Arctic Village. Attracting this kind of commercial activity, however, is contingent on bringing additional uses to the area that highlight its assets for the larger region. This includes residential, and 200 units in addition to the planned 200+ units at Royal Mills can be supported in the next five years. These could be a range of housing types, including townhomes, high end multifamily (for rent or sale) and moderate multifamily (for rent or sale).

## VISION

In the future, the heart of Arctic Village will be concentrated along Main Street and in the crescent of land between Main Street and the bicycle path. With two way traffic on Main Street and on Legion Way, pedestrians will be able to stroll more easily and to cross from the village to the recreational bicycle trail and riverfront trails. Small shops will activate the street, some in historic buildings that have been renovated and some in new infill development. New mixed use development that is two to six stories high will increase the resident population and provide active retail uses on the ground floor.

At the high point, Gazebo Park will be the symbolic and functional center of town. The redevelopment of the Saint James property will activate this part of the village with new residential units and ground floor retail uses on the corner. Renovation and new investment will restore the prominence of the shops all around the park. The side streets that connect Main Street to Legion Way - St. Mary's Street, Bank Street, and Weaver Street - will be quiet tree lined residential streets that encourage connection to the trails and the river beyond.

Town Hall will likely continue to occupy the northern gateway into the Village, but with new investment for upgrades and expansion, this buildings could become a civic landmark and point of pride, (FIGURE 3 Arctic Village Illustrative Concept Plan). Connections and pedestrian access from the Town Hall to the riverfront should be prominent. In order to allow for expansion, one possibility is to relocate the fire and/or the police station either to Archambault Avenue or to another location outside the district. If funding were available immediately, the relocation of the municipal facilities to the Saint James property could be studied in more detail, however, this prime property may be better suited as a catalyst for private investment.



In the future, Washington Street could become an extension of the infill development of residential buildings with shops on the ground floor, similar to Main Street. The underutilized properties in this part of Arctic Village could also be suited for larger developments of residential units in townhouses, multi-family units, and/or higher density low-rise apartments. If market demand called for more retail, a small lifestyle center could be located in this part of the village creating a southern anchor. Even with larger footprints, the new buildings would line the street with entrances that faced the street while providing convenient access to surface parking behind the buildings.

In this part of the Village, the side streets should reinforce connection to the green corridor of the bicycle path, even though the grade change is significant. With larger development projects, some of these streets could be realigned to improve the arrangement of development and connections. Where streets intersect, small parks will provide a sense of place, much like the Gazebo Park does at the corner of Main Street and Washington Street.

Over time Archambault Avenue may become more of a business street, creating a network of streets in the village. This network will serve to relieve traffic on Main Street, while offering a more interesting set of destinations. With this in mind, Archambault Avenue should be an attractive pedestrian friendly environment, lined with trees and defined by curbs and sidewalks. Retail facades on Main Street and Washington Street should turn the corner onto the side streets to make these streets more pedestrian friendly, while improving the connections between the neighborhoods and the Village center. With a more successful center, investment in existing housing in the surrounding neighborhoods should be encouraged.



*Freeport, Maine*



*Newburyport, Massachusetts*

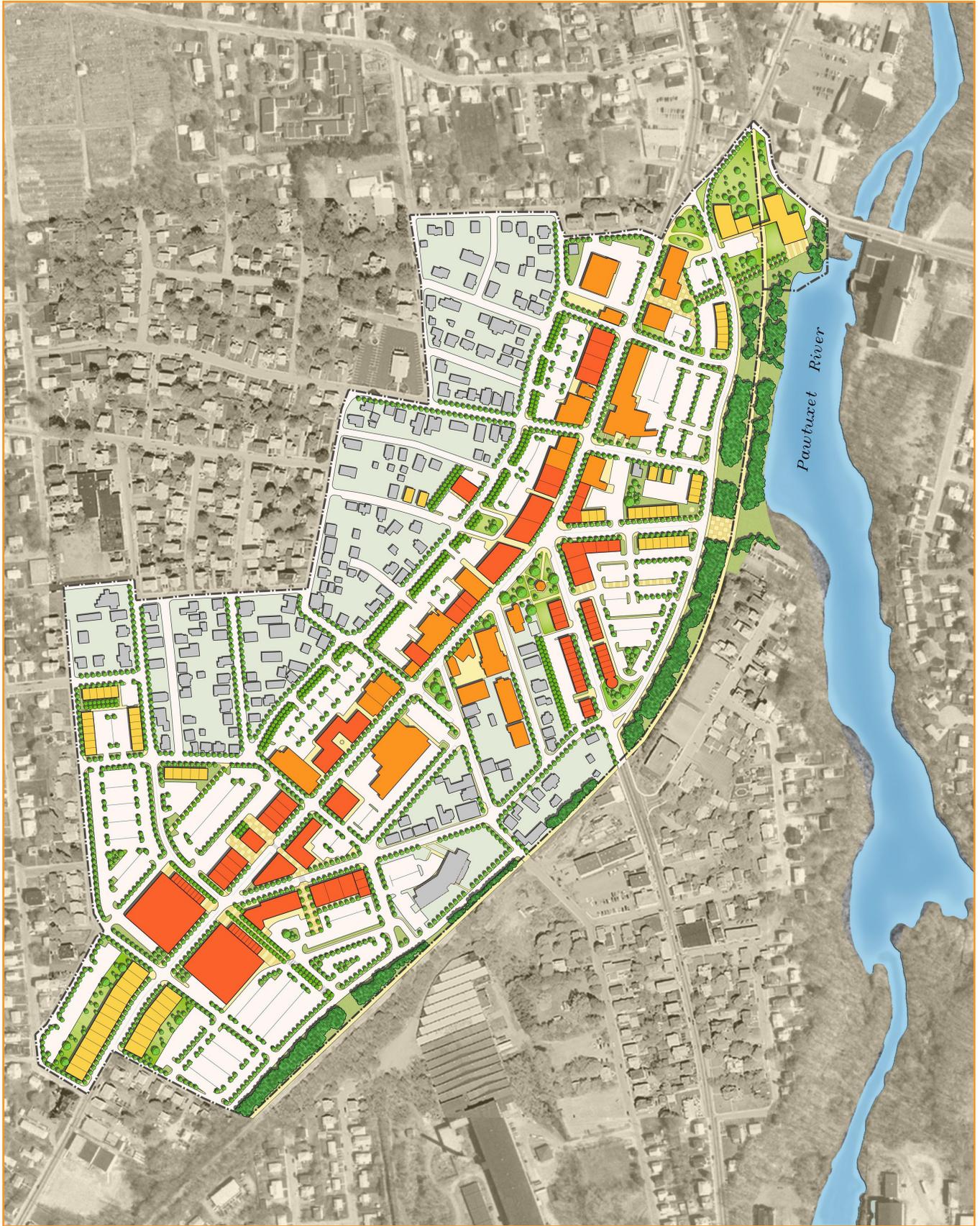


FIGURE 3 Arctic Village Illustrative Concept Plan





*The East Coast Greenway near Arctic Village*



*Neighborhood Within Arctic Village*

## DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The goal of redevelopment and improvements in Arctic Village should build on the unique character of the Town Center. Specific development principles are as follows:

1. Reinforce the civic realm - The streets should be well-defined pedestrian friendly corridors; the Gazebo Park and other similar small parks will create a sense of place.
2. Connect to the bicycle path and the riverfront - since the regional trails and the natural environment of the river are outstanding assets in the Village, the side streets should be improved and Legion Way should become two-way with traffic calming to allow for easier crossing.
3. Focus on “main street” retail - the comfortable scale of small shops oriented to the street is the most popular trend in retailing today (lifestyle centers); in Arctic Village, this character is authentic.
4. Encourage adaptive reuse - Rhode Island has one of the most favorable historic tax credits in the country; renovating historic buildings maintains scale and a connection to the past while adapting to new uses.
5. Make the downtown a neighborhood - the Village would have a more committed constituency, support more shops, and feel safer at all hours with more residential units in the heart of Arctic.
6. Connect to the neighborhoods - Above all, Arctic Village should serve the residents in the surrounding neighborhoods; mixed use development, stronger connections along pedestrian friendly streets, and attention to the transition areas between commercial and residential areas will blur the lines between uses.
7. Encourage incremental small scale development - By encouraging adaptive reuse and infill development, change can be incremental in Arctic Village allowing existing owners to invest in their properties and attracting small businesses and a range of developer interests.

## PROGRAM

Future development will take advantage of the proximity to the Providence metropolitan area and proximity to all the major retailers, which are located on Route 2, only a five to ten minute drive away. With steady population growth in Kent County and the region, the market potential will be primarily residential and specialty retail that serves local residents, visitors, and recreational users of the bicycle path and the riverfront.

The specialty retail will capitalize on the historic village environment and can draw from a large trade area like a regional shopping center. This type of retail includes restaurants, cafes, bookstores, bicycle shops, stationary shops, music stores, jewelry stores and others. By 2009, West Warwick could support 20,000 to 40,000 square feet of this retail depending on the market share. A grocery store (approximately 60,000 square feet) or other similar size small boxes would best be accommodated along lower Washington Street, where there are fewer historic structures.

With a mix of incomes and different housing types (townhouses, apartments, condominiums, etc.), the area could support over 400 new housing units by 2009. The Royal Mill project will absorb about half of these, but as the Village and the Town become known as a attractive option the numbers can grow over time.

As an indicator of scale and long term development potential, the framework plan illustrates the following program and its associated parking:

- Approximately 600 to 650 residential units, which can serve a mixed income population
- Up to 300,000 square feet retail/professional office
- Shared parking based generally on one space per 200 square feet retail, one space per 300 square feet office, and two spaces per residential unit.

In the future, the Town may need to play a more active role in providing off-street parking in municipal facilities to encourage adaptive reuse of buildings on small lots and to support retail development.

## DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREAS

Three areas stand out as areas for catalyst development, (FIGURE 4 Development Focus Area) The South Main Street area, centered on the former Saint James Church property, is perhaps the most suitable for early investment since most of the land is available already. The North Main Street area becomes a major redevelopment site only if the municipal facilities (Town Hall, Police Station, and Fire Station) are relocated. Otherwise, renovation and expansion could transform this site. New development on the west bank of the riverfront along either side of the bicycle path should be a priority in any event, with improved public links to the water. The North Washington area today lacks distinctive character and could be transformed with new development and realigned streets. This part of the Village, however, is fragmented by multiple property ownership and small lots, which could be difficult to assemble. A description of each of these three key areas follows.

- **South Main Street:** This four-acre triangle, which is bounded by Main Street, Saint Mary's Street, and the Legion Way, encompasses four acres of prime land in the heart of downtown, close to a key gateway, the regional bikeway, and the Gazebo Park. The Saint James property, which is for sale, represents 60 percent of the land (2.6 acres). Assembling the rest of the property in the triangle will involve six other property owners. If desirable, the private sector could also assemble properties north of Saint Mary's Street (up to two acres). Redevelopment would most likely involve a mix of ground floor retail and housing along Main Street and multi-family residential facing a two-way Legion Way and the bicycle path beyond. While reuse of the existing church is possible, its removal will allow for a better arrangement of buildings on the site.
- **North Main Street:** The Upper Main Street site encompasses approximately three acres with the Town owning most of this area, and only two other property owners involved. In this area, a developer would work with the Town to relocate the municipal facilities, which would free up prime real estate. This site sits at a primary gateway into the district, at the corner of Main Street and Legion Way, where the bicycle path, the riverwalk, and the bridge all come together. The program for this site would be similar to Lower Main Street with ground floor

retail and housing along Main Street and multi-family residential facing Legion Way. The private sector may wish to assemble additional properties adjacent to the riverfront near the bridge to improve the waterfront connections.

- **North Washington:** Another development opportunity would involve the southern portion of Arctic Village, encompassing approximately 20 acres. The potential program for this site will be a substantial number of residential units with ground floor retail on key corners. The study considered the possibility of a more substantial retail center with about 175,000 to 200,000 square feet of floor area, or some combination of retail and residential uses. Such a development would be similar in scale to Mashpee Commons (265,000 sf plus 100 units of housing) or other lifestyle centers. The range of retail might include a grocery store, small box retail, and inline shops fronting on Washington Street. This project will involve assembling over 100 properties, however. There are no parcels over 1.0 acres in the South Washington area, and only about seven of the 107 property owners own more than one parcel.



FIGURE 4 Development Focus Areas

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

### Main Street / Washington Street Corridor

The recommended design guidelines for built projects on the Main Street/Washington Street corridor are as follows:

1. Define a consistent street wall with two to six-story buildings placed on the lot line (no set backs).
2. Place the primary building entrances on Main Street and Washington Street.
3. Activate the building façade with multiple building entrances and building articulation to minimize uninterrupted facades of more than 50 feet in the core and 150 feet elsewhere on the corridor.
4. Provide ground level transparency into stores, offices, or civic spaces, wherever possible.
5. Create Special features on street corners including architectural elements, doorways, and/or slightly higher massing of building height.
6. Minimize surface parking lot frontage on primary streets; if necessary, buffer with significant landscape treatment.
7. Design architectural expression, color, and materials to be consistent with existing historic building fabric.

### Surrounding Neighborhood

Design guidelines for the surrounding neighborhood are summarized below:

1. Create a sense of neighborhood with two to four-story multifamily residential buildings.
2. Define a consistent street wall but allow a setback of up to 10-feet to create landscape character or landscaped entry court.
3. Create a sense of community with multiple building entrances on the street, activated with stoops and/or other building articulation.
4. Place all parking in rear of building or below ground.

### Street Pattern

Main Street and Washington Street will remain the primary roads within Arctic Village. With future improvements, Archambault Avenue, Legion Way, and Roberts Road will create a more substantive network of two-way streets in the Village, allowing for better local circulation. With redevelopment in the North Washington Street area, the lateral streets - East, Pond, Ottawa, and Crawford can be slightly realigned to improve access, circulation, and pedestrian crossings. Some blocks in this area are too small, which makes redevelopment difficult; however, the general concept of village blocks and streets will be retained to ensure connections to the surrounding neighborhoods



The implementation strategy translates the vision into specific action steps and outlines responsibilities. The phasing of public improvements and the likely sequence of private development is outlined in order to establish priorities. The strategy for rezoning is addressed and incentives are outlined, (FIGURE 5 Existing Ownership Patterns and Key Redevelopment Priorities), both serving to catalyze private investment.

## PHASING

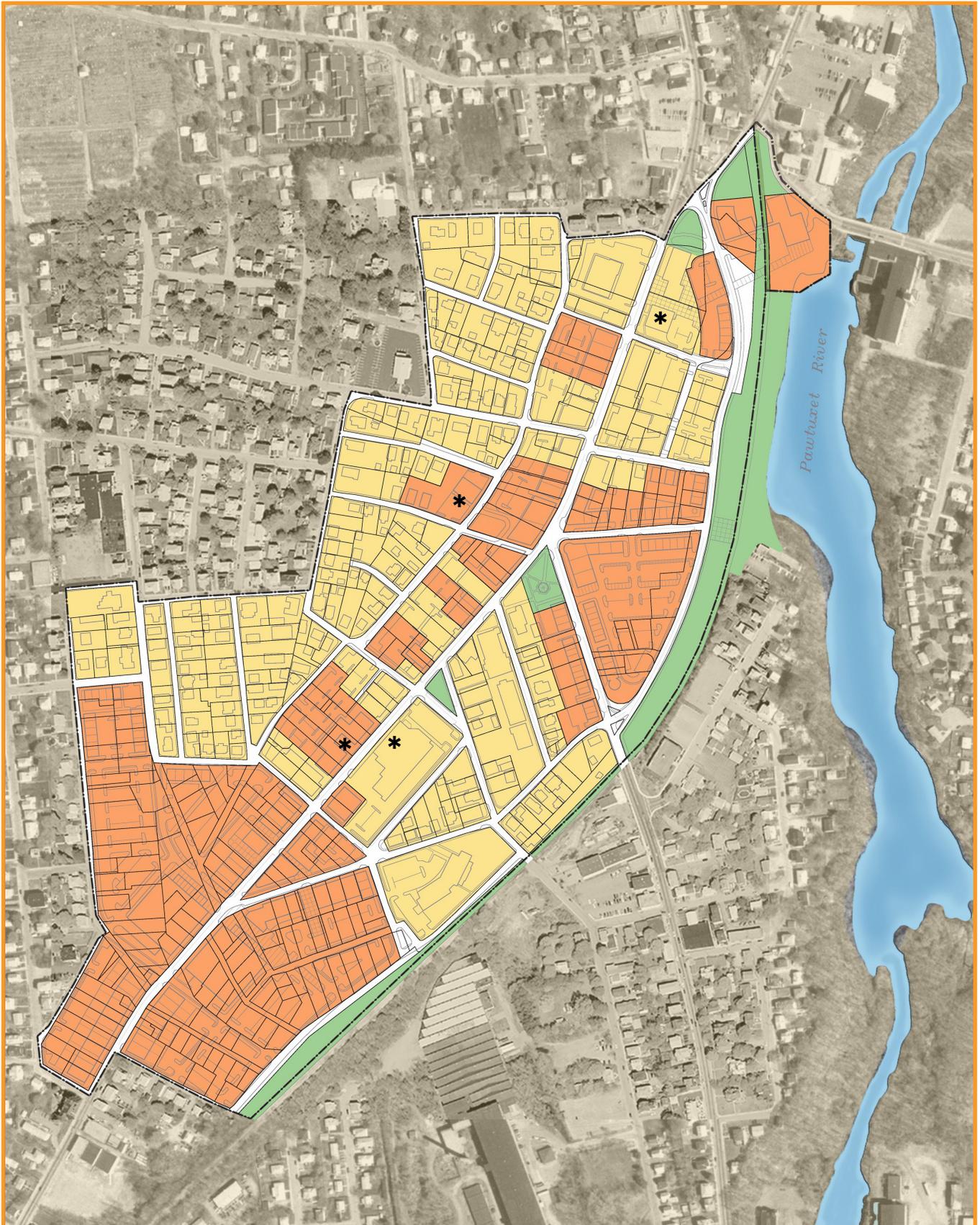
The finalization of the master plan report will trigger a series of steps, some of which are sequential and some of which will occur spontaneously with private sector interest. The likely phasing of these is listed below:

1. Approval by the Development Commission and the Town Council.
2. Policy changes including rezoning, designation of a redevelopment area, and if appropriate, creation of a historic district within some portions of the Village, and clarification of development incentives.
3. Private/public partnership to develop the Saint James property.
4. Public improvements begin including conversion to two-way streets and riverfront trails, phased in over five, ten and twenty years.
5. Individual private projects subject to review, including new development and adaptive reuse, with full build out reached in twenty years.

The phasing of public sector capital improvements is shown below:

Short Term (1-5 years)	Mid-Term (5-10 years)	Long Term (10-20 years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-way street conversion on Main Street</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riverwalk South</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realigned side streets</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riverwalk North</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Washington streetscape improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal facilities expansion and/or relocation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main Street utilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legion Way improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal parking</li> </ul>





**FIGURE 5** Existing Village Ownership Patterns and Key Redevelopment Priorities



## ZONING

Once approved, the Town will adopt the master plan as a redevelopment plan and incorporate a special PUD zone to supersede the existing zoning regulations within Arctic Village, (FIGURE 6 Existing West Warwick Zoning). The intent of the rezoning will be to clarify expectations about new development and streamline the review process.

The current zoning along Main Street and Washington Street is Village Commercial, while the surrounding residential neighborhoods are designated Residential-6. The majority of uses outlined in the master plan are allowed within these designations, except in the following cases.

In the Village Commercial zone, a special permit is needed to allow two-family and multi-family residential as well as department stores and variety stores.

In Residential-6, multi-family dwellings are allowed only through special permit.

In Village Commercial, dimensional regulations require a five-foot minimum front yard set back, which is not always desirable in urban village settings. In the Residential-6 zone this increases even more to a 20-foot setback, and the 30% maximum building lot coverage limits density.

The height limits are overly generous in the Village Commercial zone (90-foot maximum height) and overly restrictive in the Residential-6 zone (3 stories or 35 feet maximum height).

The parking requirements are acceptable for each use but do not account for shared parking; the retail and restaurant parking requirements are extremely restrictive for small businesses that are “main street” oriented.

New zoning for Arctic Village should encourage multi-family dwellings and specialty retail. The setback requirements should be reduced to a zero lot line on the main streets in order to establish a continuous street wall and a well-defined street corridor. A more consistent height limit for the overall area should be four to six stories maximum. Shared parking should be encouraged throughout, and on-street parking and public parking should be counted for small retail shops and restaurants on small lots.

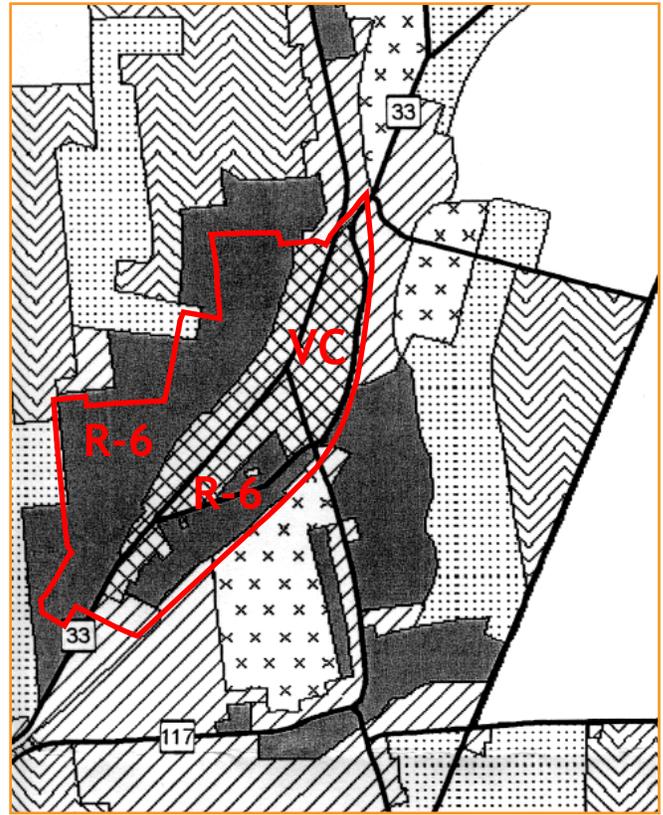


FIGURE 6 Existing West Warwick Zoning

## INCENTIVES

A variety of development incentives are available at the Federal, State, and local level. Most Federal incentives are administered by the State. The Town can work together with the State to deliver these incentives. Incentives that may accelerate investment in Arctic Village include the following. In applying incentives and creating public/private partnerships for development, the Town will be evaluating the following criteria:

- Relevant experience of the developer and/or development team
- Financial capacity of the developer and/or development team
- Expectations for public sector participation in financing
- Fiscal impacts
- Relative risk and reward
- Project feasibility
- Sustainability of program mix
- Proposed timing and project phasing
- Quality of design concepts

### Tax Abatement and Tax Increment Financing

Tax abatement is negotiated on a project by project basis and improves the financial feasibility of private projects, typically by forgiving taxes in the short-term and imposing a schedule for a gradual increase over a ten-year period. Unlike Tax Increment Financing, abatements do not involve Town financing of public improvements.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) establishes the base tax assessment for real and personal property within a certain district at a base date when redevelopment begins. The base taxes continue to flow into the City's general fund, while the increment in taxes is used to finance infrastructure projects that will leverage private investment, such as land acquisition, streetscapes, utility infrastructure, parking structures, municipal facilities, and parks.

### Historic Tax Credits

The combination of the Federal and State programs currently writes down half of eligible improvement costs in Rhode Island for adaptive reuse of certified historic structures. This incentive has been a major impetus behind the renovation of the Royal Mills in West Warwick, as well as many other projects in riverfront mills and downtown districts throughout Rhode Island.

### Industry Incentives

The State has a 10 percent investment tax credit for "qualified taxpayers." "Qualified taxpayer" firms must (1) be in the wholesale, finance, insurance, real estate or selected service industries and (2) generate more than half of their revenues from out-of-state sales and/or sales to the federal government. The State has a 10 percent Research and Development Property Credit for the construction, reconstruction, or acquisition of property for the use of research and development in the experimental or laboratory sense. Tax credits are available on the basis of employment to firms qualifying for enterprise zone tax credits.

### Enterprise Zone

Additionally, West Warwick is designated as an enterprise zone. Any business located in a state enterprise zone that grows its employment base by 5% with full-time Rhode Island residents may be eligible for the Rhode Island Enterprise Zone Business Tax Credit. The tax credit is equal to 50% of the annual wages paid to new employees to a maximum of \$2,500 per employee. If new employees reside in an enterprise zone then the tax credit is equal to 75% of the annual wages paid to those new employees to a maximum credit of \$5,000 per employee. Earned but unused enterprise zone tax credits may be carried-forward for up to three years. Every year a company, located within an enterprise zone, may be eligible for the annual tax credits based on full-time employment levels increasing by 5% over that of the previous year.



*The Saint James Property*

### Grants

Direct grants from the State or Federal government for brownfields remediation, economic development, open space, and transportation are all benefits that enhance private investment. The Town of West Warwick should pursue Federal Funding for major public improvements, both through individual earmarked appropriations and allocation of more general discretionary program funds distributed on a state-wide level. The constrained funding levels and vagaries of the competitive process imply a significant element of speculation to receipt of such funding.

### Land Acquisition

The Town should allow the private sector to lead in land assembly and reinvestment wherever possible. Where opportunities are readily available, such as the St. James property, the Town may want to become involved in land assembly as a means of accelerating development and controlling the outcome.

A negotiated purchase is preferred in all cases. Eminent domain is a tool of last resort and should only be employed in strategic situations. The most typical of these would be to achieve public purposes such as parks or street realignments. The use of eminent domain for economic development purposes should be limited to the infrequent cases where significant blight is causing an adverse affect on surrounding redevelopment potential or where a small out-parcel is precluding redevelopment of a land that has been assembled by the private sector.



*Municipal Facilities*

### MEDZone

The Arctic MEDZone, which is one of three presently in Rhode Island, was authorized in 2003 giving special tax exemption status to attract business investment and encourage economic revitalization and economic development. The area for West Warwick’s MEDZone was predetermined by the enacting legislation (unlike the other MEDZones which had discretion as to the boundaries). The area is bounded generally by Legion Way in the east, Archambault and Gardner Avenue in the north, McNiff, East and Blanchard streets in the west, and Washington street south of Nolan and West streets and the south.

All businesses engaged in qualifying sales and located in newly constructed buildings will be exempt from the requirement to charge and collect from customers 50 percent of the current sales tax, currently 7%. Businesses will be exempt for 10 years beginning when the latest to occur is triggered: 3 years from the effective date of legislation, two years from the town designates the MEDZone for its municipality, or the date the first MEDZone business obtains a certification of exemption. All sales and use taxes collected from the MEDZone will be reimbursed to the municipality for capital improvements within the MEDZone and within one mile of the area. To support redevelopment, the Town is willing to explore other financing techniques based on the MEDZone tax revenues.

“Qualifying sales” in the MEDZone exclude gambling, motor vehicles, furniture, home furnishings including mattresses and oriental rugs, tobacco, and packaged alcohol sales.

The legislation stipulates that a business cannot relocate from anywhere within Rhode Island, unless relocation results in increasing the permanent employment of the business by at least 50% of its employment from a two-year period prior to its receiving an exemption certificate. The business cannot expand into the MEDZone and then close any other location within Rhode Island, or its certificate of exemption will be revoked.

The MEDZone designation gives the Town sweeping powers to condemn property within the zone, but the Town has decided that the land acquisition strategy will be limited to the rare cases described in the section above.

### Municipal Facilities

The Town needs to address space shortages at the current Municipal Building either through expansion or relocation of some or all of the component facilities (Town Hall, fire, and police). This consideration could support the Arctic Village redevelopment in a number of ways:

- Relocation could free up a valuable site at the northern gateway near the river and bicycle trail.
- Depending on a developers plan, a new Town Hall could anchor a mixed-use development program in the South Main/Gazebo area.
- The fire and police station could be sited outside the district to free up valuable land for development or could be separated and relocated within the district.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Many players will be involved in the transformation and improvement of Arctic Village. Key roles and responsibilities are outlined below.

- **Town Council** - The Town Council approves the master plan and any incentive packages, including the designation that starts the MEDZone benefits and time clock.
- **Town Administration** - The Town Administration is responsible for the financial management of the Town and the coordination of departments that affect development, including public works, parks and recreation, and planning.
- **Development Commission** - The Development Commission is appointed by the Council and focuses on economic development. The Commission is the chief advisor on development planning and policy, working on behalf of the Council.
- **Arctic Village Association** - The Arctic Village Association is a voluntary organization that serves as a liaison with existing businesses.
- **Private Sector** - The private sector should take the lead on land assembly and the actual real estate development. Depending on the project, the private sector may need to partner with the public sector to make a project financially feasible.
- **Planning Board** - The Planning Board approves any zoning changes and reviews individual development projects as they arise.

- **Zoning Board** - The Zoning Board approves waivers for zoning and parking.
- **Recreation Commission** - The Recreation Commission is appointed by the Council with the responsibility over the Bicycle Path, Town parks, and recreation facilities.
- **Riverwalk Commission** - The Riverwalk Commission was a short-term entity set up by the Council to focus on the implementation of the Riverwalk.

The Town could consider the creation of a Main Street program under the framework established by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Trust's National Main Street Center developed the Main Street Four-Point Approach, a comprehensive methodology for revitalization of traditional commercial districts. The approach, which is tailored to meet local needs and opportunities, focuses the work of local staff and volunteers in four key areas:

**Organization:** Building consensus and cooperation among public and private groups and individuals, and identifying sources of funding for revitalization activities.

**Design:** Enhancing the district's physical appearance through building rehabilitation, compatible new construction, public improvements, and design management systems.

**Promotion:** Marketing the commercial district through events and advertising to attract customers, potential investors, new businesses, residents, and visitors.

**Economic Restructuring:** Strengthening the district's economic base and creating new opportunities through careful analysis and appropriate mixed-use development.

These four areas apply broadly to any revitalization and redevelopment entity. Whether the Main Street program is officially constituted or not, these lessons provide a framework for action that can be applied in West Warwick.

Ideally, a non-profit development corporation can be set up to take the lead in development issues. Such an organization can move more expeditiously than the public sector and can acquire land, take out mortgages, and obtain bond financing. This entity should be staffed with a qualified, full-time director who can promote the downtown, bringing expertise in real estate development and an understanding of design. The development corporation would serve as a liaison between the public sector and the private sector and should have a representative board.

In the end, the residents of West Warwick are the constituency that stand to benefit from new housing choices, new shops and restaurants, well maintained open space and recreational facilities, a walkable attractive Arctic Village, and the economic benefits of jobs and a stronger tax base. Participation in planning for these changes is an ongoing and long term commitment that will ensure a positive outcome with a more attractive, vital Arctic Village in the future.

This report was prepared for the Town of West Warwick, in partnership with the West Warwick Development Commission, with significant input and participation by stakeholders and residents interested in the future of the Arctic Village.



