

**ROUTE 102 (BRONCO HIGHWAY)  
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT STUDY  
BURRILLVILLE, RHODE ISLAND**

**I. Executive Summary**

Bronco Highway is the route of entry to Burrillville for most residents and visitors. It is a two lane rural arterial highway, with a third lane added for slower vehicles on steep grades. It traverses mostly forested land, with limited commercial and residential development near historical village centers. The mix of forest and village centers is an important part of the identity of Burrillville. Several large tracts of land are presently for sale along Route 102. Development of these tracts should not be undertaken randomly, but in a systematic program of orderly development, in accordance with a comprehensive plan that protects natural and cultural resources and maintains free flowing traffic conditions on Bronco Highway.

Recognizing the need for such a plan, the Town Council established the Route 102 Committee in September of 2001. The Committee was charged with the task of developing a Route 102 (Bronco Highway) Development Management Study. The goal of the study was to adopt a popular new plan for Route 102 that protects open space, stimulates appropriate development, enhances the community, and improves the tax base.

It is clear that future development along Route 102 has the potential to forever change the way Burrillville is perceived by its residents and visitors alike. Development is inevitable. The key to managed development is to ensure that it occurs in a controlled manner that matches the capacity of the land and infrastructure and that it benefits the community by providing quality housing, new jobs and enhancing the tax base.

**II. Background**

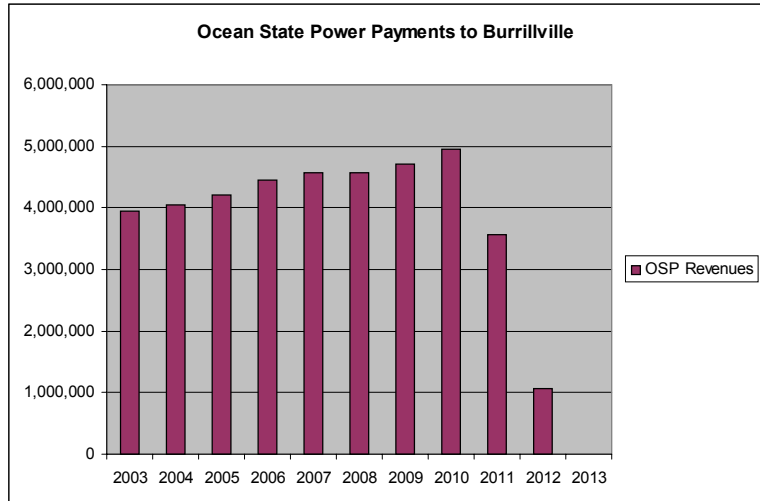
Development along Route 102 is currently guided by the Town's Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision/Land Use Regulations. In response to growing concern regarding the quality and order of development along the corridor, the Town decided to undertake a two-phase scope of work to study the corridor. The objective of Phase I was the creation of a Vision Statement for the future development of Route 102 and to establish Guiding Principles for Future Development. The second phase focused on the preparation of development plans and an implementation schedule.

**A. Need for action**

A large amount of land along the Route 102 corridor is presently available for development. Concern has arisen about the potential impact that development of this land could have on the Town's tax base and infrastructure. Most of the Town's budget comes from property taxes. About 82% of the budget goes to support the school system. Residential development that increases school enrollment will increase education costs and has the potential to significantly affect the budget and therefore the tax rate.

More than \$4.5 million of the Town budget currently comes from payments by Ocean State Power under an agreement that expires by the year 2012. Figure 1 shows the schedule of payments from the power plant to Burrillville under the current agreement.

These payments rise gradually until 2010 and then drop to zero by 2013. Without new residential, industrial or commercial tax base to replace this revenue, taxes will have to increase. If all of this revenue was to be made up by property taxes, the increase would amount to as much as \$1,200 for a typical household, an amount the Committee considers excessive. While the Town anticipates renegotiating its agreement with the power plant, the revenues derived from this source after renegotiation may never again



**Figure 1...Ocean State Power**

approach the peak levels available in the next few years. Therefore, it is important to use the resources provided by the power plant now to prepare new sites for industrial and commercial development that can contribute to the local tax base.

Unfortunately, the Town has almost used up its supply of readily available industrial space. The last site in the Burrillville industrial park was sold during 2002. Although there are some private initiatives underway to prepare new industrial lots, the Town still needs to prepare more space for new industrial and commercial development. Because it is one of the best roads in Burrillville, and because it offers the best highway access to Burrillville, Route 102 is a natural focus for these economic development efforts. At the same time, new development has to be carefully planned to protect the environment and preserve the rural character of Burrillville. Therefore efforts for economic development need to be balanced by programs designed to protect wetlands, water quality, wildlife habitat and forest in the community.

#### B. Previous activities

Actions taken by the Town relating to the Route 102 study began in 1998 with the Industrial Site Survey for Routes 100 & 102. This was followed by a proposal to rezone three properties along Route 102 for industrial uses in June of 2000. One zone change was approved, but the other two were not. The Town awarded a contract to design an extension of Clear River Drive along a railroad right-of-way to Stillwater in August of 2000 to provide access to industrial property near the former landfill and wastewater treatment plant. At the same time, a new Wastewater Facilities Plan was prepared. The new plan, which proposed extensions of sewer service to villages along Route 102, was approved in 2001. Finally, in September of 2001 the Route 102 Committee was established. The Committee was directed to develop plans for the future of Route 102.

The Committee undertook the following activities:

1. Set Goals – The Committee determined that the goal of this study should be to develop a Popular new plan for Route 102 that protects open space, stimulates development, enhances the community, and improves the tax base.
2. Hired Consultant – The Committee Selected Maguire Group Inc. as the consultant to prepare the Development Management Study for the Town.
3. Set Project Limits – The study limits were established to include all parcels abutting Route 102 from Gloucester to North Smithfield, all parcels between Route 102 and Victory Highway, all parcels abutting Clear River Drive, and all areas within one half mile of major intersections on Route 102.
4. Studied Project Area: The committee examined existing patterns of development, inventoried undeveloped and under-developed land, Examined existing RIGIS land use data, Collected tax assessor information and mapping, and evaluated infrastructure (sewer, water, transportation) capabilities and needs.
5. Met with the Public – Throughout the study, the Committee invited public participation in planning for the study area. Public workshops and hearings were also held at key points to solicit public comment as plans for Route 102 were being developed.
6. Developed a Vision Plan – The Committee worked with the consultant team to prepare a concept plan showing potential future developments in the study area.
7. Prepared an Implementation Program – The Committee considered what actions need to be taken to implement the proposed plan and prepared a program indicating who has to do what by when to successfully carry out the plan.
8. Drafted Recommendations – This report presents the results of the research undertaken by the Committee and it provides recommendations for consideration and action by the Town Council.