

**Town of  
West Warwick  
Rhode Island  
Comprehensive  
Plan**

Prepared by the:

**West Warwick Planning Board**

With Assistance from the:

**Comprehensive Plan Citizens  
Advisory Committee**

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**March, 1992**

**ADJUSTED MARCH 2005**



**WEST WARWICK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

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**March 1992**

**AS ADJUSTED**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE PLAN

March 1, 2005



## BACKGROUND

In 1992 and 1994, the Rhode Island Office of State Planning (OSP), Local Planning Assistance Program (LPAP) issued two memoranda related to its review of the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of West Warwick. The Town met some time later with officials of the LPAP, who outlined a process by which the Comprehensive Plan, approved and sanctioned by the Town, could meet the requirements of the LPAP, and receive OSP approval.

As a result, The Town of West Warwick prepared the following “adjustments”, which reflect the substance of the intent of the Town in 1992. The “adjustments” do not change the Plan that was ratified by the Town; rather, they address and clarify certain points of concern identified by LPAP as a result of its review of the Plan.

Following a meeting with LPAP on April 9, 2003, and a follow-up letter on April 28, 2004, all remaining deficiencies were articulated by LPAP, and the Town proceeded to address those deficiencies, in order for LPAP to review and accept the Town’s final “adjustments” to the Plan, and final approval by OSP.

## ADJUSTMENTS

Throughout this document reference is made to “site plan” review process as a part of the municipal zoning ordinances. The appropriate language is a “development plan” review process and it is part of the municipal subdivision regulations. This entire Plan is adjusted accordingly.

Also included in most Chapters is supplemental information that is titled “Supplement X”, etc; that deals with issues such as soils, farm land, economic development, housing, emergency management, and open space and recreation. The “Supplements” are intended to address review comments by the Rhode Island Housing Resources Commission, Department of Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals, Department of Environmental Management, RI Emergency Management Agency, and additional information from the Town of West Warwick. The “Supplements” are also identified in the CONTENTS pages in the beginning of this document.

The following “adjustments” have been made to the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of West Warwick. The Table of Contents has been adjusted to reflect all “adjustments”, however, the text of the Plan has not been changed to allow the reader to compare the adjustments with the original text in the Plan.

All “adjustments are shown in **bold and underlined** text

### 1. CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION, page I-15, third full paragraph:

**Education** – In 1980, approximately 57 percent of the West Warwick population over age 25 had completed high school and 10 percent had

completed college in 1980. Statewide slightly over 61 percent of residents over age 25 in the region had completed high school in 1980, and 15.4 percent had completed college in 1980, showing West Warwick below the norm for education.

2. CHAPTER II – LAND USE, II.4, Page II-16, third paragraph:

**Census Tract 205 – Wakefield Hill/Natick/Westcott** – The most land rich of the planning districts, this area provides the Town’s one real opportunity for maintaining some open space green area. Use of the remaining undeveloped land, particularly around the golf course, was discussed at length during the planning process, with various options mentioned, including clustering residential sites or requiring larger minimum lots sizes. Maintaining the golf course, as an important recreational resource of the community, was also considered. The existing zoning ordinance identifies most of the area as residential with a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet. This is an example of the effort the Town will take to amend the zoning ordinance and bring it into consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. The future land use map, included in the Plan, identifies the area as low density residential. In West Warwick low density residential reflects a minimum lot size 10,000 square feet. The other residential zones are R-6000, R-7500 and R-8000. Land use tools such as cluster zoning to encourage the inclusion of open space in subdivision design are being considered.

3. CHAPTER II – LAND USE, II.5, Page II-16

#### Goals, Policies and Implementation Actions

Land use goals and policies are centered on six main goals as follows:

Add:

- Develop a future land use concept or set of concepts that articulate the vision of the Town’s land uses, and develop a plan and schedule to adjust the municipal zoning ordinances so that the ordinances are consistent with the future land use plan. The future land use map, included in the Plan, will allow the Town to address any zoning inconsistencies with the zoning ordinances. (1)

(1) West Warwick Building Official

4. CHAPTER II – LAND USE, II-5, page II-17, 3<sup>rd</sup> column:

1. The Town will update and amend its existing Zoning Ordinance to comply with the guidelines and requirements of the Zoning Enabling Acts as

amended. Accordingly, the Town will amend and update its zoning maps in accordance with state statutes.

4. Develop an official zoning map for the community at plat map scale that is easily modified and is updated annually. Accordingly, the Town will amend its Zoning maps in accordance with state statute.

5. Strengthen special use permit Standards within the Zoning Ordinance making requirements more explicit and better defined.

5. CHAPTER II – LAND USE, II-5, page II-19, 3<sup>rd</sup> column, #1

Replace in entirety and substitute with:

2. Formalize the development plan review process within the zoning ordinances and other municipal ordinances as required.

6. CHAPTER II – LAND USE, II-5, page II-20, 3<sup>rd</sup> column, #3

Replace in entirety and substitute with:

3. Review other community zoning ordinances, relative to the treatment of aesthetics and other design issues. (Other references throughout this document to only reviewing RI communities should be expanded.)

7. CHAPTER III – HOUSING, III-4, page III-9, add new paragraph #3:

West Warwick Housing Authority

Another need that is growing, as we learn more about the requirements of special needs populations, is the access to, and the safety of units and common areas for special needs populations. Special needs populations are contributing and active members of our society if they have the wherewithal to participate in mainstream community life. West Warwick recognizes these issues and is prepared to address them where changes and improvements to public policy will further these goals. (1)

- Ramps for ingress and egress of special needs populations.
- Elevator controls for special needs populations
- Safe entry and use of utility closets and other more dangerous areas for special needs populations.

- Safe window and door locations for special needs populations, and
- Proper dimensional requirements for living space for special needs populations.

(1) West Warwick Housing Authority Management

8. CHAPTER III – HOUSING, III-6, page III-15, 3<sup>rd</sup> column:

- a. When considering special needs housing, the Town will encourage the developer to hold neighborhood meetings for public information purposes, advocate location of projects throughout the community rather than centered in certain, work with the developer to successfully market their project to local residents and to use and improve existing housing stock where appropriate. The West Warwick Housing Authority has plans to update all of the access and egress points of its facilities to comply with the needs of special needs populations. Improvements to protect unsighted persons with Braille-announced signage to hazardous areas are planned.

9. CHAPTER IV – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, IV-2, page IV-11, top of

Page:

**Economic Development Strengths**

The Town should target development activities that take advantage of these benefits, such as through the promotion of reuse of existing buildings, incubator businesses, and a coordinated approach to promoting the remaining Industrial Park land. The Town will promote a more active role for the Economic Development Commission, coordinating the many aspects of community economic development and reviewing and commenting upon municipal policies as they directly and indirectly effect economic development in West Warwick. The Economic Development Commission is made up of members who are generally professional business leaders in the community.

Appointed by the town Council this Commission can be very helpful in articulating municipal policy for Council consideration and action, particularly municipal tax policy.

Moreover, the Commission can coordinate the activities of the Chamber of Commerce, the private sector and economic development public policy and programs. The work of the Economic Development Commission is consistent with the Consolidated Plan. (1)

10. CHAPTER IV – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, IV-3, page IV-13,

**Summary (3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph)**

One solution, proposed in 1968, was to develop a “sound central core” of business and surround them with service and convenience establishments. This concept, that is still used today, attempts to create a downtown mall that will compete with regional suburban malls. While this approach has worked in some cities, there have been far more failures than successes. Given the proximity of the Warwick Malls, Route 2 commercial development, and the limited resources of the Town, “sound central core development” must be subsidized with federal and state programs coupled with active participation by the private sector. The Town will work to develop and coordinate the public and private partnerships in economic development as they affect the “central core”. Concepts such as those that include the development of neighborhood and village business concepts that incorporate the history of the village development in West Warwick will be considered.

11. CHAPTER IV – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, IV-5, page IV-27, 3<sup>rd</sup> column, #4(c), add new #2 and #3:

2. Encourage and support improvements to the municipal wastewater treatment plant so the orderly expansion of existing industrial areas such as the industrial park can move forward.
3. Encourage and support improvements to the water system to industrial areas through close coordination with Kent County Water Authority

12. CHAPTER V – NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES, V-3, page V-23, 3<sup>rd</sup> column, #9:

9. Formalize the “development plan” review process within the subdivision regulations, applicable to .....promote ease of use.

13. CHAPTER VI – COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES, VI-1, page VI-2:

**Police – Issues/Needs Assessment -**

- **Facility-** The existing police station.....to be addressed, including:
  - Lack of garage space, particularly for felony vehicle storage **and automotive repair.** This may be a state mandated requirement in the near future.
  - Lack of storage space for records **and a general lack of administrative areas.** Records are currently being kept in a private storage facility. A more secure area is required.
- **Equipment –** The Department strives to replace its 10 main fleet cruisers ..... such as Detective or Chief's cars. **A more efficient and cost effective approach is repair and replacement of departmental rolling stock is planned. Options involving the cost of lease or purchase of vehicles will be assessed. Optional purchase packages will be assessed as well.**

14 CHAPTER VI – COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES, VI-1, page VI-3:

**Issues/Needs Assessment (continued)**

- **Population Shifts**  
The community is changing and its population shifts effect law enforcement. Change in spoken languages within the community dictate that police officers are capable of bilingual skills on all shifts in order to better serve the community.
- **Police in Schools**  
Changes in law enforcement requirements within the schools, to ensure the safety of students within school buildings, suggests that police officers placement within the physical structures should be considered.
- **Traffic Pattern Changes**

The commercial development of the Route 2 area as a destination shopping area has changed traffic patterns within the community. Traffic control planning activities designed to confront these

problems, particularly during busy shopping days and times are underway.

- Community Housing Characteristics

As the housing stock in the community ages and is not maintained, the social dynamics of the impacted properties and neighborhoods require careful planning by law enforcement. Program planning with community leaders with recreation and education programs and concentrated code enforcement activities need to be coupled with good neighborhood policing efforts. The change in the types of complaints and calls to local law enforcement must be met with properly trained and educated officers to properly react to ever changing problems. Such planning is currently underway. (1)

(1) West Warwick Police Chief

### Projects/Tasks Planned to Cope with anticipated Demands

- Short Term – Administrative space needs appear to dwarf all other short-term needs. Communication needs, total computerization of department files and reporting; additional personnel, both civilian and sworn. A space planning effort is planned, identifying specific administrative needs, as well as an effort to analyze computerized records keeping programs.

## 15. CHAPTER VI – COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES, VI-1, page VI-5:

### Fire and Rescue Services -

Other Issues and Concerns – Other issues that concern the Fire Department includes the large number of old mill complexes in the town, some of which are unused and present significant fire potential. This is a compelling reason why adaptive re-use of older structures, particularly mill buildings, is an important goal for West Warwick. Traffic is also a concern, particularly during the PM peak hours and during peak shopping times on Route 2. The Veterans' Square area is a major traffic problem. Changes in traffic design of the area are planned. The housing stock and commercial buildings must be kept consistent with the local building and fire codes.

Improvements to the station facilities are planned. More space is needed for equipment and vehicles to meet national fire standards.

Communication equipment is planned to meet national fire standards for fire equipped fire stations. A 5/10 year repair/replacement program is planned to address the problem.

A fire and emergency manpower-planning program is planned.

The construction of the residential and commercial building inventory presents certain unique problems to the fire fighters in West Warwick. The “grandfather” rights of building owners of the older building inventory, where density is congested and multiple floors are present, cause serious fire hazards.

Water supply and volume issues are being addressed through coordination with the municipal Fire Department and the Kent County Water Authority, as improvements to the overall system go on line.(1)

(1) West Warwick Fire Chief

16. CHAPTER VI – COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES, VI-2, page VI-19,

Water Service – (1<sup>st</sup> full paragraph)

The Scituate Reservoir, one well in West Warwick, and three wells in Coventry furnish the water supply to the Town of West Warwick. There are no public wells located in West Warwick and no wellhead protection program for the Kent County Water Authority (KCWA) wells is needed. The KCWA have none of their well heads extending into West Warwick.

System Improvement – (additional points added)

- Cambell Farms – programs to correct for pressure and volume are planned. There are ongoing programs in place for the increase in pressure, supply and storage, as well as equipment and line repair and replacement programs.
- Wakefield Hill and the West Warwick Industrial Park – new water lines are planned and installation is underway to meet demand consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Flushing Program – An annual flushing program is planned and will be underway shortly.
- Natick Area – Plans for the improvements to the system in the Natick area are underway and problems with pressure and volume will be addressed.
- West Street Tank – Plans to re-furbish the West Street Tank are underway, increasing pressure and volume.

- Communication Improvements – Planning is underway to improve communications between the KCWA and the municipal wastewater treatment program. Steps include regular meetings between staffs, coordination of construction activities, and the sharing of meeting directives. (1)

(1) Kent County Water Authority

17. CHAPTER VII –RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE, VII-11, page VII-41, 3<sup>rd</sup> column, 2<sup>nd</sup> box:

3. Base acquisition and development programs on up-to-date studies of demand and usage. The first step in this process was to catalog the existing recreational programs and compare those programs with universal standards and local population needs. Next, an assessment of the availability of programs to the community population at large, was prepared. The programmatic cataloging was completed and the assessment of local needs was articulated. A plan for the provision of facilities and services to all population groups is currently underway.

18. CHAPTER VIII –CIRCULATION, VIII-9, page VIII-19, 2nd column, 4<sup>th</sup> box:

- a. Include in the design of new development, redevelopment, and the expansion of development projects appropriate road design and construction specifications, as well as landscaped and functionally workable pedestrian.....areas.

19. CHAPTER VIII –CIRCULATION, VIII-9, page VIII-19, 3rd column, insert new #7 box under existing #6 box:

7. Codify into the subdivision regulations, road and pedestrian walkway design and construction specifications that exactly define roadway and walkway dimensions, as well as details as to the construction standards for all new or improved roadways and walkways.

20. CHAPTER IX – IMPLEMENTATION, Element II, Land Use, page IX-3, 1<sup>st</sup> box, amend “Action” statement as follows:

- Develop an official zoning map for the community at plat map scale which is easily modified, and is updated consistent with state statute.

21. CHAPTER IX – IMPLEMENTATION, Element II, Land Use, page IX-3, 3rd box, amend “Action” statement as follows:  

Strengthen special use permit Standards within the Zoning Ordinance including the map, making requirements more explicit and better defined.
22. CHAPTER IX – IMPLEMENTATION, Element II, Land Use, page IX-6, 3rd box amend “Action” statement by adding:  

Reference to the “Review of other zoning ordinances should be expanded, as Adjustments were made to the Land Use Element
23. CHAPTER IX – IMPLEMENTATION, Element III, Housing, page IX-13, 2nd box, amend “Action” statement by adding:  

Improve the ease of access to, and the safety of public housing units and common areas for the special needs populations, so they can contribute and be active members of the community. Implement changes to provide ramps for ingress and egress, special elevator controls, safe entry and use of utility closets and other accessible areas, safe window and door locations, and proper dimensional requirements for living spaces for the special needs populations.
24. CHAPTER IX – IMPLEMENTATION, Element IV, Economic Development, page IX-23, 3rd box, amend “Action” statement by adding:  

Encourage and support improvements to the municipal wastewater treatment plant so the orderly expansion of existing industrial areas, such as the Industrial Park, can move forward. Encourage and support improvements to the water system to industrial areas through close coordination with the Kent County Water Authority.
25. CHAPTER IX – IMPLEMENTATION, Element VIII Circulation, page IX-71, 1st box, amend “Action” statement by adding:  

Codify into the subdivision regulations, road and pedestrian walkway design and construction specifications that exactly define roadway and walkway dimensions, as well as details as to the construction standards for all new or improved roadways and walkways.

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### March, 1992

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