

**WestbrookWorks.org**

A Coalition for a Stronger, Cleaner City

 Westbrook ME

## **Study Concludes Quarry & Asphalt Plant Would Lead To Failed Economic Development Effort**

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**Westbrook, Maine** In order to fully realize the economic impact Pike's proposed expansion of a quarry, asphalt plant and rock crushing facility would have on the City of Westbrook, WestbrookWorks recently commissioned an economic impact study by PolicyOne Research, an organization with a long history of involvement in Westbrook's Strategic Planning process.

Based on PolicyOne's review of economic development data, including the 2007 Strategic Economic Development Plan & Process; the 2000 Comprehensive Plan; Occupational Cluster Definitions & TIF Related Aspects; Statistical Data about the 5-Star Industrial Park and a recent survey of businesses members residing in the Park, ***PolicyOne Research concluded that Westbrook's City Administration and elected leaders were maintaining the City's Vision by re-zoning the Five Star Industrial Park. The research also concluded that if quarrying and an asphalt plant are permitted, then new business attraction, expansion of targeted businesses, and the City's Vision for economic growth would not be realized to its fullest potential.***

The following four points were the basis for this conclusion:

- The 2007 Economic Development Vision process underscored the City's future direction, to "...develop and implement strategies and recommendations for targeted economic and business development sectors. In particular and based on the City's economic assets, the city will develop strategies for the following targeted sectors: Bioscience/biotech; precision manufacturing; information technology; finance and business services; office; service economy; arts and cultural economy; energy and environmental related industry; retail – around exit 48, Route 302, and the Downtown" (page 2, March 9, 2007 report).
- The 2006 Economic Development Vision captured important concepts about change in the section *Future Land Use and Quality of Life*: "The City, once known as a paper manufacturing giant, is moving into its future as an environmentally friendly, economically sound, and progressively active community looking towards continued excellence" (page 16, March 9, 2007 report).
- Among the recommendations and observations that emerged from the 2007 Economic Summit work, including both the pre-summit and summit phases, was a practical vision: "The Industrial Park needs to go to the next phase and have the amenities that were initially envisioned, including trails, sidewalks, transportation, and day care. It needs to have more of a campus feel. The City should develop an identity for that Park" (page 24, March 16, 2007 report).
- The 2000 Comprehensive Plan outlined planning goals for Industrial/Commercial Expansion: the Planning goals outlined in the plan include development that should be "...high-quality business office or industrial space that is planned in a campus-like atmosphere that permits full development while protecting the environmental qualities of the properties" (chapter 8, page 15, 2000 Comprehensive Plan).

The study considered a number of economic indicators, including property and excise tax revenues that new business attraction and business expansion would generate if the Park were to be rezoned. It also considered the future development potential of 44 available acres within the Five Star Park.

Regarding annual property tax revenue, the study highlights a comparison of total property taxes paid per acre, and shows that while Pike Industries pays \$1,024 per acre in property taxes, all the other companies who were within the proposed rezoning pay on average \$8,293 per acre.

A similar comparison of existing excise taxes paid and acreage shows the same result, i.e., the types of businesses in the proposed rezoning district that are in keeping with the City's Vision represent a significantly higher existing economic use than quarrying activities. A comparison of total excises taxes paid per acre shows that Pike Industries pays \$252 per acre, while the comparable total for all the other companies within the proposed rezoning area pay approximately \$652 per acre.

Regarding future development opportunity, the study concludes that if the available acreage were to be developed in a manner that is consistent with companies currently in the 5-Star Industrial Park, re-zoning area excluding Pike, the estimated annual property taxes paid on the 44.64 acres would be \$370,210. This represents \$324,502 more than the amount of taxes if the parcels were developed in a manner that was consistent with Pike Industry uses.

Likewise, if the acreage were to be developed in a manner that is consistent with WestbrookWorks member companies, the estimated annual property taxes paid on the 44.64 acres would be \$506,653 or \$460,946 more than the amount of taxes if the parcels were developed in a manner that was consistent with Pike Industry uses. Clearly, re-zoning of the park represents a higher potential fiscal gain to the City.

Warren Knight, an active member of WestbrookWorks whose family owns and operates Smiling Hill Farm commented on the study. "As farmers we understand yields and that planting the correct crops will produce the greatest return. This study clearly shows that if we want our City to realize the greatest benefit in the future then planting the seeds of rezoning the Park is the right thing to do. This will in essence say "NO" to Pike's proposal to move its Main Street operations to Spring Street, which is also exactly what the city said to Blue Rock 41 years ago."

Jack Wood, a spokesperson for WestbrookWorks and an employee of Artel also commented. "We believe the study concludes that if Westbrook is serious about economic development, then rezoning the Park is a very important step. Artel purchased its property in order to operate and expand, which was supported by the City's vision of a business park that fostered growth of technology-oriented and other compatible businesses. Bradley Drive is our 'global headquarters.' We hope that our as our

business continues to grow, this activity will in turn attract other precision manufacturing or high technology interests to the neighborhood. Such momentum is a real possibility should the rezoning occur.”

WestbrookWorks initially formed to respond to the proposal from Pike Industries to relocate its Main Street quarry operation to a property along Spring Street. The organization is a collaborative business and citizen group which came together to support the City’s vision of rezoning of 5-Star Industrial Park; to protect current business interests; and to promote future economic development of the area.

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