



TOWN OF WARREN

WARREN COMMUNITY OUTREACH PLAN



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WARREN COMMUNITY ATTRIBUTES

The Town of Warren is home 10,611¹ residents and one of the oldest working waterfronts in New England. With its scenic location, rich history and diverse population, Warren has become a thriving arts and dining destination. Investment in public spaces such as parks, waterfront amenities and the East Bay Bike Path has further enhanced Warren's unique character and created a strong community identity as a friendly, welcoming town.

As part of the public process to update the Town's Comprehensive Community Plan, the Planning Board has developed a set of comprehensive planning principles to guide policies and actions of the Town. These principles include:

- Maintain Warren's small town character by guiding development opportunities toward already built areas of town, encouraging creative reuse of underutilized structures and continuously improving the existing infrastructure.
- Pursue energy efficient and renewable energy resources to reduce costs for facilities and services and to support a cleaner environment.
- Plan for safe, quality housing for all incomes, ages and abilities while promoting good design and other planning principles.

All of these principles support the use of low impact renewable energy sources to increase efficiency, long-term viability and affordability of existing structures. Through Solarize RI, property owners can utilize economies of scale to install affordable photovoltaic systems, which will create a reliable energy source independent of volatile market forces.

Warren contains 5,149 housing units², 56.8 % of which are owner-occupied³. The median value of owner occupied homes is slightly higher than the State average at \$251,000³. With 1,732.7 persons per square mile², Warren is significantly more dense the State average of 1,018.1 per mile. Through its small size and compact development pattern, Warren offers an opportunity to easily provide outreach to the population.

WARREN'S PROJECT TEAM

The Warren Town Council has actively supported energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives. Warren Town Council President Joseph DePasquale will serve on the External Review Team and will serve as a direct connection to the Town Council and to the community

¹ 2012 Population Estimate: RI Statewide Planning

² 2010 Census

³ 2010-2014 Census Quick Facts

at large. Warren's primary point of contact will be Town Planner, Kate Michaud. Ms. Michaud is a full-time staff person with experience in Solarize RI programs through previous employment in the Tiverton, Rhode Island Planning Department. Ms. Michaud will be supported on the External Review team by Building & Zoning Official Gareth Eames. In addition, a two (2) to three (3) person team of "solar ambassadors" will be assembled to assist in spreading the word and gathering community support. Interim Town Manager Jan Reitsma has also provided a letter of support for the Solarize Warren project.

Ms. Michaud will be available for any community interviews that may be necessary, as well as interviews for community installers. All members of the External Review Team will read and score the community installer proposals. The staff and volunteer time involved in these tasks will be donated by the Town of Warren.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY AND INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

Town Council support for solar system installation is evidenced through an ordinance passed unanimously by the Town Council in November, 2015 regarding taxation. Chapter 7, Article II, sec 7-122 Generally. Division 9. Residential Solar Devices reads as follows:

The Tax Assessor of the town is hereby authorized, pursuant to RIGL section 44-2-21 to exempt from taxation the addition value of any solar device which is being utilized as the primary or auxiliary power system for the purpose of heating or otherwise supplying the energy needs of residential property in which it is located, for a period of 20 years from the date of installation.

Warren's support for renewable energy initiatives is not new. In 2007, Town committee was formed called Citizens for Renewable Energy in Warren (CREW). This committee is described as follows: "The committee shall advise the Warren Town Council on short and long term strategies to promote energy efficiency, thereby creating savings and reducing the environmental impact of Town energy use through conservation and the use of sustainable energy resources. CREW will also provide education and assistance to the citizens of Warren in attaining the above objectives." A Strategic Energy Plan for the Town of Warren was completed in 2011. This plan is available on the Town's website (www.townofwarren-ri.gov) in the "Documents and Libraries" section titled "Reports and Studies".

Another innovative local initiative is a partnership with The Compost Plant to develop a food scrap compost facility on Town property to divert food waste from the landfill with the end product being a high quality compost material. This project has obtained preliminary support from the Town Council and it is proceeding through permitting and funding.

Strong community support exists for the “locavore” movement and for the continued extension and development of the East Bay Bike Path, with runs through the heart of the Town. All of these areas of support dovetail well with the development renewable energy resources.

E-PERMITTING

Building and Zoning for solar installations is simple and streamlined in the Town of Warren. Roof mounted solar installations are permitted as an accessory to the structure, with no special requirements imposed. An electrical permit is also required, again with no requirements outside of the normal protocol. Permit applications are all electronic, whether filed online through PermitLink⁴ or at computer terminals installed at Town Hall. Permit fees are calculated for the permittee through the system, and are based on the adopted fee schedule. The review timeline for roof-top solar installation building and electrical permit applications has been estimated by the Building & Zoning Official at twenty-four (24) hours.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Opportunities for outreach could include the many public events that are scheduled to occur in Warren in spring, 2016, including Bike to Work Day on May 20 and Meet Your Maker on April 17 and May 22. Meet Your Maker is a local food marketplace hosted by Hope & Main, Rhode Island’s first culinary business incubator. Meet Your Maker is a community event drawing many visitors with a desire to improve the local economy and promote a healthy lifestyle. Both of these events showcase the level of support from the community for innovative approaches to everyday needs.

Print media can be made available through the Town Hall and other public locations in the community. The Town will provide electronic posting of information through its website. Email blast information will be distributed to groups and committees locally as appropriate. Many local groups maintain an active Facebook and Instagram presence, and these groups can be approached to participate in the community outreach process.

The Town will work with Solarize RI to host a workshop or workshops within the Town to promote the project and provide educational information. Space and setup support will be donated by the Town.

The installation of exterior banners or signs on public property falls under the jurisdiction of the Town Council, and staff members will assist in the process of obtaining the necessary permission.

⁴ <http://u18048815.onlinehome-server.com/csp/warrenlive/DocumentLink.PublicLogin.cls>

SUMMARY

The Town of Warren is perfectly suited for the Solarize RI program. Please do not hesitate to contact us for any further information or points of clarification.