



WHY WE DEVELOPED THIS PLAN

This is Warwick's first full update of its comprehensive plan in twenty years. It is designed to help Warwick begin meeting the challenges of the 21st century so that it can continue to be competitive as a place to live, work, play, and do business for many decades to come. The State of Rhode Island requires that municipalities prepare a comprehensive plan with a 20-year vision and a 10-year implementation plan that is consistent with the state's planning goals.

HOW WE DEVELOPED THIS PLAN

More than previous plans, this Warwick Comprehensive Plan is based on a substantial community engagement process that was designed to find out what residents, business people, and other stakeholders were thinking about the future of the city. What makes Warwick a good place to live and do business? What characteristics of Warwick should we keep, enhance, and protect? How should we allocate our resources in maintaining and improving quality of life and prosperity for the city?



HOW WE'LL PUT THE PLAN TO WORK

The purpose of planning is to get to action. The Comprehensive Plan includes a ten-year implementation matrix setting out the What, How, Who, and When for specific actions to achieve the goals of the plan. Annual public hearings will give citizens a report on implementation and the plan will be used in capital improvement planning, work plans, and to guide land use decision making. Partnerships with residents, businesses, institutions, and nonprofits will be important to the success of the plan.

WHAT'S IN THE 2013 CITY OF WARWICK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

IMAGINE ► PLAN ► ACT

The Comprehensive Plan covers a broad range of topics in 13 chapters about current trends, the planning process and all aspects of community life that affect the way our city can develop in the future.

IMAGINE: WHAT KIND OF PLACE DO WE WANT TO BE IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

- *Part I: Setting the Stage.* Our vision for the future, guiding principles for planning, the public process, and where we are starting from today.

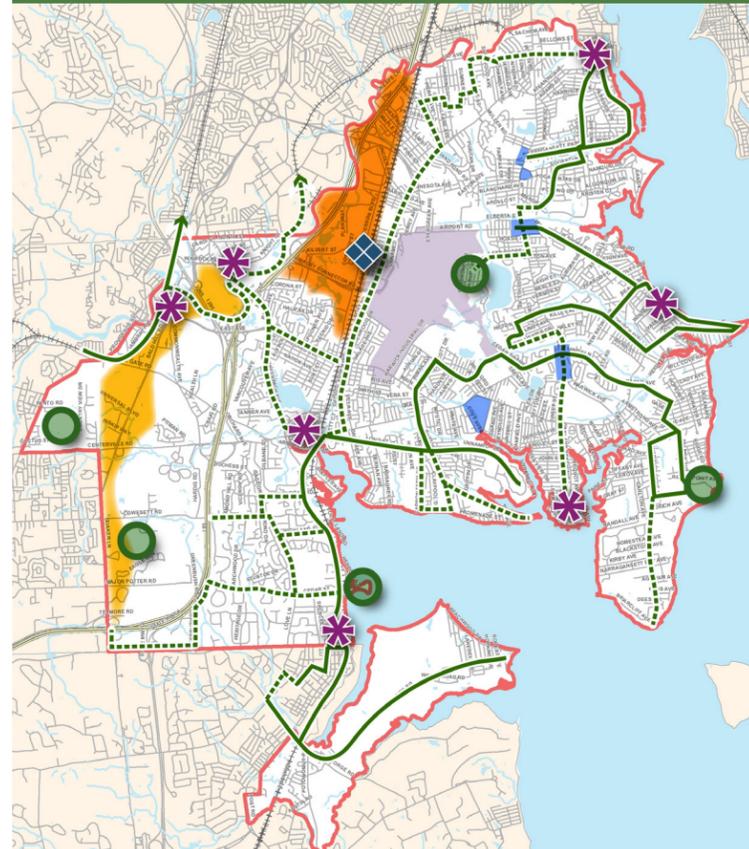
PLAN: HOW DO WE GET THERE? STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE VISION.

- *Part II: Natural and Cultural Resources*
- *Part III: Livable Neighborhoods*
- *Part IV: Prosperous City*
- *Part V: Sustainable Systems*

ACT: HOW DO WE GET STARTED?

- *Part IV: The Future City*

WARWICK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2013–2033 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



THE CITY OF WARWICK'S VISION FOR 2033

Twenty-first century Warwick is a connected, sustainable, and prosperous coastal city of livable neighborhoods and walkable villages—a community that honors and preserves the best from its past, protects and enhances its environment of water and land, provides varied housing opportunities for people across the age and income scale, and supports an increasingly diversified economy. We are strengthening our city and our community to meet the needs of current and new generations of Warwick residents, within the context of our traditions, history, and maritime heritage.

- Our village centers are pedestrian friendly and mixed use, include new housing opportunities, and serve neighborhoods with attractive retail and services. They add new living options to our traditional suburban neighborhoods of single family homes.

- The Warwick Station district, now known as City Centre Warwick, is a vibrant live-work-play growth hub with mixed-use, transit-oriented development.
- We have invested in transportation improvements and amenities to make Apponaug Village the city's center of civic life, anchored by city hall, the Warwick Museum, a new community gathering place, and celebration of our connection to the water at Apponaug Cove and through the daylighting of Hardig Brook.
- We are protecting and enhancing the overall quality of life in all the city's neighborhoods; continuing to be vigilant in monitoring noise, air, and water quality around the airport; and providing methods to remediate minimum housing violations and reconcile derelict properties.
- We are connecting neighborhoods, parks, schools, village centers, ponds and coastline to one another by green-

- ways, pedestrian links, and bicycle routes, in order to create more transportation choice in getting around the city.
- We are committed to a diversity in land use that promotes a strong, stable tax base, including preserving industrially zoned land for non-retail uses.
- We are investing to keep our regional retail destinations competitive, to modernize and transform our neighborhood commercial districts, to make the intermodal station district a new city center and hub of economic growth, and to attract new opportunities, such as advanced manufacturing.
- We are committed to preserving and enhancing the city's open space, recreation and water resources, improving the utility of these properties for the community while promoting economic development and public-private partnerships that provide

revenue for ongoing maintenance and infrastructure improvements.

- We are making more sustainable choices about how we manage the impacts of development on our streams, ponds, wetlands, and coastal waters because we understand how our actions on land affect water quality and flooding. We are implementing a coordinated program to manage stormwater, impervious surfaces, wastewater, and landscape practices so that all our waters will once again be clean for fish and shellfish, for recreation, and for commercial purposes. Warwick's coastal waterfront is one of our most precious assets, but we know we must plan for the likelihood of sea level rise in this century.

Twenty-first-century Warwick combines the best of traditional suburban life with the amenities of village centers, affordable access to the coast, convenience to travel hubs, and a forward-thinking community.

TEN KEY CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES TO PRESERVE QUALITY OF LIFE AND COMPETITIVENESS IN WARWICK'S FUTURE

- 1 Make the City Centre Warwick a new hub of growth and economic development.** Promote mixed-use, transit-oriented development, make improvements to the public realm, and advocate for more frequent commuter rail service
- 2 Make historic village centers into hubs of walkability, amenities, events, and mixed use development.** Continue Apponaug Village improvements and establish Village District zoning in additional historic villages.
- 3 Promote compact development options to preserve open space.** Establish the option of conservation subdivision design for the few large open space parcels that remain available for residential development.
- 4 Promote walkable Neighborhood Activity Centers.** Establish zoning to incentivize mixed-use redevelopment of neighborhood shopping areas at major intersections
- 5 Intensify efforts to make Warwick a "green" community.** Plant more trees, protect and enhance Warwick's streams, ponds, and coastal waters by implementing measures to reduce nonpoint source pollution, make the city energy- and resource-efficient, and work on climate change resilience with the state.
- 6 Create the Warwick Innovation District.** Revitalize and refresh the city's economic base by creating the Warwick Innovation District to attract technology, advanced manufacturing, and office development with appropriate zoning and economic development initiatives.
- 7 Maintain the city's role as a regional retail center.** Establish the Bald Hill Enhancement Corridor Overlay District to bring improvements in design and function, so that this important tax base for the city continues to be competitive.
- 8 Enhance connectivity throughout the city.** Connect neighborhoods to parks, schools, villages, shopping areas, and other city destinations by "green corridors" of designated routes for walking and bicycling.
- 9 Continue efforts to include a signature public open space at Rocky Point and enhance other open space areas.** Pursue funding to enhance places like Chepianoxet and Barton's Farm.
- 10 Monitor airport impacts and agreements.** Continue to work with the Rhode Island Airport Corporation to mitigate the environmental and other impacts of T.F. Green Airport, and monitor implementation of previous agreements.



THE BIG PICTURE
 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR A NEW ERA OF TRANSFORMATION IN WARWICK'S HISTORY

Over Warwick's long history from a colonial town of farming and fishing villages to a successful 20th century suburban city, it has gone through many transformations. New challenges and changes are ahead in the 21st century:

- **Warwick hasn't been growing.** The city's population peaked in 1980 and has declined slightly since then, though the number of households has increased because households today are smaller and more people live alone.
- **There is a generational transition from Baby Boomers to Millennials.** The post-war and baby-boomer generations that raised families in Warwick's comfortable and safe suburban neighborhoods from the 1950s to the 1990s are getting older. Some want to age at home while others hope

to stay in Warwick but with new housing options. The Millennial generation—born from the early 1980s to the early 2000s—tends to prefer walkable, village-like environments, bike and walking trails and connected open space. Warwick is beginning to offer new housing options and neighborhood environments for both seniors and Millennials in the Village Districts and the Warwick Station District.

• **From now on, it's all about redevelopment.** Warwick is a mature community with little undeveloped land. Improvements must come through redevelopment of previously developed land and through upgrading and redesign of public infrastructure and amenities for new residents and new businesses.

- **Everybody is talking about better connectivity.** Pod-style suburban development patterns left Warwick neighborhoods without good connections. Bike and pedestrian trails can help connect neighborhoods with city destinations and options for better transit must be explored.
- **Warwick's environmental assets are a key competitive resource.** With ponds, streams, marshes, 39 miles of coastline, and Rocky Point, Warwick has tremendous natural attractions. Protecting and enhancing these assets, and making sure that there is continued affordable access to the coastline, has multiple benefits.
- **Preparing for climate change has to begin earlier rather than later.** Warwick is very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and sea level rise.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES



Natural Resources

- Develop an integrated "Green Systems" Plan that encompasses natural resources, open space, greenways, waterfronts, parks and recreation, and sustainability.
- Protect and enhance natural resource areas and water bodies—including our 39 miles of coastline and five coves—with appropriate zoning and land use management.
- Improve water quality and habitat in freshwater and saltwater resources.
- Continue policies and programs that protect, enhance and increase the city's tree canopy.

Parks and Recreation

- Work towards a goal of a park within walking distance of every resident.
- Develop parks and open space maintenance guidelines and funding options.

- Develop "green corridors" to connect open space and recreation land with walking and biking routes.
- Protect, maintain, and expand coastal and fresh water public access points.

Historic and Cultural Resources

- Provide incentives for historic preservation.
- Enhance the review process in local historic districts with more focused design guidelines.
- Promote adaptive reuse of historic buildings with a demolition-delay ordinance.
- Promote the preservation and adaptive reuse of Elizabeth Mill.
- Explore the creation of neighborhood conservation districts for neighborhoods with an established character that are not local historic districts.
- Improve promotion of arts and cultural activities and initiatives as part of the city's economic development strategy.

LIVABLE NEIGHBORHOODS

Housing and Neighborhoods

- Focus multi-family and other higher-density housing options in areas that support village, City Centre, and neighborhood center development.
- Refine and implement the affordable housing program.
- Provide affordable housing and programs suitable for seniors, so they can stay in Warwick as they age.
- Establish a coordinated, proactive system of code enforcement and property standards.

- Create Neighborhood Livability Plans to identify improvement projects on the neighborhood level.
- Make Apponaug Village into the city's civic center.
- Use Village District zoning in Pawtuxet, Pontiac Village, East Natick Village and Oakland Beach.
- Redevelop neighborhood shopping centers into walkable mixed use centers at intersections such as Lakewood, Hoxsie, and Wildes Corner through appropriate zoning and design standards.
- Use mixed-use development and office uses to make a transition between major arterial roadways and residential districts.
- Allow development of mixed-use, multi-family residential uses along arterial roads such as Warwick Avenue, Post Road, and West Shore Road.
- Limit development of undersized lots and create design standards for properties seeking zoning relief to ensure that new construction fits into the neighborhood.



PROSPEROUS CITY



Economic Development

- Implement the City Centre Development District Master Plan and continue to work with the state to develop City Centre Warwick as a transit hub, mixed-use growth center, and gateway to Rhode Island.
- Designate a Warwick Innovation District near I-95 and the airport with appropriate zoning and design standards.
- Strengthen relationships with the technology and advanced manufacturing and property owners to recruit these industries to the Innovation District.
- Target marketing to other industries in which Warwick has competitive strengths, including regional retail, professional and technical services, financial services, and distribution
- Strengthen and expand the tourism industries.
- Preserve the shellfish industry by maintaining needed infrastructure and appropriate land use policies, and advocating for supportive federal and state policies.
- Survey business owners to identify improvements to make the City more business-friendly, such as a one stop information and referral office for regulation and streamlined permitting processes.
- Promote participation by local businesses in career education and workforce development programs

SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS

Transportation and Circulation

- Create "complete streets" where feasible to incorporate walking, biking and transit.
- Reduce traffic congestion on major roads by applying a strong access management policy to control the number and location of curb cuts.
- Advocate for improved commuter rail and bus service and better bus connections among city destinations.
- Implement traffic calming in locations with persistent speeding.
- Expand bicycle routes and sidewalks to make a connected network.

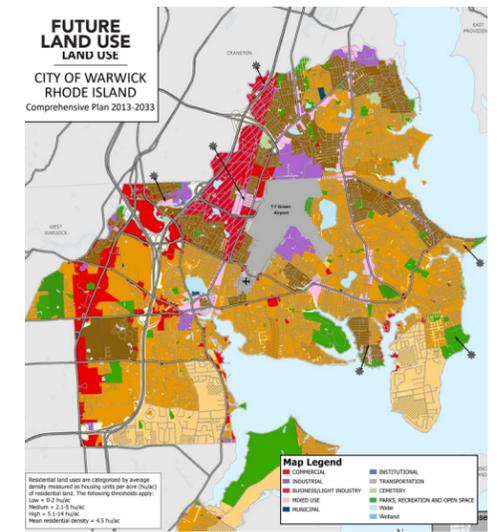
- Ensure implementation of measures to mitigate negative impacts of airport operations and development.
- Complete an update to the city's Harbor Management Plan.
- Advocate for dredging to restore navigable depths to the city's navigation channels and mooring fields.

Public Facilities and Services

- Continue to protect existing and potential drinking water sources and to implement water system management and capital plans.
- Continue to implement plans and programs to protect the Wastewater Treatment Facility from flooding.
- Continue eliminating all cesspools and implementing the Mandatory Sewer Connection Program.
- Comply with state and federal stormwater management requirements and best practices for drainage.
- Ensure that all private developments adhere to the standards in the state stormwater design manual.
- Invest in a GIS system and an asset management system to manage city-owned property efficiently.
- Continue improving the city website to be more informative and user-friendly.

Resilience and Sustainability

- Keep the city's hazard mitigation plan updated.
- Appoint a committee to raise awareness and work with the state on climate change and sea level rise.
- Continue to implement energy conservation projects and programs identified in the City's Comprehensive Energy Strategy
- Adopt regulations that support renewable energy installations, green building, and best practices to reduce impervious surfaces and promote infiltration of stormwater
- Make city government practices and facilities a model of sustainability.



THE FUTURE CITY

Future Land Use, Zoning and Urban Design

- Retain diverse land uses to support a strong and stable tax base.
- Change zoning in the Innovation District from Heavy Industry to Technology/Light Industry.
- Extend Village District zoning to other villages such as Pawtuxet Village, Pontiac Village, East Natick Village, and Oakland Beach.
- Implement the City Centre Warwick Plan.
- Provide regulatory options for mixed-use redevelopment at major intersections currently occupied by retail and to allow multi-family development along commercial arterial streets.
- Establish a Bald Hill Enhancement Corridor Design Overlay to improve the function and appearance of the Bald Hill retail corridor.
- Incorporate basic urban design, form-based, and performance standards into zoning districts.

Stewardship and Implementation

- Review progress on the plan in an annual public hearing before the Planning Board or City Council.
- Incorporate the plan into decision making on operating and capital budgets.
- Publicize the comprehensive plan connection when recommendations are implemented.
- Update the City zoning ordinance to be consistent with the goals, policies, and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Update the vision, plan and implementation section every ten years to comply with state law.

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