

PRELIMINARY DRAFT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The following pages contain preliminary draft recommendations for the Village of Warwick Comprehensive Plan. Note: these are preliminary recommendations subject to further discussion and revision. They are being provided here to enable members of the public to review them and comment on them. Each category begins with a brief background statement and then lists goals and objectives to address that topic. These recommendations will be updated following further input and deliberation, and as additional topics are considered by the Committee. These additional topics will include: civic life, culture & the arts and housing & neighborhoods. The preliminary recommendations contained in this document are organized into the following categories:

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Overall Plan Approach/Vision

The Village of Warwick plays a unique role as a location where people gather face-to-face to participate in and celebrate commerce, culture and community life.

The focus of this plan is to strengthen the Village as a 21st Century gathering place by fostering attractive, walkable human-scale development that provides:

A sense of place. . .and a sense of history

Abundant and diverse economic opportunities

An inclusive community of economic, ethnic and social diversity

Strong residential neighborhoods

Celebrations of Arts, Culture and Civic Life

Sustainability and resilience in the face of climate change

Physical infrastructure to support and sustain Village life in an effective and affordable manner

Business Development & Economic Vitality

BACKGROUND: The Village of Warwick is largely built out, with few undeveloped parcels left in the Village. Therefore, economic development is most likely to come in two forms:

1. Redevelopment of vacant and under-used areas that can no longer accommodate previously intended uses. Examples of such areas include underused parking lots associated with banks and other institutions that have experienced a decrease in in-person employment and/or patronage along with corridors such as Forester Avenue that have long-term undeveloped parcels and/or buildings which changing economic conditions have made obsolete. In addition, given the shift in much freight from rail to truck and the general deemphasis of manufacturing employment economy-wide, many of the industrial uses originally intended to provide investment and development in the Light Industry district are no longer reasonable prospects for that zone and may benefit from expanded uses for the Light Industry zone.
2. Expanding participation in the Village economy to businesses and/or individuals currently under-represented. One of the best ways to ensure continuing economic vitality in the Village is by maintaining a “churn” of new establishments and new types of entrepreneurs engaging in business in the Village. This includes tourism and the arts as important sectors.

Both of these kinds of development typically have tight profit margins. Therefore, it is important that the project review process be both effective and expeditious. This requires careful coordination among those involved in project review as well as keeping the public informed on the parameters and process for each project.

The draft goals and objectives outlined below address these market conditions in the Village.

GOAL: Encourage redevelopment of vacant and under-utilized parcels in the Village

OBJECTIVE: Evaluate adding upper floor apartments as a use in Light Industry district. Under new economic conditions, the uses attracted to the Light Industry district are most likely to be services and retail. Increasingly, these uses are developed as part of mixed-use developments, with the primary use on the first floor and residential or office uses on the upper floors. In the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, the demand for office space may remain limited as remote work practices are more widely adopted. Consequently, in order to facilitate mixed-use development in the Light Industry district, it may be helpful to add 2nd and 3rd floor residential uses to that district. Adding second floor residential uses to the district may also provide additional opportunities to create new options for housing in the Village.

OBJECTIVE: Encourage redevelopment of vacant second floors in commercial properties. The Village should explore options from incentives using such tools as tax credits to taxes on vacant undeveloped commercial properties to spur their development.

OBJECTIVE: Identify underused parking lots that could be developed for commercial and/or mixed uses. Observations suggest that the parking lots for such businesses as Sterling Bank, Chase Bank are currently underused. The Kuiken lot may also have potential for at least partial redevelopment. The Transportation section of the plan recommends a detailed parking study for the Village. Part of this study could determine if currently under-used private parking lots are needed to accommodate parking demand or if they are in fact available for redevelopment.

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OBJECTIVE: Develop local policies for boutique lodging. As the hospitality industry is evolving, new types of lodging are being developed, ranging from boutique hotels to glamping establishments. Consequently, the Village policy should seek to accommodate such development while shaping it in a manner that preserves or enhances property values and maintain the unique character of the Village.

For example, the Village could create a Boutique Lodging Floating Zone to assist in the siting of such facilities in the Village. Similar to the Village's Planned Adult Community Floating Zone, a Boutique Lodging Floating Zone would permit the Village to evaluate the need and demand for boutique lodging, address specific aspects of the proposed lodging, relate the type, design and layout of it to a particular site and control the impacts that such a development may have on the surrounding community. To avoid impacting residential areas, the floating zone could be limited to the Light Industry and Central Business zones.

In any case, the approach adopted by the Village should encourage innovative developments that enable the Village to capture the economic benefits of tourism in a manner consistent with the existing character of the Village's built environment.

GOAL: Promote a balance between diversified retail and restaurants in the Village

OBJECTIVE: Ensure start-up retailers have access to smaller footprint spaces. This can include:

- smaller storefronts on secondary and tertiary streets in commercial zones
- creation of a new multi-use facility that could include an indoor market space with small stalls for retailers as well as pop-ups. This could be encouraged by the Village pre-approving a location for such a use through a Generic Environmental Impact Statement or similar means.

OBJECTIVE: Accommodate innovative mixes of retail, dining and other uses. In order to compete with on-line shopping, retail establishments have begun to combine their establishments with other uses, such as dining, drinking and entertainment. In order to maintain a strong retail sector, the Village should encourage such innovative mixing of uses with retail, particularly if such mixes allow the presence of retail operations providing groceries and other daily staples to Village shoppers.

GOAL: Accommodate new forms of economic activities or economic actors that re-use existing structures

OBJECTIVE: Encourage/incentivize merchant ownership of buildings. In the focus group held for merchants for this plan, it was pointed out that merchants are much more likely to succeed and remain in the Village if they are able to own their own building. The Village should seek to create incentives for merchants to own their own buildings in the downtown through such policies as:

- A partial exemption of property taxes for 10 years or less under Section 485-b of the New York State Real Property Tax Law for properties experiencing improvements of \$10,000 or more.
- Establish a revolving loan fund for such purpose. This can be created by the Village in partnerships with commercial lenders and government agencies. Public sources for capitalizing a revolving

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loan fund include the United States Department of Agriculture (via the Rural Economic and Community Development Administration), Housing and Urban Development (via Community Development Block Grants), and the Department of Commerce (via the Economic Development Administration).

- Other appropriate incentives can be created by using such sources as historic preservation tax credits, a SBA 504 loan for the purchase or construction Existing buildings or land, new facilities or long-term machinery and equipment (<https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/504-loans>)

OBJECTIVE: Encourage initiatives that broaden participation in the Village economy. During the focus group for Latino communities in the Village, it was pointed out that there are entrepreneurs and small business people in those communities who need various forms of assistance ranging from translation of legal documents to basic business assistance to small business financing. The Village should ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, those looking to operate businesses in the Village have ready access to such services. In addition, the Village should encourage the Chamber of Commerce to hold sessions for Village merchants and commercial property owners on various types of technical and financial assistance available to them.

OBJECTIVE: Ensure that home offices are adequately accommodated in Village zoning. The COVID pandemic has seen a rise in remote work and working at home, particularly as people relocate to smaller towns such as Warwick. Many of these home offices are in arts-related occupations. This trend is likely to continue. The Village should review its current provisions for home offices to ensure that these new trends can be accommodated with minimal disruption of residential areas.

GOAL: Continue to promote Village as center of economic, cultural and social activity

OBJECTIVE: Promote better use of outdoor spaces and rights of way for dining, the arts and other social, cultural activities. The Village's response to the Covid involved creative ways to encourage retail, hospitality and arts-related businesses through eased restrictions on the use of outdoors space and rights of way. Beyond the end of pandemic, the Village should continue use this approach to foster even greater economic activity in the Village by taking advantage of outdoor spaces including rooftop dining.

OBJECTIVE: Explore the possibility for a Visitors/Welcome Center. Tourism is central to the Village's economy. Creating a visitors/welcome center can improve the attractiveness of the Village for visitors by improving their experience and directing them to facilities such as parking, restrooms, etc. To assist with its staffing, facility could also house the Chamber of Commerce offices.

OBJECTIVE: Promote opportunities in the Village to connect artists with their audiences. This can include fostering the creation of cooperative gallery space, venues for performances, live-work spaces for artists and pop-up spaces for artists included in events ranging from the Farmers Market to community festivals. Partners in this effort can include the Library and Historic Society.

OBJECTIVE: Consider the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID). Improving resident and visitor experience of the Village is essential for its economic success. A BID is a special district within which

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commercial property owners enable the Village to impose an assessment on their properties with the resulting revenues dedicated to support such improvements as wayfinding signage, marketing campaigns, etc.

OBJECTIVE: Regularly review the Village annexation policy. The annexation policy helps build the village's residential base and provides tax revenues that can support enhancements for the downtown. It should be reviewed every few years to assure that its terms, conditions and associated revenues remain a viable means to achieve these ends.

GOAL: Ensure expeditious review of projects in village

OBJECTIVE: The Planning Board, Architecture Review Board and others involved in project review will maintain clear public communications to set expectations regarding the issues involved in the review (e.g., is it an as-of-right-use according to the zoning, whether variances be required, criteria used to issue variances, special use permits, etc.). This is intended to keep public comment on projects focused and productive.

OBJECTIVE: During the annual summit of boards, focus a portion of the agenda on a review of economic development goals and activities. The annual summit, as recommended in the "Governance" section, will provide an opportunity for the boards involved in project review to ensure their work is both well-coordinated and is effectively addressing the economic development priorities in the Comprehensive plan.

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Governance

BACKGROUND: In Warwick, Village government plays an important role as convener of the Village's civil society, encompassing citizens, merchants, civic organizations, etc. In this role, it helps foster dialogue throughout the community. This is an ongoing positive aspect of the organizational culture of the Village government that needs to be reinforced and continued as the Village's various boards and committees experience turnover in membership. The goal and objectives below are intended to maintain and strengthen that culture. NOTE: All meetings discussed under these recommendations should encourage the use virtual technology (e.g., Zoom) to make attendance easier for prospective participants.

GOAL: Village government should instill and encourage dialogue in the community.

OBJECTIVE: There should be regular joint meetings involving the Village Board, the Architectural Review Board, the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. These should occur at least two times per year to establish regular dialogue on key issues and projects facing the Village. For major projects It may be desirable to create a task force of the various boards so that the review for the project can take place in a coordinated fashion.

OBJECTIVE: Village will serve as the regular convener of an annual meeting of community civic groups to coordinate setting an annual calendar for the use of shared Village resources. This meeting should also include arts organizations and recreation leagues.

OBJECTIVE: The village should develop a mechanism to foster regular outreach to the Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPoC) and Latino communities in the Village. This is intended to enable Village government to maintain awareness of issues facing those communities and, in turn, to make members of those communities aware of opportunities to serve on Village committees and boards. The mechanism used could be a committee or other approach to best reflect the diversity of Warwick's BIPoC and Latino communities.

Resilience & Sustainability

BACKGROUND: In the face of climate change and the looming depletion of fossil fuels, environmental sustainability and resilience have become essential for the continued prosperity and quality of life in the Village of Warwick. These goal and objectives provide a framework to integrate these topics into Village policy-making and practice.

GOAL: Improve Environmental Sustainability and Resilience throughout the Village of Warwick.

OBJECTIVE: Implement policies to reduce reliance upon fossil fuels by:

Encouraging the increased use of geothermal heating in new construction and building rehabilitations through the creation of zoning and subdivision regulations that promote and/or create incentives for both the installation of geothermal systems serving individual buildings as well as the creation of geothermal heating districts serving multiple structures operating by a utility and/or special district.

Promoting the use of solar energy by encouraging new construction to be sited to maximize the electric power generation potential of on-site solar panels.

OBJECTIVE: Promoting energy efficiency throughout the Village by:

Considering adoption of the NYStretch building code and other regulatory measure to minimize energy consumption in new construction in a manner that maximizes energy conservation without unduly increasing construction costs.

Promoting energy efficiency and sustainability in Village buildings, vehicles and other capital equipment by, whenever feasible, applying energy conservation principles and practices when purchasing, constructing or repairing Village properties.

Accommodating increased use of electric vehicles through policies and/or incentives that encourage the installation of residential charging stations in housing units and expand the availability of public charging stations throughout the Village.

OBJECTIVE: Promote Resilience in the Face of Climate Change by:

Adopting policies to mitigate the threat of increased flooding including riparian buffers and other flood mitigation measures for any new development along the Wawayanda Creek.

Reviewing existing zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure height, bulk and surface area regulations, lot coverage, setbacks and other provisions are consistent with best practices in flood mitigation, habitat protection and reduction of excess heat due in urban areas.

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Ensuring local codes support Disaster Preparedness by including addressing temporary emergency dwelling permits, emergency staging bases, temporary mobile office units and other means to aid preparedness and disaster recovery.

Ensuring Village sewer and water infrastructure is safeguarded against flooding by reducing infiltration and inflow of stormwater in to the sewer system and by continuing to ensure storm drains and sump pumps are separated from the sewer system.

OBJECTIVE: Enhance capacity to monitor issues related to climate change and energy conservation by designating a citizen's committee or other group to follow these issues and inform Village Government on important related topics. This could involve creation of Climate Smart Communities Task Force, A Conversation Advisory Commission or coordination with such entities as the Town's Conservation Board or a private citizen's group such as Sustainable Warwick.

Transportation, Parking & Parks

The preliminary recommendations by Alta Design for Transportation, Parking & Parks can be accessed at a separate link on the Comprehensive Plan website.