

**Centerville Road Development
Multi-Tenant Commercial Development Project**

Rezone and Comprehensive Plan Amendment(s)

**171, 181, 203, and 221 Centerville Road
Assessor's Plat 246; Lot(s) 246, 247, 250, 251, and 257**

Prepared For: 203 Centerville Road, LLC and Centerville Associates

Prepared By: Pimentel Consulting, Inc.

5 September 2022

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

203 Centerville Road, LLC and Centerville Associates ("Applicant"), have retained my professional land use planning and zoning consulting services ("Consultant"), in order to evaluate the appropriateness of developing certain well under-utilized property for general commercial purposes, consisting of a variety of land uses that serve the everyday needs of all Warwick citizenry. The referenced services, to potentially include a car-wash, drive-thru coffee shop, and separate banking and retail facilities, will address both regional and local needs; self-containing a variety of needed land uses to reduce vehicular activity. However, given the lack of permissibility resulting from present zoning, the Applicant is pursuing a respective amendment; uncertainty necessitating pursuit prior to formal submission.

Evidencing appropriateness necessitates reviewing several pertinent regulatory documents for purposes of determining regulatory compliance, as well as conducting an extensive area analysis for purposes of determining neighborhood compatibility. However, what is most pertinent, considering the Applicant is pursuing a zone change, is evidencing general 'consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, and more specifically consistency with Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map ("FLUM"). This is by-far the greatest measure of consistency, and the series of properties in question are literally already classified in a 'Commercial' land use manner.

The referenced zone change is from the present Office District ("O-District") to the General Business District ("GB District"), thereby permitting as a matter-of-right the anticipated self-contained, multi-facility general commercial development. Land use classification is already affirmed by the present 'Commercial' designation; further 'general consistency' to be evidenced throughout this report. Finally, it must be acknowledged from the outset that the property is literally in very close proximity to Interstate-95, numerous commercial land uses (several of which are similarly general commercial in character), and most importantly like GB District zoned properties.

In light of the requested development proposal, necessitating the detailed zoning amendment, this Consultant has thoroughly reviewed the Applicant's submission package and all associated documents, as well as the following regulatory documents:

- o City of Warwick Comprehensive Plan 2033 - 17 April 2014 ("Comprehensive Plan");
- o City of Warwick Zoning Ordinance ("Ordinance");

- o City of Warwick Development Review Regulations - Governing Subdivisions, Land Development Projects, and Development Plan Review - Adopted 1 January 1996 - Amended through 13 March 2001 ("LDP Regulations"); and,
- o Reviewing pertinent case law and Rhode Island General Law ("RIGL").

In addition, this Consultant has completed a thorough analysis of the immediate Centerville Road (Route 117) and Toll Gate Road (Route 115) neighborhood(s), said analysis consisting of conducting several site inspections and reviewing Property Tax Data for purposes of evidencing neighborhood compatibility.

As this report will evidence, the proposed zone change amendment will eventually realize a development that is consistent with the respective goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, as well as mixed general commercial, professional office (primarily medically oriented), and high-density residential character of the surrounding neighborhood(s). This is in direct accord with the overall vision for the City of Warwick, as evidenced by the Comprehensive Plan.

Our Vision for 2033 - *"Vision statements focus attention on a community's values, sense of identity, and aspirations. They identify what citizens want to preserve and what they want to change, and articulate their desires and hopes for the future. This vision statement for Warwick provides a guiding image for the city as it faces choices and challenges over the next twenty years."* [Page 1.3]

C. Land Use Trends - *"Land use" is the general term referring to the actual uses or activities that occur on a parcel of land at any given time, be they residential, commercial, industrial, recreational or another use. Land use is not permanent and can change over time. For example, much of the land that holds residential uses in Warwick today was farmland a century ago. **It is important to note that land use is not the same as zoning. Zoning is the tool a municipality uses to regulate what can be built on a parcel of land and how should it be developed or redeveloped.** Land uses can be "nonconforming," meaning that they do not conform with the zoning because they were in existence when the land was zoned for another use. The nonconforming uses were "grandfathered." **Like land use, zoning can change over time. For example, parcels that are currently zoned to allow only commercial uses today may one day be changed to allow for a mix of uses, including residential.**" [Page 3.9]*

1. **Commercial and Industrial Uses:** *"Commercial and industrial land in Warwick has expanded significantly over the years. As noted earlier, Warwick's development pattern since World War II has been suburban in nature, **leading to commercial development that accommodates, and relies on visibility from, automobile drivers along the city's major thoroughfares.**" [Page 3.13]*

Local Commercial Corridors - *"**Other commercial activities within the city are concentrated along major arterials** such as Post Road, West Shore Road, Airport Road, and Warwick Avenue. **In general, these commercial areas target local residents and contain a varied mix of local retailers, grocery stores, fast food, convenience and service establishments.** The corridors lack a cohesive design aesthetic, are several decades old, and have numerous vacancies. As noted by many participants during public meetings, the commercial corridors throughout Warwick look tired and "need a face-lift". [Page 3.14]*

PRESENT PROPERTY CONDITIONS

The property that is the focus of the subject rezone analysis is comprised of several parcels ("Property"), all of whom are presently zoned O-District. The referenced parcels are individually described below:

- 1. Assessor's Plat 246, Lot 246:** Addressed 221 Centerville Road. Lot contains approximately 54,101 square feet of total land area, and is presently unimproved. A very minute Northerly portion of the referenced lot appears to be constrained by a wetlands body.
- 2. Assessor's Plat 246, Lot 247:** Addressed 203 Centerville Road. Lot contains approximately 110,642 square feet of total land area, and likewise presently unimproved. Similar to the Lot 246, a very minute Northerly portion of the referenced lot appears to be constrained by a wetlands body.
- 3. Assessor's Plat 246, Lot 250:** Addressed 0 Calef Street. Lot contains approximately 37,882 square feet, and likewise presently unimproved.
- 4. Assessor's Plat 246, Lot 251:** Addressed 181 Centerville Road. Lot contains approximately 17,830 square feet, and likewise presently unimproved.
- 5. Assessor's Plat 246, Lot 257:** Addressed 171 Centerville Road. Lot contains approximately 14,735 square feet, and likewise presently unimproved.

In total, the Property contains approximately 237,910 square feet, or 5.46-acres. Minimal Northerly portions of both Lots 246 and 237 are constrained by wetlands and associated setbacks, however the vast majority of contiguous land area fronting Centerville Road (Route 117) is deemed land area suitable for development. The Property is presently well under-utilized and uniquely shaped such that it has multiple lot frontages; having upwards of approximately 605 linear feet along Centerville Road (Route 117) and in excess of 300 linear feet along unimproved Calef Street. The Property is therefore technically defined as a through-lot, albeit Calef Street is presently an unimproved public right-of-way. Furthermore, Toll Gate Road (Route 115) almost bounds the Property towards the North, or along its rear side, and to the East where it intersects with Centerville Road.

Centerville Road (Route 117) is classified a 'Principal Arterial' roadway, whereas Toll Gate Road (Route 115) is classified a 'Minor Arterial' roadway, pursuant to the Comprehensive Plan - Map 9.1 'Roadway Functional Classifications.' The referenced roadway classification is defined by the Comprehensive Plan [Page 9.6], in the following manner:

Functional Classifications consist of the following:

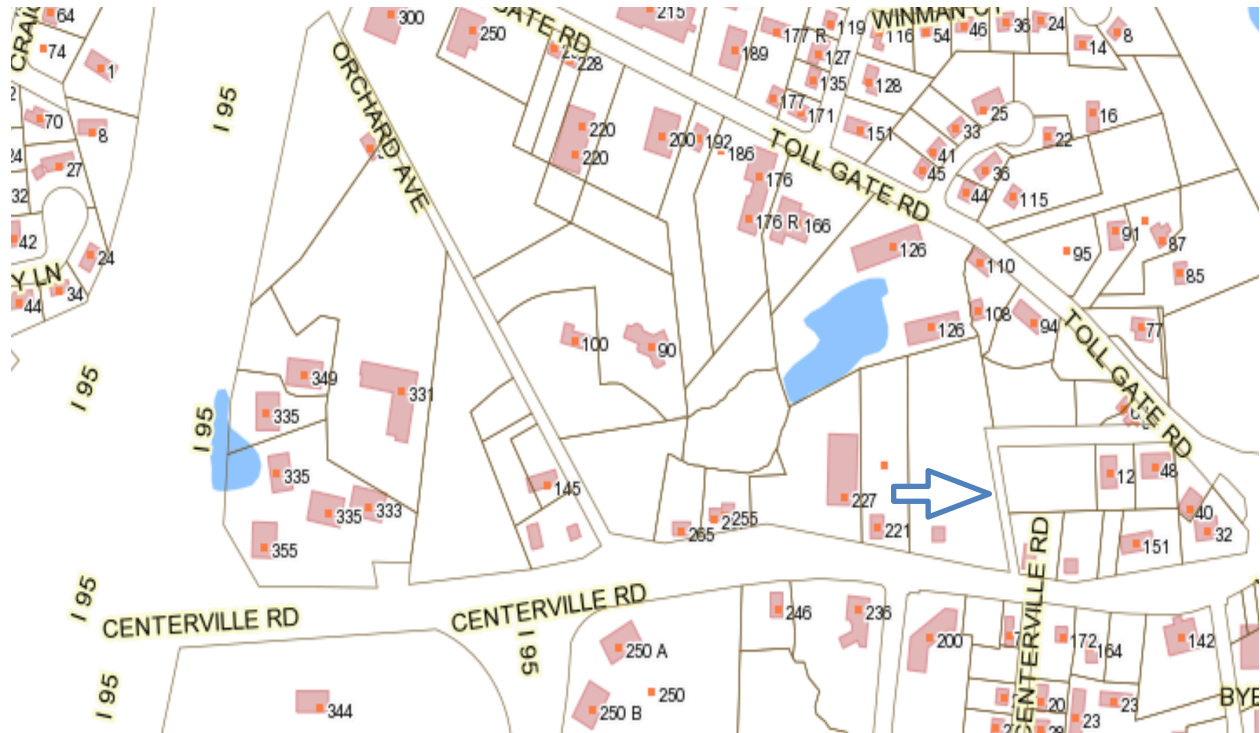
Arterials — *"These types of major roadways provide a higher level of mobility for through traffic movements, and depending on classification, offer limited access to adjacent properties."*

The Property is situated in close proximity to Interstate-95, with the north-bound on and off-ramp located to the immediate Southwest, across Centerville Road. Furthermore, the Property is surrounded by a mixture of land uses, to include light industrial, medical offices, gas stations and a variety of retail and personal convenience services. Although the area is overly zoned in an O-District manner, it is nevertheless comprised of a variety of land uses, not necessarily entirely office related. Furthermore, the majority is medically oriented, which can be overly intensive and intrusive in its own right, most notably from a vehicular perspective. In fact, the proposed project will directly abut a sizable medical office development, the referenced medical facility exceeding 26,000 square feet of usable gross floor area, with associated parking.

Albeit the Property is just slightly outside the stretch of Centerville Road expressed in the Comprehensive Plan, it is nevertheless applicable because it is within the sphere of land uses situated at the I-95 interchange. As acknowledged in the Comprehensive Plan, there is a concerted level of commercial activity situated at the I-95 interchange. Therefore, averting unnecessary additional office usage in exchange for more successful economic development is most definitively furthering respective goals and objectives. The subject development is therefore appropriate in light of the mixture of surrounding land uses. Both mixture and intensity of land uses is well recognized by the Comprehensive Plan [Page 12.11], as evidenced by the following:

D. CENTERVILLE ROAD - "Known as State Route 117, *this heavily-trafficked arterial runs from Apponaug Four Corners in a due westerly direction to the West Warwick line. Traffic is steady and can be very heavy at the Four Corners, Bald Hill Road and Quaker Lane intersections, and the Route 95 interchange. Except for concentrations of commercial activity near Apponaug Four Corners, Interstate 95, Bald Hill Road and Quaker Lane, and to a lesser extent New London Avenue, land uses are essentially residential.*"

Portions of the surrounding area have been zoned in an O-District manner for quite sometime, given existing conditions and an expectation of need based on historical trends. However, as the City of Warwick approaches the mid-point of the 2033 Comprehensive Plan, commencing to prepare for its amended renewal, it is without question that there will be serious reconsideration to reorganizing the area in question and allocating resources to other than office usage. This is not mere speculation, but based on a several-year economic down-turn in need for office space and past actions of the community in rezoning select areas to alternate land usage. There is simply much too land resources presently zoned in an O-District manner, especially when market conditions evidence a lack of necessity. The Property and surrounding neighborhood are reflected below, as excerpted from City's Geographical Systems ("GIS") and Google Earth, respectively.

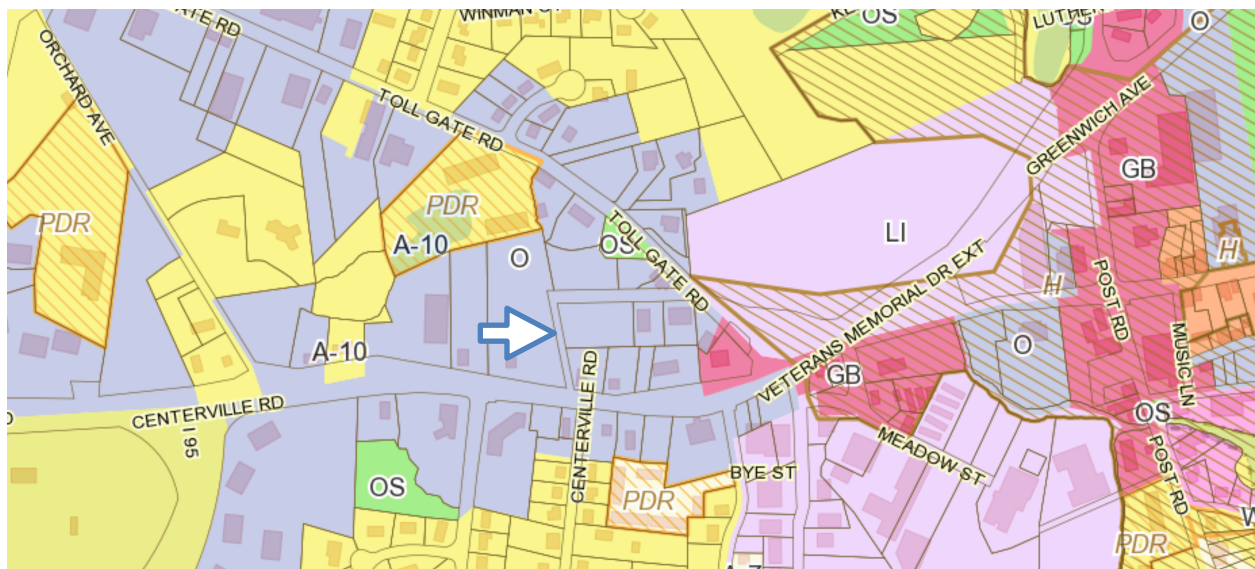


The Property is presently zoned in an O-District manner, being defined pursuant to Section 301.6 'Districts' of the Ordinance, in the following manner:

301.6. Office district (O). “Properties mapped in accordance with subsection 303 of this ordinance and used primarily for professional and personal service offices, and low intensity businesses, which generally serve as a transition between residential and other nonresidential districts. The preservation of residential structures or the construction of new offices that are residential in character is encouraged to the extent possible and where appropriate.”

Albeit the O-District represents a large swath of the immediate neighborhood, there is nevertheless a variety of zoning designations, to include the GB District. In fact, the GB District encompasses a number of properties to the immediate East, inclusive of the Coffee Shop physically located at the intersection of Centerville and Toll Gate Roads. It should also be emphasized that several properties appear to be zoned in a stand-alone manner, thereby precluding any spot-zoning argument. Although spot-zoning can be omitted when a zone change can be shown to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The following zoning map, as excerpted from the City's GIS, details the wide array of surrounding designations. It is abundantly clear that the O-District is diverse, and yet forever shrinking, as the need for alternate land usage, commercial and residential alike, become ever more apparent. Careful attention should be dedicated to the present GB District a mere three (3) properties to the East, at the intersection of Centerville Road and Toll Gate Road. Furthermore, there are scattered designations that are singular in nature, to include PDR, LI and OS. Although, the present proposal encompasses a total of five (5) parcels.



Another more general, albeit equally important consideration, is the ever changing commercial needs of the community's citizenry. It has already been determined that the area in question is quite capable of accommodating commercial development, given the proximity to similar land uses and expressed concerns over continuous medical office development. Need is in demand

and with limited remaining land resources, redevelopment and in-fill development is all that remains.

- ***"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."***

Regardless, due to the Comprehensive Plan's acknowledgment that past development has been introduced in a tired and haphazard fashion, with little regard for abutting dissimilar land uses and immediate roadway conditions, the applicant has crafted a development that is designed in a safe and considerate manner. For example, the entire development is limited to a singular means of ingress and egress to minimize driveway openings; realizing greater control of vehicular flow both on and off-site. Although minimal residential presence, the majority of land uses will be oriented towards the frontage of the Property, and enhances landscaping and buffering incorporated throughout, especially along the rear. And finally, off-street parking will be situated towards the rear of the Property, behind all commercial entities, as recommended within the Comprehensive Plan. These are but a sampling of the design features to be incorporated, absolutely evidencing general Comprehensive Plan consistency.

Sustainable Systems - Transportation and Circulation [Page - Executive Summary]

- ***"Reduce traffic congestion on major roads by applying a strong access management policy to control the number and location of curb cuts."***
- ***"Expand bicycle routes and sidewalks to make a connected network."***

Sustainable Systems - Resilience and Sustainability [Page - Executive Summary]

- ***"Adopt regulations that support renewable energy installations, green building, and best practices to reduce impervious surfaces and promote infiltration of stormwater"***

Future Land Use, Zoning and Urban Design - Recommendations [Page 12.30]

Action 2 - ***"Include urban design standards for all commercial and multi-family development and redevelopment in these corridor segments."***

"The standards should be required for "new development," "substantial redevelopment" (change to 50% or more of the structure) and "substantial addition" (expansion by 20% or more of gross floor area). The focus should be on promoting connectivity and a pedestrian-friendly environment, for example by:"

- ***"Placing parking to the side or rear, except for one single-loaded parking area in front of commercial development."***
- ***"Orienting building entrances to the street."***
- ***"Prohibiting blank walls at the street."***

- "Providing windows and transparency in commercial buildings."
- "*Minimizing stormwater runoff through green infrastructure and landscape treatments.*"

"In addition, a reduction in the number of curb cuts should be encouraged, in order to promote better access management and traffic patterns."

NEIGHBORHOOD / DENSITY ANALYSIS

The neighborhood analyzed included all properties sandwiched between Interstate-95 and Orchard Avenue to the West, Toll Gate Road to the North, Toll Gate Road and Benefit Street to the East, and the those interior parcels lining the Southerly side of Centerville Road to the South. In total, 55-lots were reviewed, inclusive of a number of commercial entities (e.g., two gas stations). There is a very noticeable mixture of land uses.

First of all, a total of 28-properties are presently commercially improved, with an almost even split between office and non-office usage, several of the office entries being medically oriented. And finally, in order to evidence just how intensive are the present commercial entities, a facility massing analysis was completed. The referenced 28 commercially improved properties range from as small as 1,676 square feet to in excess of 50,000 square feet. It is therefore this Consultant's professional opinion that the referenced neighborhood(s) can accommodate additional commercial development.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS

The Comprehensive Plan clearly evidences textual consistency; expressing support for both the general type of anticipated businesses, as well as proximate location.

2. Commercial and Industrial Uses - *"Commercial and industrial land in Warwick has expanded significantly over the years. As noted earlier, Warwick's development pattern since World War II has been suburban in nature, leading to commercial development that accommodates, and relies on visibility from, automobile drivers along the city's major thoroughfares. This shift has significantly affected the commercial landscape of the city. Although commercial uses were once centered in the traditional village centers, they now sprawl along major arterials throughout the city, with the largest commercial concentrations located in central and western portions of the city that are easily accessible from I-95 and I-295."* [Page 3.13]

It can also be evidenced that during the Comprehensive Plan amendment public outreach process, there was general support for the redevelopment of commercial nodes, such as the property in question. This support was offered with the understanding that albeit alternate forms of transportation should be pursued, the City of Warwick is nevertheless reliant on the automobile.

B. Public Opinion Survey - Table [Page 2.3]

'How important are these issues...?'

- o Job growth within the city - 73% indicated very important
- o The level of taxes - 71% indicated very important
- o Improving the appearance of major roads and commercial corridors - 61% indicated very important

When asked to identify three of the most desirable characteristics or amenities in their neighborhood, nearly two-thirds of respondents included "location and conveniences to goods, services, and shopping," and half of respondents included "low crime rate." Other characteristics with strong support included "parks, recreation and open space," "good schools," and "sense of community." [Page 2.3]

B. Findings and Challenges

Findings [Page 12.3]

- o **"With few exceptions, development patterns in Warwick are auto-oriented."**

It should also be emphasized that the community seeks to enhance its commercial and industrial tax base. This assists in off-setting the disconcerting heavy reliance on residential property taxes. In-fill development is perhaps one of the best means of realizing new, much-needed tax revenue, while averting disturbing whatever green resources remain.

Goal 1. "Attract and retain business in key existing and emerging economic base industries." [Page 8.17]

Policies

- o **"Implement land use policies that support a diversity of industries and promote a strong, stable tax base."**
- o "Invest in public infrastructure to catalyze private development."

Goal: "Public and private development meets high standards of design." [Page 12.2]

- o "Promote infill and redevelopment of outmoded/blighted commercial or industrial properties."
- o "Ensure that proposed new residential, business and industrial uses are compatible with the character and surrounding area."

B. Findings and Challenges [Page 12.3]

Findings - "Warwick is close to built-out and older non-residential areas will need to be redeveloped to meet the city's goals."

Challenges - *“Supporting economic development without adverse impacts on residential neighborhoods and traffic.”*

ZONE CHANGE: ‘OFFICE DISTRICT’ to ‘GENERAL BUSINESS DISTRICT’

A zone change is absolutely mandatory in order to realize successful development of the Property for appropriate multi-facility commercial purposes. The results of the Comprehensive Plan analysis clearly acknowledges support for the subject development; having limited residential presence and almost contiguous to presently similarly zoned General Business District (“GB District”) property. The applicant thus seeks a zone change of the Property from the present **‘O-District’** designation to the **‘GB District’** designation, reflecting existing neighborhood conditions and fulfilling numerous Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives. The referenced zone change will ensure neighborhood character consistency.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - FLUM CONSISTENCY

The applicant is required by law to evidence consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, and more importantly the “Future Land Use” map. R.I.G.L. 45-24-50 – “Consistency with Comprehensive Plan,” specifically grants local communities the authority to amend their Ordinances, when it is done so for the purpose of promoting the public health, safety, morals and general welfare. An Ordinance amendment, including change to the official zoning map, must first evidence consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Textual consistency has already been affirmed, however there must also be agreement between the FLUM and the proposed zone change. Consistency with the FLUM, which reflects, “...*the preferred or acceptable patterns of land use...*” is legally mandatory. Evidence of this consistency must be satisfied, otherwise RIGL mandates a Comprehensive Plan amendment. It is the professional opinion of this Consultant that FLUM consistency is an absolute, considering the Property and large portions of the surrounding neighborhood(s) are classified in a **‘Commercial’** manner. This opinion is corroborated by the Comprehensive Plan [Page 12.16], as evidenced by the following:

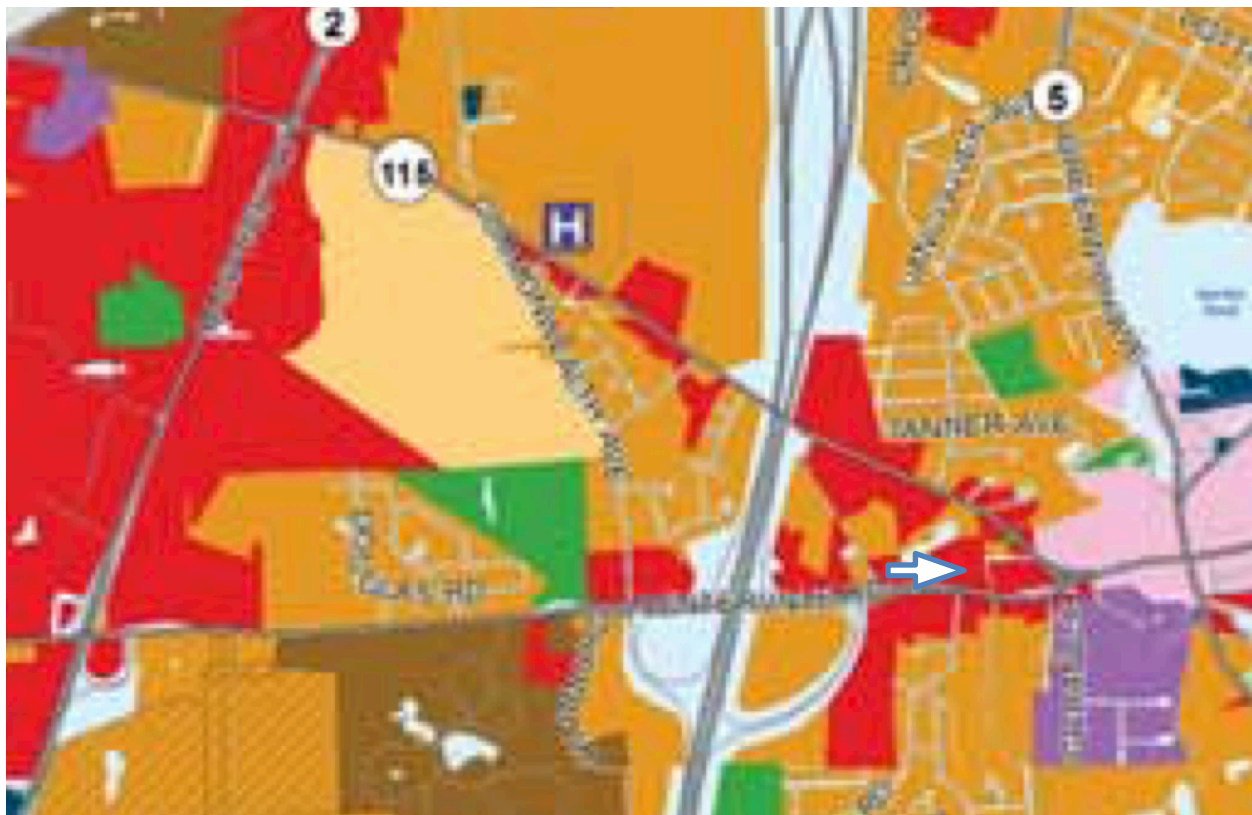
1. General Principles for Land Use: *“The “General Principles to Guide Future Land Use” provide a set of policy principles to guide decision making about land use changes and associated zoning amendments. These principles are based on community discussions during the planning process, the land use patterns necessary to support other goals (such as transportation, connectivity and environmental goals), and economic development considerations.”*

“One of the most important land use issues in Warwick is the condition of the city’s arterial corridors. While a variety of viable neighborhoods of different vintages, housing types, and economic levels remain in Warwick, the majority of the non-residential

development along the city's arterials is out of date, unattractive, functionally obsolete, and environmentally problematic. Ugly, auto-dominated, old-fashioned commercial development surrounded by wide expanses of parking and sometimes with "curb cuts" as wide as the entire lot is too common in Warwick. The land use issues identified in the discussion of Warwick's arterial corridors highlight over and over the need for a new set of design and development standards to be applied to new and redeveloped non-residential and multi-family development all over the city. In addition, many of these corridors currently have "General Business" zoning that encourage sprawling, low-density commercial development with the accompanying multiplication of curb cuts and traffic congestion. Many of the corridors continue to have residential segments, and preservation of those segments is desirable, in order to promote consolidation of commercial uses in walkable environments or the city's regional commercial center."

"Any land use map for the future is inevitably based on the existing uses. Some land uses are less susceptible to change once they have been established. For example, occupied single-family neighborhoods tend to stay in place over long periods, with limited change or encroachment from other uses. Similarly, heavy industry, once located, does not tend to move if it continues in operation because it is difficult to find new locations. **In contrast, retail and light industrial land uses are more likely to change, and to change in more rapid cycles...**"

The FLUM is provided below to affirm the presence of a variety of land uses, and most importantly, the vast presence of the 'Commercial' land use classification.



CONCLUSION

In summary, this Consultant professionally believes that the Warwick City Council should not have any reservation in regard to approving the requested zone change; especially considering it is both textually generally consistent, and absolutely FLUM consistent. The proposed changes are purely for the purpose of realizing appropriate infill commercial development. It will also realize a much-needed new revenue stream; thereby averting further stressing an already orderly burdened residential tax base.