

## A REPORT OF POSSIBLE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION FOR SINKING SPRING

The downtown heart of Sinking Spring is that area along Penn Avenue from the old Borough Hall at Columbia eastward past the Shillington Road intersection and along the frontage of the former Boscov's West store. This downtown core ought to be the vibrant commercial center of the borough, but instead it is beset by business failures and vacant buildings, including the Joe Dell showroom, the former bank, and the former Boscov's.

A major reason for this malaise is the two awkwardly angled intersections: one at Columbia Avenue, the other at Shillington Road. These intersections not only clog traffic movement, they make pedestrian crossing a dangerous venture. A healthy downtown commercial district requires better traffic management and improved pedestrian safety.

However, although heavy traffic is a problem, areas with high traffic counts are sought out by commercial developers because traffic brings customers to shops and restaurants. Penn Avenue traffic is both a problem and an asset to downtown Sinking Spring.

Ludgate Engineering has suggested it is feasible to correct the Columbia Avenue intersection by taking the old Borough Hall and an adjacent building so that Columbia can be re-aligned to intersect Penn Avenue at nearly a right angle, directly across from a straightened Cacoosing Avenue. This will provide an adequate radius so that trucks can turn from Penn onto Columbia without undue difficulty and the other traffic flow will be smoother too. Squaring up the intersection will improve sight lines and make pedestrian crossing safer as well.

Ludgate Engineering suggests the Shillington Road and Mull Avenue intersection should be re-constructed too. It is possible to raise the grade of Penn Avenue by five feet in front of the Notary Shop. If the grade is raised Shillington can be re-aligned to intersect Penn Avenue at a right angle and Mull Avenue can be turned to line up directly with Shillington Road.

With the Columbia Avenue and the Shillington Road intersection problems corrected the Penn Avenue traffic will flow much more smoothly and pedestrian safety will improve too. Now it will be easier for people to get in and out of businesses along Penn Avenue's frontage.

Traffic improvement will be a good start for revitalizing downtown and improving the tax base but it should not stop there. Redevelopment of the former Boscov's West site is another step to take. There have been attempts by private developers to redevelop this site but development potential was not valuable enough to offset the cost of demolition, grading and road connections. The solution suggested by Ludgate Engineering is to add

a light at Queen Street and align Queen with Bainbridge (as Penn Dot has suggested). Then a “street of shops” is envisioned to connect from Queen Street to Shillington Road.

The “street of shops” will feature on-street parking and a pedestrian friendly landscape to make it attractive for people to park their cars and walk into stores or restaurants. Modern apartments could be added above the shops to give the new area additional night time presence.

At present there are several acres of undeveloped land south of Penn Avenue, west of Shillington Road. This land resists development, in part because of difficult access. Ludgate Engineering suggests continuing the “street of shops” to cross Shillington and continue parallel to Penn Avenue (adjacent to the railroad). Krick Avenue can be extended to tie into this street and the street itself could be continued on to intersect Columbia Avenue, using part of the VFW grounds.

This extension from the “street of shops” could provide still more retail space but an equally beneficial use could be high-density residential, whether conventional town homes, apartments, or age-restricted. Unfortunately, although the land south of Penn Avenue has good potential, the area is too small for major retail development.

Major retail development these days involves an “anchor store” of 60,000 to 120,000 square feet flanked by smaller stores and “out parcels” bringing the total lease-able space to 200,000 square feet or more. There is one site accessible by Penn Avenue in downtown Sinking Spring which has the potential for such a major development.

The Village Greens golf course site is thirty acres, large enough to support 200,000 square feet of buildings at less than twenty percent lot coverage. Parking, loading, and drives could be accommodated and still leave fifty percent green area. If Penn Avenue traffic is improved as suggested, a major entrance with a new traffic signal could be provided at or west of Broad Street.

This type of development would take advantage of the traffic on Penn Avenue, Shillington Road, Mull Avenue, and Columbia Avenue. This development would provide a tax base which the Borough may sorely need in the future.