

Executive Summary

The purpose of this document is to demonstrate the in-depth information that has been compiled from the one-on-one interviews conducted in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Upon extensive research a dynamic amount of information has been developed to establish a base for the revitalization efforts of Pawtucket.

To ensure sampling diversity, the one-on-one interviews were conducted at an array of locations. The sites consisted of the Community Players Theatre, Gamm Theater, The Boys and Girls Club, Slater Mills, and Slater Park. The total amount of interviews compiled was 40. The age of the respondents ranged from 20-80 years old. While the demographics varied there was a clear consistency with some of the common themes found in the interviews. These themes consisted of: commerce, restaurants, safety, arts/culture, restaurants, attractions, and other minor categories.

In hopes to revitalize the city of Pawtucket, it is critical to know how the residents actually feel about the city. The input from the residents about Pawtucket was a great insight in to how they viewed the city. After conducting the qualitative research, the themes that emerged closely resembled those found in the previous quantitative study.

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I. Introduction

Founded over 350 years ago, Pawtucket is the fourth largest city in Rhode Island. The city has been working on a revitalization plan to satisfy a population that has reached over 70,000 people, while paying special attention to the diversity of the socioeconomic environment (City of Pawtucket). Its territorial atmosphere can make it difficult to place and pinpoint exactly what is necessary to be done to fulfill the wishes of the residents. Before the Pawtucket Foundation's "Marketing Development" process can begin, crucial information is needed to fulfill the wants and needs of the city and its residents.

With vacant lots and empty businesses, Pawtucket residents have an opportunity to come together and build a downtown that celebrates their heritage and fosters a sense of community. With attractions such as: the Historical Slater Mill, Slater Park, and McCoy Stadium; Pawtucket's residents are given many opportunities to expand the community to how they see fit.

Interviewing the residents of Pawtucket is the key to learning about what the community wants and what they think will bring change. Only through interacting with the residents can we begin to make recommendations as to how Pawtucket should go about its revitalization.

II. Methodology

As part of a qualitative study, the team members focused on interviewing individual members of the Pawtucket community. The community members must have lived, worked, or been familiar with Pawtucket. The team members followed an In-Depth-Interview guide that helped underlie individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and motives about a specific topic. These In-Depth-Interviews (IDI) aided the team to keep a common interview style to help ask the same type of questions to each individual person.

There were several features the team looked for before interviewing. The first was a sense of natural setting. As mentioned in the introduction section, the team focused on areas such as parks, clubs, community buildings, and common tourist attractions such as theatres and arts. Next, the team then interviewed a diverse group of individuals who had different meanings, perspectives, and understandings. It was important for the team members to use language that allowed clarification or further explanation for the interviews in order to not accidentally lead to an assumed opinion. For example, "Tell me more about what you mean" or "And how do you feel about that...?" were often used to continue the respondents conversation without implying a general direction.

Once all the IDI's were gathered the group needed to identify common themes and categories. In order to do this the team followed Creswell's six steps to a long table method (Creswell, 2003). The first step was for the team to summarize each of their interviews into notes. Next, they discussed an overall feeling and tone for the data. Third, they analyzed the data by sorting the

information into themes. They did this step by having each member represent a theme such as safety, arts, tourist attractions, and miscellaneous and then highlight the theme they were responsible for on the piece of paper. When they reached the fourth step, they stepped back from the table to find which theme showed up the most. They then sorted the theme into chronological order. The members responsible for the theme then were accountable for interpreting the description and meaning behind the themes to be provided as a thematic analysis in the data analysis section (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

III. Data Analysis

Introduction

While analyzing the data, six themes emerged. These themes are, arts and festivals, attractions, safety, commerce, restaurants, and other minor themes, which will be described further. The interviews were done through a face-to-face interview technique known as an in-depth-interview. The themes discovered are further described below. They are sorted by level of importance or most commonly mentioned.

Arts and Culture

After interviewing 40 residents of Pawtucket, the most common theme was arts and culture. Brought up in almost every interview without guidance; the people truly appreciate when there are arts festivals and cultural events that they can go to. One community member stated, "Pawtucket is such a diverse city, the arts and festivals are a way to bring all the diversity together in a beautiful manner." Pawtucket residents embrace the diversity of the city and would like to see more arts and cultural displays that represent the different ethnicities present in the city.

Many respondents thought that there should be more arts and festivals throughout the summer months. They suggested having events in the parks and downtown area. Suggestions also included having monthly themed cultural events such as a Portuguese festival so residents and visitors could learn about the major ethnicities in Pawtucket. Other suggestions included live bands to play cultural music in the parks, tents downtown selling cultural items, theatre plays

about foreign cultures, and accompanying food.

One important place that brings arts to Pawtucket is Gamm Theatre. This was the most common attraction mentioned by the majority of residents as something they truly enjoyed. An employee of Gamm Theatre stated, “Only 15% of the people who come to Gamm Theatre shows are actually Pawtucket residents.” The residents enjoy this because it offers more business to other stores as well as bringing in new people to see their culture. Residents suggested adding more theatrical events to bring in more tourists. Additional ideas suggested were: arts and festivals in the downtown streets, theatrical plays in Slater Park, and outdoor festivals that involve the entire family.

In addition, the most memorable thought that one community member expressed was, “Most people do not venture outside of Pawtucket. By having arts and festivals the community members have a chance of learning about different cultures they are not aware of.” Many residents expressed similar thoughts as a unique selling point to entice tourists to visit Pawtucket. They referred to nearby towns that added culture successfully, such as Providence’s Italian Festival, the New England Expo and *The Big E*.

Another important aspect of arts and culture was the desire to see more beauty in Pawtucket. Even if it did not include specific cultural meanings, community members wanted to see more restoration of buildings, flowers, landscaping, and nicer signs for businesses. One respondent suggested, “I would love to see more outside landscape that brings out the different seasons. For example, Pines for the winter but other trees to bring out the fall, and bushes

to bring out the spring.” Many members of the community expressed the desire for more landscaping in the downtown area to enhance its beauty.

With all this being said, arts and culture are great opportunities to help beautify Pawtucket and bring out the culture that the community members are so proud of. As mentioned in the prior study, arts and festivals have proven to be effective in revitalizing several cities; Tennessee, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island are prime examples. The following are examples of successful arts, festivals, and culture brought into cities.

In Chattanooga, Tennessee, *The Euphoria Food, Wine, & Music Festival* brings out residents and tourist from around the world. The festival has been occurring for five years and is four days long with food, wine, music, and performances. Chattanooga also benefits by receiving revenue through corporate sponsorship of the arts. Pawtucket has the opportunity to create a festival to bring all the cultural foods together. They could have unique ethnic themes for each day involved in the festival.

Lynn, Massachusetts was also successful by beautifying the downtown area by adding antique lighting. The city also revitalized Lynn Commons, an area that was known to be the place the homeless slept and turned it into “The Turtle” with a new fountain to bring out its beauty. Many residents of Pawtucket stressed the idea of revitalizing the downtown area with lighting and landscape. The residents believed that this could encourage more businesses to take the empty building spaces if they looked more welcoming.

The last example is Springfield, Massachusetts. Springfield's dedication to culture and the arts is expressed throughout five museums in the heart of the city. Springfield constructed the Dr. Seuss National Memorial Sculpture Garden. This brings tourists to see the sculptures as well as bringing culture and beauty to a plain green space. The project cost \$6.2 million and was funded through a variety of public and private sources. Pawtucket has a unique cultural appeal with the Mr. Potato head tourist attraction. If they revitalized this attraction they could implement it as a common theme to tie together different parts of the city.

Attractions

Through the in-depth-interviews, the group decided to focus on interviewing residents in attraction areas to gain input from residents that make use of the attractions. With this, the group also obtained several suggestions on ways to improve or create attractions in Pawtucket. A highly noted desire is its need for more family oriented activities. It has become a strong standpoint for many residents, for there aren't as many opportunities for families of different backgrounds and age groups to enjoy a day out.

Pawtucket's Art Festival has been around for 14 years (Pawtucket's Arts Festival). It is a strong part of the cities attractions. Pawtucket has been known for its involvement with the arts and theatre, making the art festivals well known. Not just any art festivals, but ones that may capture the attention of a more diverse crowd giving different people chances to enjoy festivities. One resident stated, "More festivals should be put on to give more people exposure to something different". Adults and children should be able to be involved in a

festival put on through their city that pertains to what they may look for in entertainment. Affordable activities such as, face painting, boat rides on the river and games, could capture the attention of both children and adults.

McCoy Stadium has brought forth much of Pawtucket's charm through its love of baseball. "McCoy is an easy (to) access ... clean, safe, affordable ball park", stated a Pawtucket resident. Many residents also suggested it could be utilized in additional ways to capture a more diverse crowd. A resident who works for the Boy's and Girls Club of Pawtucket suggested, "A movie night with a big screen so kids can go out on the field and see a good movie". A movie night allowing children the chance to watch a film right in the stadium could make a great family night out and an opportunity for children to interact with other children outside of school in a safe environment.

The stadium's array of concerts have been enjoyable for many residents, because it allows them to view live concerts right in the comfort of their own city. Concerts, although strongly liked by most of the city's residents, also bring outsiders to attend the event. One mentioned having a folk concert or a Christmas celebration within the stadium. It has also been brought up to create a smaller "Winter Classic" right in McCoy ,similar to the NHL's Winter Classic that has previously been held in popular baseball fields such as; Fenway Park in Boston and Heinz Field in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania (NHL Winter Classic). This was a popular mention by many residents. Having a hockey game would bring fans from other sports to the stadium; and could potentially become a very popular event within the community.

Many residents expressed that Slater Park is a valuable asset of Pawtucket. Its carousel, playground, Dog Park, bike path and its natural green space have made it widely appreciated by much of Pawtucket. “Winter Wonderland” is a two week event held in December that was founded in 1999 and is an event that brings many people to the park to take part in its entertainment for the holidays (Winter Wonderland 2011). People who live in the city find such an event to be very inviting and easy for many people to attend. More activities, such as games, food and small rides can involve more of the city and include both adults and children.

Some residents agreed that there aren't as many smaller parks in other areas of the city that give access to people who may not be able to utilize Slater Park due to lack of transportation. One said, “Many families don't have cars so having small parks in different areas around the city would make it easier for more families to go to.” Transportation is a theme that had been brought up multiple times throughout the interviews. For many families not being able to afford a vehicle can be an issue, RIPTA is a reliable alternative, but also makes it difficult to get to certain places.

Downtown Pawtucket used to be a popular spot for many people. “I really loved the downtown theaters, there used to be three theaters downtown and they were all destroyed, it's a shame. I wish they would bring a nice theater back.”, stated a resident. Another resident stated the following, “Downtown can be really nice it just has a lot of abandoned buildings that need to be occupied. And there are not many people walking around anymore”. The Blackstone River is another

very important piece to the downtown area. Residents would enjoy the river more if it was cleaned up. Boat rides have sparked the interests of many residents, because it had used to be a fun activity the city offered. A good clean up and a couple fun events could bring them back to it's former beauty.

The last concern residents had was their lack of awareness. "Being aware of the activities is a big thing", said a local Pawtucket resident. Learning how to adapt and integrate with smaller attractions could then lead to bigger ones, such as a zoo or a Children's Museum. By better organizing advertisements or spreading the word through community members more people may venture out to new activities and see what the city has to offer.

Safety

Another common theme was safety. The majority of people said they felt safe, with one admitting they "still felt safe even though my car has been broken into several times". When speaking to people that were able to provide the viewpoints of the youth of Pawtucket, there was mention of violence attributed to school rivalries. Noting that a majority of the violence in the city was because of these rivalries. Some residents that have lived in Pawtucket for upward of thirty years mentioned that they, "noticed a steady increase in crime as time has passed" but they still feel safe. Over all, most residents were aware of crime but generally felt unaffected by it. A different safety aspect that people did feel effected by was pedestrian safety.

Safety goes beyond measures of crime; pedestrian safety downtown is also very important. Pedestrian safety refers to making sure the city is physically

safe to navigate. Making sure roads aren't in disrepair and making sure there are enough sidewalks. As we saw in Springfield MA, special care was taken to ensure streets-capes were kept in good condition and up to code. This included proper lighting, curbs, sidewalks and crosswalks. It was found during the interviews that resident thought that road disrepair was a danger to more than just the people driving.

Suggestions for improving the safety of the city came from many sources, some of them tied in with beautification with the introduction of better lit areas downtown. As for the violence attributed to the school rivalries, one resident stated "A panel of students from all the high schools should be created to come together to figure out ways to put aside their differences". This came from a member of the Boys and Girls Club who could speak on behalf of the youth.

Commerce

Another theme was commerce. While interviewing the residents there was constant mention of there being "nothing downtown". When asked about what kind of shops people wanted to see downtown, most people weren't sure, but some thought it would be nice to have "clothing and jewelry stores". When asked about the current businesses, residents were confused why high-end shops were going in downtown. They mentioned that these shops went out of business very quickly and didn't know why high-end businesses thought that they would be successful in Pawtucket.

Residents stated that they thought the Apex building needed to be cleaned up. They mentioned that because the tax was too high downtown,

reasonably priced businesses were discouraged from setting up shop. When asked about big box stores and chains most residents stated that they don't want them, a few though stated, "A Wal-Mart would be nice." but others thought that this would destroy any hope of shops downtown, much in the same way as the malls did.

Respondents wanted to see Main Street filled with small mom-and-pops that can build a sense of community. Residents want shops that are willing to hire a younger crowd so kids can find summer work. Creating a bustling downtown relates back to with the background research showing that if shops are built, normal downstream economic effects will take place and people will come and spend money. Creating foot traffic downtown is essential for businesses to last and thrive, starting with businesses that people want and can afford is step one.

A resident also mentioned that it would be nice for some of the buildings downtown to have shops on the first floor and have office space or housing above them to make full use of the buildings. This directly correlates with what was done in Vancouver, WA and Springfield, MA. In both cities, complexes were constructed that provided office space as well as retail unites. Doing this will grow the downtown population providing a larger customer base for commerce of all types.

Pawtucket's diversity presents a wonderful opportunity for people to open up shops that display their culture and heritage. One woman stated "Its a real

shame that there aren't craft stores to cater to traditions from people's homelands". A Portuguese woman and her mother expressed this while telling us about their plan to move back to Brazil. People want to shop but there simply isn't anywhere to shop downtown.

As will be mentioned in the following section, restaurants are an important part of the commerce. As with any shopping area people need to refuel during their shopping excursions. Even if there were shops downtown when people get hungry they're going to have to leave the area to get food. Having restaurants and cafes will not only bring money into those businesses but it will also keep people in the vicinity of shops.

Restaurants

One of the largest themes to emerge was restaurants and cafés. The need for more eateries were mentioned in almost every interview. Implementing this idea would benefit the beautification efforts that are currently in motion. Other cities that were mentioned in the previous report that have successfully constructed more eateries throughout their city were Greenville, South Carolina and Lynn Massachusetts. One way that Lynn and Greenville were able to beautify the waterfront was by putting the restaurants on or near water.

Many of the interviewees mentioned that they like to attend the events in Pawtucket, however after attending they had nowhere to eat afterwards. With the arts being such a predominant source of entertainment in Pawtucket, new restaurants would be a perfect way to bring more people into the city, as well as satisfy the residents.

Pawtucket is a city that would prosper with the addition of a diverse cuisine. The downtown area of the city has a handful of different theaters and attractions that people visit weekly for example, Gamm Theater, The Community Players Club, McCoy Stadium and many more. One resident said, "There is nowhere to go out to eat in this area, and there needs to be some nice shops. It is so sad to see when we come to the Gamm Theater we can't even grab a bite to eat before we go because there is nowhere to go." This also was mentioned on several occasions. Residents were passionate about this topic and stated that it should be a priority.

Having more restaurants in the city will also encourage more people to visit Pawtucket on a regular basis. As a direct result of having more people visiting the local eateries, people will be exposed to the revitalization efforts of the city.

Other Minor Themes

This section reviews topics that sprouted organically but sporadically during the interviews. These topics are important because they may have not been a prevalent topic in all pieces of conversation but a lot of very interesting ideas were conveyed. These topics of interest collaborated with the findings from the sample cities, which can be found in the background research.

One of the most common topics in this section that was also found in the comparative analysis was beautification efforts. It was mentioned that the city needs a lot of fixing up, as well as trash clean up. Most residents mentioned the river when referring to clean up efforts.

Looking back at the first section of the research that was compiled, beautification and general cleaning up were large parts of other cities revitalization efforts. In order to make the city a warm and inviting place to live, work, and visit, it first needs to be somewhere people are willing and happy to spend their time. Lighting is important, residents want to be able to walk in their city and feel comfortable at night. By making the city bright and welcoming, people are more apt to spend evening hours in the city.

Another point that came across was tearing down unused parking garages. Some of the residents felt like it was a waste of space and generally didn't feel safe parking their cars there. It was said that many of the parking garages are not being utilized and are an eyesore. One resident specifically said "I would get rid of the parking garages. They're not nice to look at ... and unsafe. I would not want to go through them and I would certainly not want my wife to either." It was suggested that an alternative way of parking should be devised. An example that came to mind was what Jacksonville, Florida did with their parking garages. The city had off street parking that looked nice and was a safe place to leave your vehicle.

A very common theme among residents was the lack of family activities. People mentioned McCoy Stadium and later said, "If you didn't like baseball there was nowhere to go with your family". This is worth mentioning because of the large amount of families with young children in the city. In the previous research that was compiled cities had many different forms of attractions such as aquariums and theme parks, providing save entertainment for all age groups.

Finally, taxes were a common theme amongst almost all of the interviews. Many of the residents felt that the tax rate was too high and was making the city unaffordable. One of the residents stated, "The housing prices are average but the true problem lies with the taxes, I have been living here for 20 years, and the prices are ridiculous." Unfortunately reducing taxes is a difficult thing to do. However, it is important to mention all topics of concern voiced by residents.

IV. Recommendations

According to our interviews the series of recommendations that we put forth are tailored to what the residents of Pawtucket have expressed interest in. There are several main themes, including: commerce, dining, entertainment, parks, attractions, and safety. These common themes occurred throughout just about every interview that was conducted with residents of Pawtucket.

Based upon the research, what people want are small businesses that are preferably not chains. We recommend that small and reasonably priced clothing, jewelry and craft stores be constructed downtown. These stores can take advantage of the local artists and bring a better return on the city's' investment to the art scene, which was an expressed concern of several residents. Integrating the shopping with local talent and generating community involvement will bring customers and create a more stable business. Just as the arts festival brings in people from out of town, stores carrying the artists' work year-round will draw these visitors back to the city multiple times a year. Just as important as bringing in commerce, restaurants are essential to creating a bustling downtown area in which people will stay.

According to interviewees dining is essential downtown. When talking to residents that work downtown they expressed that they, "want places to go out to lunch but there just isn't anything". A resident told us she just sits in her car and eats her lunch. Based on our findings, we recommend restaurants with a small town feel be put downtown. Some residents expressed that they would like outdoor seating for use in nice weather. Residents also asked that some bars be

incorporated in the plans. We recommend that the community interest be kept in mind during the restaurant selection process. Residents also expressed interest in small cafés. Cafés and restaurants provide yet another outlet for residents to display and celebrate their cultures.

While interviewing residents, it was clear that people longed for something to do without having to go to Providence or other neighboring towns. Based on suggestions from residents, we recommend revitalization and better utilization of performing arts and theatre to reflect cultural diversity. We also recommend, based on respondent feedback, that a movie theater be constructed. Residents expressed specific interest in entertainment that will bring families together. An additional family attraction suggested was bowling alleys. Just as these venues will bring families together and give the kids something to do, parks and green space are equally as important in providing families with a quality place to relax and enjoy the downtown area.

According to our research, people love Slater Park. However because of its location on one side of town it is inaccessible to many families because of a lack of transportation. We recommend that more designated green spaces and small parks are made available throughout the city for all residents. Corresponding with the background research, green space in the downtown area will provide people with a place to relax and enjoy the city.

While conducting the studies the team saw many commonalities with people's thoughts on safety. Most people that the team talked to stated that they, for the most part, felt safe. The only time safety was a concerning factor was

when speaking on behalf of the kids. During interviews with respondents who worked at the Boys & Girls Club it was discovered that due to school rivalries there was an increase in violence among the youth.

Suggestions that some residents made and ones that we believe could be helpful are to create events where these kids can come together in a non-competitive environment to reach a common goal. One resident suggested that a panel be created among the students from all the schools to help come up with solutions. This panel would be tasked with community organization between the schools.

V. Conclusion

These 40 In-Depth-Interviews were conducted as a continuation of the research started in the fall in support of the Pawtucket Foundation's revitalization efforts in the city of Pawtucket. The interviews were conducted in person at various locations in the city of Pawtucket. The information was then analyzed in a manner consistent with the long table format (Creswell 2003) In order to investigate common themes.

The common themes that emerged were: Arts, theatre, culture, attractions, safety, commerce, and restaurants. The sixth section consisted of a compilation of minor themes that emerged.

Some highlights of suggestions made are outdoor seating for restaurants and new, local restaurants. There was also a desire for cleanliness along the riverfront and more small cafes and art shops to better utilize the empty space by the Blackstone River. Green space downtown was also a very common theme, and would help incorporate more of a sense of community by integrating playgrounds for children.

Overall, the interviews provided much insight into the minds of the citizens of Pawtucket. Even though every citizen could not have his or her voice heard, the suggestions made by these respondents will certainly help the Pawtucket Foundation's efforts to revitalize and rebrand the city of Pawtucket into the beautiful and bustling city it is meant to be.

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