

Chapter IV
Economic Development

West Warwick Comprehensive Plan

CHAPTER IV ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

"Shall include the identification of economic development policies and strategies, either existing or proposed by the municipality, in coordination with the land use plan element. Such policies should reflect local, regional and statewide concerns for the expansion and stabilization of the economic base and the promotion of quality employment opportunities. The policies and implementation techniques must be identified for inclusion in the implementation program element." -- Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act

IV.1 Existing Conditions, Trends and Projections

The total labor force in West Warwick increased 20.4 percent from 1980 to 1989, as shown in Table IV-1, from 13,675 to 16,465, compared with an 8.9 percent increase in population age 16+ over the same period. In 1989, West Warwick employers provided work for approximately 7,294 people, indicating that most of the resident labor force works outside of the Town.¹ West Warwick holds approximately 13 percent of the region's total labor force, and local employers comprise about nine percent of the region's total employment.

Table IV-1
Labor Force, Participation Rate and Employment, 1980, 1985, 1989

Year	Total Pop.	Population Over Age 16		Total Employed Persons	Total Unemployed Persons	Unemp. Rate	Overall LF Partic.		Total Labor Force
		Total	Age				Rate	Rate	
1980	27,026	20,661	12,500	1,175	8.6	66.2	13,675		
1985	28,083	21,810	14,767	797	5.1	71.4	15,564		
1989	28,972	22,500(1)	15,806(2)	675	4.1	73.2	16,465		
% Change 1980-89	7.2	8.9	26.4	-42.6	-52.3	10.6	20.4		

Note:

- (1) - Albert Veri & Associates estimate, based on 77 percent of population.
 (2) - Albert Veri & Associates estimate, based on 96 percent of labor force.
 Source: RI Dept. of Administration, Division of Planning. RI Dept. of Economic Development. Albert Veri & Associates.

The percent of population over age 16 actively participating in the labor force increased from 66.2 percent in 1980 to 73.2 percent in 1989, reflecting an increase in total labor force. The increase in labor force continues to outpace population growth, both locally and Statewide. This is due to a number of factors, including more women participating in the labor force, more older people (65+) who formerly faced forced retirement and are continuing to work, and a larger number of young people with part-time employment. Of the 16,465 people in the labor force in 1989, 675 were unemployed, a 42.6 percent decline in unemployed workers since the recession period of 1980. The current unemployment rate is 4.1 percent, a decrease from the 1980 rate of 52.3 percent.

Employment - The number of employed persons in West Warwick increased from 6,511 in 1960 to 12,500+/- in 1980 and 15,763 in 1988, an increase of 142 percent from 1960-88. During the last decade, employment in West Warwick increased by over 3,300 jobs, or 26 percent. During this decade, the labor force increased correspondingly, from 13,675 persons in 1980 to 16,284 persons in 1988. The unemployment rate ranged from a high of 12+ percent in 1982 to a low of 3.2 percent in 1988.

¹ Rhode Island Dept. of Employment and Training, Employment Covered by the RI Employment Security Act, 1989.

