

# **Chapter I Introduction**

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*West Warwick Comprehensive Plan*



## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan for West Warwick is a document, graphics and maps which present historical trends, current and future conditions, goals, policies and recommendations for the following functional areas:

- Land use;
- Housing;
- Economic development;
- Natural and cultural resources;
- Community services and facilities; and,
- Circulation.

The Plan also includes a program for implementation of these recommendations within a 5-20 year time frame.

The Comprehensive Plan is a broad-based document which represents the Town's objectives for future development as defined by the citizens of the community, and which is adopted by the Planning Board, the Mayor and the Town Council. Throughout the preparation of the Plan, the Town endeavored to invite comment by the widest spectrum of citizen possible, through a citizen opinion survey, a citizen's advisory committee comprised of interested residents, public workshops and regular open meetings. Through this process, a consensus has been attained on the goals, policies and recommendations which, it is felt, best represents most residents' attitudes toward the Town's future.

The underlying theme of this document, as is the State's, is "to use our land in a way that will allow us and future generations ... to enjoy enjoy sustained benefit from our natural resources as we strive to create and take full advantage of opportunities in to fashion pleasant living environments and to promote economic well-being for all our citizens."<sup>1</sup>

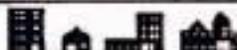
### **I.1 Purpose**

In 1988 the State of Rhode Island enacted the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act requiring the 39 communities in the State to prepare and adopt a local Comprehensive Plan. The intent of the Act stems from the following findings of the General Assembly:<sup>2</sup>

1. The absence of accurate technical information and comprehensive planning by municipal government as a rational basis for long term physical development creates conflicting requirements and reactive land use regulations and decisions.
2. Municipal government is responsible for land use, but lacks the technical information and financial resources to plan for orderly growth and development and the protection and management of our land and natural resources.
3. Land, water and air are finite natural resources. Comprehensive planning must provide for protection, development, use and management of our land and natural resources.

<sup>1</sup> State Guide Plan Element 121, Land Use 2010, State Land Use Policies and Plan, Division of Planning, Rhode Island Department of Administration, June 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Handbook on the Local Comprehensive Plan for the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act, June, 1989, The State Planning Council, Division of Planning, Rhode Island Department of Administration.



4. Comprehensive planning and its implementation will promote the appropriate use of land. The lack of comprehensive planning and its implementation has led to the mis-use, under-use and over-use of our land and natural resources.
5. The coordination of growth and the intensity of development with provisions for services and facilities is a proper objective of comprehensive planning.
6. Comprehensive planning is needed to provide a basis for municipal and state initiatives to ensure all citizens have access to a range of housing choices, including the availability of affordable housing for all income levels and age groups.
7. Municipal comprehensive planning must recognize and address land uses in contiguous municipalities and encourage cooperative planning efforts by municipalities.
8. Comprehensive planning will provide a basis for improved coordination so that local plans reflect issues of local, regional and statewide concern.
9. Improved coordination is necessary between State and municipal governments to promote uniform standards and review procedures as well as consistency in land use regulations.

The State's goals for comprehensive planning provide the overall direction for this Plan, and are as follows:<sup>3</sup>

1. To promote orderly growth and development that recognizes the natural characteristics of the land, its suitability of use and the availability of existing and proposed public and/or private services and facilities.
2. To promote an economic climate which increases quality job opportunities and overall economic well being of each municipality and the State.
3. To promote a balance of housing choices, for all income levels and age groups, which recognizes the affordability of housing as the responsibility of each municipality and the State.
4. To promote the protection of the natural, historic and cultural resources of each municipality and the state.
5. To promote the preservation of the open space and recreational resources of each municipality and the state.
6. To encourage the use of innovative development regulations and techniques that promote the development of land suitable for development while protecting our natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources and achieving a balanced pattern of land uses.

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<sup>3</sup> Handbook on the Local Comprehensive Plan for the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act, June, 1989, The State Planning Council, Division of Planning, Rhode Island Department of Administration.



7. To promote consistency of state actions and programs with municipal comprehensive plans and provide for review procedures to ensure that state goals and policies are reflected in municipal comprehensive plans.
8. To ensure that adequate and uniform data are available to municipal and state government as the basis for comprehensive planning and land use regulation.
9. To ensure that municipal land use regulations and decisions are consistent with the comprehensive plan of the municipality and to ensure state land use regulations and decisions are consistent with State guide plans.
10. To encourage the involvement of all citizens in the formulation, review and adoption of the comprehensive plan.

The preparation of this Plan has been directed to achieve compliance with the above goals.

## **I.2 Existing Conditions, Trends and Projections**

Population and demographic information is helpful in illustrating the historical growth patterns of the community, as well as projecting its future characteristics. Data is presented in terms of community-wide characteristics, sub-areas within the community (census tracts) and regional characteristics, as defined below.

**Census Tracts** - Census tracts are geographic divisions within the community, defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. They are small areas into which communities have been divided for statistical purposes. Tract boundaries are established by local committees, the State Division of Planning and the Bureau of the Census.

West Warwick was comprised of five census tracts for the 1980 Census, numbered 201 to 205. Census tracts (from the 1980 Census) are illustrated on Figure I-1. They correspond generally to the following neighborhoods/areas:

- 201 - Crompton;
- 202 - Arctic Hill/Centerville;
- 203 - Arctic/Riverpoint;
- 204 - Phenix/Lippitt/Clyde; and,
- 205 - Wakefield Hill/Natick/Westcott.

Tract 201 has been divided into two sections for the 1990 Census to accommodate the growth of the Town. Tract 201.01 will include largely the Crompton area (Cowesett Road south), and 201.02 will include largely the Centerville area (Cowesett Road north to Legris Avenue, west to Pawtuxet River, east to Route 2). The Town's Census tracts will be considered the planning districts for this Plan.

**Region** - For comparative purposes, regional and State statistics are used throughout this Plan. The region is based on major transportation routes, journey to work patterns from the 1980 Census and general observations of the community. West Warwick residents average 17.5 minutes travel time to work. The 1980 Census indicates that over 83 percent of West Warwick residents worked in the communities of Providence (14%), Coventry, East Greenwich, West Warwick (39%), Warwick (23%) and Cranston (7.5%). Because of the advantageous location of the community centrally in the State, and its proximity to Interstate Route 95 and State Route 2, the Town's region of influence includes West Warwick, Warwick, Coventry, East Greenwich and Cranston (see Figure I-2).



**Population** - Demographic characteristics of the Town's population which were reviewed include population, age, labor force and occupation, income and education. Best available data was used for all statistics. Some statistics cannot be extrapolated to current year estimates with confidence, and in those instances, 1980 Census figures were used.

The Town's population has grown significantly over the past 90 years, as shown on Table I-1.

**Table I-1**  
**Population Trends, 1900-1990**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
1900	11,400*	--
1910	14,200*	24.6
1920	15,461	8.9
1930	17,696	14.5
1940	18,188	2.8
1950	19,096	5.0
1960	21,414	12.1
1970	24,323	13.6
1980	27,026	11.1
1990	29,268	8.3

\* - West Warwick split from Warwick in 1913. If proportions of 1920 census figures held true for prior years, the population for 1900 and 1910 in the present Town would have been at these levels.

Source: U.S. Census of Population.

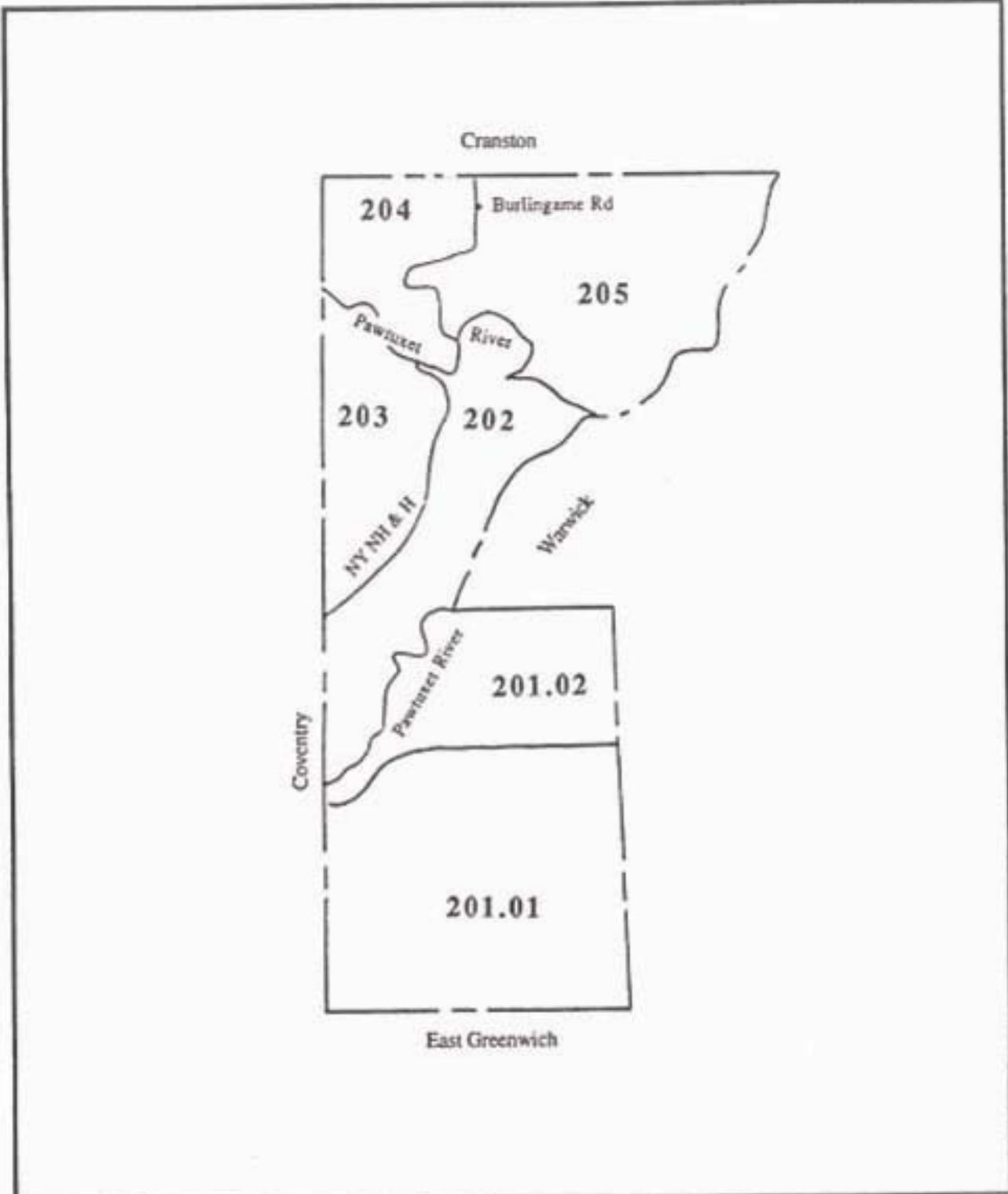
This represents a 157 percent increase in the population since 1900, a 37 percent increase since 1960, a 20 percent increase since 1970, and a 8 percent increase since 1980. Between 1980 and 1989, there were 4,277 births, and 2,591 deaths in West Warwick, a natural increase of 1,686 persons (see Table I-2).<sup>4</sup>

**Table I-2**  
**Natural Increase, 1980-1989**

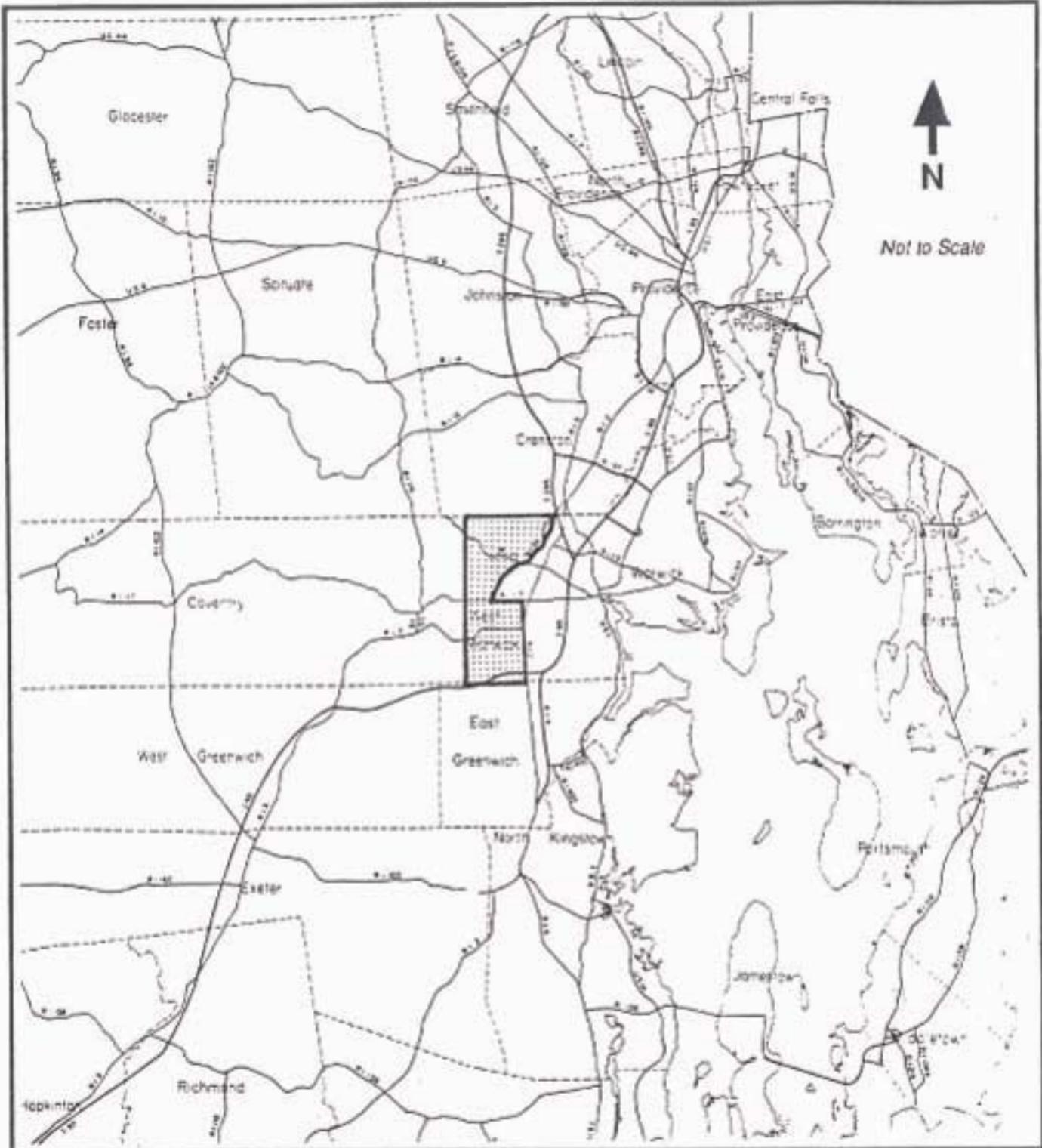
<u>Year</u>	<u>Births</u>	<u>Deaths</u>	<u>Net Difference</u>
1980	455	231	224
1981	412	266	146
1982	397	228	169
1983	414	252	162
1984	412	235	177
1985	408	262	146
1986	416	241	175
1987	444	251	193
1988	474	293	181
1989	445	332	113
<b>Natural Increase</b>	<b>+4,277</b>	<b>-2,591</b>	<b>+1,686</b>

<sup>4</sup> Based on information received from RI Department of Health, through 1988 births, and the West Warwick Town Clerk's office for 1988 deaths, 1989 deaths. Births for 1989 are estimated based on an average of the last three years.









**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**  
 Town of West Warwick  
 Albert Veri & Associates, Inc.

**REGIONAL**  
**AREA**  
 Figure I-2



Population increased by 2,242 persons since 1980. Based on the above figures, 75 percent of this increase is due to natural increase, and 25 percent due to immigration, i.e., people moving into the community. It is interesting to compare these figures with the number of new housing units authorized during the same period. Between 1980 and 1988, there were approximately 863 new single family units, and 1,043 new multifamily units authorized in West Warwick.<sup>5</sup> Using the 2.3 average persons per household from 1980, an estimated 4,380 new persons could fill these new units. This figure, plus natural increase, well exceeds what the estimated change has been over those years.

Inferences which can be made from this difference include the likelihood of a smaller household size in most of the new units, particularly as the majority have been multifamily units. It is also possible that although the units were authorized, they may not have been constructed during this period.

**Population Projections** - Projections prepared in 1989 by the Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Planning, indicate the following population estimates and projections:

Year	Estimated Population	Percent Change
1990	29,268*	NA
1995	30,692	4.9
2000	31,291	2.0
2005	31,680	1.2
2010	32,032	1.1

\* - Actual population from the 1990 Census.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Planning, 1989.

The State's estimated 1990 population was 29,872, approximately 604 persons higher than the actual 1990 population, or a two percent error. Based on information developed through the planning process, particularly availability of land for further development, current economic conditions, and the attitudes of residents toward growth, the Town accepts the State's population projections through the year 2010.<sup>6</sup>

Projections suggest a leveling off in population over the next 30 years, highly plausible by the limited amount of available, developable land remaining in West Warwick (see Figure I-3). A 6.9 percent increase in total population is estimated for the next ten years (1990-2000) compared to an 8.3 percent increase for the past 10 years. This is expected to be followed by a 2.4 percent increase from 2000 to 2010. Over the next twenty years, West Warwick may expect another 3,300+/- people to move or be born into the community. Figure I-3 illustrates both historic trends and future projections.

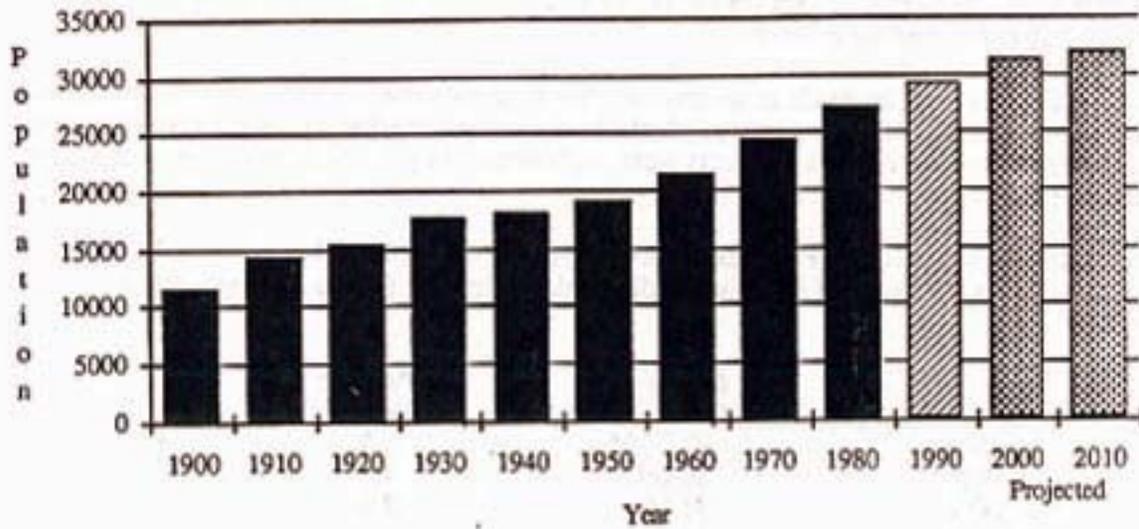
Figure I-4 shows population growth by the actual change which occurred every ten years, to illustrate the rate of increase. After a steady growth period between 1910 and 1930, the Town experienced a declining period, due to closure of local mills, the post-war recession and the corresponding loss of employment and population. Between 1960 and the present, population growth has been between 2,000 to 3,000 persons per decade. Based on the State's population projections, the period between 1990 and 2000 shows a slower rate of increase, at some 2,000 new residents over the decade.

<sup>5</sup> RI Department of Economic Development, Research Division, 1989.

<sup>6</sup> The Town will review the projections in 1996 to determine whether there should be adjustments.

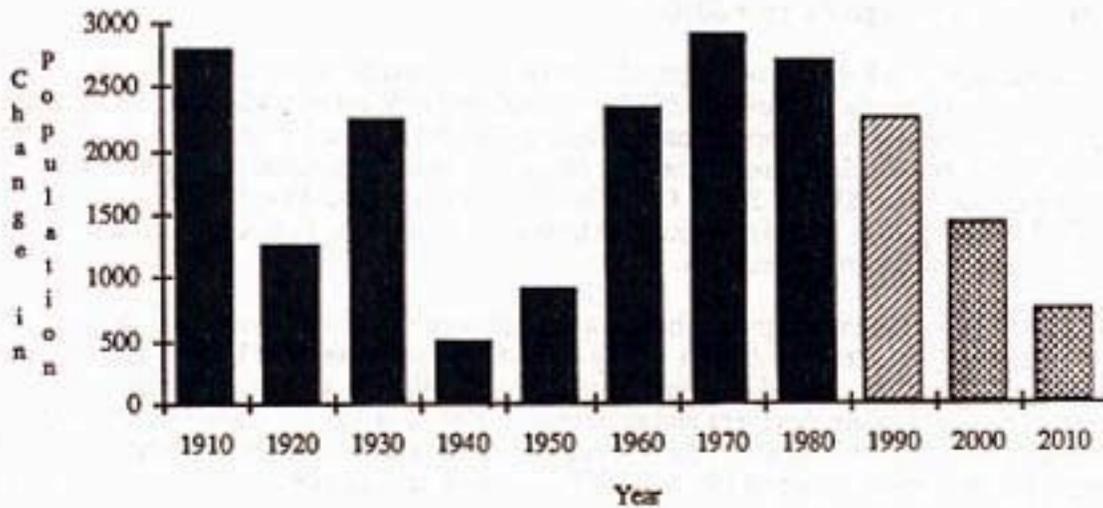


Figure I-3  
Population Trends and Projections, 1900-2010  
West Warwick, Rhode Island



Sources: U.S. Census of Population 1900-1980, R.I. Dept. of Administration, Division of Planning 1990-2020.

Figure I-4  
Population Changes, 1910 to 2010  
West Warwick, Rhode Island



Sources: RI Department of Economic Development, Basic Economic Statistics.  
Rhode Island Department of Administration, Office of State Planning, projections.

Population Distribution - Population is distributed as follows for each census tract in 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1990 (see Table I-3):

Table I-3  
Summary of Population by Planning District, 1970, 1980, 1990

Census Tract	1960	1970	% of Total	1980	% of Total	1970-80 Percent Change	Est. 1990	% of Total	1980-90 Percent Change	1960-90 Percent Change
201	4,480	6,738	27.7	9,076	33.6	34.7	11,209	38.3	23.5	150.2
202	4,572	4,643	19.1	4,945	18.3	6.5	4,917	16.8	-0.6	7.5
203	6,233	6,280	25.8	6,320	23.4	0.6	6,293	21.5	-0.4	1.0
204	2,903	3,449	14.2	3,358	12.4	-2.6	3,155	10.8	-6.0	8.7
205	3,244	3,213	13.2	3,327	12.4	1.0	3,694	12.6	11.0	13.9
Total	21,414	24,323	100.0	27,026	100.0	11.1	29,268	100.0	8.3	36.7

Sources: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

Areas which have grown the most over the past three decades include Crompton (CT 201), Wakefield Hill/Natick/Westcott (CT 205), Phenix/Lippitt (CT 204), Arctic Hill/Centerville (CT 202). Downtown Arctic has stayed at the same population level for 30 years, even showing a slight decrease between 1980 and 1990. The distribution of population around the Town has shifted from Arctic center to the peripheral areas, particularly to Crompton, which has more than doubled in size since 1960. As land became more difficult to develop in the urbanized areas, development moved to those areas where land was more plentiful and less costly, bringing the population along with it.

Population Density - West Warwick has long been one of the most densely population communities in the State, with slightly over 8 square miles of land area, and a density of 3,527 persons per square mile. Statewide, West Warwick is eighth in density, behind Central Falls, Providence, Pawtucket, North Providence, Woonsocket, East Providence and Newport. Population density by census tract is as follows:

Census Tract	Population	Area	Density
201	11,209 persons	3.63 square miles	3,088 persons/square mile
202	4,917 persons	1.23 square miles	3,998 persons/square mile
203	6,293 persons	0.87 square miles	7,233 persons/square mile
204	3,155 persons	0.68 square miles	4,640 persons/ square mile
205	3,694 persons	1.78 square miles	2,075 persons/square mile

Sources: U.S. Census of Population; Rhode Island Department of Economic Development.

The Wakefield Hill area (CT 205) is the least dense of the villages, while Arctic Center/Riverpoint (CT 203) is the most dense. Most of the housing development which has occurred during the past ten years has been in the Crompton area, with corresponding increases in density, as shown in Table I-4.



Table I-4  
Changes in Planning Area Density Since 1965

Census Tract	Villages	1965 Density	1990 Density	Percent Change
201	Crompton	1,427	3,088	116.4
202	Arctic Hill/Centerville	3,667	3,998	9.0
203	Arctic/Riverpoint	6,849	7,233	5.6
204	Phenix/Lippitt/Clyde	4,598	4,640	1.0
205	Wakefield Hill/Natick/Westcott	1,795	2,075	15.6

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

**Age of Population** - During the period between 1960 and 1990 all age groups have increased in size with the exception of ages 0-4 and 5-9. These groups decreased in size since 1960, but showed a slight increase during the last decade. Table I-5 shows a decrease in the number of children under 9 years of age, while the number of persons likely to have children increased during the same period. This underscores the national trend toward smaller families, and a possible increase in the number of households without children in West Warwick due to the large number of condominium projects constructed in the past decade. The number of children under age 9 has shown a slight increase since 1980, but lower than what might have been expected from the large number of single family homes constructed in the Crompton area of the community during the same period.

Other notable changes since 1960 are the significant increases in population over age 60, due in part to the construction of a number of large elderly housing complexes within the Town.

Table I-5  
Age Distribution of West Warwick's Population  
1960 - 1990

Age Group	1960 Population	1970 Population	1980 Population	1990 <sup>(1)</sup> Population	% Change 60-90	% Change 80-90
Under 5	2,409	2,070	1,947	1,964	-18.5	0.9
5-9	2,144	2,157	1,943	1,977	-7.8	1.8
10-14	1,978	2,365	2,035	1,991	0.7	-2.2
15-19	1,340	2,144	2,251	1,986	48.2	-11.8
20-24	1,101	2,168	2,735	2,073	88.3	-24.2
25-29	1,217	1,619	2,459	2,287	87.9	-7.0
30-34	1,611	1,131	2,280	2,779	72.5	21.9
35-39	1,742	1,203	1,483	2,495	43.2	68.2
40-44	1,519	1,608	1,163	2,305	51.8	98.2
45-49	1,222	1,706	1,195	1,484	21.5	24.2
50-54	1,104	1,506	1,562	1,144	3.7	-26.7
55-59	1,058	1,207	1,665	1,144	8.2	-31.3
60-64	905	1,022	1,340	1,446	59.8	7.9
65-69	832	881	977	1,459	75.3	49.3
70-74	594	682	770	1,108	86.6	43.9
75+	638	854	1,221	1,624	154.6	33.0
Total	21,414	24,323	27,026	29,268	36.7	8.3

Note: (1) This distribution is based upon the percentages of total of the State Division of Planning 1990 estimate applied to the actual 1990 population total.



There was a substantial increase in the number of labor force age adults in the community since 1960, although over the past decade, the number of younger (15 to 29 years of age) labor force adults has declined (see Tables I-6, I-7). These patterns seem to show a community of young families, with fewer children moving into Town in recent years. These individuals bring with them new demands for municipal services, particularly schools, recreational facilities, and libraries, as well as sewer and water.

**Table I-6**  
**Age Group Trends, 1960-1990**  
**West Warwick, Rhode Island**

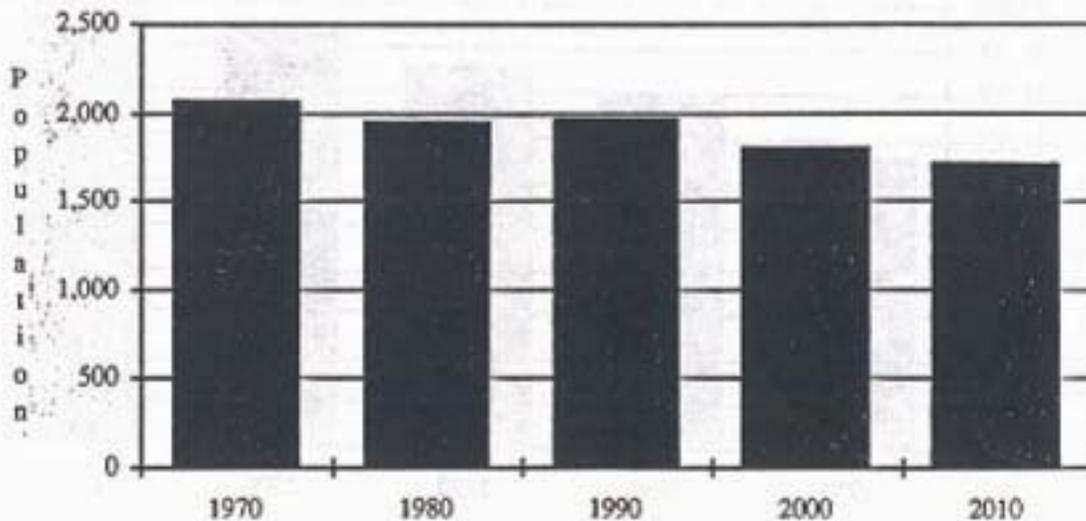
Age Group	Age Group Description	1960 Population	1970 Population	1980 Population	1990 <sup>(1)</sup> Population	Percent Change 60-90	Percent Change 80-90
0-4	Preschool	2,409	2,070	1,947	1,964	-18.5	0.9
5-19	School age	3,318	4,509	4,286	3,977	+19.9	-7.2
20-64	Labor force	11,479	13,170	15,882	17,158	+49.5	+8.0
65+	Seniors	2,064	2,417	2,968	4,192	+103.1	+41.2

Note: (1) This distribution is based upon the percentages of total of the State Division of Planning 1990 estimate applied to the actual 1990 population total.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; RI Department of Administration, Division of Planning.

Figures I-5 to I-8 show trends in the preschool, school age, labor force age and elderly groups.

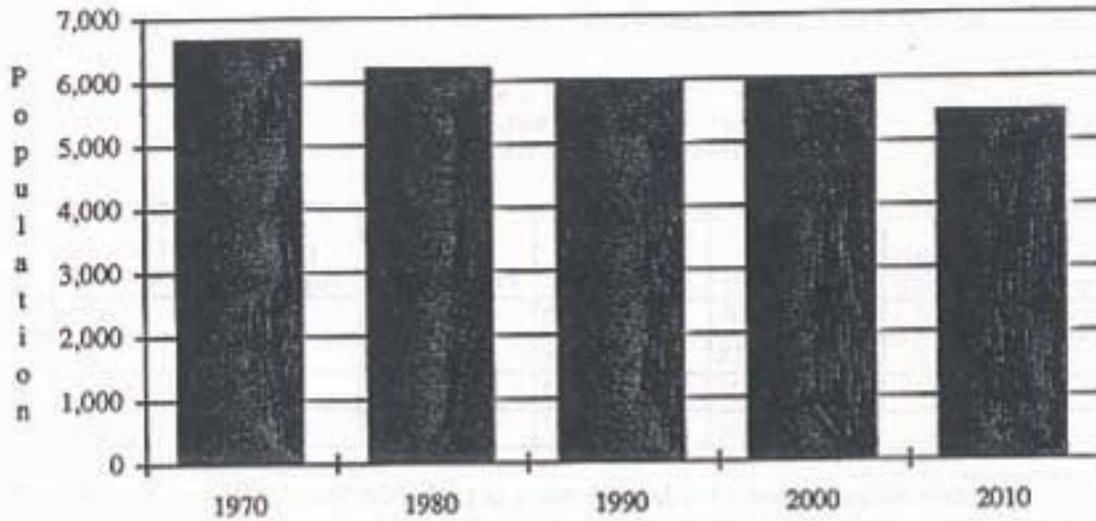
**Figure I-5**  
**Trends in Preschool Age Group**  
**West Warwick, Rhode Island**



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; RI Department of Administration, Division of Planning.

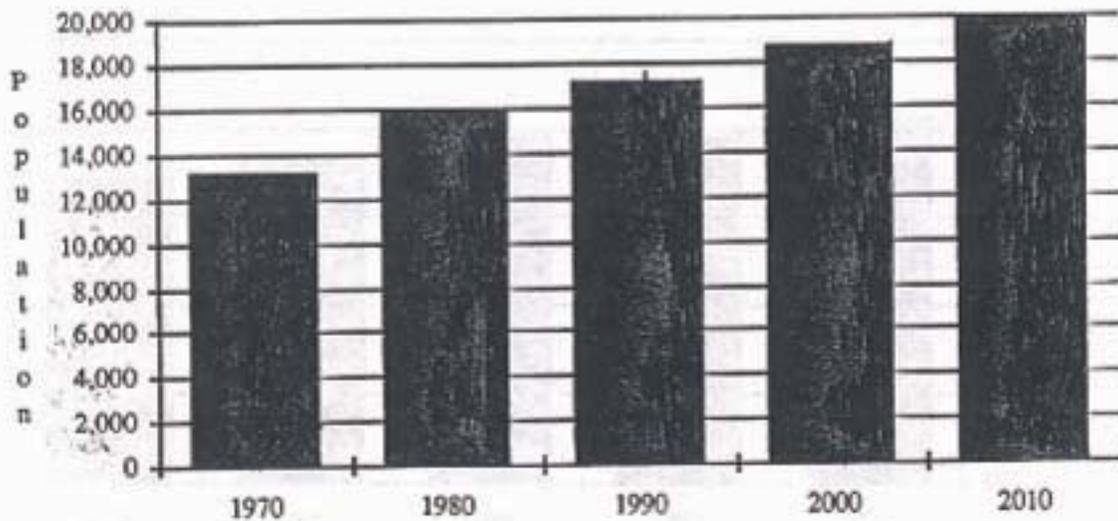


Figure I-6  
Trends in School Age Group  
West Warwick, Rhode Island



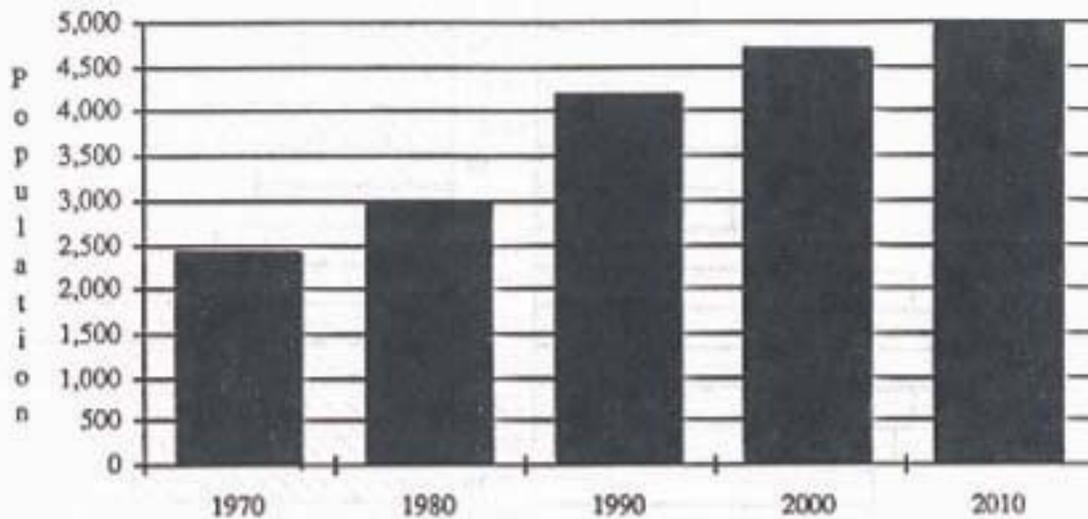
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; RI Department of Administration, Division of Planning.

Figure I-7  
Trends in Labor Force Age Group  
West Warwick, Rhode Island



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; RI Department of Administration, Division of Planning.

Figure I-8  
Trends in Senior Age Group  
West Warwick, Rhode Island



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; RI Department of Administration, Division of Planning.

The largest percentage of West Warwick residents are between the ages of 30 and 34, followed by the 35 to 39 age group (see Table I-7). The smallest number of residents, 3.9 percent, are in the 50-54 and 55-59 age groups. The median age for the total population was 30.8 years in 1980, slightly younger than the 1960 median of 31.6 years. Comparison with Statewide figures does not indicate any notable differences in age distribution. Figure I-9 shows the Town's population pyramid for 1990. Most notable features of this chart are the constricted school age groups, from age 0 to 19, and the expansive female group age 75+.

**Projections by Age Group** - Future projections by age group indicate an aging population, and a loss in population between 0 to 34 years from 1990 to year 2000 (See Tables I-8, I-9). The largest increase in an age group in the next ten years, over 90 percent, is expected in the 50 to 54 group. With trends toward longer life expectancy, the Town's older population is expected to continue to increase as a percentage of the total population. The age group 65 and older are expected to experience a net increase of 25+/- percent during the next ten years.

Figure I-10 presents the population pyramid for the year 2010, based upon the above figures. As in Figure I-9, the pyramid for 1990, this chart shows a continued constrained school age children group, as well as a smaller young labor force group. The age groups from 40 to 54 are shown to increase in comparison to 1990, and the cohort age 75+ continues to expand for both males and females.

**Regional Population** - The six town planning region used for this Plan had a 1980 population of 223,417, which increased to in 1990 (see Table I-10). This represented a regionwide increase of nearly 6 percent. West Warwick holds about 13 percent of the region's total population, and experienced an increase of nearly 11 percent in that same period. West Warwick has the fourth largest population in the region after Warwick, Cranston, and Coventry.

Figure I-9  
West Warwick Population Pyramid, 1990

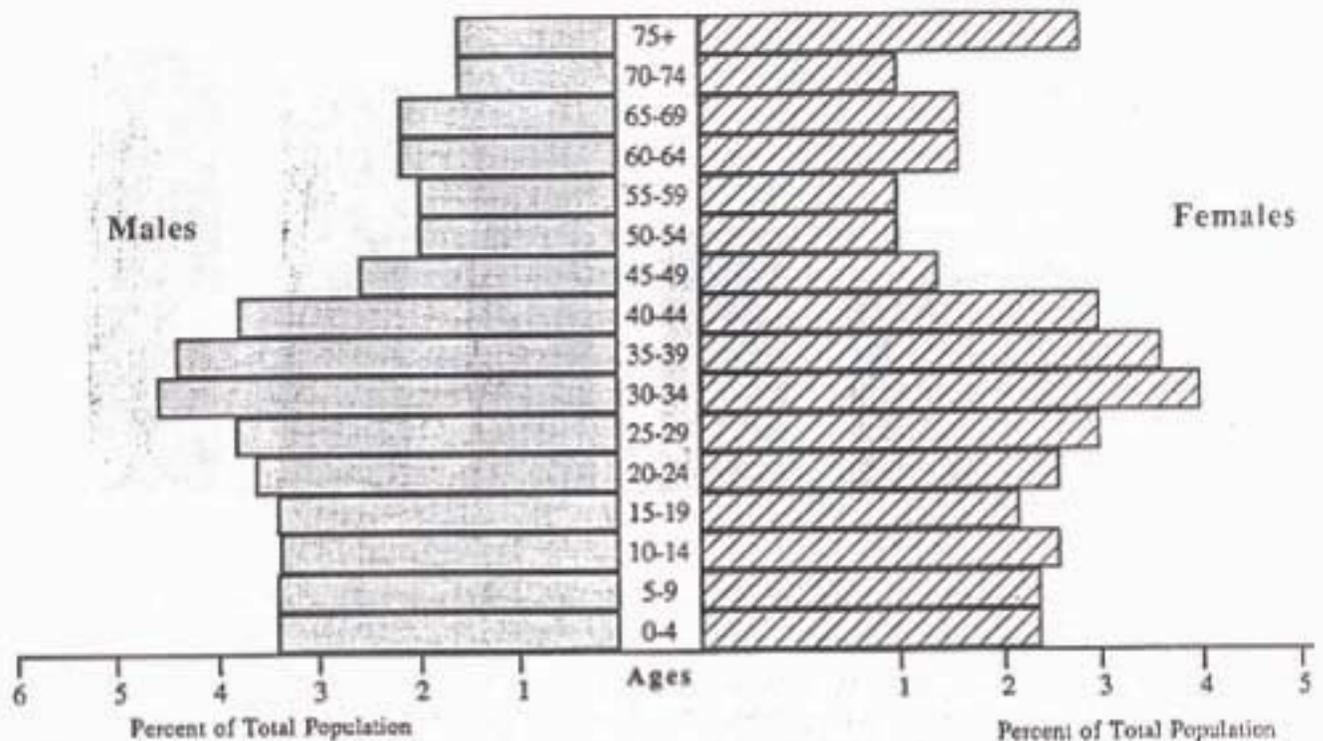


Table I-7  
Age Distribution of the Population  
West Warwick and Rhode Island

Age Group	1990 West Warwick Population	% of Total Population	1990 Rhode Island Population	% of Total Population
Under 5	1,964	6.7	65,067	6.5
5-9	1,977	6.8	63,023	6.3
10-14	1,991	6.8	58,013	5.8
15-19	1,986	6.8	72,251	7.2
20-24	2,073	7.1	84,563	8.4
25-29	2,287	7.8	83,139	8.3
30-34	2,779	9.5	83,501	8.3
35-39	2,495	8.5	76,313	7.6
40-44	2,305	7.9	69,493	6.9
45-49	1,484	5.1	53,504	5.3
50-54	1,144	3.9	43,057	4.3
55-59	1,144	3.9	42,529	4.2
60-64	1,446	4.9	49,008	4.9
65-69	1,459	5.0	48,737	4.9
70-74	1,108	3.8	40,898	4.1
75+	1,624	5.6	69,549	6.9
Total	29,268	100.0	1,002,645	100.0

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1960, 1970, 1980; RI Department of Administration, Division of Planning, 1990.



Table I-8  
Population Projections by Age, 1990 to 2010

Age Group	Year 1990	% of Tot	Year 1995	% of Tot	Year 2000	% of Tot	Year 2010	% of Tot
0-4	1,964	6.7	1,922	6.3	1,798	5.7	1,711	5.3
5-9	1,977	6.8	2,020	6.6	1,935	6.2	1,736	5.4
10-14	1,991	6.8	2,032	6.6	2,033	6.5	1,805	5.6
15-19	1,986	6.8	2,046	6.7	2,044	6.5	1,941	6.1
20-24	2,073	7.1	2,036	6.6	2,052	6.6	2,035	6.4
25-29	2,287	7.8	2,124	6.9	2,042	6.5	2,041	6.4
30-34	2,779	9.5	2,343	7.6	2,130	6.8	2,048	6.4
35-39	2,495	8.5	2,845	9.3	2,348	7.5	2,036	6.4
40-44	2,305	7.9	2,546	8.3	2,844	9.1	2,117	6.6
45-49	1,484	5.1	2,338	7.6	2,531	8.1	2,316	7.2
50-54	1,144	3.9	1,488	4.8	2,297	7.3	2,760	8.6
55-59	1,144	3.9	1,132	3.7	1,445	4.6	2,399	7.5
60-64	1,446	4.9	1,111	3.6	1,077	3.4	2,114	6.6
65-69	1,459	5.0	1,359	4.4	1,024	3.3	1,261	3.9
70-74	1,108	3.8	1,324	4.3	1,205	3.9	876	2.7
75+	1,624	5.6	2,026	6.6	2,486	7.9	2,836	8.9
Total	29,268	100.0	30,692	100.0	31,291	100.0	32,032	100.0

Source: Rhode Island Dept. of Administration, Division of Planning, 1989.

Table I-9  
Population Projections and Percentage Changes, 1990-2010

Age Group	Year 1990	Year 2000	% Change 1990-2000	Year 2010	% Change 2000-2010
0-4	1,964	1,798	-8.5	1,711	-4.8
5-9	1,977	1,935	-2.1	1,736	-10.3
10-14	1,991	2,033	2.1	1,805	-11.2
15-19	1,986	2,044	2.9	1,941	-5.0
20-24	2,073	2,052	1.0	2,035	-0.8
25-29	2,287	2,042	-10.7	2,041	0
30-34	2,779	2,130	-23.4	2,048	3.8
35-39	2,495	2,348	-5.9	2,036	-13.3
40-44	2,305	2,844	23.4	2,117	-25.6
45-49	1,484	2,531	70.6	2,316	-8.5
50-54	1,144	2,297	100.8	2,760	120.2
55-59	1,144	1,445	26.3	2,399	66.0
60-64	1,446	1,077	-25.5	2,114	96.3
65-69	1,459	1,024	-29.8	1,261	23.1
70-74	1,108	1,205	8.8	876	27.3
75+	1,624	2,486	53.1	2,836	14.1
Total	29,268	31,291	6.9	32,032	2.4

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.



Figure 1-10  
Population Pyramid, Year 2010  
West Warwick, Rhode Island

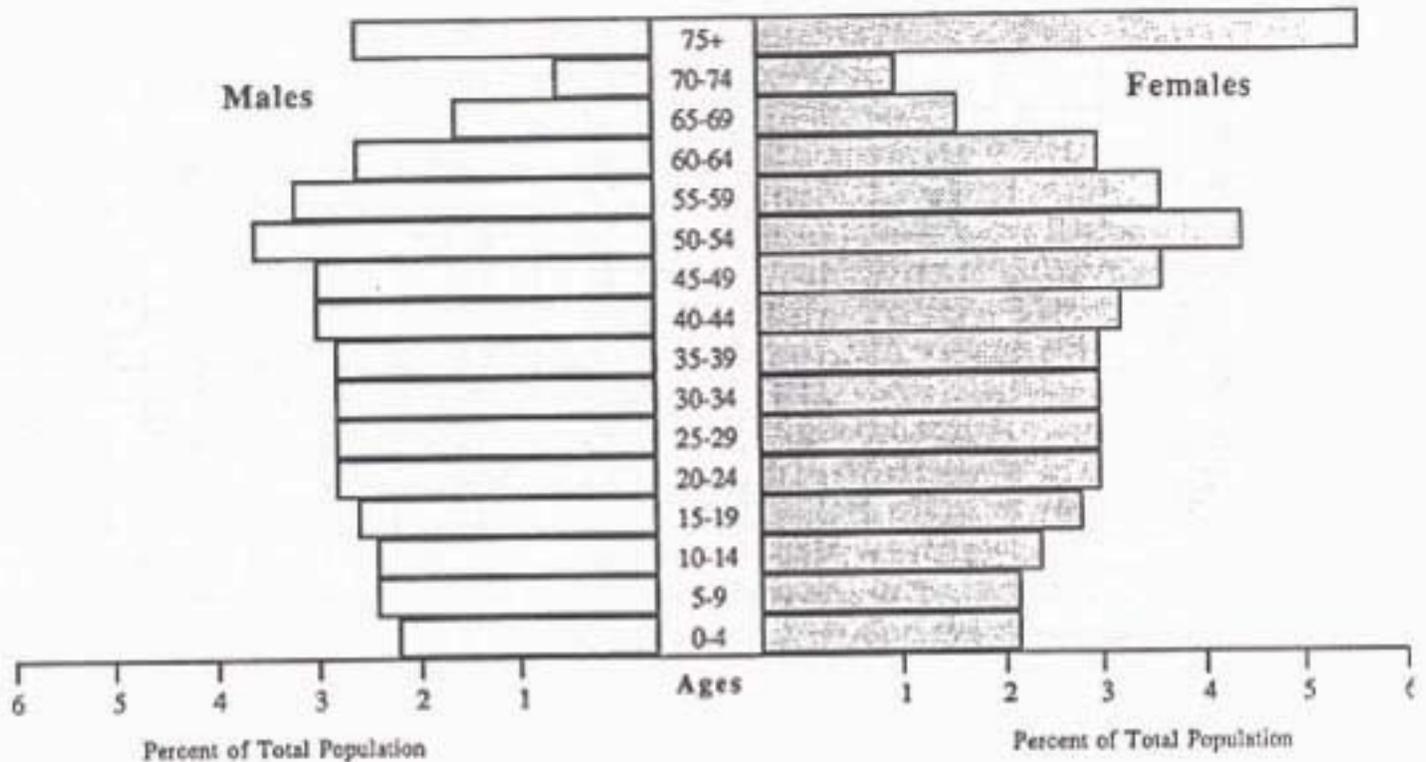


Table I-10  
Regional Population, 1980-1990

	1980 Population	1990 Population	Percent of Region	Actual Change 1980-1990	% Change 1980-90
West Warwick	27,026	29,268	12.5	2,242	8.3
Warwick	87,123	85,427	36.5	-1,696	-1.9
Cranston	71,992	76,060	32.5	4,068	5.7
Coventry	27,065	31,083	13.4	4,018	14.8
East Greenwich	10,211	11,865	5.1	1,654	16.2
Region	223,417	233,703	100.0	10,286	4.6

Sources: RI Department of Administration, Division of Planning.

The attractiveness of West Warwick as a residential area is evident in the above statistics, which show the Town with the third largest percent increase in population of the regional communities over the past decade.

**Household and Family Composition** - Households are defined in the Census as persons per occupied housing unit. Even a slight change in household size produces a significant change in the number of housing units.<sup>7</sup> The average Rhode Island household consisted of

<sup>7</sup> Land Use 2010: State Land Use Policies and Plan, Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Planning, June 1989.



3.07 persons in 1970; ten years later it was down to 2.7 persons per household. In 1970 there were 33 housing units per 100 persons statewide, while in 1980 there were 37 units per 100 persons, due to a less than 0.3 percent change in household size.

In 1960, West Warwick had 24,323 persons in 7,814 households. Average household size was 3.11 persons. By comparison, there were 27,026 persons in 9,936 households in 1980, for an average household size of 2.72. Current household size is estimated at 2.34 persons per household (29,872 persons/12,488 households). There are currently 43 housing units per 100 persons compared to 37 housing units per 100 persons in 1980. This indicates a potential demand for more housing units, and particularly units which serve smaller households.

Within the households in 1980, there were 7,288 families, 51 percent of which had children under the age of 18. The combined total of children under age 18 was 7,238, or 1.0+/- children per family. The percentage statewide was slightly higher, at 1.14 children per family. Over 80 percent of the Town's families are married couple families, and 15 percent are female householders. These figures are similar to statewide conditions for families.

**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 slightly below the norm for education.

**Social Characteristics** - The 1980 Census indicates that nearly 92 percent of West Warwick residents were born in the United States, and nearly 8 percent were foreign born. Of those who were foreign born, most were from Italy, and places within North and Central America, mainly Canada. This is a significant difference from 1960, in which some 40 percent of the Town's total population was foreign born, or of mixed parentage.

Census tracts 202, 203 and 204 had the largest percentages of foreign born residents (Arctic, Arctic Hill, Phenix, Lippitt, Clyde), between 10 and 11 percent of total residents, while tracts 201 and 205 had larger percentages of native born residents.

The language spoken at home reveals more about the ethnic characteristics of the community. In 1980, 75 percent of residents spoke only English, while 8 percent spoke French, 3 percent spoke Italian, 1 percent spoke Polish and 5 percent spoke other languages.

The 1990 Census will likely reveal further changes in the community's ethnic base, as recent years have brought immigrations from other countries. Residents of the community have long felt strong ties to their ancestry, and as the 1960 study of the Town's population indicated, this "tends to strengthen these neighborhoods as functioning social units." The diversity in ancestry, tied to the community's industrial heritage, is one of the elements which makes it unique to the region.

### **I.3 Growth Issues**

Over the past 10 years West Warwick has undergone a period of substantial growth and new development. This has brought about an understanding of the pressures brought by the additional population, particularly in providing community services and facilities, budgetary challenges, recognition that the Town will continue to experience some growth, and a desire to ensure that such growth is compatible small village character of the community. This village character has been defined in many ways throughout the planning process, but essentially revolves around the mill village atmosphere and identity, including the mill structures and housing around which each village grew. Preservation and improvement of this unique character



was a major theme of the planning process, as identified by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee and the general public.

**Issues Identification** - The issues which were considered through the planning process were identified through a variety of sources. These include a citizen survey conducted by the Alpha Research Associates in the spring of 1990, a questionnaire submitted to selected Town and community service providers, an issues identification exercise held early in the process, public workshops held during the latter stages of the project and through discussion at monthly Comprehensive Plan Committee meetings.

In West Warwick, residents have a long-standing identification with specific villages, and Table I-11 summarizes these issues (not prioritized) by village area. This list, while not all encompassing, is representative of the concerns presented by the public during the planning process. These issues and related topics form the problem statement to which the goals, policies and recommendations respond.

**Table I-11**  
**Summary of Issues Raised During the Planning Process**

Village	Character	Issues/Concerns
Arctic	Primarily commercial area, with interspersed residential uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown is unattractive, visual quality needs improvement;</li> <li>• Need rehabilitation of existing buildings, promotion of existing commercial space, streetscape improvements, road repairs, planting flowering trees on main roads and generally cleaning up the downtown.</li> <li>• Perception that some existing downtown land uses generate undesirable activities such as loitering, littering, etc.</li> <li>• Parking - lack of, and enforcement of parking regulations.</li> <li>• More commercial development needed, including restaurants, theaters, other cultural attractions.</li> <li>• Controls on the development of multifamily housing.</li> <li>• Downtown cannot compete with surrounding strip commercial malls, and is losing business as these areas expand.</li> </ul>
Arctic Hill	Primarily a residential area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preservation of old mill buildings.</li> <li>• Roadway improvements - in general.</li> <li>• Maintenance of the area's historic values.</li> <li>• Need to limit further commercial development, and maintain integrity as a residential area.</li> </ul>
Centerville	A mixed use area, with residential, commercial and industrial uses interspersed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant road/traffic circulation improvements needed, including Murray Square, Veteran's Square, and Route 117.</li> <li>• Need to limit additional commercial development.</li> <li>• Preservation and reuse of old mill buildings.</li> <li>• Perception of uncontrolled development, particularly commercial development.</li> </ul>



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Centerville	A mixed use area, with residential, commercial and industrial uses interspersed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant road/traffic circulation improvements needed, including Murray Square, Veteran's Square, and Route 117.</li> <li>• Need to limit additional commercial development.</li> <li>• Preservation and reuse of old mill buildings.</li> <li>• Perception of uncontrolled development, particularly commercial development.</li> </ul>



Table I-11 cont.  
Summary of Issues Raised During the Planning Process

Village	Character	Issues/Concerns
Clyde/ Lippitt	A mixed use area, including commercial, residential and industrial uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road improvements needed at Maple Avenue/East Main and Main.</li> <li>• Traffic flow is difficult and road conditions are poor in general.</li> <li>• Preservation and reuse of mill buildings.</li> <li>• Need for drainage improvements.</li> <li>• Need to limit additional development, particularly conversion of single family units to multifamily units, additional commercial development, development on small lots.</li> <li>• Loss of neighborhood character.</li> </ul>
Crompton	A mixed use area which includes residential, commercial and industrial uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage single family housing.</li> <li>• Increase the number of recreational facilities.</li> <li>• Need for open space preservation.</li> <li>• Road improvements needed include New London Avenue and Cowesett Road, Route 3, East Greenwich Avenue and Greenbush Road.</li> <li>• Need for controlled development, slowing of growth.</li> <li>• Emphasis on single family development versus multifamily development, condominiums or apartments</li> <li>• Improvements to water pressure.</li> <li>• Perception of uncontrolled development - all uses.</li> </ul>
Natick	Largely residential, with commercial uses interspersed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road improvements - widening Wakefield Street, East Avenue repairs, and improvements in general.</li> <li>• Using Pawtuxet River areas for recreational purposes.</li> <li>• Need for drainage improvements.</li> <li>• Improvements to housing conditions in some parts of the neighborhood.</li> <li>• Limiting further commercial development.</li> </ul>
Phenix	An urban residential area, including some commercial uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road/traffic circulation improvements - signal at Wakefield/Main, Phenix/Main, upgrading Phenix Square, improvements to Wakefield Street, Main Street.</li> <li>• Need for additional recreational areas.</li> <li>• Need for drainage improvements.</li> <li>• Improvements to historic buildings, preservation, restoration.</li> <li>• Revitalization of the area - cleanup and maintenance.</li> <li>• Loss of historic character.</li> <li>• Overdevelopment - primarily residential.</li> <li>• Loss of business/industry.</li> </ul>



Table I-11 cont.  
Summary of Issues Raised During the Planning Process

Village	Character	Issues/Concerns
River Point	Generally characterized as a mixed use area, mainly residential, but also including some commercial, recreational and industrial uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining River Point Park.</li> <li>• Need for drainage improvements.</li> <li>• Improved access to Wakefield Hill.</li> <li>• Loss of the ethnic community.</li> <li>• Overdevelopment - primarily commercial encroachment to residential areas.</li> <li>• Abandonment of older buildings.</li> </ul>
Wakefield Hill	Rural, open and low density residential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preservation of open spaces and country atmosphere.</li> <li>• Improvements of drainage problems.</li> <li>• Widening Wakefield Street.</li> <li>• Limit development of high density housing and commercial areas.</li> </ul>

#### I.4 Citizen Survey Summary

In May, 1990, Alpha Research Associates conducted a poll of 411 West Warwick residents over the age of 18 in a study designed to assist in the development of the Comprehensive Plan. The questionnaire was designed to elicit residents' opinions about town services, quality of life, development etc., as they currently exist in West Warwick and opinions regarding directions for West Warwick's future development. Appendix I-A includes the full survey report.

Of those residents interviewed, males and females were equally represented, 72 percent were age 44 or younger and 18 percent were age 55 or older. Most of the households (54 percent) had three or more members, and household composition reflects a community largely comprised of families with children and young adults. Most respondents owned their homes (58 percent), and live in single family detached dwellings.

West Warwick is a community of relative newcomers. Some 41 percent have lived in the community for 5 years or less. Most of those who have moved into Town have come from other places within Rhode Island.

Over 45 percent of the residents surveyed have two or more wage earners, the remainder have single wage earners. About one-third of both first and second wage earners are in white collar jobs, another 25 percent of first wage earners are skilled laborers and 14 percent are in blue collar jobs. About three quarters of both first and second wage earners work outside of West Warwick, and 12 percent work in the City of Providence. Forty percent of the residents sampled have annual incomes between \$30,000 and \$60,000, ten percent have incomes above \$60,000 and 36 percent have incomes under \$30,000.

**Opinions on Town Image** - Respondents were asked to first volunteer what they liked best about West Warwick, and then what they liked least. Most responses to the first question addressed the general character of the community, for example, it is quiet and friendly, it has a small town atmosphere, it is a homey place, it is close to everything. Things that respondents liked least about West Warwick largely related to municipal or state services, including dirty sidewalks, sewer problems, and lack of bus service.



**Town Services** - In general, residents are satisfied with Town services. With the exception of playgrounds and parks, and road maintenance, all services were rated excellent or good by almost all respondents. Rescue service, library and fire protection were rated most highly. The high school, junior high and elementary schools were rated only fair or poor by 24 to 37 percent of respondents.

Having adequate water pressure at home for normal daily use was a problem for about one-quarter of those interviewed; these individuals were more likely to live in the Crompton and Phenix/Lippitt areas.

Roadway intersections mentioned as being dangerous included Main and Legris (Veteran's Square), Main and Church, Main and West Warwick, Main Street in general, East Greenwich Avenue and Greenbush, and Main and Phenix.

**Quality of Life** - Six features which contribute to the quality of life in West Warwick were rated as very important, important, somewhat important or not very important by survey respondents. The features included good quality/well maintained housing, open space, employment opportunities, location in Rhode Island, shopping opportunities, and historical character. Good quality and well maintained housing, and open space were at the top of the list, with more than 60 percent of respondents rating them as very important to their quality of life, while shopping opportunities and historical character were considered to be not very important by almost one quarter of the respondents. Three quarters of the respondents favor spending additional Town money to protect open spaces from future development.

**Zoning Regulations and Development** - When asked about zoning regulations, 40 percent said they were not strict enough, and 32 percent said they were about right. Only 7 percent said they were too strict, but almost half of these were from the Crompton area. The Centerville/Arctic Hill area had the highest proportion of respondents (55 percent) who said regulations were not strict enough.

In terms of the future development of the Town, the development of public parks and recreation areas, and recreational programs were given top priority. These were followed by encouraging manufacturers to locate in West Warwick, revitalizing the Main and Providence Street commercial areas, providing a wide range of housing opportunities, providing more art, music and cultural activities and development of shops, stores and restaurants. Over 40 percent rated development of shops, stores and restaurants as not very important to the future development of West Warwick. Ninety percent of respondents favor promoting the reuse of mill buildings for small business use.

## 1.5 Summary

During the past 30 years West Warwick accommodated over 7,800 new residents at an average density of 3,500 persons per square mile. The addition of these new residents has brought changes and placed numerous pressures on this small village-centered community. Long a blue collar, labor-oriented town, West Warwick is moving toward a more white collar character, and many feel it may be losing its small village character.

Most recent growth has been immigration to the community, as more people find West Warwick an attractive, geographically convenient and economical place to live. It clearly is an affordable alternative to surrounding communities.

Population is expected to continue to grow, although at a slower rate than recently experienced. As the availability of developable land in West Warwick continues to decrease, there will be fewer opportunities for development and a corresponding slowing of population growth. Over



the next ten years the population is expected to change in its demographic composition, with fewer school age children, more adults in the labor force age group and more elderly. These changes must be monitored and factored into local decisions regarding community services, facilities and land use changes.

As these demographic shifts occur, it is important that public sentiment regarding growth and development be maintained at the forefront of local decision-making. Public participation in the planning process shows substantial concern for maintaining and improving the village character of the community, while allowing growth which will comfortably support existing and future residents of the community. The recommendations of this Plan focus on the overall desires of the West Warwick citizenry, and their hopes and aspirations for the future of their community.

