

# Pownal, then, now — and later?

Columnists,

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Before I am too old and senile, I want to tell what Pownal used to be, what it has become and my thoughts of how it can be revitalized, despite the dramatic downturn in the country. Hopefully, I can stimulate others to get a written dialogue going bringing forth many articles of "outside the box" thoughts that might really work to help Pownal.

I can remember back some 70 years ago when Pownal was a beautiful little town where many people from NYC, Long Island, Connecticut, New Jersey loved it so much they would come here to spend the entire summer.

Entering Pownal from the south were the little "Dugway cabins," further north was a charming little restaurant called Shady Nook, with a white picket fence and archway.

Further north was Cherry Court and Ladd Brook cabins and restaurant. Approaching Pownal Center, there were two beautiful homes, the Mason Farm "Grandview," where artists would spend the summer and the Andrews home, "Mountain View" that had guests all summer.

Leaving Pownal Center were The Red Door cabins, and a bit further, the Best Restaurant and then a motel and terrific chicken restaurant, Peaceful Valley.

Pownal had industry. The tannery in North Pownal was a big employer, Warren Wire had several locations, Northeast Lumber was cutting lumber and loading freight cars. Very early on, there was even a quarry operating on both sides of Route 346 before entering North Pownal.

All of this is gone, yet I've heard people say they don't want to see Pownal change.

Believe me, Pownal has changed.

Over the past couple of years much to do has been made over the development of a "town center," or cluster housing with some 100 houses to prevent "sprawl" and provide "workforce" housing. Workforce housing seems to imply that there is a place for a work force to work in an area where we have no employers or industry. I don't understand that.

It also sounds like encouraging approximately \$100,000 homes that pay under \$2,000 a year in taxes for a total of about \$200,000, while middle age families with only an average of 1.5 children per household will add 150 children to the school system, at about \$5,000 per student, for a cost of some \$750,000.

That is a deficit of over \$500,000. Does this mean that all Pownal taxes will have to be increased to pay for the children added to the system to make up some half million dollar deficit created by this type of development? Also, who constructs, plows and maintains roads and sidewalks in this type of development? This does not sound like a good idea to me.

Pownal encompasses some 100 square miles. Adding an average of one house per square mile for a total of 100 homes doesn't sound like a problem to me no matter where they are located.

My thoughts lay with the fact that millions of baby boomers purchased homes in southeast Connecticut, Long Island, New Jersey, etc., some 40 years ago for \$100,000.

These people are now retiring by the thousands and can, even at reduced housing values, sell their homes for upward of \$700,000. This, coupled with retirement, puts them in the position to get out of the rat race, move to the country, build a beautiful \$300,000 home, paying some \$6,000 per year taxes and have no children to add to the school system.

This type of a development would add some \$500,000 a year to the town income through taxes or approximately \$1 million better than the "workforce" proposal.

On top of this, these are the people that would help employment a bit, because they would hire people to pick up their garbage, mow the lawn, tend the flower gardens, plow the driveway, maybe house cleaners, etc.

Possibly, some of these people would be retired professionals, such as a dentist who might open an office for two days a week. That would be an added bonus for Pownal.

One problem exists that would have to be addressed. If Pownal residents A and C own \$100,000 homes and B builds a \$300,000 home between them, the listers will immediately consider it an upscale area and want to increase A's and C's evaluation and taxes.

A and C would not want to see this happen, thus harming the potential growth for nicer homes paying higher taxes. I believe this issue could be resolved.

With today's technology and the Internet, I am sure someone can come forward with ideas of how to get to these baby boomers who will be going someplace with lower living costs. Bringing Southern Vermont to their attention is a possibility.

My thoughts may be a bit off the wall and will be criticized by some based on dollar figures, etc. I expect and welcome this in the hope I can get others to come forth and throw out ideas. From this, some good has to happen for Pownal.

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