PUBLIC NOTICE: INVITATION OF COMMENTS

Pursuant to Section 45-22.2-9(c)(2) of the General Laws of Rhode Island, the Division of Statewide Planning hereby invites comments from the public, regional and state agencies, contiguous municipalities, and other interested parties regarding the local comprehensive plan document listed below.

Warwick – Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments
Encouraging Solar in the Built Environment
ID#: WAR-A1-22

Posted May 05, 2022

Amend the Comprehensive Plan 2013-2033 regarding regulations for the installation and siting of solar energy systems. The Amendment is currently under review by the State to ensure “consistency with the goals and intent established in the [Comprehensive Planning Act] and in the State Guide Plan.” The comment period shall extend for thirty days from the posted date. All comments should reference the document title and identifier number, and should be submitted to:

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City of Warwick

Proposed comprehensive plan amendments

Encouraging solar in the built environment.
Preserve existing forests, farmland, and open space from solar development by restricting solar development to developed commercial and industrial areas.
Choose turf varieties that require lesser amounts of fertilization, irrigation, and mowing

Explore the use of artificial turf for intensively used athletic fields because the fields can be used without resting and do not require the water and other inputs that natural turf does. Grants may be available to install artificial turf.

Recommend employing integrated pest management and natural alternatives for management of private golf courses and other areas.

Design new recreation buildings to take advantage of natural lighting and ventilation during some parts of the year, in order to reduce the need for air conditioning and lighting.

Seek to use recycled and recyclable materials for walls, paving and recreational equipment.

Explore alternative energy sources, such as solar or wind power, to reduce electricity costs over time in recreational structures.

4. Develop improvements for increased neighborhood connections to parks, such as new sidewalks or multi-use paths.

Incorporating these improvements into the individual Village Master Plans that are updated every five years makes those neighborhoods eligible for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, which can be used to enhance public parks and trails.

5. Work with local businesses and residents to develop a plan for promoting local tourism.

Actively promote events and identify opportunities with the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses in Cranston, West Warwick, East Greenwich, and North Kingstown to take advantage of funds, available land, and purchase or swap opportunities.

6. Create an easy to use trail/bike/greenspace map that can be accessed from the City’s website.

The map should be developed so that it is legible when printed on letter size paper from a home printer.

D. Pursue improved connectivity of open space and recreation land through the development of “green corridors” consisting of new and existing bicycle and pedestrian trails and on-street routes.

Actions:

1. Identify opportunities for “land swaps” to develop systems of contiguous permanently protected open space. The City can actively seek these opportunities once a “master list” of properties has been developed and available City land has also been identified.

2. Develop further refinements to the existing bicycle and pedestrian trail system in locations that currently connect major open space parcels. Improvements such as pavement maintenance, signage, and increased visibility all contribute to a safer and more accessible bicycle and train system.

3. Develop new enhancements to the bicycle and pedestrian trail system by identifying potential new routes that can connect major open space parcels.

These new routes, such as the Meadow View Avenue spur at Rocky Point, increase connectivity

E. Maintain high standards of urban design, environmental stewardship, and aesthetics in public open spaces to preserve and further enhance the character of the City.

Actions:

1. Continue and expand the development of the municipal tree farm at Barton Farm.

Focus on species that are proven to be urban tolerant. Keep a diversity of small, medium, and large deciduous trees in stock. Develop a maintenance plan for the tree farm to keep it free of invasive weeds, and encourage volunteer stewardship of the Barton Farm.

2. Continue and expand the City’s street tree planting program, and seek innovative funding methods.

Street trees are proven to sequester carbon, aid in stormwater filtration, reduce heat island effects, and
## FINDINGS AND CHALLENGES

### Findings

- Warwick is dependent on fossil fuels for energy.
- The municipal government has conducted preliminary feasibility analysis for wind turbines on City properties.
- The City has begun to adopt energy saving technologies in City buildings.
- Solar and wind energy technologies have been installed by some private and non-profit businesses in Warwick.
- The City has a strong recycling program.
- The zoning and building codes need to be updated to incorporate regulations and incentives to encourage energy efficiency and reductions in energy demand.
- Climate change impacts on Rhode Island are documented. In the future, Rhode Island is expected to experience more frequent extreme weather events with potential flooding, more severe hurricanes and nor’easters, and an accelerated rise in sea levels.
- With its coastal location and 39 miles of shoreline, Warwick is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and sea level rise.
- State government has convened the Rhode Island Climate Change Commission to help communities prepare for the impacts of climate change.
- Warwick is already taking steps to protect its wastewater facility from a repetition of the 2010 flood.

### Challenges

- Raising public awareness of energy efficiency and demand reduction options
- Changing behaviors to conserve energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Funding for adoption of additional energy efficiency strategies for municipal facilities
- Raising public awareness about the potential future impacts of climate change on Warwick.
- Planning, funding, and implementing programs to adapt City facilities and activities to be resilient to climate change impacts.
- Working with private property owners over time in vulnerable locations.

Developing local solar siting policy that focuses on existing developed commercial & industrial areas with large parking lots and rooftops.

Federal & State tax incentives generate development pressure that favors solar arrays in undeveloped areas, thereby compromising forests, open space, and field areas.
Upon observing three solar facilities which have been installed via the zoning amendment process (RIGL 45-24-51), and through the course of developing solar policy, there is a clear public consensus to focus solar arrays within existing developed commercial & industrial areas—perhaps through accessory use solar canopies and rooftop solar.

Preserving existing, undeveloped forest tracts, whether by open space preservation, or in concert with residential zoning districts parameters, is preferred.
Consider allowing solar canopies as an accessory use in commercial and industrial zones by building permit without extensive Planning or Zoning Board Review.
Encourage private sector to augment fossil fuels with solar power on sites that are already developed.

Provide regulations that encourage solar canopies and rooftop solar in existing commercial areas.