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DEVELOPING WESTERN CRANSTON'S PROPOSED VILLAGE CENTER AND PUBLIC CONSENSUS THROUGH A VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY

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DEVELOPING WESTERN CRANSTON'S PROPOSED VILLAGE

CENTER AND PUBLIC CONSENSUS THROUGH A VISUAL

PREFERENCE SURVEY

BY

THOMAS J. KRAVITZ

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
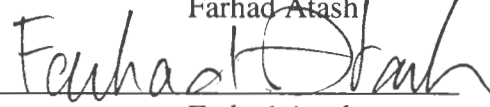
COMMUNITY PLANNING

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

2000

Master Of Community Planning

Research Project

Of

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Abstract

The goal of this research project sought to evaluate resident's opinions concerning a variety of different developments, with each development representing specific elements of a proposed village center development in Western Cranston. The project utilized a technique developed by Anton Nelessen called Visual Preference Survey. VPS is a tool planners may use to present a vision of a plan to the public. It's meant to be used in the very preliminary stages of the public planning process, because this is when public participation is most important. In the context of this report, the idea is to garner public support by developing consensus through a visioning process.

In addition, the report contains a defined methodology explaining the steps taken to complete a Visual Preference Survey. The report contains a statistical analysis, findings, recommendations and a conclusion.

The main theme of the study examines residents opinions in effort to synthesis how the elements should come together for the proposed village center's development. By popular opinion, even local Rhode Islanders think of high density when talking about Cranston. The fact is, nearly 45 percent of Cranston's land area is of a relatively low density and lies west of route 295. The two halves are generally comprised of different zoning densities and should be developed differently. Western Cranston is suburban to almost rural in character. This project set out to gather public input, and explore whether or not VPS and public inclusion -early on in the planning process- can provide guidance as to how the village center should be developed, and what is must include.

Acknowledgements

This project could not have been completed if it was not for the help from the following people:

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This project is dedicated my parents, who are two people who do nothing except constantly love and provide for their family - **Norman and Patricia Kravitz**. They are the two most honorable people I know and will ever have known.

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Chapter One

Introduction

A profile of the City of Cranston and its potential village center

The City of Cranston is certainly not uniform in character, land use, or natural resources. To put it simply, Eastern Cranston is urban and Western Cranston is generally rural, with Interstate 295 serving as a generally accepted dividing line between the two parts. Figure 1 shows Cranston, and how it's distinctly divided into two separate density patterns. Even from a map of this scale, one can discern the generally denser pattern of streets in Eastern Cranston compared to those in Western Cranston. Western Cranston is primarily zoned for large lots, which utilize individual sewerage disposal systems (ISDS).

Figure 1

City of Cranston

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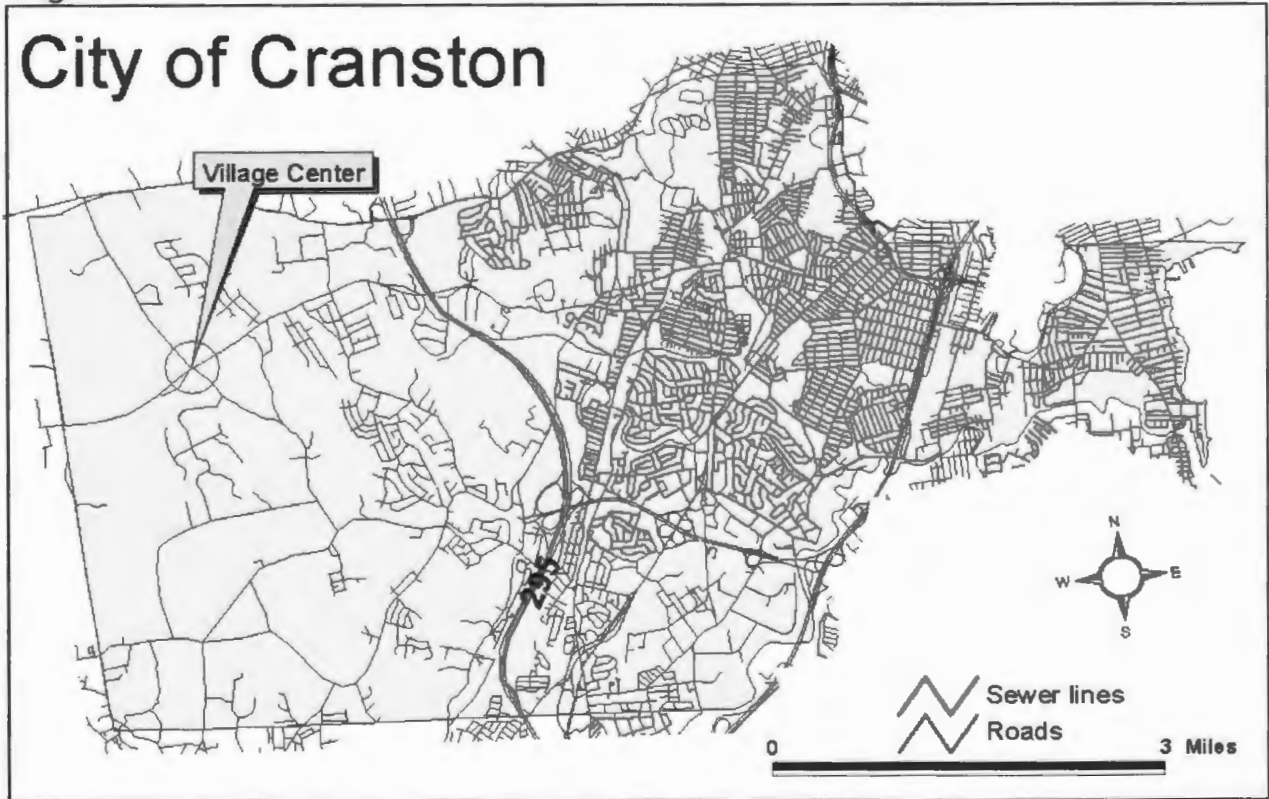
Like the other 38 cities and towns in Rhode Island, Cranston has found itself pressured to come up with creative regulatory land use techniques to guide growth for the benefit of all its citizens. The city, like many other cities and towns in Rhode Island, contains a conventional zoning ordinance that is antithetical to what this project proposes, (i.e., clustered subdivisions and mixed use developments in and around the intersection of Pippin Orchard Road and Scituate Avenue). As it currently stands, clustered housing developments are encouraged, but not legally mandated within the zoning ordinance. As a result, acres of land are being developed at quick rate, and Cranston's rural scenery is in jeopardy. Cranston's comprehensive plan communicates this issue perfectly:

> "The western half of the city is more open than the eastern part, but is also changing more rapidly due to the combination of available land and low-density zoning. In this part of Cranston, growth in open rural landscapes can be expected to have drastic effects on the character of the city. The plan stresses preservation of rural character, protection of environment, provision of a high level of services for existing and new residents. The themes of the plan for Western Cranston are (1) balancing development intensity, open space, infrastructure needs, and environmental quality; and (2) recognition that this area is a resource for the entire city, in terms of a whole range of competing land uses – e.g., open spaces, housing opportunities, and economic development." (Cranston Comprehensive Plan, 1992, page 24)

Comprehensive Plan

Cranston's Comprehensive plan already recognizes the importance of preserving open space. It does so by proposing a strategy for balanced growth utilizing compact development at three levels:

> "At the broadest level, the City should promote the development of a village center as a focus for community live in Western Cranston, including community

facilities (school, library, post office, etc.), limited commercial services (bank, convenience shopping, etc.), and higher density residential uses.

Within the areas designated for lower-density residential development, the City should promote cluster development in order to minimize public infrastructure costs and to preserve large tracts of open space.

With respect to areas designated for nonresidential development, the City should strengthen its controls on non-industrial development in the industrial districts along Plainfield Pike and Comstock Parkway, while providing for integrated development of limited commercial services to serve on-site employees of local industries." (Cranston Comprehensive Plan, 1992, page 29)

The Master Plan recognizes and articulates the importance of open space preservation through its open space and recreation section, element 7. Rhode Island's state comprehensive planning and land use act promotes an open space goal that all state towns and cities must achieve. The goal reads: "To promote the preservation of the open space and recreational resources of each municipality and the state." Cranston's comprehensive plan achieves the state goal by setting and articulating two open space goals which are further supported by seven open space policies. Such policies include: "Preserving, through purchase or other means, major open space areas which are subject to development pressures and which serve important environmental functions; to providing appropriate public access and recreational opportunities along Cranston's rivers, lakes and ponds, based upon the particular water body and the type of use it can support."

Moreover, the comprehensive plan recognizes the importance of preserving scenic roads in Western Cranston, particularly, intersection of Pippin Orchard Road and Scituate Avenue. This intersection is projected to serve as the focal point of a proposed village center. The area is comprised of picturesque farms, and attains environmentally sensitive wetlands. Immediately within the intersection area, lies land suitable for development. By the words "suitable land", the author means, land that lacks development constrains such as wetlands, slopes exceeding 9-15 degrees, and subsurface metamorphic strata (i.e., ledge). Ironic as it may seem, in this case, the

road to preserving the majority of Western Cranston's open space lies in developing a small portion of it. It's not feasible for the City to purchase it all, because the cost would be extraordinarily high. The benefits of building out a smaller portion of Western Cranston utilizing cluster development would be a better option, but not the only way to secure open space (i.e., a Transfer of Development Rights ordinance is recommended in chapter five).

In addition to open space goals, the Comprehensive Plan establishes parameters of the strategy for Western Cranston.

"The plan states that at current growth rates, residential development in Western Cranston will consume between 395 and 560 acres of currently undeveloped land per decade, ultimately resulting in the conversion of 2,470 acres of open land to residential use (not including existing residential land that can be developed more intensively under the City's zoning regulations). A relatively modest goal – and yet one with significant potential to affect the future of Western Cranston – would be for the City to attempt to preserve twenty percent of this land, exclusive of wetlands, in large tracts of open space, either publicly or privately owned, through a combination of policies promoting village centers, clustering of residential development, or purchase." (Cranston Comprehensive Plan, 1992, page 29)

Open Space Linkages

Concentrating Western Cranston's growth into nodes of development alleviates the quick rate at which land is currently being consumed. As things currently stand, Cranston's comprehensive plan discusses the importance of establishing open space linkages. From a human standpoint, open space offers little or no benefit if people are unable to get to it. Even passive recreation requires a level of accessibility. The recreation potential of a large tract of land is often increased by linking it to other areas. The value of open space as a public amenity is also greatly enhanced when they are joined or connected. Linkage may be established though a system of trails, paths, streams belts, or other linear corridors. These corridors may be referred to as greenways.

Developing Western Cranston's village center grows in importance with each passing day. The center is the only legal option planners have to develop land for the purpose of preserving open space. The development will allow linkages between existing subdivisions and

future land uses, while ensuring wildlife protection and farmland preservation. This project is emphasizes open space preservation, and strongly supports the recreation plan goals articulated in Cranston's Master Plan.

Cranston's comprehensive plan also recognizes flaws in current zoning. Current patterns of land use regulation neither adequately nor consistently promote the plan's main objectives (i.e., promoting residential development that protects natural resources, protecting natural systems including ground and surface waters or wildlife habitat). Current zoning also fails to preserve large tracts of open space, which if preserved, would help to retain the rural character of the area and provide recreational opportunities. Moreover, current zoning provides no opportunity for commercial development to serve neighborhood needs. "To assume that nearly half the land area of the city will never have any kind of store, bank, or post office, is unwise." (Comprehensive Plan, 1992 page 25).

The comprehensive plan recognizes flaws brought on by current zoning, but can only recommend changes in future land use. What Cranston's comprehensive plan needs is public recognition and support to overcome the flaws associated with its zoning code before it can carry out Western Cranston's growth management objectives. Otherwise, the community will not only challenge the comprehensive plan's objectives, but also slow down the village center planning process with opposition.

Objective and Significance of the Study

This project gauges and evaluates public opinions concerning specific land use goals and policies within Cranston's comprehensive plan. It will solicit, from the public, preferences about number of different types of developments through the use of slides. This project will then serve as a starting point for planners in reference to how the proposed village center should develop. It will also provide insight as to what the village center should include. Developing a village center in Western Cranston is one of the ideas the Master Plan focused on to promote open space preservation for the City. In addition to the Comprehensive Plan's strategy for Western Cranston, the City recently passed a one million dollar open space bond to match the state's fifty million dollar open space bond. Areas as well as scenic roads that are currently preserved include: Curran State Park, Bellefont Pond Area, Pocasset River Corridor, Pawtuxet River

Corridor, Burlingame Road/Hope Road, and Pippin Orchard Road/Scituate Avenue. (Cranston Comprehensive Plan, 1992)

The project will also focus on the size and architectural style of Western Cranston's potential village center, with its main objective being to **solicit public perception about village centers and how they are structured**. It is impossible for government officials and planners to articulate and address the demands of roughly 77,000 residents into village center development plan. The task of reaching public consensus is ominous, so, in a sense, this project is meant to make this challenge easier. In essence, the significance of this study lies in the realm of public participation, and the village center development itself. Alone, the village center, if planned improperly, can pose a number of environmental, human, and natural resource hazards. A sprawling center can lead to overly expensive infrastructure, fragmented wild life, and introduce the likelihood of environmental degradation. Most importantly, a village center that is planned without major public input, may not reflect the needs and desires of the Cranston residents. The village center will contain a housing element, and it would be a disaster if this element was not marketable. Neither can the City, nor a prospective developer, expect to benefit from investing millions of dollars into a development that doesn't sell.

Thoughts on Consensus

There are a number of different ways to achieve public consensus. Organizing focus groups and charettes are the two most common methods. Both methods involve public meetings, often times between private planning consultants, government officials, university faculty, and the general public. Usually, groups come together and hash out issues relating to any number of things (e.g., land use, open space, or school budgets) concerning their community, neighborhood, or street. From the author's experience of attending Cranston zoning board meetings and public forums hosted by the University of Rhode Island, it is evident that such issues can become quite confrontational. People can become extremely defensive about their town, neighborhood, or street if a development plan's vision is unclear. Unfortunately, for most people, confrontation obscures cognitive thinking and consensus is never reached.

The Village Center

This project attempts to reach consensus almost subliminally, without confrontation, using a process called the Visual Preference Survey. This process, which is articulated further in Chapter Two, is meant to provide residents with a clear vision of what Cranston's village center could look like. The village center is already in the preliminary planning stages (see Figure 2). Plat 34, lot 57 (orange tinge) is the present location for Holy Apostles Church, which submitted plans for expansion to accommodate the 4,000 or so member families. Plat 34, lot 3, highlighted in green, is the proposed location for The Good Earth, an organic farm and shop. The Good Earth has come forth with conceptual plans for renovating an existing horse barn into a café and children's library, where children and adults can learn about organic farming while simultaneously tasting organic foods. While the café is uncertain, the parcel will certainly serve as a functioning farm that hopes to grow and sell organic produce, flowers and gardening supplies. The Good Earth's proposal would be the perfect opportunity to utilize a zero set back line from the street. Barn renovations and additional structures should be close to the road, appealing to pedestrians.

Yet another significant development within the center has been the reclamation of lots 8 and 9, shown in olive. These two lots were acquired by the City of Cranston, and will be merged into one lot whereupon a new elementary school and possibly a branch library will be constructed. Between the school, church, and proposed Good Earth café, significant tracts of land have either already been secured, or are strongly being considered for development. The very beginnings of the proposed village center are starting to take shape.

In addition to the uses mentioned in the previous paragraph, there is potential for pedestrian traffic within and around the center. Two subdivisions can be seen just north of the center, with a large lot subdivision called Ridgewood Estates situated just south of the center. This is a large lot (2 acre) subdivision, not particularly pedestrian oriented. It is hoped that future residential development adjacent to the center would be far denser in its developed portion, leaving a substantial open space component. The project proposes connecting surrounding these, and future subdivisions, to the village center by numerous walking and bicycling paths.

Infrastructure Developments in Western Cranston

Also, recent negotiations between the City of Cranston and Hope Energy have produced an agreement that may make the development of a village center easier. Hope Energy has agreed to use waste waters from Cranston's sewerage treatment plant as coolant necessary to produce their electricity at a plant to be constructed in Johnston (see Appendix Six). As a result, water lines used for transporting the waste waters will have to be constructed along Pippin Orchard Road. The City will use this opportunity to put a sewer and public water line in as well. Traditionally, this type of infrastructure would be accompanied by development pressure, but Cranston's comprehensive plan addresses this dilemma as well.

The Services and Facilities section of Cranston's comprehensive plan addresses the need for developing and providing adequate facilities for Western Cranston residents. With the

Figure 2: Village Center Parcel Map

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exception of the village center, facilities should only be extended to those areas already substantially developed. One exception is the proposed new village center, located around the intersection of Pippin Orchard Road and Scituate Avenue, which will need public water and sewer service to accommodate the projected residential densities and public facilities. (Master Plan, p. 153). The master plan maintains a three (3) part strategy for sewer expansion, with part one being directly related to this project. "Sewers should not be extended to facilitate suburban development, but should only be provided to support focused, compact development or to remedy existing conditions which may lead to environmental problems." (Cranston Comprehensive Plan, 1992) This policy of the Comprehensive Plan seeks to use utility extensions to support the land use (and open space protection) goals of the plan. Clearly, the comprehensive plan articulates the symbiotic relationship between where utilities are laid out, and how they'll affect future development patterns. Further, the plan states, "It follows that minimum lot area requirements in Western Cranston should be based not only on the environmental consequences of individual sewage disposal systems, but also on the desire to maintain the semi-rural character of the area." (Cranston Comprehensive Plan, 1992, page 153)

Utilities will be installed along Western Cranston roads to provide Johnston's power plant with cooling water. Development will be allowed to tie into the new infrastructure, but there will not be an increase in density along Pippin Orchard Road. In this case, the geography of development patterns will take precedence over the idea of tying developments into infrastructure just because its there. In short, Cranston's Comprehensive open space plan seeks to maintain that Western Cranston's roads remain scenic.

Land Consumption

The City of Cranston faces serious growth management issues, particularly west of Route 295. The city, much like the rest of the state, has experienced a form of decentralization. In 1970, the City's population was 74,287. In 1990, the City's population grew to 76,060, a growth rate of 2.4%. (U.S. Census Bureau Estimates, 1980, and 1990). Likewise, there were 22,951 housing units in Cranston in 1970. But, by 1990, there were 30,516 housing units, a growth of 33%. (U.S. Census Bureau Estimates, 1980, and 1990). Most of these housing units were constructed west of Route 295 where zoning is more "large lot" in nature. This high rate of land consumption is also based on a lower family house hold size. Should the City experience a

resurgence in population where the number of persons per household increases up to 3.2, (as it was in 1970) from the 2.5 number of 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990), traffic congestion will worsen, and public utilities could become stressed to the point where general health, safety, and well being of the residents is jeopardized.

The comprehensive plan maintains goals and objectives that clearly support the recommendations of this project. However, a bigger challenge remains. Less than 20% of this project's respondent sample size has read the comprehensive plan. Projecting the author's conclusive sample over Cranston's current population would yield that less than 12,000 people read the Master Plan. They don't know what's ahead; and are unaware of any village center developments. The project tries to shed some light on the development in a non-confrontational manner by conducting a Visual Preference Survey (hereinafter referred to as VPS). The benefits of evaluating residents' opinions concerning Western Cranston's village center using VPS, is discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Two

Visioning and Public Consensus

Visual Preference Surveys and Public Participation

"Visioning is more than painting an idealistic picture of the future –it is a process of evaluating present conditions, identifying problem areas, and bringing about a community-wide consensus on how to overcome problems and manage change."

(APA; www.eerc.ra.utk.edu/smart/chapter3-1.htm).

The visioning process has five steps: 1) identifying values and setting goals, 2) gathering, integrating and forecasting information, 3) developing and assigning options, 4) decision making, and 5) monitoring change (APA: www.eerc.ra.utk.edu/smart/chapter3-1.htm, 1998). Visual preference survey can be used as a tool for identifying values and setting goals. Values are a person's internal conceptions of what is desirable for themselves and others. Also, values are not static. While some values are deeply held, others can change as a person learns more about a situation. In Cranston's case, planners face the daunting task of getting Western Cranston's residents to buy into future zoning changes, such as compact and cluster developments containing passive and active open space components. According to conversations with Cranston officials, people moved out to Western Cranston because they like the "country feel" it presently offers. However, merely bringing up the words "cluster" or "increased density", will remind people of the very areas they moved away from, and it is therefore expected that future public meetings will turn confrontational. Never mind that the current pace of development and consumption of land will remove the "county" feel anyway. It's important for people to look at the City as a whole.

Values help to shape what people want for (and from) their community; thus, values are important in goal setting. However, community goal setting should transcend individual values. Goals for the community should be a product of personal reflection and collective dialogue. The purpose of the VPS is to articulate the residents' impression of the present community image and to build consensus for its future character. Originally developed as a business-marketing tool used by developers to help sell Neo-traditional developments, and later perfected and used as a planning tool by Anton Nelessen, VPS's have proven to be very useful for developing a common vision between developers, public officials, and the public.

Case Study - Warwick Development

The City of Warwick is developing an inter-modal development center, which, within the context of this project, serves as the perfect example of how other cities also grapple with how to present projects to the public. On April 27, 2000, the Providence Journal reported on plan negotiations between the developer, The Bulfinch Companies, and the City of Warwick. Public officials were reluctant to show proposals to the public.

> "Last night, the redevelopment agency voted to make the proposals public and hold meetings to gather public comment. But the chairman of the agency said the public meetings would essentially be meaningless because the agency has already selected its favorite and negotiations will be under way. The City Council passed a resolution last month requesting that the agency make the proposals public."

Fortunately, Warwick's City Council made the right decision, but deciding whether or not to show proposals to the public should never be an issue. The mistake was made before the project even began. The public should have been included in some way, shape or form, before Bulfinch,

the consultant in this case, was even hired. Trying to sneak developments by the public is unwise.

Who developed VPS?

Anton Nelessen is the founder of Nelessen Associates, which is an urban design and planning firm based in Princeton, New Jersey, and creator of the VPS. Using this proprietary planning tool, citizens view paired images of different built environments and then indicated a preference by ranking each image. The VPS is usually administered to groups of 100 to 300 people. After respondents have made their choices, survey results are tabulated quickly and reviewed with the group by the end of a workshop session. Unfortunately, this project was not conducted on scantron sheets, and therefore, results could not be made available at the time of each session. The strong consensus that develops in such workshops is useful to local public officials and planners, and helps to foster a sense of "ownership" in the community. If the City of Warwick had used tools such as Visual Preference Survey to assess public opinions, perhaps city officials would not be arguing amongst themselves about whether or not to let the Inter-modal Village to go public.

The success of Cranston's village center will depend on the level of cooperation among its key stakeholders, including Cranston residents, local officials, and planners. If planners are to create the types of places in which people really want to live, then the concerns and desires of the inhabitants must be taken into consideration (Nelessen, 1998, page 81). Planners plan for communities, residents make up communities, planners therefore plan for their residents. Conducting a Visual Preference Survey however, does not guarantee public outcry. Planners must expect an amount of general disagreement.

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Visual Preference Surveys allow the public to see project ideas up front before they take place. Visual Preference Surveys let community members respond to images rather than to words. It makes abstract ideas tangible, and it may reach people who have limited reading, writing, or public speaking abilities. VPS are most effective when shown to large groups (i.e., public meetings, school groups, nonprofit organizations, and church groups.

For this project, VPS was conducted for Cranston's West Bay Land Trust, Cranston Rotary Club, residents, and a number of high school students from both East and West High Schools. Residents and high school students were surveyed at Cranston's Central Library, where the author conducted a weeklong nightly slide show survey.

Invariably, developers have a fear that public participation will slow down the entire development process, or halt it completely for a period of time, as is the case in the Quonset Point Development. Visual preference surveys prevent delays incurred by the public process when developments do not include the public, and keep the planning process moving forward. Perhaps this project can serve as a model by soliciting residents' opinions on a variety of developments before construction bids take place. Developers will be assured that they are building something the public likes. Obviously, it is impossible to please everyone, but, as planners, we must strive to not just please the majority, but plan for their best interests.

Visual preference surveys are intended to identify what the majority likes and dislikes. VPS methodology is discussed in Chapter Three. This research project will identify what Cranston residents like and dislike concerning a variety of developments. The author chose not to tell them that an actual village center was being proposed, because it was feared that confrontation would skew results. However, from their responses, the research project will make inferences as to whether or not such developments should be included in the proposed village

center. The study uses photographs taken in the eastern part of the city to communicate specific visions –particularly those showing higher densities. The remaining portion of this project includes a chapter discussing the project's methodology, statistical analysis and findings, and recommendations. The analysis section discusses the results of the survey, and contains a number of graphs showing residents' preferences. General recommendations concerning Cranston's future land uses and proposed village center are also made in this section.

Chapter Three
Methodology

This section of the report describes the methodology used in conducting the visual preference survey. The author designed and conducted a visual preference survey (VPS) to solicit Cranston residents' preferences concerning various types of developments that would support a village center at the intersection of Pippin Orchard Road and Scituate Avenue. The project involved conducting a slide show showing 43 slides relating to village center developments, (i.e., density, mixed uses, cluster developments, and pedestrian walkways). Three public workshops were conducted at Cranston's Central Library, Twin Oaks restaurant, and the Oaklawn Grange. The survey took 10 to 15 minutes to administer and was comprised of a slide show accompanied by a one-page, voluntary questionnaire. The project's goal is to obtain a public consensus on Western Cranston's village center, particularly its intensity, uses, and architectural style. The purpose of the VPS is to articulate the residents' impression of the present community image and to build consensus for its future character (Nelessen, 1994).

In an effort to develop a project that represents a valid sample of Cranston's population, the author sought to gain information from at least 100 respondents. In addition to showing it to respondents "off the street" in Cranston's Central Library, it was necessary to conduct the slide show for two different organizations. Thirty Cranston Rotary Club members attended, while fifty people participated in the West Bay Land Trust meeting.

Because the project sought to gather opinions about a village center, the author collected images showing typical aspects of village center development: mixed-uses, street trees, walking paths, and traditional architecture of which Western Cranston was originally constructed. The

author also sought to gather general consensus concerning open space, housing type, and signage. There are no rules of thumb as to the number of images shown. A number of images in this project produced neutral ratings, which indicate that residents are undecided as to what they think of the Image. Images producing highly positive scores are ones that the public likes, and images that receive extreme negative scores like –8 or below, are images that the public dislikes. Obviously, as planners, we must negotiate with developers and architects to achieve the "look" of those images that were positively rated.

Respondents

The survey requires people to actually attend the slide presentation and rate slides. Therefore, it is important that the slide presentations are well attended to generate important results. Getting people to attend the slide show is challenging to say the least, and is discussed in chapter six. Each respondent rates the slides using his or her preferences. The author found that it was helpful asking respondents to envision themselves living in the picture at hand. This helps to produce honest ratings. Respondents' opinions are calibrated (measured) with a numeric rating scale (see Appendix Three). Respondents were given 10 seconds to rate each slide using a designated rating scale. Each slide has its own rating scale, which is merely a series of integers from -10 to +10. Respondents were encouraged to circle only one rating number. For example, if a person likes the image, her or she would circle + 10. Respondents were not told where the pictures were taken. Telling them may trigger a bias. For example, if a person had a bad experience in Washington D.C., they may rate the D.C. trees slide negatively regardless of the picture's beauty. Respondents were provided with pencils, and a clipboard atop which they could write.

Images

For this project, respondents were asked to rate 43 slides, each depicting different land use developments of various intensities (see Appendix Two). This project was conducted during the winter, which is a poor time of year to take pictures because of the lack of vegetation. Therefore the author paged through a number of architectural books in search of pictures that communicate a specific development-type or scene (e.g.. walking path, high-density development, commercial development, or village center). The author also borrowed ten slides from Cranston's Planning Department, because it is important for residents to recognize images of their city. Showing local slides in this manner focuses the respondent's attention on images that they may recognize, which produces better results. Otherwise, they may feel they have no connection to the survey, and lose interest. The remaining slides were borrowed from the University of Rhode Island's Community Planning and Landscape Architecture Department. Appendix Two was created using Polar color Insight 3.5 scanning software in conjunction with a Sprint Scan 4000 scanner. All slides were scanned and converted into j-peg images before being imported into word 97.

Conducting the Visual Preference Survey

Prior to the public workshop, an advertising campaign was conducted to stimulate community interest. Generating community interest is also difficult to accomplish. Flyers were created, and several hundred were distributed to six libraries in Cranston, (see Appendix Four). Also, Saint Paul's Church (a church comprised of over 4,000 families, mostly from Edgewood, a densely developed neighborhood), inserted 4,000 flyers into their church bulletins one-week

prior to the actual workshop. The workshop, conducted by the author, took place in Cranston's Central Library on Sockanossett Cross Road from April 1st to the 5th. In an effort to attract more residents, it was decided that slide presentations be conducted from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. A number of people tend to visit libraries in evenings. Cranston's Central Library in particular, is known to generate heavy foot traffic during early evening. For one week prior to the workshop, the author visited the library and handed out flyers. Also, a descriptive advertisement was drafted and sent to Holy Apostles Church, which is a newly constructed church located within the proposed Western Cranston village center (see Appendix Five). Like Saint Paul's Church, the advertisement was also printed in the church bulletin one week prior to the workshop. Each church has a large following (over 4,000 families), and located in separate geographical areas (i.e., Holy Apostles in Western Cranston, and Saint Paul's in Eastern Cranston). One goal was to get adequate representation from both sides of the city, because West Cranston is suburban (some parts are rural) and Eastern Cranston highly urban. The assumption was that the two groups would rate images differently, because they are accustomed to living among different land uses in distinctly different areas.

Overall, 121 respondents completed the visual preference survey, with over 40 coming from the library workshop. To address the concern of not having enough respondents, which would result in a small sample failing to reflect overall city population, the author also took the show on the road, showing it to the Cranston Rotary Club – a businessmen's group, and newly formed West Bay Land Trust. Again, the idea of showing the survey to organized groups was to ensure an adequate number of respondents. One must be cautious however, because specific groups have predetermined views about land use. This will affect survey results. Such was the case in this survey, and will be discussed in the next section. The survey was conducted for the

Rotary club on April 5th, 2000 at Twin Oaks restaurant, and the West Bay Land Trust (WBLT) on April 16th, 2000 at the Oaklawn Grange.

Statistical Analysis

Upon analyzing the results of the visual preference survey, it was important to control for the predetermined view of those respondents belonging to the West Bay Land Trust. Because the group's main goal is to preserve and protect open space, their view is not only homogeneous, but it is also not a true reflection of the entire city population. It was found that they rated all open space pictures positively while rating all other developments negatively. Because the land trust accounts for almost half of the total number of respondents, it's possible that the results may be skewed to reflect their motives. Corrective measures include, either: analyzing results separately or collectively by aggregating all respondents. The latter measure may require doubling of other groups to compensate for land trust members, which turned out to be the largest group. However, it is important to include groups like the West Bay Land Trust. If the city is to be successful in its attempts to develop a village center, it will need advocacy from citizens. The involvement of a group like WBLT at a very early stage in the project could be an important factor in garnering more widespread public support later on.

This VPS was administered for three separate groups, with the first group being called "other". "Other" represents all respondents visiting the library workshop. Because "other" is not affiliated with an organized group with land use motives, they may be our best representative sample of city population. Rotary club members and WBLT members comprise the remaining groups. The "other" population was increased from 20 to 40 in effort to match the turnout produced by the West Bay Land Trust. Increasing the sample of "other" whom are not affiliated

with land trust groups, minimizes the gap between what the author obtained (a sample) and what is of real or true interest (a population). Various graphs, tabulations, and statistical tests were conducted using Stat View, a statistical software program produced by Abacus. Variables such as respondents' age, geographic location, income level, and educational attainment were discussed in relation to image ratings. One assumption made by the author prior to conducting the survey, was that those respondents who live west of Route 295 (the suburban/rural part of Cranston) would rate rural pictures positively and urban pictures negatively. Over all, the author's assumption was correct. A complete statistical analysis and discussion of outcomes is discussed in the following chapter.
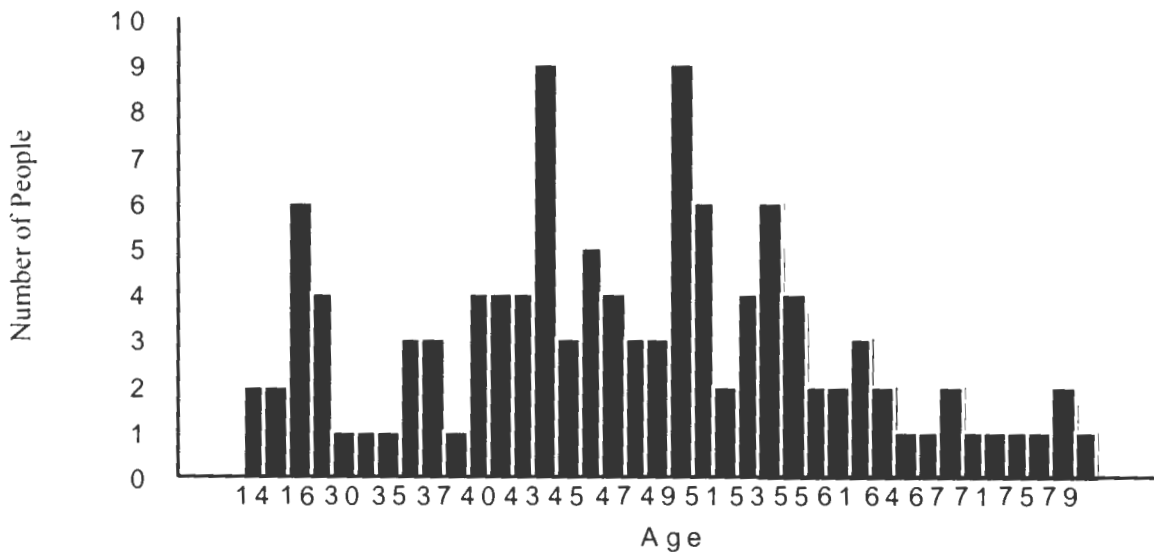
Chapter Four
Analysis and Findings

Descriptive Statistics

This section of the project will begin with a summary of the survey's general descriptive statistics. Figure 3 shows the age distribution of all those who participated in the survey, which,

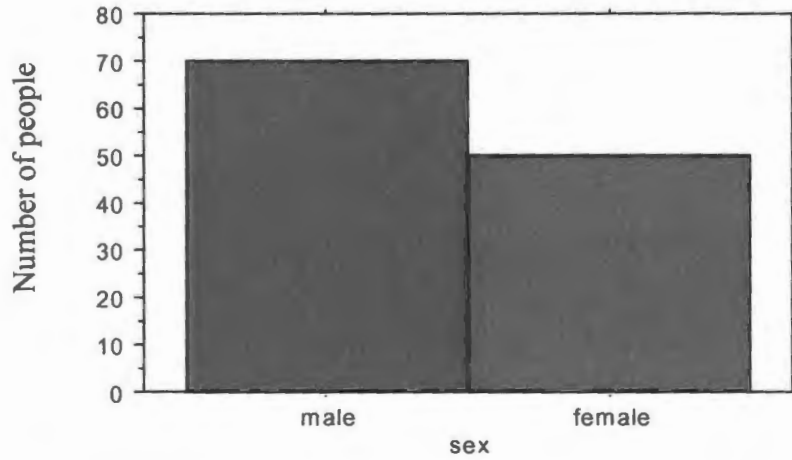Figure 3: Age Distribution of Respondents of VPS

coincidentally represents a normal curve distribution. As stated in the previous chapter, data was collected from a total of 121 respondents of various ages, ranging from 13 to 81 years of age (see Figure 3).

The median age of respondents was 48 years of age, and the sex ratio was nearly 1.4 to 1. A total of 70 males and 50 females participated in the VPS workshops (see Figure 4).

The author also sought to identify those residents living in either Eastern or Western Cranston, with Route 295 serving as a dividing line. As discussed earlier, because Western Cranston is rural and Eastern Cranston highly urban, the project has two distinct audiences. The

project's public workshop attracted almost an equal number of respondents from both sides, with slightly fewer respondents from Western Cranston (see Figure 5). Had this not occurred, the results may not have reflected citywide representation.

Figure 4: Sex Composition of Respondents

Because the project generated more respondents from Eastern Cranston, a large number of respondents live on small lots. (see Figure 6). Almost 44% (53) of respondents live on a lot less than ½ acre in size.

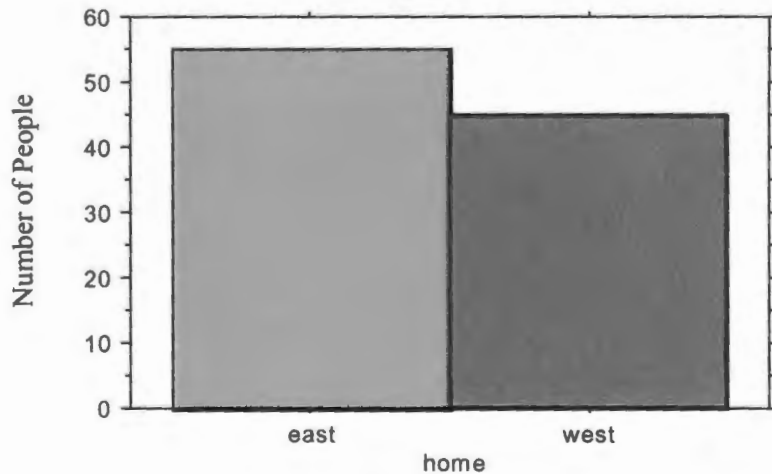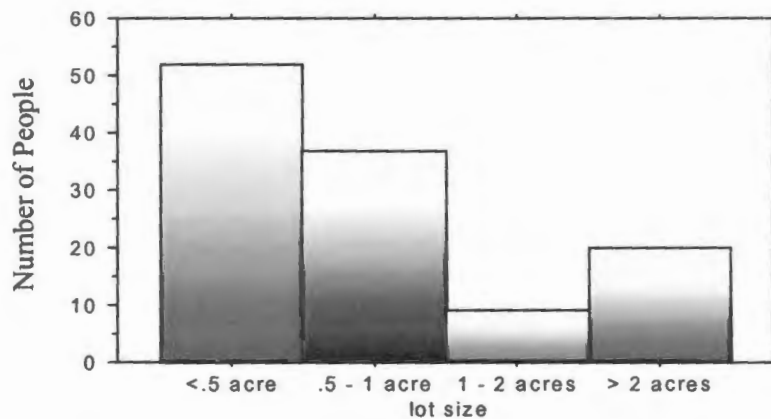Figure 5: Geographic Distribution of Respondents

Figure 6: Ownership by Acreage

Also, the author assumed that Western Cranston residents would rate rural slides positively and urban slides negatively. Similarly, it was assumed that Eastern Cranston residents would be more receptive to slides depicting developments of higher density. These assumptions are based on the fact that people not only have strong ties to where they grew up, but part of feeling comfortable with ones' life begins with finding comfort in the geographical area where they live. People simply become accustomed to their surroundings, and if they happened to associate their surroundings with a slide, generally, that specific slide got positive ratings. Later, the project looks to see if there are correlations between lot size and development types.

Figure 7: Educational Attainment of Respondents
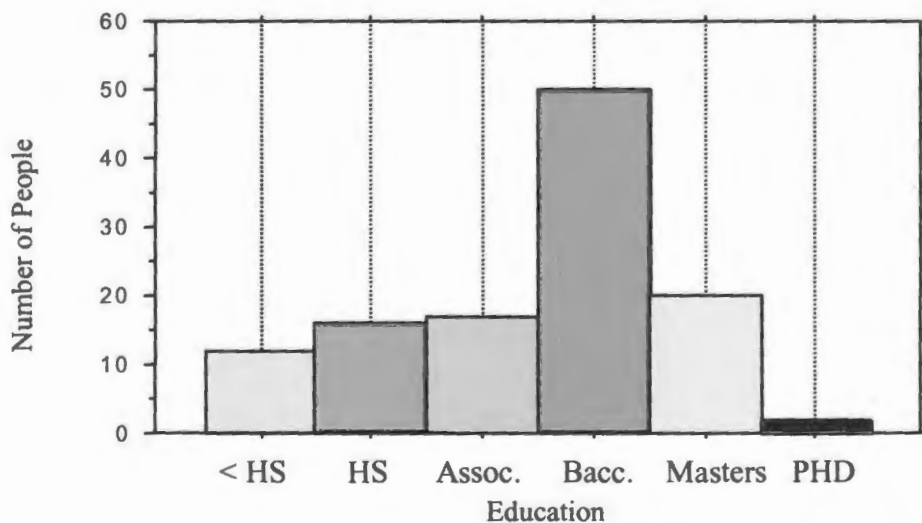
Continuing, the project's general descriptive statistics indicate an overwhelming number of respondents have attained a college degree (see Figure 7).

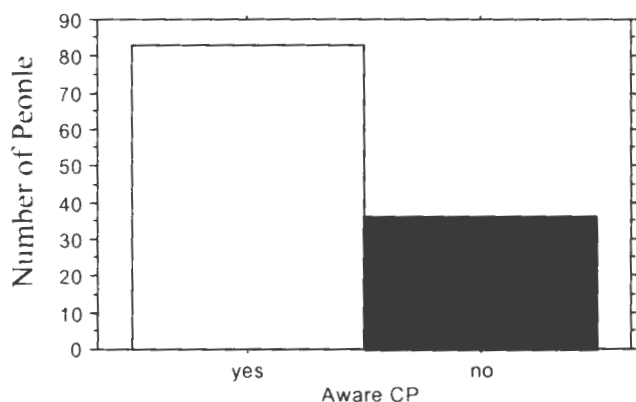Figure 8: Aware of Comprehensive Plan

Figure 9: Read Comprehensive Plan
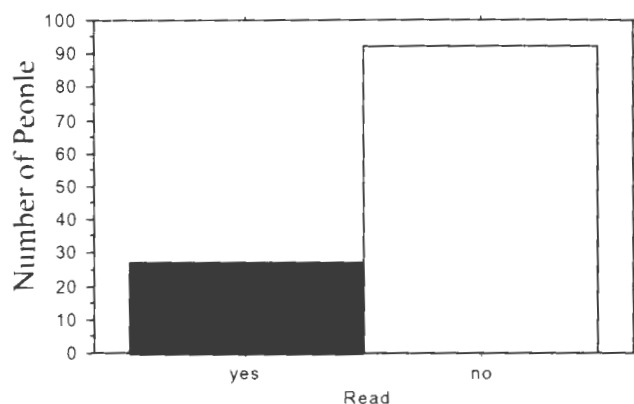
And, while 82% of respondents were aware that Cranston has a comprehensive plan, only 27% had actually read it (see Figures 8 and 9). Figures 8 and 9 represent a mirror image that planners would rather not see. Unfortunately, the public's lack of interest is obviously reflected in these two figures. Unless developments impact residents directly (i.e., in their backyard), they're simply not interested. These percentages reinforce the need for visual preference surveys. Writing a comprehensive plan is not enough; from time to time, residents must be made aware of large developments such as this. To say that 20% of Cranston residents are aware of Western Cranston's land use goals is a generous percentage.

Finally, about 35 percent of respondents earn more than $60,000 annually. 100 out of the total 121 respondents (83%) own their own home, indicating the American Dream is a reality in the City of Cranston (see Figure 10). Statistical correlations between income and slide score were not run, because the author feels such information would be meaningless.

Figure10: Home Ownership
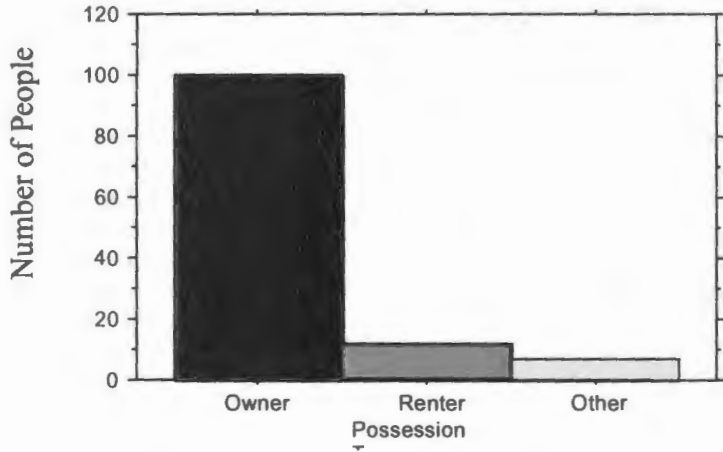
Figure 11 Respondents' Income

Income in thousands
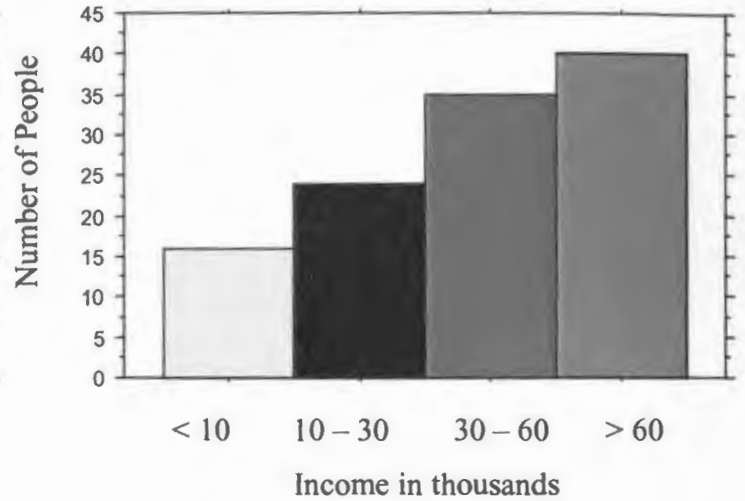
Residents who earn $10,000 per year have just as much right to determine what a development should look like as those who earn $60,000 or more annually.

Village Center Perceptions

The main objective of this project is to solicit residents' opinions concerning a variety of developments –specifically Western Cranston's village center. As shown in Figure 12 A, 72 % of respondents rated village centers positively. The average scores for Figure 12 A,

Figure 12: Vermont Village Center Slide

Figure 12 A: Vermont Village Center Rating
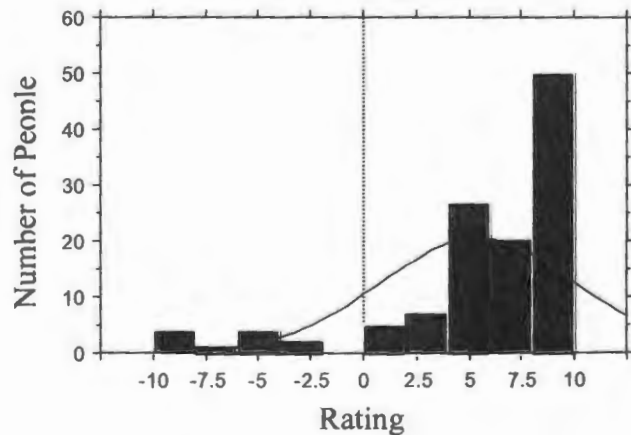
Figure 13: Vermont Village
(Winter Slide)

Figure 13A: Vermont
Village (Winter) Rating
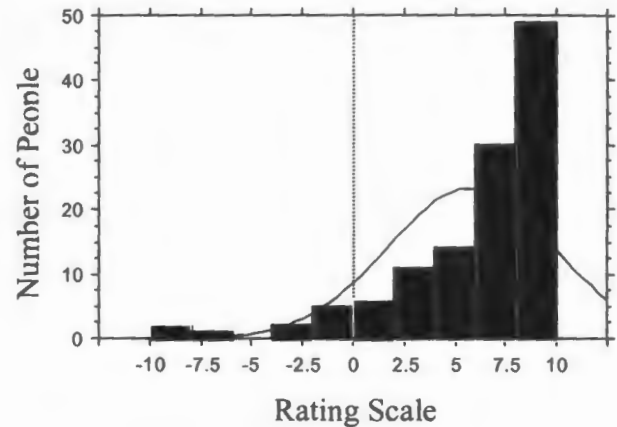
which is a Vermont village center, were +5.5, and + 6 for Figure 13 A. We can assume that clustered villages of this type, surrounded by large tracts of accessible open space, would be received positively by the residents of Cranston.

The project also utilized the opportunity to gather preferences concerning cluster development and sprawl pattern of development. The sprawl image (see Figure 15) was not taken in Rhode Island. This should not matter, however, because it is more important to communicate sprawl visuals as opposed to local pictures. Also, sprawling communities all look alike from 20,000 feet above the Earth's surface.

Figure 14: Forestdale Village Center

Cluster Development Perceptions

When comparing urban sprawl to the

Forestdale Village Center (see Figure 14),   **Figure 15: Sprawl**

it is clear that the public prefers the

Forestdale development (see Figure 16).

Figure 16 shows a large number of blue

dots in the upper right quadrant of the

graph -recall the author's original

hypothesis about residents of both Eastern

and Western Cranston. It is evident that

Eastern Cranston residents are less
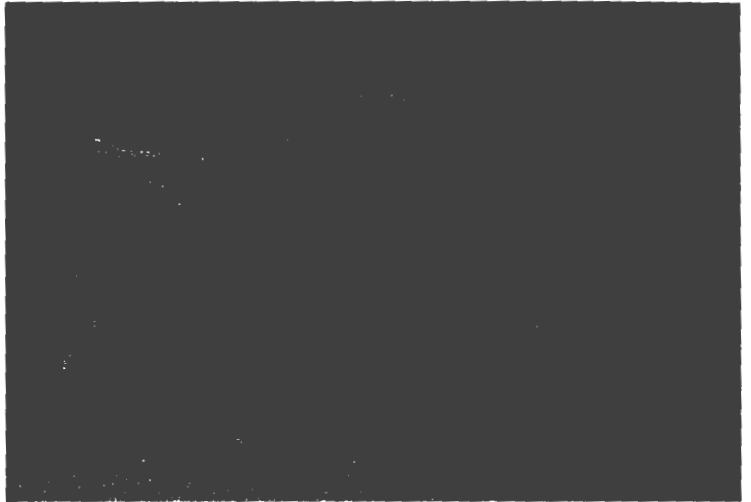
annoyed by sprawl than the residents of Western Cranston. Perhaps this is because Eastern

Cranston is more urban and Western Cranston is more rural. More importantly, the survey is

beginning to show signs indicating residents would prefer a village center layout as opposed to

sprawling subdivisions. Moreover, the survey indicates residents think very highly of cluster

(see Figures 17A and b).

Figure 16: Sprawl vs. Cluster
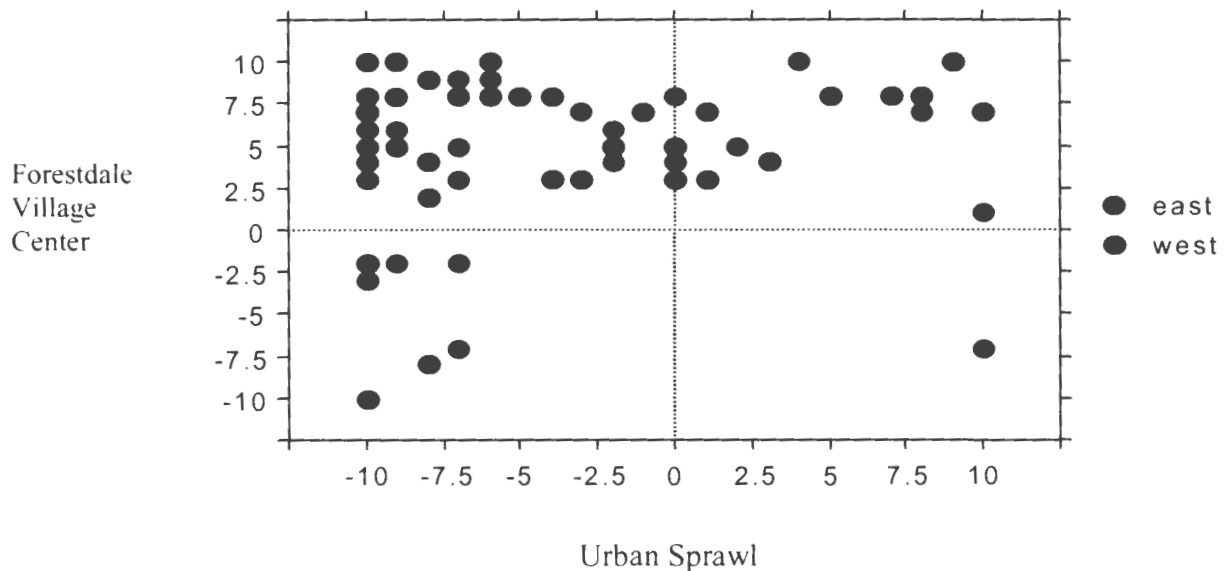
Figure 17A indicates nearly 35% of those people surveyed rated +8 or higher. Cluster developments are important, because they use less open land for development and conserve open space. In order for Western Cranston's village center to be successful, it must be surrounded by clustered subdivisions and open space. The village center is meant to act as a node around which residential cluster development can take place. Connecting residential clusters to the village center by walking paths is crucial to increasing pedestrian traffic. It will be necessary to amend Cranston's

Figure 17: Cluster Image

Cluster 1

Figure 17 A: Cluster Rating
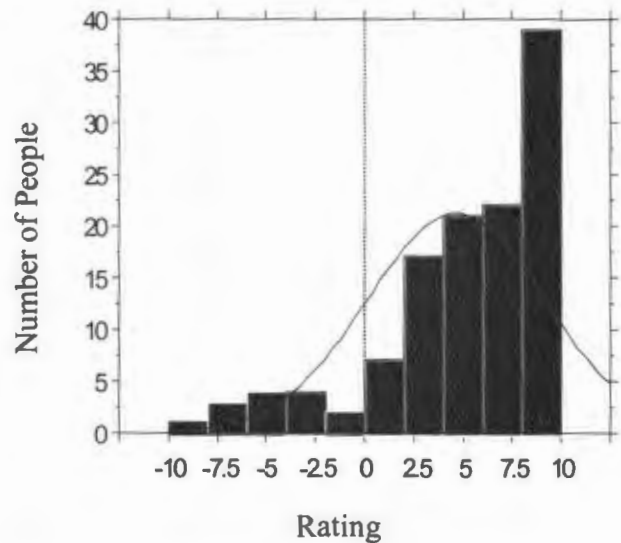
Zoning Ordinance to include specific areas of higher density to support and foster cluster development. A special zoning district within a designated radius of the intersection of Pippin Orchard Road and Scituate Avenue may be necessary. Amending the city's comprehensive plan will not be necessary, because clustering, and village center development is consistent with the goals articulated in the comprehensive plan. Recall the comprehensive plan's Land Use Section. It recognizes that development exclusively in residential areas will mean that residents of those

areas will experience inconvenience in gaining access to community centers and commercial areas. Moreover, at the broadest level, the City should promote the development of a village center as a focus for community life in Western Cranston. The center should include community facilities such as a school, library, and post office. Also, clustering development both in neighborhoods and at the village center would promote a sense of community that is typical of older neighborhoods and areas of Cranston.

Pedestrian Path Perceptions

Successful village centers of the past supported pedestrian traffic and contained a variety of mixed uses. Traditional village centers are self-sufficient. Western Cranston's proposed village center differs, however, because it is partially surrounded by existing subdivisions and undeveloped land. Very little can be done for the pedestrians who live far enough away and are currently auto-dependent.

Figure 18: Walking Path

Figure 18 A: Walking Path Rating

Rating Scale
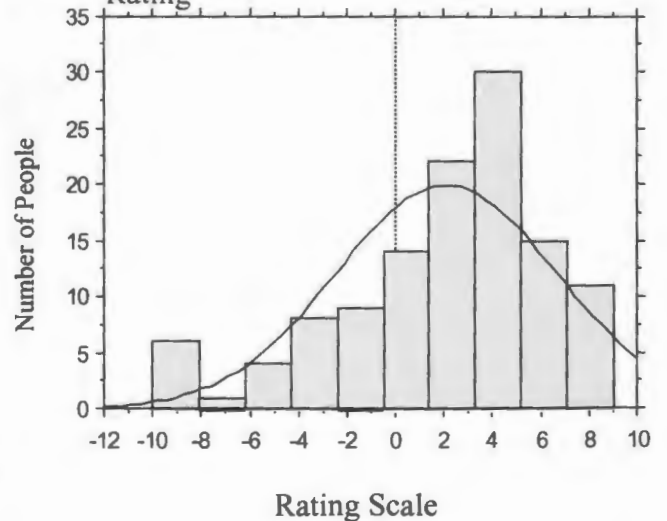
Figure 19: Walking Path

Figure 19 A: Walking Path Rating
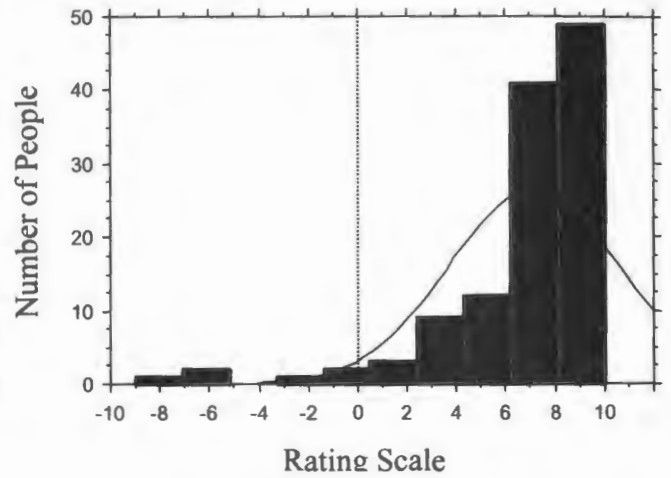
Figure 20: Walking Path

Figure 20 A: Walking Path Rating
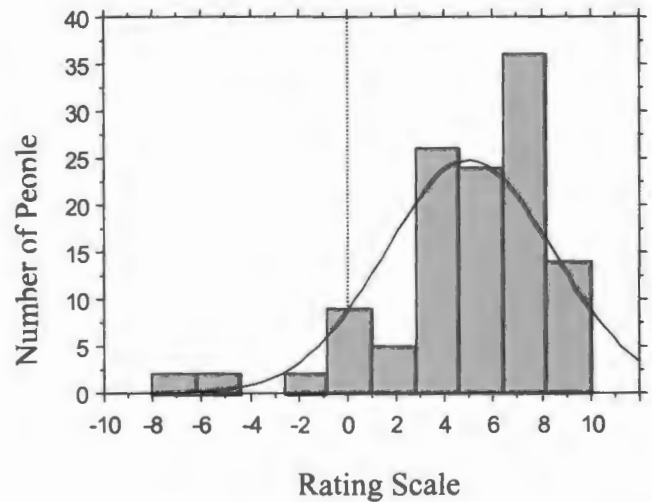
However, to address this problem, future clustered subdivisions are encouraged to develop closer to the village center. These new subdivisions should be connected to each other and to the village center with walking paths in order to encourage pedestrian traffic. As the survey shows, residents responded positively to these images (see Figures 18 A, 19 A, and 20 A). Nearly 50% of those individuals surveyed rated slide 18 B +5 or higher, 78% rated slide 19 B + 7 or higher, and 60% rated slide 20 B + 6 or higher. Each of the three pedestrian pictures clearly depicts a

separate walking path for pedestrians. Cranston residents rated all three pictures positively indicating that they would be receptive to them. Pedestrian traffic is expected to increase upon

completion of Western Cranston's elementary school. A series of pedestrian walkways connecting subdivisions to the village center would effectively relieve the projected traffic congestion induced by transporting children to school in the future. Conversely, Figure 21 depicting a wide

Figure 21: Wide Street

street in a Western Cranston subdivision received an average rating of –2, indicating that residents prefer paths to wide streets.

Figure 22, clearly depicts the village center and school site location and was inserted to reinforce the importance and available opportunity to create paths. Notice the number of subdivisions to the north, south and east. The intersection of Pippin Orchard Road and Scituate Avenue has all the makings for a successful village center. The possibility exists to link existing subdivisions to the school site and crossroads by walking path, fostering and reinventing a strong sense of community.

Housing Style

Resident's perceptions concerning housing style was also solicited. Historically, Western Cranston was primarily an agrarian community containing a number of barns. Most of the early homes are of colonial architecture. The author recommends incorporating colonial style homes into new developments wherever possible in an effort to preserve the historic feel of the

community. Cranston residents certainly feel positive about the appearance of such homes (see Figure 23 and 23 A).

Figure 22: Western Cranston Village Center

Figure 23: Housing Type

Figure 23 A: Housing Type
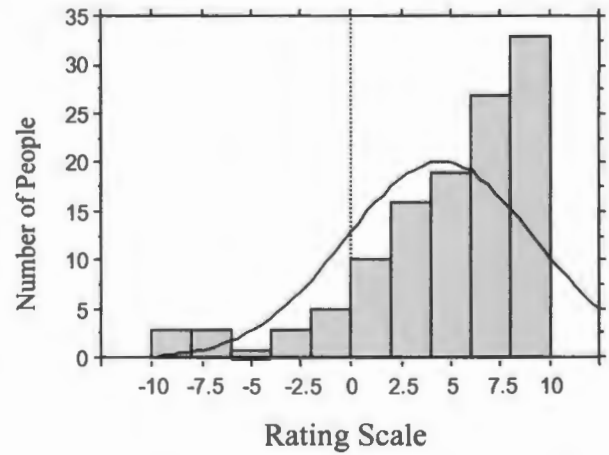
Colonial homes are in sharp contrast to those of contemporary architecture (see Figures 24 and 24 A). The majority of residents in the sample disapproved contemporary styles. More than 25 respondents rated Figure 24 – 10, 20 respondents rated - 2.5 indicating that contemporary

Figure 24: Contemporary

Contemporary

Figure 24 A: Contemporary Rating

Rating Scale
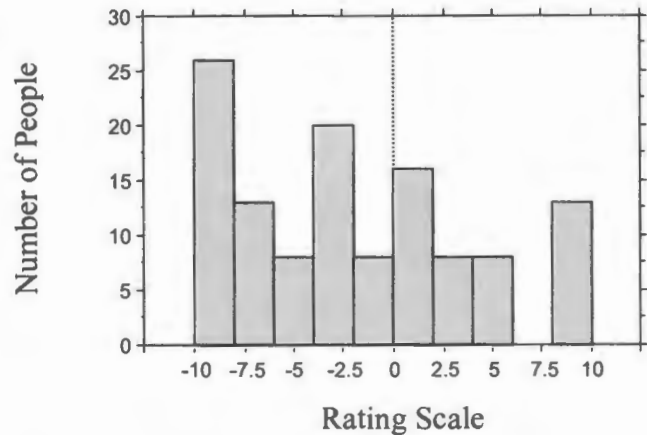
architecture –in general- is disliked. Conversely, observing the results of Figure 23, 65% of the respondents rated large colonials highly with a positive five or higher. The normal distribution curve is located in the positive quadrant of the graph, thus indicating most residents would prefer

homes of colonial architecture as opposed to those of a more modern or contemporary style. The author does recognize however that slide 24 is relatively hideous in appearance, and therefore may not be a true indicator of what people think of other contemporary styles.

Figure 25: Suburban Home

Also, Figure 25, a typical residential suburban home more common to those found in Cranston subdivisions, received positive ratings. Sixty five percent of all those surveyed rated the house positive 6 –very similar to the ratings on colonial slides. However, colonial homes resemble the "look" Western Cranston's historical past more accurately than those homes in Figure 23.

Controlling for the different groups

As indicated in the introduction of this project, the survey is comprised of three specific groups of people: Rotary Club members, West Bay Land Trust members, and Other. It is important to account for predetermined views of those who belong to associations. West Bay Land Trust members, whose goals are to preserve open space, are not going to rate slides the same way as rotary club members, who tend to be business people, and therefore pro-business. The author was interested in seeing how both groups rated slides. The graphs below clearly show the perceptions of each group, and what they stand for.

Figure 26: Urban Intersection

Figure 26 A: Groups' Ratings
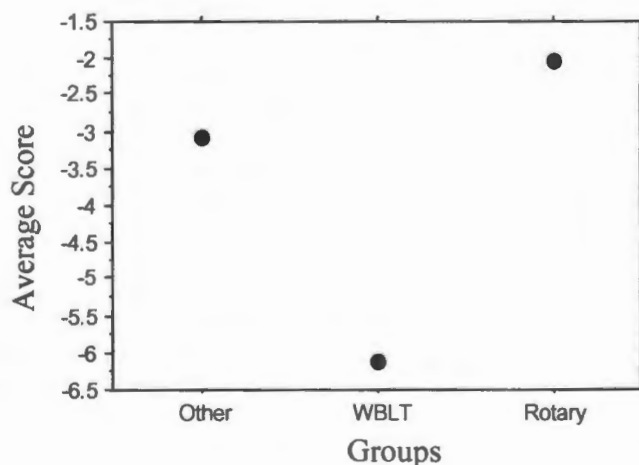
Though all three groups rated the suburban intersection negatively, there is a significant disparity between WBLT member and Rotary Club members. Rotary club members rated the

picture much more positively (average score −1) than the WBLT members, who rated − 6.5. The "other" group is meant to be a "truer" representation or reflection of the entire city, because they are not affiliated with either group. Therefore, the author was expecting to see their rating fall in between the other two groups, which it has (see Figures 26 and 26 A).

Continuing with the same argument, the author has also included a rural picture to compliment the type of development seen in the suburban intersection picture. Again, this picture was not taken in the City of Cranston, but it does communicate a rural image. Figure 27 indicates the different ratings by the different groups. Apparently, rotary club members have very little use for farmland vistas −rating +2.5. Conversely, WBLT member's average rating for the same picture was nearly + 7. "Other", though not exactly serving as the median between the WBLT and rotary, still fell in between with an average rating of +6. The author resorted to

Figure 27: Agricultural Image

Figure 27 A: Agricultural Image Rating
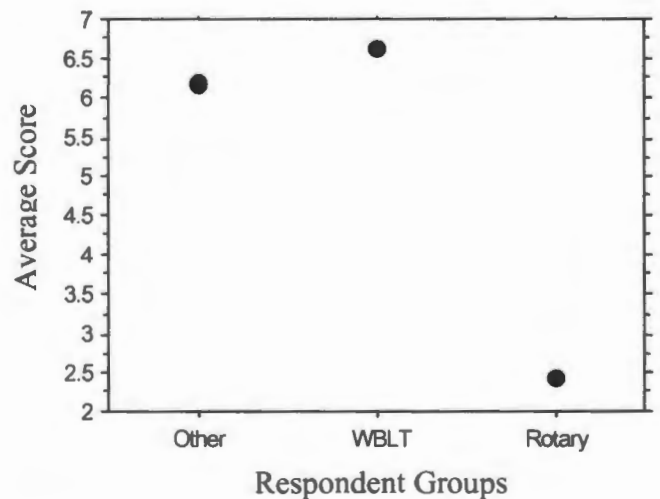
showing Figure 27 A as a substitute for New England's winter landscape. In retrospect, maybe a snow covered field or farm of Western Cranston would have been the appropriate selection. In sum, the author may have skewed results slightly by selecting pictures according to season. A collection of slides taken during all four seasons would yield the most effective results.

Controlling for the different respondent groups increases the survey's validity by reducing possible error incurred by the West Bay Land Trust and Rotary Club. Therefore, the group "other" sample size was doubled from 21 to 44 in effort to offset any error incurred by the bias injected into the survey due to the WBLT members.

Landscaping and Vegetation Perceptions

In an effort to get an idea concerning residents opinions about street trees, the author also included pictures depicting street vegetation. Traditional New England village centers often times possessed many tree-lined streets. Trees provide shade, conserve energy for homes, and form a sense of serenity. Unfortunately, they also drop many leaves, clog gutters, street drains, and buckle sidewalks. The majority of the sample rated slide 28 positively however, and therefore street trees should be considered.

Figure 28: Street Trees Image

Figure 28 A: Respondent Group Graph

Geographic Location
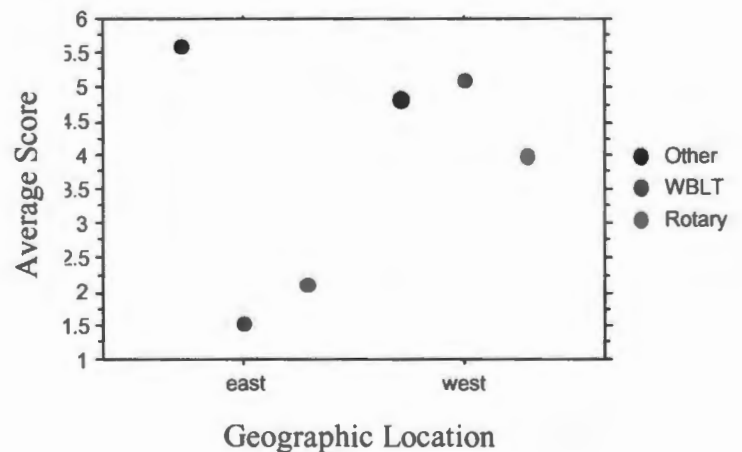
As shown in Figure 28 A, everybody rated the urban tree picture positively, with an average score of +5. The disparity between "other" residents and WBLT residents of Eastern Cranston is reflected in an average score difference of 5. All we can learn from this is that WBLT members

and "other" members who live in Eastern Cranston, cannot agree on whether or not to plant street trees. Generally however, all the groups from Western Cranston, which is where the village center is developing, feel positively about streets, and would be amenable to having them. The important knowledge to be gained from this analysis is that street trees should be planted wherever possible, particularly in Western Cranston's village center.

Perceptions about signage

This section evaluates residents' opinions about street signage. Granted, the pictures shown here depict a signage intensity that is not normally seen in most towns. However, there are signs in Cranston that look similar to the ones shown in Figure 29 A (i.e., Penn TV on Park Avenue). As shown in Figure 29, there was a sizable difference in ratings between the three groups. All of the groups rated the Las Vegas sign picture negatively: "other" combined for an average rating of –4, rotary –5, and WBLT –8. Intense street signs of this nature are not

Figure 29: Urban Signs

Figure 29 A: Average Signage Scores

Respondent Groups
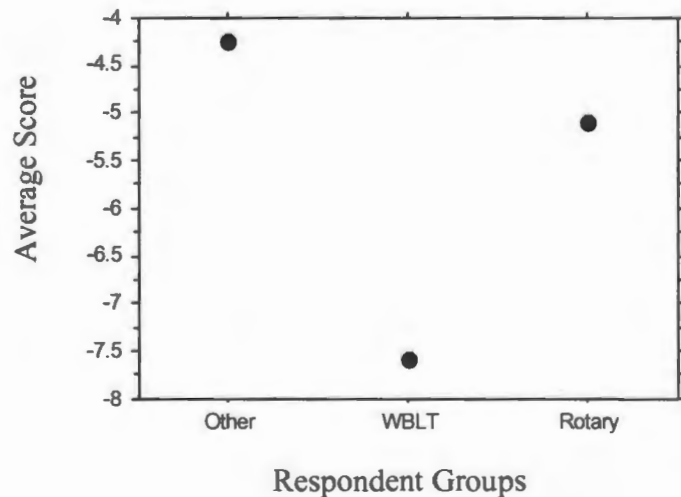
recommended for Western Cranston's Village center. Perhaps smaller, hanging signs or landscaped monument signs would be more appropriate.

Figure 30: Vegetable Stand Image

Figure 30 A: Rating Graph
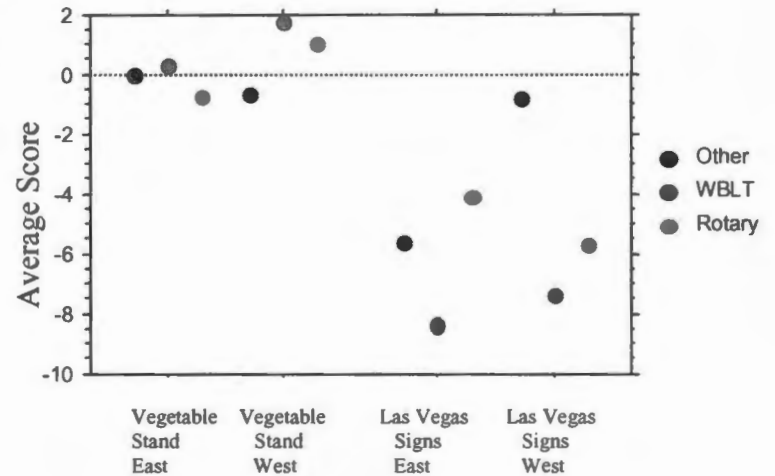
Finally, the author included a picture of a vegetable stand (see Figure 30 and 30 A), which is a use that is consistent with the Western Cranston village center. Figure 30, a point grouping variables chart, not only observes the ratings of each group, but separates the residents out by geographic location. Essentially, the chart compares the three groups' separate geographic location (i.e., those who live east and west of Route 295), ratings of vegetable stand to Las Vegas signs. Analysis concludes there was a large range in the ratings of West Bay Land Trust residents when comparing the two pictures. The vegetable stand picture indicates neutral to positive ratings. However, the ratings for the Las Vegas signs picture are not only less consistent, but they are also more negative. For example, WBLT members from Eastern Cranston combined for an average rating of –8.5 for the Las Vegas signs picture. The analysis clearly indicates those residents who are WBLT members are critical of large signs. Comparing

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the vegetable stand slide to Figure 31, the project revealed similar ratings (i.e., 58% of all

respondents rated +3 or higher for the mixed use

picture, while 65% of all respondents rated +2

Figure 31 Mixed Use Slide

for the vegetable stand. The author

recommends not constructing such mixed uses

within the village center. Analysis concluded

vegetable stands and smaller, corner markets to

be much more appropriate. The object is to

refrain from developing automobile intensive uses, and concentrate on those uses which facilitate

pedestrian traffic.

Chapter Five

Recommendations

It is hoped that this analysis, in addition to soliciting public input, will be utilized to answer a number of concerns and questions developers and public officials have about Western Cranston's village center. In addition to providing ideas for the development of Cranston's Village Center, the findings in this project can also be useful for other developments throughout Cranston. For example, Cranston's Brewery Parkade

Figure 32: Joy Homestead

(on the site of the former Narragansett Brewery) development is expected to contain a tree lined boulevard, which is designed to handle pedestrian and vehicular traffic. It would be interesting to see the results of a survey asking what people think of the Brewery Parkade when it is complete. Regardless, this project reaffirmed the importance of street trees and planners should continue to require them for all developments. Portions of this analysis (particularly street trees and signage recommendations) are intended to be useful and contributory to that development.

Continuing, the analysis allowed the author to propose a number of general recommendations for Western Cranston's village

Figure 33: Multifamily

center. Currently, the center is removed from surrounding subdivisions. Most of these subdivisions are greater than one mile away from the village center's central point (i.e., the intersection of Pippin Orchard Road and Scituate Avenue). In order for the

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village center to be effective, it must incorporate a housing element of appropriate density. The author proposes clustered residential subdivisions comprised of colonial homes, or homes that resemble Figure 32; the Joy Homestead. Otherwise, the village center is going to be auto-dependent, not different from conventional developments. It is hoped that the village center includes multifamily housing, as shown in Figure 33. Large colonials of this type would be perfectly suitable for multifamily housing, and also maintain Western Cranston's historic character.

Action Table and Time Frame

Specific recommendations can be found in Table 1. The recommendations include amending Cranston's zoning ordinance where necessary to achieve the goals related to the village center development, negotiate proactively with developers, and expedite construction permitting procedures. The actions described in Chapter One indicate that some of the conceptual elements of the village center are beginning to come together, (i.e., institutional uses are in place and land for a new elementary school has been secured). The most important action to come out of this project are the negotiations with developers. They must be made aware of the fact that homes of colonial architecture within cluster developments are attractive to Cranston residents. Recommendation three advises Cranston's public officials to write a Transfer of Development Rights Ordinance (TDR). An ideal situation would be to protect areas around the proposed village center as open space. Yet, with so many properties being privately owned, protecting properties as opens space may take away residents' constitutional rights as to what they can do with their property.

However, a way to protect and preserve land would be to send those development rights (transfer them) from those areas in Western Cranston to areas in and around the village center (the receiver site) where higher density is projected to take place. A TDR ordinance would allow property owners in the sending zones to be compensated for their development rights. In return, the owners' land is to be preserved as open space, which obviously preserves one of the major goals in the Comprehensive Plan.

Assembling Land

The significant challenge of assembling parcels still remains. A number of parcels in and around the village center are currently owned by separate property owners. The situation of justly compensating owners must be negotiated between the developer, and property owner. Taking the land by public domain is not an option because, currently, a rational nexus cannot be made between the need for a village center to prevent widespread public harm. Taking land by eminent domain is normally done for specific public purposes, that is, the need for a school, library, fire station etc. Also, municipalities must compensate owners with public dollars. The option to justly compensate a series of owners who own adjacent parcels within TDR guidelines would be a better option. That is why recommendation two extends to a one year period. There is no telling how much time will be required for parcel assembly.

A number of other recommendations remain. For the village center itself to be effective, housing must be built within it. Natural constraints to development must be identified within a specific radius around the intersection of Pippin Orchard Road and Scituate Avenue. Upon identifying areas suitable for development, green ways must then be identified. These green

ways will connect the village center to the newly designed clusters and serve as pedestrian walking paths. Also, the analysis identified street trees as a necessity for the village center.

Table 1. Village Center Recommendations

Time Frame	1-6 months	6 mo. – 1 yr.	1-2 years	2-5 years
Recommendation 1	Identify Village Center Development Radius	Approve School Plans	Construct School	Post Survey Review
Recommendation 2	Negotiations with developers & property owners	Negotiations with developers & property owners	Propose Walking Path Areas	Post Survey Review
Recommendation 3	Explore formulating a TDR Ordinance	Possible Good Earth Construction	Walking Path Construction	Walking Path Maintenance
Recommendation 4	Amend Zoning Ordinance	Negotiate with developers	Market and Plan for Clusters	Market and Construct colonial cluster developments

Retail and Commercial Uses

One question remains to be answered; how much retail/commercial use is enough? The slides shown in this survey do not adequately reflect retail-intensive uses. It was learned that a majority of the sample liked smaller corner store images, but the question of how much retail remains to be answered. "Mom and pop" variety stores seem to conjure the village look, but the question of whether or not they are economically viable still remains.

Also, recommendation four was added as a precautionary measure. At this time, it is not known exactly which articles of the zoning ordinance require amendments. The zoning

ordinance currently regulates the proposed village center area as 2 acre residential zoning, which may conflict with future limited retail and commercial uses. In addition to a TDR ordinance, an overlay zone may have to be incorporated into this area. The tables time frame extends to a period of five years. It is expected that strategic plans will be completed by this time. Strategic plans include: walking path areas, as well as amending the zoning ordinance to include an overlay zone. The author also recommends conducting another survey (see Table One – Post Survey Review). A post survey review would build on the work of this research project. It may involve conducting another VPS containing images that are more specific to the proposed village center.

Signage

As limited retail use evolves, it is recommended that any signage be limited. Because the village center is in a special district (planned district), normal sign regulations do not apply. Signage should be regulated under the guidance of planning staff through site plan review. The City of Cranston recently passed a sign ordinance in 1998 which contains provisions for monument signs, so this should be achievable. The research project recommends monument signs where appropriate. Landscaped monument signs have a much smaller impact on visual sight lines as seen from an automobile than taller pole signs.

Housing

Because Western Cranston attains an abundance of large lot zoning, clustering housing developments based on current build out projections will preserve significant areas of open space. Clustering alone is not the answer, but it is a form of housing that provides the City with

a different option in a way that preserves land, while still being in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan. Cluster developments inherently preserve open land, and should be incorporated within and around the village center according to natural constraints. A goal of the village center is to preserve development with development. This analysis is meant to serve as a starting point for what planners, the public, and public officials must think about before the proposed village center development continues.

Chapter Six
Conclusions

Advice for Planners and Planning Students

As a thesis project, the author wrote this section with both: future Community Planning students and planners in mind. Therefore the challenges of conducting a visual preference survey will be discussed along with general conclusions relating to the project itself. I would not discourage students from conducting such a project, but I would only recommend it for students who are diligent enough to commence the project one semester prior to graduation.

Conducting a visual preference survey is challenging due to the large amount of time one has to invest to obtain pertinent and useful results. On the other hand, because the project demands moderating skills on behalf of the student. Therefore, it does allow the student one last chance to gain and refine his or her public speaking skills outside the classroom, unlike most traditional forms of solitary research. Excellent oral communicative skills are important skills to have in the field of planning. Most of the planners with whom I associate, talk of public outcry, struggle, and misunderstanding between the public and what is going on in their community. In order to educate people, one has to know how to talk to them. The biggest challenge for planners lies in righting and correcting general misunderstandings. As a student conducting a VPS, the author submits there will be opportunity to discuss the impacts, importance, and relativity of the development at hand, but recommends not discussing it before the participant takes the survey. Many of my participants asked me, "What is this for and who will it affect, and how does it affect me?" It is important to deflect such concerns as quickly and as politely as possible. The more information participants learn about a project, the more their responses will be adversely affected. A good way to solve this problem is to conduct focus groups with

residents, and present them with the survey while a picture is being projected up on a screen. Allowing the picture to be a decoy (not as part of the analysis), takes participants focus away from the survey, and questions about income and lot size and directs it more towards the slides themselves, and photographic perceptions, which is more important. Remember, the VPS is meant to find out what the public likes and dislikes (visually), in their community.

Motivating Respondents

Make sure all the pictures are from the city and or town for which the VPS is being conducted. The more scenes people recognize, the more involved they'll feel. They may feel an affinity towards their city or town, and more importantly, toward the consultant. That is, the participants will be positively receptive towards the consultant, accepting him or her because of the amount of work the consultant already invested in their city or town. After all, the consultant did take 50 to 80 pictures of their community, therefore, he or she must really care. Explain to the participants that they are here for a reason; to keep the beauty of their community alive and or enhanced, as developments take place. Remember, everything is positive, and when things turn badly, solicit the public as to what he or she would do if they were planning the community. Let the participants ask questions after the survey is complete, answer them honestly, according to and within the guidelines of Rhode Island's legal system.

Unfortunately, the author could not help but notice the lack of interest on behalf of the community; not enough people were interested. Because of the two religious institution advertisements, and week-long public library workshop, it's estimated that at least 1,800 to 2,000 people were aware of a Cranston VPS survey and weekly work shop. Yet, only a small number

of people showed up. Such disinterest was quite disheartening, but, at the same time, interesting. Interesting to the point where it had to be discussed in the next section.

Public Disinterest?

A great deal can be learned about societal response when conducting surveys of any type. Arousing peoples' interest to a point where they actually come to a public workshop to participate in a survey is a daunting challenge. **People are simply not interested in things that they feel do not directly affect them.** Anthropologists' theoretical explanation of this "lack of interest" can be seen through what is known as rational choice theory. Hechter (1987), holds that it is irrational, or at best non-rational, for an individual to contribute to a collective cause from which he or she will derive no benefit, either material or non-material. Whatever the psychological and or mental explanation, gathering input for surveys of any type is tremendously frustrating. While at Cranston's Central Library, a number of people came and went without taking the survey. The author strategically placed a 36 by 48 inch advertisement in the library's main entrance, directing residents into a large training room where the survey was continuously being administered. The advertisement, comprised of a map of the City of Cranston delineating its proposed village center, stated "Help shape the City of Cranston – View the slide show and participate in Cranston's Visual Preference Survey." Out of the 2,000 or so residents entering and exiting the library that week, only 42 participated. Hechter's of rational choice theory certainly seemed applicable in this case; because there are few residential abutters in the project area, very few people even know where the project area is located. Hence, the residents can not make the connection of how such a development affects them, albeit indirectly.

Therefore, because residents lack such awareness, it's up to planners to educate people and motivate them to remove themselves from their own points of reference, which can sometimes seem selfish. A good way to accomplish this, is to conduct focus group meetings. Focus group meetings serve as a forum where planners can educate and instill residents with a sense of responsibility and accomplishment.

Planning for Intergenerational Equity

More effort needs to be placed in fostering intergenerational equity within the field of planning and how it relates to community building. Intergenerational equity is more commonly associated with natural resource conservation movements (i.e., preserving beaches, forests, national parks, or open space). Grass roots environmental advocates have had tremendous success with regards to environmental preservation (common examples include: beach replenishment, maintaining air quality and water quality etc.,). As a whole, people and scientists can look at the Earth and admit to the dangers of losing these types of resources, and how it affects future generations. Yet, from a land use perspective, free enterprise economics defies basic principals of environmental preservation, and as planners, we try to make up for environmental loss through regulation (i.e., zoning, site plan review, Master Planning etc.).

Planning, in the author's view, is fundamentally social, and relates more to interpretive social science. Placing social planning and community preservation on an equal footing of respect with environmental planning is vital for the field of planning. Cluster developments and village centers of this type foster community as well as environmental preservation. Intergenerational equity supports the notion that environmental preservation is vital for successive generations to enjoy and utilize natural resources for economic prosperity. In

addition to the presence of natural resources, oceans, and vistas, future generations should have the right to sustainable infrastructures, services, communities, and the positives brought about by communal interaction. However, the author feels that spatial development patterns, coupled with advances in information technology, are depriving the nation's youth from communal interaction. That however, is another research project for another time.

Using VPS

Is VPS the right tool for planners to use? The short answer to this question is both yes and no. One criticism of the VPS process relates to possible differences between photos that could sway the selection process. Such variables include time of day, intensity of light, weather and appearance of people and cars in the foreground (Internet: Nelessen, 10/25/00). One evening, during the slide show workshop the author had an interesting verbal interaction with a participant, who was a high school student. During the slide show (with other people present), particularly during slide 39's projection (see Appendix Two), the student asks, " What if you hate people, what do I circle then, what if I simply hate people?" I told the student that I didn't have an immediate answer for such a concern, but asked if the person could please keep all thoughts private. I didn't want this person to corrupt the survey. A series of catastrophic events could have erupted just by the student asking such a question. I didn't want the student's comments to sway other peoples' thoughts, particularly concerning communal slides. In essence, when showing slides that include people as part of the foreground, use caution. A solution may be to show both, slides with people and slides without people.

The Importance of Seasons

The importance of seasons is usually not discussed between VPS connoisseurs, but it should be. The author would agree, summer and fall photographs are much prettier that those taken during winter months. If winter pictures have to be included, include those with snow. Better yet, include those with and without snow. This allows your audience to decide what is preferred, and allows for more objective results.

Certainly, ratings for pictures taken during winter months generally tend to be lower than those taken during times of autumnal equinox. The author clearly submits, one criticism of this project lies in the fact that not enough local Cranston photos were shown. At the time, the project was being conducted during spring semester, which translates to limited vegetation until May. The author tried to compensate for the lack of vegetation buy scanning highly vegetated photographs from books and magazines; photos that would closely resemble Cranston's urban/suburban character. A number of Cranston photos were shown, but, perhaps we could have had truer results if all photos were of Cranston, regardless of the time of year. Then again, the project needed to show residents what true village centers looked like, of which there are very few left in Rhode Island. Gracia Maynard's photograph (Appendix 2 Slide 20) was certainly helpful in this regard.

A Concluding Thought

This research project utilized a technique developed by Anton Nelessen entitled Visual Preference Survey. The survey was conducted for the City of Cranston and set out to evaluate resident's perceptions concerning a variety of developments, which, as elements, can be assembled to comprise a village center. There are many types of village centers, but they all

contain similar elements; common greens for public use, a density favoring pedestrian traffic, and a variety of uses meant to support and serve the general public's basic needs. As a region, New England utilized these types of spatial developments to achieve an economic dominance that still exists today. One must ask the question…Will New England develop itself to the point where it loses its geographic identity? Is it important to re-create village centers in our rural and suburban areas? Let's build community and preserve New England's communal character.

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Internet:

Http://www.sustainable.doe.gov/toolkit/TCDDM/Nelessen.htm

Appendix One

Please answer the following questions.

1. Sex: (Please √ one) Male____ Female____
2. Age____ (Fill in the Blank)
3. Cranston Resident (Please √ one) Yes____ No____

4. If you answered yes to question 3, do you live east or west of Interstate 295? (Circle one)
   A. East
   B. West

5. Do you own or rent the living accommodations in which you live? (Circle one)
   A.   Owner
   B.   Renter
   C.   Other

6. Size of the lot on which you live. (Circle letter)
   A.   Less than 0.5 acre.
   B.   0.5 - I acres
   C.   I - 2 acres
   D.   Greater than 2 acres

7. Educational attainment (Circle one letter)
   A.   Less than high school degree
   B.   High school degree
   C.   Associates degree
   D.   Baccalaureates degree
   E.   Masters degree
   F.   Doctoral Degree

8. Are you aware that the City of Cranston has a comprehensive plan? (Circle one) A. Yes B. No

9. If so, have you ever read it? (Circle one) A. Yes B. No

10. Annual income earned per year (Circle one)
   A.   Less than $ 10,000
   B. $10,000 to $30,000
   C. $30,000 to $60,000
   D.   Greater than $60,000

11. Are you a land trust member? (Circle one)
   A.   Yes
   B.   No
   If yes, how long have you been a member?
   A.   Less than 6 months
   B.   6 months to I year
   C.   I to 2 years
   D   Greater than 2 years

Appendix Two

Slide 1

Scituate Reservoir

Slide 2

Urban Trees – D.C.

Slide 3

StreetTree

Slide 4

Pedestrian 1

Slide 5

Cluster 1

Slide 6

Meshanicut Lake

Slide 7

Pedestrian 2

Slide 8
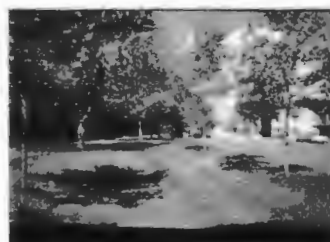
Pedestrian 3

Slide 9

Contemporary

Slide 10

High Density 1

Slide 11

High Density 2

Slide 12

High Density 3

Slide 13

Low Density 1

Slide 14

Low Density 2

Slide 15

Air Cluster

Slide 16

Urban-Sprawl

Slide 17
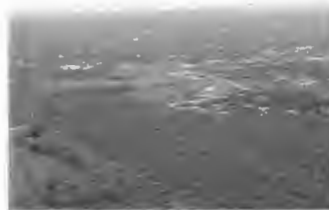
Western Cranston

Slide 18

Wide Street

Slide 19

Traditional Subdivision

Slide 20

Forestdale Village Ctr.

Slide 21

Vermont Village

Slide 22

Urban Intersection

Slide 23

Urban Mixed Use

Slide 24

Outdoor Cafe

Slide 25

Vermont Village

Slide 26

Mixed Use 4 Story

Slide 27

Barn 1

Slide 28

Joy Homestead

Slide 29

Open Space – Lake

Slide 30

Autumn Barn

Slide 31

Row Trees – Dublin

Slide 32

Barn 2

Slide 33

Hay Roll -Montana

Slide 34

Barn 3

Slide 35

Suburban Development

Slide 36

Aerial - Edgewood

Slide 37

Wide Street 2

Slide 38

Commercial Development

Slide 39

Rural Post Office

Slide 40

Suburban Building

Slide 41

Vegetable Stand

Slide 42

Vegas Signs

Slide 43

Urban Streetscape

Appendix Three

For each slide, please circle only one integer. You may circle 0 if you experience a neutral feeling.

Slide 1. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 2. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 3. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 4. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 5. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 6. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 7. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 8. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 9. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 10. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 11. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 12. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 13. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 14. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 15. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 16. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 17. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 18. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 19. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 20. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 21. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 22. -10   9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 23. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 24. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 25. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 26. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 27. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 28. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 29. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 30. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 31. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 32. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 33. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 34. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 35. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 36. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 37. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 38. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 39. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 40. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 41. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 42. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Slide 43. -10   -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

TO ALL CRANSTON RESIDENTS!

Help Shape the City of Cranston
Take the Visual Preference Survey and
Give us your opinion on Architectural Styles and
Types of Developments

Come see the slide show! (Only takes 10 minutes)

April 1st to 5th (Saturday to Wednesday)
6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Central Library - Main Meeting Room
140 Sockanossett Cross Road
Cranston, Rhode Island

Appendix Five

Holy Apostles Public Advertisement

As advertised on Holy Apostles Weekly Bulleting:

To all Cranston residents: A slide show is going to be held at the Central Library (140 Sockanossett Cross Road) on the nights of April I" to 5 (Saturday to Wednesday). Shows start at 6:30 p.m. and run until 8:00p.m., and conducted by a graduate student from the University of Rhode Island Community Planning and Landscape Architecture Program. Each show lasts approximately 10 minutes and is accompanied by a one-page survey. The main goal of this workshop is to gather your true preferences concerning types of architectural styles and developments as they evolve in the City of Cranston. Please come and help shape the "look" of the City of Cranston!

Johnston breaks ground for another gas-fired power plant
The symbolic start of construction of a power plant across from the Central Landfill gets
underway yesterday amid optimism from town officials and protests from a few neighbors.

By BOB JAGOLINZER
Journal Staff Writer – October 27, 2000

JOHNSTON -- For most of the audience at yesterday's groundbreaking for an electric-generating
plant on Shun Pike, the people doing the shoveling were merely throwing dirt. But for town
officials, particularly Mayor William R. Macera, it was more like shoveling gold dust. The gas-
fired plant is going to provide the town with a total of $33.7 million over the next 17 years, said
Macera. The money is in lieu of taxes. Macera plans to use the money to help pay for a variety of
projects and to convince bond-rating companies to upgrade the town's dismal bond rating.
"We received $900,000 [in March] and we'll get another $900,000 next January," said Macera.
"After that we'll get about $2 million a year; this is a very good deal for the town." The plant is
being built by FPL Energy LLC, a subsidiary of FPL Group, a Florida-based energy company
with generating facilities in 14 states.

Besides the money, Macera said town buildings will get free electricity and the town will receive
a subsidy for street lights. The package was worked out as part of a tax treaty that state and town
officials negotiated with Reliant Energy Hope, a Houston-based energy firm that conceived of
the project and did much of the work to get construction and environmental permits. Reliant sold
the project to FPL in June. The plant will be able to produce 500 megawatts of electricity. It is
to be completed in 2002 and is expected to provide jobs for 250 construction workers. The plant
is to be cooled by water from the Cranston sewer plant. The water is to be treated in Cranston,
piped to Johnston, then treated again in Johnston before it is used, to be sure bacteria and viruses
are killed. Besides the plant, work has started on the 13-mile pipeline that will carry the water.
Yesterday, under white tents, as heavy equipment a few feet away moved dirt and rocks around,
Macera joined FPL president Louis Hay III, and Thomas Shumpert, executive director of the
state Economic Development Corp. and other business leaders to symbolically shovel dirt. "We
[first] started moving dirt about two weeks ago," said Herman Flagley, a construction manager
for the company. The work, which is to level the site for the plant, should continue through
year's end.

FPL president Lewis Fay III said the company has facilities in Massachusetts and Maine and the
plant "will further strengthen [the company's] investment and presence in the New England
power market." The plant is on Shun Pike, across from the state Central Landfill, which has
often been the target of criticism from neighbors. In June, Rhode Island Resource Recovery
Corporation sold the site to the company, for $2.8 million, according to Resource Recovery
spokeswoman Beth Bailey. And yesterday a couple of neighbors said they were concerned about
the possible effects of the plant on the nearby neighborhood. Lisa Gargaro, a member of the
town's Landfill Management Action Committee, which keeps track of doings at the landfill, said
she was upset that she did not know of the groundbreaking until yesterday morning.
She said she put up several signs near the plant, asking that the company ensures that the

operation does not endanger neighbors. Earlier this year the plant project also engendered another flap, after Reliant Energy pledged to give the Winsor Hill School $750,000 for a new library. That upset Macera, who wants the money used throughout the system. Because of the amount of money, a group of parents, led by Macera's wife Maureen who is assistant superintendent of schools in Woonsocket, asked state education officials for advice on how to deal with the gift. However, Commissioner Peter McWalters declined to give an opinion. Macera said he has talked to FLP Energy officials about the issue and wants to see the money put into an account that school officials could use throughout the system. "I think they're [FPL] going to agree to that," he said.