

# PASCOAG VILLAGE AREA BUSINESS DISTRICT ASSESSMENT



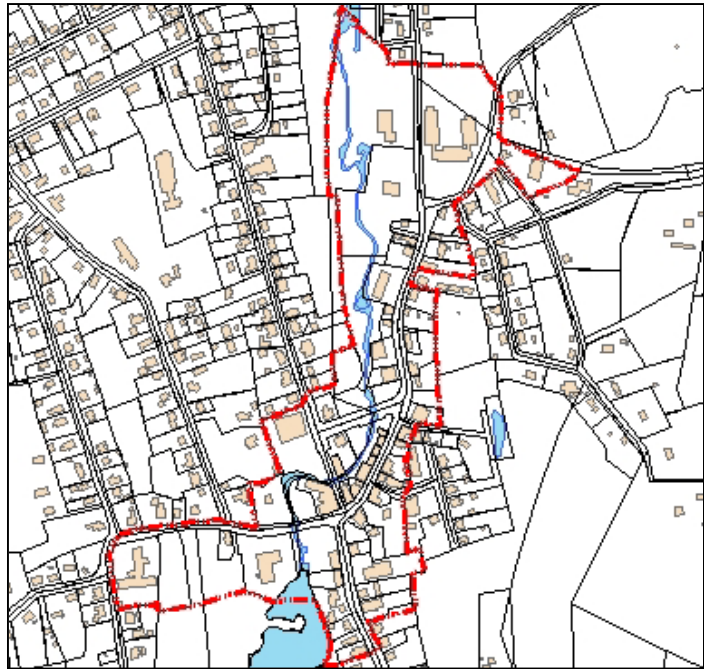
*TOWN OF BURRILLVILLE  
Department of Planning & Economic Development  
105 Harrisville Main St.  
Harrisville, RI 02830  
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### Executive Summary

The following analysis compares two distinctly different types of land use areas within the Town of Burrillville. Particularly, this analysis will assess the Downtown Pascoag Revitalization Area (Business District) in a new perspective. It looks at the Village by the sum of its parts as opposed to a lot-by-lot observation. Observing the Village as an aggregate "unit", and comparing its natural resource impacts and tax impacts as a revenue source, allows Town officials to make certain comparisons between the village area and other objects such as industrial parks.

The analysis contains several hypotheses' that may be better confirmed through more quantitative analysis. That being admitted, the enclosed is based on interpretive approaches learned through onsite observation over the past 22 months. Quantitative data was gathered from business owners, the Town's GIS Arc Mapping System and Town Tax Assessor.

The analysis closes with recommendations, which will be forwarded to the Burrillville Town Council for consideration. The recommendations will assist property owners within the Downtown Pascoag Revitalization Area (right), and represent a direct approach to community redevelopment as opposed to an indirect approach that uses state and federal resources to effectuate redevelopment. The latter approach



effectively supports planning resources, but has not proven to be a timely mechanism for implementing redevelopment activities due to constricting rules and procedures.

An example of such constricting bureaucracy lies in the Federal Davis/Bacon Wage Act (40 U.S.C.276 (a) - (a) 5).

Contracts using federal funds to execute redevelopment projects through the state's RICDBG program must pay Federal Department of Labor Standard wage rates if the overall project exceeds \$2,000. Today, due to inflation, contractors' insurance and other increased costs, virtually all projects exceed that amount. High Federal wages increase the cost of labor, which in turn increases project cost -essentially out of reach of the storeowner who may be required to pay matching finances. The law may apply better for larger labor unions, as opposed to smaller two and three person contractors capable of rendering the same historic renovations.

### **Sustainability and Competitiveness**

*"Community sustainability requires a transition from poorly-managed sprawl to land use planning practices that create and maintain efficient infrastructure, ensure close-knit neighborhoods and sense of community, and preserve natural systems."*<sup>1</sup> --- United States Department of Energy, Smart Communities Network.

The above statement is certainly applicable to the Town of Burrillville and its former manufacturing mill areas. Today, these areas serve mostly as residential village areas, with the exception of Pascoag, which has retained its small business main street area amidst the development of regionalized retail centers, which are slowly eroding away Pascoag's local consumer base.

Comparatively, when recalling Pascoag's history, the Main Street area is not sustaining itself. Historically, Pascoag contained larger buildings that employed hundreds. What has happened? The answer lies somewhere in the decentralization of urban cores, construction of Interstate Highways, technological modernization of manufacturing processes and subsequent relocation of employment centers around regionalized retail centers. All of which happened symbiotically leaving Pascoag empty-handed in terms of Mills, but as a through way for traffic traveling to newer regionalized marketplaces. Instead of people walking to Pascoag, they drive through Pascoag.

### **Regionalized Retail Centers - Competitive Disadvantages**

Complicating matters further for Pascoag is the rise of regionalized retail centers, which contain the same goods

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sustainable.doe.gov/landuse/luintro.shtml>

and services found in the Pascoag Main Street Area. The Crossings at Smithfield for example contains eating and drinking places, bookstores, printing services, lumber, hardware services and clothing services etc. The mere presence of such centers and their aggressive multi-media marketing techniques are serving to erode Pascoag's local consumer base, thus preventing the Village from attaining its highest productivity level. The idea of big box retail centers competing with local consumers is a nationally recognized problem<sup>2</sup>

The presence of multiple service sector uses in one regionalized complex, in addition to electronic banking services (i.e., debit cards), and close highway access, allow residents to purchase many desired goods and services within one place on their way home from a decentralized workplace. Most regionalized centers can also sell products at lower prices and undercut small business<sup>3</sup>

#### **Competitive Advantages - sense of place and Tourism**

Unlike the monolithic regionalized centers, the Village of Pascoag does possess historical resources that, if redeveloped properly, would enable the village to capitalize on Rhode Island's growing tourism market. The Tourism Industry has experienced an average Annual Real Growth of 11% since 1995 and is expected to be Rhode Island's number one employer by year 2015 (Tyrell, 1999).

The tourism industry continues to be confined more to Newport, South County and more recently the City of Providence. Northwest Rhode Island contains a fair share of industrial history and historic structures similar to Providence and Pawtucket, but such has not been collectively organized and marketed, doing so would increase Pascoag's tourism sector and allow the area to add to its local consumer base. In other words, Pascoag has the opportunity to collectively organize and market its turn-of-the-century architecture and enhance it through proper, pedestrian friendly site planning. Doing so would place the Village in a position to attract residents from outside the Town of Burrillville.

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<sup>2</sup> Downtown Idea Exchange Vol. 50, No. 9 May 1, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> <http://abcnews.go.com/sections/business/YourBusiness/smallbizbuilder000405.html>

### **Natural Resource Impacts**

The Town's GIS Database was used to determine natural resource impacts and general productivity assessments on a per acre basis for both the Burrillville Industrial Park and Downtown Pascoag Revitalization Area. In terms of area of disturbance, the Industrial park is larger than the Revitalization Area by an estimated 14.55 acres. Specifically, the Industrial park covers an estimated 47 acres, while the Revitalization District is approximately 32.8 acres in size. Wastewater flows data was not collected, as sewer bills would have to be researched in order to confirm and compare usage volumes in both areas. However, most of the uses in the Village are domestic in nature, while the Industrial park contains food manufacturing uses that generate +/- 40,000 gpd in effluent. Therefore a hypothesis could be made that both are generally equal, again however, more quantitative data would have to be collected and analyzed to confirm that assumption.

### **Tax Revenue**

In terms of tax revenues generated, the Burrillville Industrial Park provides the Town with an estimated \$370,861 (FY 02'); this includes both real estate and personal property. The Downtown Pascoag Revitalization area offers a tax impact of \$256,686. On the surface, it may seem like the Burrillville Industrial Park generates more revenue as compared to the Village area. However, if one considers a factor of revenue generated per acre, the Burrillville Industrial Park generates \$7,890 per acre while the Downtown Pascoag Revitalization Area generates an almost identical amount, \$7,825 per acre.

### **Employment**

Employment activity for both areas is equally intriguing. Based on data collected by telephone survey<sup>4</sup>, the Pascoag Village employs an estimated 409 jobs while the Burrillville Industrial Park employs 396 jobs. Again, on a per acre basis, the village area generates 12.4 jobs while the industrial development generates 8.4 jobs.

Though not collected as a data set, the Village holds numerous opportunities for Burrillville's teen population. Interpretive analysis uncovered that many of the food service and retail establishments offer part time

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<sup>4</sup> Sept. 5, 2003 – Sept. 14, 2003 Burrillville Dept. of Planning & Economic Development - Telephone Survey

employment opportunities for teens, and from onsite estimations, it is not unreasonable to estimate that twenty five to fifty percent of the total 405 employed are teenagers.

Table 1.

<i>Downtown Pascoag &amp; Neighborhood Association Revitalization Area</i>			
<b>Business Name</b>	<b>Number Employed</b>	<b>Business Name</b>	<b>Number Employed</b>
Gonyea's Tavern	3	Northwest Community Nursing & Health Service	40
Pascoag Utility Company, Inc.	18 <sup>1</sup>	Brigido's IGA Marketplace	55
North Mane	4	The Coffee Mill	Data not available
East Coast Artisans, Inc.	1	CVS	15
Wayne's Place	2	Curves for Women	6
Computer Works, Inc.	2	D.P. Printing, Inc.	3
Overlook Nursing & Rehabilitation Center	130	Elite Pizza	23
Ocean State Credit Union	7	Olympia Pizza	10
China Star	4	Pascoag Auto Part	9
Bargain Buyer	8	Physical Attitude	8
Diamond Video	4	Cumberland Farms	8
Fleet Bank	7	Champ's Liquor Store	5
Pascoag Tattoo	1	Carter Brother's Oil, Inc.	9 <sup>2</sup>
Pascoag Tanning	1	Palmisciano's TV	1
Ledge Liquor	3	Bradford Court	3
Georges Pizza	15	Chum's Hardware	2
		The Country Store	2
<b>Total Employed</b>			<b>409</b>

<sup>1</sup> 1 part time employee

<sup>2</sup> 3 part time employees

Burrillville Industrial Park, Route 100

<i>Burrillville Industrial Park Route 100, Pascoag</i>	
<b>Business Name</b>	<b>Number Employed</b>
Creb Engineering, Inc.	7
Lockheed Window Corp.	75
Daniele Prosciutto, Inc.	160
Blake Equipment	7
G.S. Inc.	22
Matrix Properties	3
Bayberry Commons	120
Xtreme Auto	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>396</b>



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Tax Incentive Proposal**

Financial incentives are needed to compliment Burrillville's existing CDBG program and foster more historic renovation activity within the Historic Village of Pascoag. The Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission and Federal, National Historic Register do not recognize composite or vinyl materials involving building rehabilitation. Often times, the cost of rehabilitating structures in a historic manner requires more funding than would otherwise be required to rehabilitate in a historically unsympathetic manner.

In speaking with one storeowner who is poised to make improvements on his historic building, it was learned that a brief, five-year tax stabilization plan would yield nearly \$4,000 in savings and cover the financial gap created by using historic materials. Other tax credit programs exist at the state and federal level, and such programs can be used in addition to local incentives. The state and federal tax programs allow a percentage of sales tax on construction materials to be credited if the project in question is historically recognized, or in the process of being historically designated.

It is therefore recommended that the Town Council enact case specific tax incentives for businesses within the Pascoag Revitalization Area for property owners who have made historic improvements since August 2003 or plan to do so in the future. Doing so will assist the property owner(s) enhance the historic theme of the area, and enable the village to expand its consumer base by attracting those outside the local area of influence. A property tax abatement plan or stabilization plan, similar to what is executed to secure industrial development, is recommended.