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Mayor's message: It takes many villages to make a city

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As we begin the New Year - and, for Warwick's elected officials, new terms in office - we are moving forward with a number of exciting initiatives related to the future growth and economic development of the city.

As you may know, the city of Warwick is comprised of more than 30 villages, each with their own special role in our city's history. Today, there are many vibrant and active neighborhood associations that are committed to working with the city to improve both their villages and the quality of life in Warwick as a whole.

One proposal, led by the Apponaug Area Improvement Association and the Conimicut Village Association, in conjunction with various municipal departments, would amend the city's zoning ordinance to include a new Village District Zone.

The Village District Zone would recognize historic land use patterns and allow for greater flexibility in addressing the intrinsic characteristics of an established village, with a goal of revitalizing and creating new economic opportunities. The plan calls for new parking requirements and addressing building setback regulations in an innovative way. Encouraging mixed use districts would offer "live/work" opportunities, providing both valuable, local business opportunities and unique residential choices for citizens.

The live/work concept aims to reduce the need for residents to travel outside of the village to shop or eat, thereby increasing pedestrian activity, encouraging more physically active lifestyles, reducing fuel consumption and supporting environmental initiatives.

With the incorporation of new design standards, Village District zoning will also improve the appearance of properties within the central village and enable development and re-development of Village Centers, like Apponaug and Conimicut, in keeping with their historic development patterns and with an eye to the future.

Finally, the new zoning will give our Department of Tourism, Culture and Development the ability to market individual villages as specialized destinations for local residents and out-of-state visitors alike.

Scott Avedisian is the mayor of Warwick.

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