

***Downtown Visions***

***2000 and Beyond***

*Middletown, Connecticut*

# **DOWNTOWN VISIONS 2000 AND BEYOND**

Middletown, Connecticut



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**Middletown Planning and Zoning Commission**

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## I. VISION STATEMENT

Downtown will be the heart of Middletown. It will represent the focal point of community activity. The downtown will evolve as a thriving and economically viable area while always remembering and building upon its rich history.

The classic architecture of the downtown will be preserved and enhanced. New development will be at a scale which will preserve and complement the character of the historic downtown and restore its connection to the river.

The downtown will be unique in that there will be a distinct mix of retail, service, governmental, residential, social service, entertainment and cultural activities. With this mixture, the downtown will prosper. Merchants and restaurateurs will target the downtown market both in terms of products offered and hours of operation. They will emphasize customer service and a knowledge of the customer and the products offered. Government will strive to keep the downtown safe, active, clean and attractive. Downtown neighborhoods will be a top priority. Monies and programs will target these neighborhoods to initiate their revitalization while at the same time preserving their historic integrity, character and scale. The arts and entertainment sectors will thrive. They will represent a truly unique element in the downtown and will attract thousands of spectators and shoppers. Wesleyan University will play an integral role in the downtown. The downtown will become an active and thriving college town.

Intermingled among these uses will be clean and well maintained public spaces. These public spaces will host outdoor concerts, plays, farmers markets and other special events. From these public spaces there will be clear visual and pedestrian linkages to the riverfront. The downtown and the riverfront will once again be united. The riverfront, in addition to its popular restaurant and night club, will host a number of water oriented activities and events.

Downtown will be a popular place to work, gather, dine, relax and shop. In this way, Middletown residents, downtown employees, college students and their families, and visitors alike will all come to enjoy Middletown's thriving and vibrant downtown.

## II. INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1993 the Planning and Zoning Commission formed a Downtown Planning Subcommittee. This committee was charged with the responsibility of evaluating current plans and then formulating a comprehensive plan for the downtown.

The committee immediately recognized that most revitalization efforts in Middletown have been piecemeal and uncoordinated. While in the short term this approach did show some results, there has never been a truly comprehensive plan for the future of downtown Middletown.

For the purposes of this plan the downtown is generally bounded on the east by the Connecticut River, on the west by Pearl and Broad St., on the south by the South Congregational Church and on the north by St. Johns Church. The plan also recognizes the existence of major employers, important residential areas, and Wesleyan University on the outskirts of the downtown.

This plan provides a strategy to keep the area a vital mixed use district. The plan builds upon the strengths that exist in the downtown. The plan will:

- 1.) help maintain a very important segment of the City's tax base;
- 2.) allow the downtown to provide needed goods and services for residents;
- 3.) maintain an attractive business and investment climate which will encourage investment in retail and commercial areas without infringing on the surrounding and very important residential neighborhoods; and
- 4.) provide a direct physical and visual connection to the river.

The goal of the plan is quite simple - to attract more people and investment to the downtown. The plan is an attempt to articulate and prioritize the issues and opportunities facing Middletown's downtown. Recognizing a need for general policy, site specific recommendations, and a very clear implementation strategy, the plan is divided into three phases.

The first phase is the overall conceptual plan. This phase articulates the general policy and direction of the downtown. The second phase outlines recommendations for each of the seven subdistricts in the downtown. The third and final phase is the implementation strategy. This third phase identifies the key players, funding sources and a step by step strategy to begin the gradual progression towards achieving the plans goal and vision.

Finally, it is recognized that circumstances change and therefore this plan is not set in stone. Constant evaluation will be necessary, amendments may be required but the overall framework for the revitalization of the downtown is now in place.

### III. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

#### OVERALL STRATEGY FOR DOWNTOWN.

The plan for downtown provides a strategy to ensure that downtown is an active mixed use area. While the plan focusses on improving the business climate and encouraging active commercial and public uses in downtown, the plan also concentrates on strengthening the existing residential and mixed land use neighborhoods which are integral components of downtown and which provide vitality to downtown.

The strategy is to promote downtown as an exciting and interesting area to be in by enhancing retail uses, promoting after hours entertainment, and creating new arts and cultural activities and recreational uses within downtown.

The plan seeks to upgrade the existing fabric of downtown and strengthen its image. The strategy recognizes that the downtown is a collage of differentiated spaces and therefore, the plan analyzes the seven sub-districts in downtown to formulate sensitive and specific proposals.

The following pages articulate general policies for the downtown. The policies regard land-use; riverfront access; future development; urban design, preservation and rehabilitation; arts and cultural activities; downtown neighborhoods; traffic and pedestrian circulation, and parking; and retail revitalization and downtown management.

## LAND USE STRATEGY

As the vision statement articulates, a vital mixed use environment is the central theme of this plan. The greater the diversity the more likely the uses will complement and build upon one another. Currently there is no clear land use strategy for downtown Middletown. The area is zoned Central Business. The uses allowed in the B-1 zone vary greatly. They include banks, offices, hotels, single and multi-family dwellings, funeral homes, public buildings, retail sales, restaurants, bars and other service related establishments. While this permissive zoning will help foster the mixed use character which is central to this plan, in many cases the uses are not sufficiently directed.

This plan recognizes that Main Street is made up of three unique districts. The districts include the north end neighborhood service district, the downtown retail core and the south end post redevelopment commercial district. It is essential that the land use strategy promote only appropriate uses in the districts.

Zoning should be revised accordingly to reflect these district and the overall plan. In terms of land use, these districts must complement one another, and in order to do this, each must establish its own concentrated mix of similar uses. Concentration is a key word. Shopping districts along Main Street should be as compact as possible and have continuous retail frontage. This will encourage pedestrian traffic along the Main Street frontage and will facilitate both comparison shopping and impulse buying. Service type establishments such as small restaurants, copy centers and support offices should be directed towards office/governmental complexes. Equally important, there must be a captive population in the downtown. Therefore, the upper floors should be devoted to offices, small service businesses, and distinctive residential units targeted towards young professionals and college students. The downtown residential neighborhoods should be reinforced and when appropriate recreated. Intrusion of inappropriate businesses into these neighborhoods should be discouraged.

### Specific Policies

1. Promote office, service, and distinctive residential units on the upper floors of Main Street buildings;
2. Insure that all land uses relate to, and where feasible, connect to the waterfront;
3. Revise zoning to recognize and reinforce the unique districts in the downtown and along Main Street;
4. Promote more lodging, bed and breakfast, and conference type establishments, within and on the fringe of the downtown, to attract conferences, tourists and weekend visitors;

5. Maximum Building height for buildings fronting on Main Street should be changed from twelve (12) to six (6) stories. Minimum Building heights, for buildings fronting on Main Street should be changed from one (1) to three (3) stories;
6. A maximum setback from Main Street of five feet should be established. The front line of the building shall be located within the maximum setback area for a minimum of 80% of the lot frontage on Main Street;
7. In order to achieve continuous retail frontage, first floor land uses on Main Street should be restricted to retail, including, retail banks, theaters, restaurants, and other eating and drinking establishments with direct pedestrians access on to Main Street for each individual establishment;
8. Permitted and Special exception uses in the Central Business (B-1) Zone should be reviewed to establish the desired mix. Undesirable or inappropriate uses such as adult book stores, adult entertainment, liquor stores, massage parlors, check cashing and pawn shops should be deleted;
9. Cafeterias should be eliminated as a permitted accessory use in the Central Business (B-1) Zone;
10. The Ferry/Green and Northwest Residential Area should be rezoned from Central Business to Residential Pre Zoning;
11. Zoning should prevent the conversion from residential to office between Broad Street and High Street;
12. The Preservation Board and the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust should formulate Design guidelines for each subdistrict within the downtown and act in an advisory role to the Planning and Zoning Commission;
13. Architectural assistance for exterior renovation is a necessary service. The Preservation Board should provide property owners and merchants with preliminary design assistance to help visualize the type of improvements that could be made to their properties;
14. Zoning should incorporate the Design Guidelines for substantial renovations of new buildings and new signs;
15. Required parking for new development should be reviewed with the goal of maximizing pedestrian activity. Payments in lieu of parking and shared parking should be considered. Creating large buildings with interconnected parking garages does little to increase pedestrian circulation and should be discouraged;

16. Zoning should be amended to insure that no driveway access or parking lots are permitted along Main Street;
17. Zoning should be modified to specifically permit Outdoor restaurant seating;
18. Zoning should be amended so that all new uses shall be integrated into the overall pedestrian circulation system;
19. Zoning should be amended to prohibit free standing signs in the Central Business (B-1) Zone;
20. Zoning should be amended to specifically allow small projecting signs and awnings over the public ROW;
21. Neighborhood Stores should be eliminated from the MX Zone;
22. Tax assessment deferrals for substantial renovation should be utilized, as has been implemented in the North End of Main St., adopt provisions of Section I2-65c-f of the General Statutes which permit gradual phasing in over ten years of the value of the rehabilitation;
23. Create a facade improvement and rehabilitation loan program, modeled similar to Manchester and Norwalk. Community Development Block Grant funds should form a major component of this program;
24. Consider waiving municipal permit fees for conforming property improvements.

## DOWNTOWN AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE WATERFRONT

The Connecticut River is the single most important asset in downtown Middletown. The riverfront represents the competitive edge the downtown possesses over most communities. The river holds the key to the long term economic revitalization of the downtown. Middletown exists as a city today because of its relationship to the river and its future prosperity will be tied to the river.

Middletown's evolution as a thriving agricultural and later industrial center was highly dependent on its proximity to the Connecticut River. Throughout the majority of its history, Middletown's thriving downtown enjoyed and benefitted from direct, at grade access to its waterfront.

In the late 1950's the construction of Connecticut State Route 9 severed this extremely important link between the downtown and the waterfront. At the same time, redevelopment efforts did not recognize the waterfront as the single most significant natural and cultural resource in the City, and all too often new development turned its back on the then polluted river.

It was not until the environmental movement of the 1970's, when the state and federal government enacted clean water legislation and began spending millions of dollars to clean the Connecticut River, that the City began to recognize the tremendous opportunities the reclaimed river had to offer. In recognition of the river's value and to draw visitors to the waterfront, the City developed Harborpark and approved a popular restaurant and nightclub on the banks of the river. Now that popular amenities have been established on the waterfront, this plan recognizes that there is a need to re-establish a "pedestrian friendly" link between the downtown, Harborpark, and the Connecticut River.

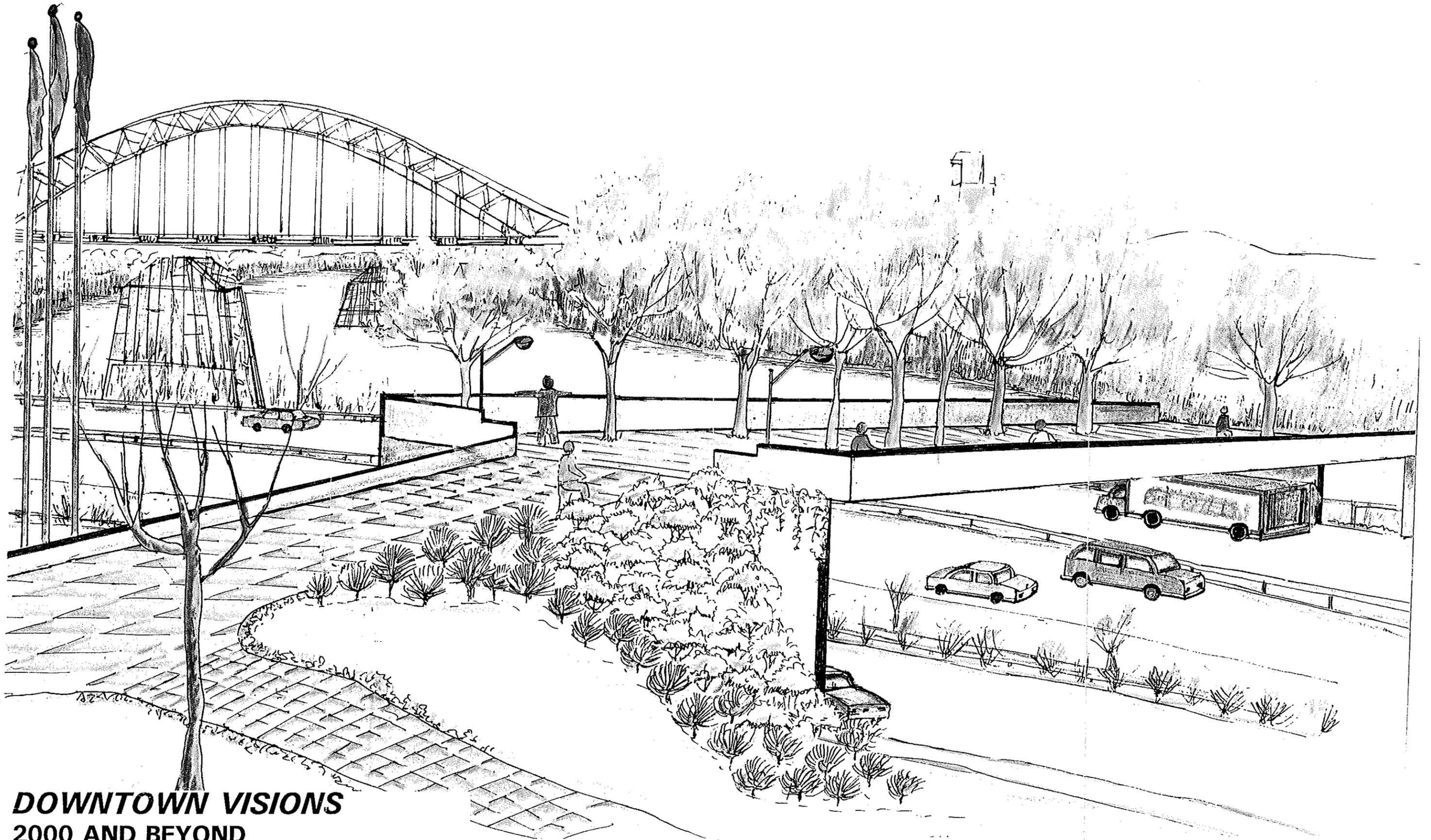
This plan advocates the creation of a carefully designed plaza over Route 9. This plan envisions this plaza as a stimulus for investment in an adjoining government/cultural plaza and major tourist attraction at the vacant deKoven Drive courthouse property. The addition of a portion of the Columbus Plaza parking area, the Capital Theater, and the MAT properties will provide the land mass for the total esplanade, which will once again reestablish the link between Main Street and the waterfront (This plan recognizes the vital importance of the parking in this area and therefore advocates a redesign which will increase the number of spaces). Once established, this new Columbus Plaza will allow visitors to the downtown to shop along Main Street, enter the Plaza for a concert or craft fair, proceed for a visit to a tourist attraction of statewide significance and then over Route 9 to the riverfront for a leisurely walk along an interpretive trail or for a drink and/or dinner at America's Cup or a cruise down the Connecticut River.

While this plan recognizes that the above improvements are a crucial first step in the evolution of improved river access, the plan also recognizes that the ultimate solution is a much expanded riverfront plaza capable of accommodating mixed use riverfront development. At this point an exploratory committee should be established to:

- 1.) begin consensus building;
- 2.) the development of a conceptual plan;
- 3.) the identification of funding sources, including private sector involvement; and,
- 4.) the production of an informational and promotional document to be used when lobbying for special appropriations in future federal transportation acts.

In addition to this improved river access, this plan mandates that all future development must accentuate the City's relationship to the river. River views must be preserved, and where possible, enhanced. The view of the City from Route 9 and the river must continuously improve. The City must carefully scrutinize the architecture of buildings fronting on deKoven Dr. and should strive to light the arches of the Arrigoni Bridge. In this way, Middletown will continue to develop its positive image as the City by the river.

Finally, as the City strives for improved access, and when improved access is achieved, it is essential that the harbor area be carefully managed. For this reason the plan advocates the creation of a harbor management plan, as allowed for in Section 22a-113n of the Connecticut General Statutes, by the Harbor Improvement Agency.



***DOWNTOWN VISIONS***  
**2000 AND BEYOND**  
**CITY OF MIDDLETOWN**  
**PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT**

**PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN PLAZA OVER ROUTE 9**

## SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE ANALYSIS

In order to identify future development opportunities a susceptibility to change analysis was undertaken. This analysis considered current ownership, vacancy rates, parcel size, ease of consolidation of parcels and surrounding land uses which may provide an impetus for redevelopment. The areas identified as being most susceptible to change were as follows:

- 1.) the Sears, Sears Automotive, Riverview Center block;
- 2.) the deKoven Dr. Superior Court property;
- 3.) the City Tire property ;
- 4.) properties north of Rapallo Ave. behind Main St. frontage;
- 5.) the Marino property on Ferry St.
- 6.) the Metro Square block;
- 7.) the Acme Auto, Middletown Plate Glass block;
- 8.) the Harbor area south of Sumner Brook.

## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

1. Analyze the opportunities and impacts of a new Police Headquarters in the downtown area. If determined to be appropriate keep new buildings in scale with existing structures and in accordance with this plan;
2. Promote the redevelopment of the Sears Automotive Center as an office building or hotel/conference center with a scale and architecture which responds to and complements the new Courthouse;
3. Locate a transit center on the northern side of Rapallo Avenue to bring people and greater activity to the area. Insure that the facility is in keeping with the area's historic nature and scale and is sensitive to air pollution concerns;
4. Create a focal point in the center of the downtown by developing a Pedestrian Mall with links to Main Street and the riverfront in the area of Columbus Plaza and use the deKoven Drive courthouse property to develop a major tourist attraction;
5. Promote the development of retail frontage on buildings facing Columbus Plaza, particularly in the Clock Tower building;

6. When market conditions dictate, guide the private sector redevelopment of Metro Square towards the recreation of a mixed use neighborhood complete with offices, specialty retail, residential, restaurants, and night clubs. (Ensure a mandatory residential component);
7. If vacated, direct the future re-use of the Bob's Warehouse building on Kings Avenue towards multi-family residential;
8. After reviewing potential environmental constraints, consider the development of a marina at the Peterson Oil property;
9. Examine the feasibility of relocating the sewage treatment plant in conjunction with major employers to create an expanded marina at Harborpark;
10. If the treatment plant were to be relocated, promote high rise, multi-family residential development in the area south of Sumner Brook and on the southern side of River Road;
11. Attract small to medium sized corporate headquarters to accommodate the automated and telecommunicating workforce of the 21st century. This will foster a mixed use atmosphere of working, shopping and relaxing all within the downtown.

## URBAN DESIGN, PRESERVATION AND REHABILITATION.

The plan seeks to provide a strong identity to the downtown. While prominent landmarks such as the Arrigoni Bridge, the church steeples and the Middlesex Mutual office tower do exist, the downtown lacks a strong sense of place. There is no clear system of visual signage that ties the whole of downtown, nor does the downtown exude a distinct image. To a certain extent, the North End does maintain a certain character but this character fails to permeate to other areas within downtown. Another significant weakness is the lack of visually defining limits of Downtown. Downtown contains numerous features which could enhance the visual image and lend articulation if developed appropriately. The plan seeks to identify these features and proposes interventions to enhance them.

Downtown Middletown has a distinct history dating back to 1651. Its character remains due to the presence of historic buildings along Main street. Though the historic buildings have been earmarked for preservation, the downtown does not specify design controls on new construction or rehabilitation of existing buildings in proximity to historic buildings. Regulating the built form in downtown is important to ensure that any new construction does not engulf older buildings and destroy the historic character. This regulation need not necessarily require rigid adherence to restoration standards. The regulation should encourage building rehabilitation that respects the distinctive architectural quality of each structure while adapting it to meet contemporary commercial or residential requirements. The guidelines should address acceptable store fronts, window and door types, approved siding material, masonry repair, replacement or highlighting of trim, cornices and other architectural details, selection of appropriate colors and removal of incompatible signs. The zoning regulations should include these design guidelines and the Preservation Board should be expanded to act as an advisory design review committee to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Furthermore the Preservation Board should offer preliminary design services to building owners.

### Specific Proposals.

#### Urban Design, Preservation and Rehabilitation.

1. Upgrade the image of downtown;
2. Create a focal point/activity node in downtown to impart a clear sense of place;
3. Develop a treelined boulevard down the center of Main Street from Washington Street south to College;
4. Provide outdoor display areas, active public places and other recreational facilities within downtown to attract people;
5. Design a coherent system of signage and a distinct streetscape sensitive to the historic character to provide a cohesive visual quality to the downtown;
6. Preserve and restore the historic buildings and upgrade the sidewalks with sensitive landscaping;

7. Improve rear facades of buildings facing parking and pedestrian areas to be more attractive to pedestrians;
8. Preserve and strengthen views towards existing landmarks by appropriate zoning and by creating strong visual links and view corridors towards the landmarks;
9. Impose facade controls and controls on new buildings through zoning regulations to preserve the character of Main Street and highlight the historic qualities of the area;
10. Establish and strengthen entries into downtown. Create gateways to establish a sense of entering downtown by undertaking physical improvements to street scape such as landscaping, signage, building setbacks and appropriate land uses. At each gateway install a downtown map with the main attractions highlighted;
11. Emphasize views towards the riverfront by identifying, preserving and strengthening existing view corridors, ensuring that future new building activity does not block views towards the river and creating new ones by defining the view corridors by hard and soft edges;
12. Install textured cross walks at entries to Main Street and at key intersections to clearly identify pedestrian areas. This will reinforce a sense of district and encourage pedestrian movement across Main Street;
13. Highlight entries to activity nodes by pavement treatment, lighting, and street scape elements. Enhance the appearance and visibility of entries to parking lots from Main Street and other activity nodes by appropriate urban design treatment;
14. Promote the inclusion of the Arrigoni Bridge on the National Historic Register and use lighting to promote it as an historic Middletown landmark;
15. Understanding that lighting is an attraction in of itself; lighting should be used along deKoven Drive and Harborpark to accentuate the City and its positive relationship with the river;
16. Promote increased use of outdoor dining and portable carts to bring more activity to the sidewalks;
17. Bury overhead wires within the downtown and provide for more landscaping and trees to soften the urban environment.

## ARTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The plan envisions downtown as being the hub of regional arts and cultural activities. Rather than an arts center the plan promotes an arts community with numerous offerings intermingled among other downtown uses and downtown neighborhoods. Downtown is multi-cultural and this characteristic is an asset which must be nurtured.

Downtown will be a place where people will congregate, recreate, dine, exchange views and ideas, and celebrate important events. The arts and cultural activities at present are limited to very passive ones. The existing facilities fail to generate any significant activity on Main Street or in the downtown. This is partly because these uses are in scattered locations and are not inter-linked in any way.

Further, the downtown lacks a central place or a plaza where people could congregate for cultural events. Lack of a convenient link to the riverfront from the downtown prevents the riverfront from being used actively. Inactivity on the riverfront is furthered by a lack of public events.

The potential to establish downtown and the riverfront as a focus of public activity remains uncaptured. Location of governmental and other offices and institutional uses in the downtown are an asset because they bring people to downtown. An exciting and stimulating environment with opportunities for arts and cultural activities and active and passive recreation will ensure that the visitors to downtown have greater reasons to come to downtown.

The plan proposes to strengthen and reinforce the character of downtown as an arts and cultural center of the city and region by proposing more diverse arts and cultural uses and recreational events all year round. The plan promotes the creation of a plaza, carefully designed to meet the technical needs of a performance space, for sculpture, gardens, exhibitions and performances.

The plan acknowledges the need to involve the City's Arts and Cultural Commission, Wesleyan University, Odd Fellows Playhouse, the Buttonwood Tree and others in the activities of Downtown. The plaza would serve as a common platform for these groups, city residents and visitors to interact. The plan also stresses the need for the existing cultural organizations to undertake out-reach efforts and plan more special events that would encourage activity in downtown.

Co-existence of retail and business activities with arts and cultural attractions will enhance the Downtown's competitive edge over antiseptic suburban malls. The influx of visitors to downtown will definitely be an asset to the retail climate of downtown as downtown retailers will have the extra benefit of drawing customers who are in downtown for other purposes.

Specific Policies  
Arts and Cultural Activities

1. Encourage through the City's Arts and Cultural Commission and the Park and Recreation Department more arts and cultural and recreational events in the downtown and on the riverfront. Adopt a policy ensuring a special event once a month from April to October;
2. Develop the armory, the deKoven Drive court property, and the Capitol Theater for arts and cultural activities, performance space, recreational uses and other types of events to attract children, teenagers and adults during the evenings and on the weekend;
3. Link the river to downtown and organize special events, fairs and activities in downtown and on the riverfront;
4. Provide a centrally located plaza, designed specifically as a performance space, which could house outdoor arts and cultural events and exhibitions and where city residents and downtown employees could congregate for special events;
5. Constantly and aggressively provide for the arts in Middletown;
6. Encourage the City's Arts and Cultural Commission, Wesleyan University, Middlesex Community College, the Buttonwood Tree, OddFellows and others to host events in the downtown;
7. Consider the development of an "Arts in Architecture" program and other programs promoting the establishment of permanent works of art in public spaces.
8. Involve all artists; visual artists, outdoor sculptures, landscape artists, dancers, musicians, and actors, in the activities of the downtown.

## DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS

To residents of the downtown, the downtown is their neighborhood. If their neighborhood represents a safe and pleasant living environment they will invariably dine, shop, socialize and recreate in the downtown. For this reason, the City must recognize the downtown as a very unique and special "neighborhood". A neighborhood which also has the ability to attract visitors.

There are two predominately residential neighborhoods in the downtown. They are defined on the subdistricts map as the Ferry/Green mixed use neighborhood and the Northwest Residential Area. River's Edge Condominiums, Traverse Square, South Green Apartments, Sbona Tower, Old Middletown High, upper floor apartments along Main Street, particularly in the north end, and the Arriwani Hotel also represent significant populations of people in the downtown with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

This ethnically and soci-economically diverse population includes long time residents, new families, college students, young professionals, and low to moderate income households. These residences and the people who reside in them are certainly one of the most important elements contributing to the vitality of this downtown. No individual income group can preserve and increase the vitality of downtown. Currently there is an over concentration of lower income groups living in the downtown. Therefore the mixed character of the current population must be enhanced by attracting more moderate and upper income groups.

### Arriwani Hotel

Perhaps one of the most pressing social issues in the downtown is the fact that the Arriwani Hotel and the Saint Vincent dePaul Place represents a source of affordable shelter and meals for the region's desperately poor and mentally ill. From a purely business and marketing perspective these uses should not front on Main Street. These uses detract from the retail experience by leaving visitors and downtown residents with the perception that downtown is a dangerous and unwelcome place. Nevertheless the City recognizes its obligation to provide for its fair share of the region's less fortunate. For this reason the City is working with those involved to make the land use more accommodating to its residents and less threatening to downtown shoppers. The Arriwani Hotel and the St. Vincent dePaul Place are located in historically significant buildings. Their historic significance should be enhanced and as an initial step the Main Street frontages should be converted to more retail type establishments.

## Northwest Residential and Ferry/Green Mixed Use Neighborhoods

Recently there has been a decline in the vacancy rate of north end storefronts. However, the new uses are not classic downtown retail. They are more service oriented uses which cater to the "captive" population in the residential areas to the east and west. These north end businesses have recognized and exploited this particular niche in the overall downtown market and have enjoyed success.

The City needs to ensure that the Northwest Residential neighborhood continues to represent a very pleasing, safe and ethnically diverse neighborhood. Equally important to the success of this area, the City must recognize and support the grass roots efforts which blend traditional values with emerging multi-cultural thoughts in the Ferry/Green mixed use neighborhood. Zoning should be amended to clearly reflect and protect the residential character of these neighborhoods and aggressive code enforcement should continue.

### Traverse Square

Traverse Square is a federally subsidized housing project located in the south end district. It contains 60 dwelling units and represents a significant population living in the downtown. As with most housing projects the buildings are deteriorating and the neighborhood is stigmatized by a history of crime and other social ills. It is essential that the Housing Authority and the City continue to address these problems, perhaps with a reduction in the area's density, and ensure that the neighborhood will become a safe and pleasant area in the downtown. Due to its proximity to Wesleyan University and the University's dormitories the University should play an active role in the improvement of this neighborhood.

### Future Housing Opportunities

As the number of employment and cultural and entertainment opportunities in the downtown increases so too will the demand for market rate apartments, and condominiums. The two largest complexes, South Green apartments and River's Edge Condominiums, enjoy relatively low vacancy rates. The City needs to strive towards a critical mass of market rate to upper income households distributed equally throughout the downtown. For this reason, this plan identifies the Marino property, the former Bob's warehouse property, upper story apartments along Main Street and the Metro Square block as future distinctive residential areas. Young professionals from major employers in the downtown and the City as a whole should be targeted. To attract this population the downtown must remain a safe and pleasant environment and the City must foster an invigorating night life with numerous restaurants, nightclubs, arts and cultural and entertainment uses within the downtown and along its riverfront.

## VEHICULAR AND PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION AND PARKING

Middletown's existence as a central city has historically been directly related to its accessibility to the primary mode of transportation during each era.

As primary modes of transportation evolved from water to rail to automobile, Middletown adapted and thrived. Middletown's evolution to the current mode of transportation, the automobile, was marked by the construction of the Arrigoni Bridge, Connecticut Route 17, 66 and later Route 9. Due to this infrastructure, Middletown's downtown today enjoys exceptional access from all parts of the State. However, as the number of automobiles has increased dramatically, the infrastructure has, for the most part, remained in its historic configuration. This has resulted in significant congestion in and around the downtown.

Connecticut Routes 66 and 9 are the most congested routes in Middletown. The State Department of Transportation has historically expressed its desires to find solutions to the Arrigoni Bridge-Hartford Avenue-Route 9 traffic light situation. In 1991 the State DOT once again examined the issue, undertook preliminary designs and conducted an environmental impact study. The designs if ever implemented would have had dramatic negative impacts on the character of downtown Middletown. Fortunately, during this time of limited financial resources the "Middletown Route 9" project was shelved and is currently programmed in the twenty year range.

There is little doubt that eventually the Arrigoni Bridge-Route 9 issue will be addressed. The bridge is approximately seventy years old and is currently at or near capacity. The lights on Route 9 are a major cause of traffic congestion, particularly in the summer months, and a major source of air pollution. In order to ensure that the issue is adequately addressed, the City should be working with the Department of Transportation to formulate a design which adequately addresses environmental concerns and which preserves and enhances the character of downtown Middletown and its historic relationship to the riverfront. In formulating these plans, improved vehicular access to and within the downtown and the north end industrial area and improved at-grade pedestrian access to the riverfront should be of paramount concern. Furthermore, the historic Arrigoni Bridge and views to the bridge should be preserved and any new bridge should be north of the current bridge or south of the bend in the river at the narrows.

### Transportation Center

As discussed in the land use strategy, this plan calls for a regional transportation center/hub in downtown Middletown. As the downtown evolves towards its "Vision Statement" more and more employees, visitors and tourists will be coming to the downtown and more residents of the downtown will be commuting to other employment centers. All agree the State of Connecticut must move towards alternate modes of transportation.

Middletown's downtown is ideally situated to be a transportation hub. The downtown is centrally located and has direct access to interstate highways, rail corridors and the Connecticut River. Potential exists for barge and passenger boats to the north and south. Potential exists for light rail commuter access to Old Saybrook, Hartford and Bradley Airport via the Griffin line and the New Haven and New York commuter line. Potential exists for a bus/ trolley terminal to service the downtown and the entire community and region. There is also a need to establish a reliable mode of mass transportation within the downtown. It is felt that a reliable and aggressively promoted loop between major employers, residential areas, Wesleyan University and downtown shopping areas and restaurants would be heavily utilized.

This plan identifies the area north of Rapallo Avenue as the site for a future transportation center. This site is the site of the former railroad station and is currently a rail yard.

This plan envisions this transportation center attracting more people to the area and thus acting as a stimulus to future investment in the area. Any transportation center at this site must be at a scale and design compatible to the surrounding neighborhood.

Due to the far reaching benefits of such a regional transportation center and its focus on alternate modes of transportation, the City and Midstate Regional Planning Agency should aggressively pursue expanded rail service first to the north then to the south and federal transportation funding through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act.

#### Downtown Traffic Loop

A central element of the 1965 Downtown Plan, the first comprehensive look at the downtown, was the establishment of a "ring road" around the downtown. The establishment of this "ring road" was intended to remove through traffic from Main Street and take this traffic around the Central Business District. In this way Main Street would become a heavily landscaped access road whose primary function was a pedestrian friendly parking area. A portion of this "ring road", Rapallo Avenue, deKoven Drive, and Union Street, was completed during previous redevelopment efforts.

While this idea still has a great deal of merit, it was proposed at a time when there was very little sensitivity to historic structures and huge amounts of federal monies were available to undertake urban renewal. Today the implementation of the western portion of the ring as proposed in 1965 would, for all intents and purposes, be impossible. To widen Pearl and Grand Streets to the width proposed would require the demolition of many historic multi-family homes. However, a modified ring from Washington Street to High, and/or, Broad Street to Church Street to Pleasant Street to Union Street to deKoven Drive to Rapallo Avenue to Main Street back to Washington Street could be developed and

promoted through the use of signage as an alternative for through traffic. If formally established, this modified ring would allow access to parking areas at the rear of Main Street buildings from several side streets running perpendicular to the ring. By removing a portion of the through traffic from Main Street south of Washington Street, Main Street can become more pedestrian friendly as a landscaped boulevard with textured crosswalks and other urban design elements. Due to congestion and traffic lights, traffic currently moves fairly slowly on Main St. and traffic should move slowly on Main Street. But it should move slowly, not due to congestion or traffic lights, but because Main Street is attractive, inviting and interesting. The modified ring road is a major part of accomplishing this objective.

In 1989 the City of Middletown contracted with Wilbur Smith Associates to conduct a detailed downtown traffic study. The result of the study was several excellent short and long term recommendations. The recommendations were designed to improve traffic flow in the downtown area, including the above discussed modified ring road and a possible prohibition on left turns on Main St. This study was adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission and forwarded to the Police Department for implementation. To date, none of the suggested improvements have been implemented. It is time to review the plan and begin its implementation.

### Pedestrian Circulation and Parking

Ease of pedestrian circulation and parking facilities help in attracting visitors and shoppers to Downtown. While there are currently 2246 public spaces in the downtown, parking is still perceived as an obstacle and inconvenience to downtown shoppers. This plan recognizes the vital importance of an appropriate number of safe and convenient parking spaces in downtown. With this in mind, the plan for pedestrian circulation and parking envisions downtown as an active pedestrian center, with easily accessible and convenient parking spaces located in close proximity to Main Street and other activity areas such as the riverfront and Columbus Plaza.

Ironically, in many cases the parking at suburban malls is far more distant than downtown parking but mall parking is much more direct. Presently the downtown has a number of parking lots located in proximity to Main Street with sufficient capacity. What it lacks is a coherent and legible system of pedestrian circulation which ties these parking lots to each other and to the nodes of activity. Further, the extremely wide Main Street divides the downtown and serves as a barrier between the two sides of Main Street.

The downtown needs a comprehensible system of pedestrian circulation which links activity nodes and parking areas. The pedestrian ways have to be sensitively landscaped so as to encourage people to use them and provide a sense of direction. The width of Main Street has to be reduced by providing textured crosswalks at appropriate locations and a landscaped boulevard. Parking areas need to be appropriately landscaped,

frequently patrolled and made to look more pedestrian friendly to dispel the prevalent notion that they are unsafe.

### Specific Proposals Circulation and Parking

1. Provide a system of well designed and user friendly pedestrian walkways linking areas of activities with parking areas. Ensure that pedestrian circulation is segregated from vehicular circulation;
2. Reduce the psychological barrier of Main Street by defining pedestrian areas with textured crosswalks and a central boulevard in the retail core from Washington to College;
3. Insure safety in parking areas by appropriate lighting and safe accesses;
4. Strengthen the directional signage to city parking lots from all parts of downtown;
5. To the maximum extent possible preserve on-street parking along Main Street;
6. Improve access to downtown from Wesleyan University, Middlesex Hospital and other nodes in the city by improving pedestrian links;
7. Currently the Parking Authority manages public parking in the downtown. In the past the Authority has shown an insensitivity to the needs of downtown shoppers. To correct this situation downtown merchants should represent a majority of the Parking Authority membership;
8. Maintain the practice of two (2) hours of free parking in municipal lots;
9. Reinstate the practice of courtesy parking tickets thanking shoppers for coming downtown and reminding them the next ticket will include a fine;
10. Eventually, transfer the Parking Authority operations to the Special Services District. In this way the Authority will have a vested interest in the downtown;
11. Discourage employees and employers from parking on Main St. These spaces must be reserved for high turnover patron parking. Require employers and employees to register with the Authority and receive a parking assignment in one of the more distant lots at a very attractive rates. Violations will be strictly enforced;
12. If an enforceable procedure which limits parking to less than one hour can be established, consider the removal of the parking meters along Main St.
13. Implement a payments in lieu of parking arrangement for new development;
14. As development proceeds increase parking at the Broad and Washington lot by adding a single deck, carefully designed to limit its mass;
15. Eventually, as demand dictates, expand the Riverview center parking arcade.

## RETAIL REVITALIZATION AND DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT

This plan recognizes that the suburban mall possesses many advantages over a downtown area. This plan recognizes that a downtown cannot compete in the same market with a suburban mall. A downtown must develop its own unique and specialized image and it must market that image to specific niches in the overall market with a focus on customer service, product knowledge, and quality merchandise. Therefore, this plan strongly advocates that a market analysis be undertaken by a nationally recognized marketing firm in order to identify the existing and new markets. The plan cannot overemphasize the need for a detailed market analysis of the downtown. After reviewing all relevant demographic and economic information for the downtown's market area, the analysis will identify downtown's economic niche and recommend the proper retail mix, various merchandising and promotion techniques, and a strategy aimed at recruiting new businesses to the downtown. Funding for this study should come from the city's Economic Development fund with possible assistance from the private sector. The pursuit of funding for this market analysis must be the first step in the implementation of this plan. Based on this market analysis and in concert with existing merchants, a detailed promotion and economic restructuring strategy can be developed.

In developing this strategy, the plan recognizes, first and foremost, the need to work with existing merchants and businesses. A stabilization and strengthening of the existing retail base is bound to attract new investment and new businesses. In order to accomplish this stabilization and strengthening, this plan feels modifications of current business practices will need to occur. The modifications will be in terms of merchandising, promotion, retail store mix, retail recruitment, retail building improvement and finally overall and well coordinated downtown management. This would include a Special Services District to generate necessary revenues to continue the duties of a full time Downtown Manager.

It is recommended that a special services district be established to provide the sustained organizational focus and resources that downtown revitalization demands. The district should encompass all of the study area, with the exception of the two primarily residential districts. An organizational focus for Downtown revitalization is crucial to the success of the plan and must be pursued immediately. The Downtown Manager's Advisory Board and the Downtown Manager should take the responsibility to organize and promote the creation of the special services district.

## Merchandising, Promotion and Retail Mix

While the plan recognizes that it is essential that a market analysis for downtown Middletown be undertaken, it also recognizes that some general recommendations which have been proven to be successful in other communities can be articulated here. The following general recommendations were taken from the "Concept and Strategy for Downtown Manchester" and have been somewhat modified to suit Middletown's needs.

### Merchandising

The main merchandising theme should emphasize the unique and local character and tradition of shopping downtown with personal service and product knowledge offered by the independent merchant in the historic heart of the town. Some measures to achieve this objective are presented as follows:

Upgrade the presentation of merchandise and stock. Conduct periodic peer review of the layout and display practices of each store. Utilize the advisory capabilities of state and national retailing associations ie. jewelers, clothiers, etc., to bring the latest concepts of that area of retailing to the Main Street merchant.

Improved service in retail stores during the lunch hour is one step which will help convert Downtown workers into better Downtown spenders. Maintaining a full complement of staff and offering lunch hour specials are two measures to be tried. Getting Downtown employees to buy Downtown's goods and services is a must.

Design, display, and imagery - incorporate, as much as possible, the historic theme of Downtown into the presentation of merchandise. Use the richness of the materials within the interior of buildings to enhance the display and setting for merchandise. Wooden beams, brick walls, ceilings joist, metal ceilings, wood floors, etc. should be prominent interior surfaces. Letter style and art work in displays, signs and advertising can employ images of Downtown's past glories.

Develop a credit financing pool for stores - Downtown banks should create a short-term loan pool for purchase of stock and displays for stores participating in the revitalization program.

Strengthen the Central Business Bureau. Broad-based participation is essential to a successful retailing community. Joint action on merchandising and other issues requires an organizational framework to coordinate individual actions.

In accordance with market analysis work toward shifting the traditional business hours of Downtown. An increase in market share may be achieved by opening on Sunday. The week day store hours should be rearranged to be open for area residents after work.

Develop common lease conditions covering items such as uniform store hours joint advertising, required membership in the Central Business Bureau etc. Prepare master lease conditions for use by Downtown property owners which address retailing issues important to the overall success of the district. Receipt of incentives should be conditioned upon use of the lease conditions developed by the Downtown District.

Restaurants should be encouraged to use outdoor areas where possible. The sidewalk in front of the restaurants can serve this purpose. Adding a few tables with colorful umbrellas can add greatly to the visual quality of street. In addition to enhancing the vitality of the street scene, outdoor areas increase restaurant capacity with minimal increase in fixed costs. Encourage Downtown restaurants to identify with a theme ie. pasta, creole, etc.

#### Promotion

Promotional activities by the Downtown merchant community needs to be intensified with more cooperative advertising and greater coordination. Recommendations to improve promotional activities follow:

Undertake at least one event each month from March through December. Build upon the present events of the Sidewalk Sale, the Hadassah Craft Festival, the Forth of July Fireworks, and Connecticut River Regatta.

Establish a monthly or bi-monthly flyer for distribution to shoppers with a particular emphasis towards Wesleyan and Middlesex students and Downtown employees. One side of the sheet might be standardized with a logo, map and directory of Downtown's stores and services and the other side would carry current news about sales, upcoming events, products, special coupons, new businesses and merchant profiles.

Intensify the effort for cooperative advertising in local newspaper and radio and increase its frequency.

Undertake promotions with special groups in the community (ie. church groups, civic organizations, service clubs, tenants at nearby apartments, Wesleyan University and Middlesex Community-Technical College, and major employers) to offer special incentives as part of the promotions.

Publish a booklet containing advertisements and helpful information for anyone living, working, or visiting Downtown. The booklet should list categories of businesses and the name, address and phone number of the retailers listed in each division. A section on restaurants should include a price range. A map of Downtown showing parking facilities should also be included.

Since a large percentage of the public changes residence each year and there are over 18,000 dwelling units in town, Downtown should make special efforts to welcome new residents to Middletown. Special welcome mailings, gift packages, and invitations to shop downtown can build recognition and the shopper base. For instance, the Westlake Planned Residential Development contains over 3,000 dwelling units with rapid turnover and a relatively young population, but it is suspected that few venture to Downtown.

### Retail Store Mix

Downtown currently has some areas with noticeable vacancies. These generally are the larger spaces (Waldbaums, Woolworths, Kabachnicks, and Sears) which housed department store's which have found it impossible to compete with regional malls. These are the vacancies of greatest concern. Whether it is possible to attract large retailers to fill these spaces or to retro fit the building for multiple smaller end uses would be questions answered by a market analysis. As the economy improves and Downtown moves toward it's critical mass, entrepreneurs will no doubt fill the smaller spaces, as has already occurred in the North End, and is beginning to occur throughout downtown.

A market study will identify those businesses the Downtown should be targeting. Potential uses, which are successful in other downtowns, include:

specialty women's wear/accessories	apartment furnishings
shoe store	theme restaurants
card, gift & stationary	confectionery stores
European housewares	gourmet food stores
home accessories	gourmet ice-cream yogurt parlors
interior decorator	green grocers
antique shop	wine & cheese
book stores with cafes	copy centers
art galleries/frame shops	

Middletown can no longer passively wait for business to come to Downtown. An aggressive and targeted recruitment program must be implemented. It is suggested that the Downtown Manager working with the Chamber and the Municipal Development Office develop a computerized database of available sites, formulate a marketing brochure, and identify several potential retailers within the region. They would then contact the retailer to introduce them to Downtown Middletown.

**ENCOURAGE NEW DEVELOPMENT:**  
THE DOWNTOWN SHOULD ATTRACT  
NEW INVESTMENT

**UPGRADE IMAGE:**  
PROVIDE AMENITIES THAT WILL  
IMPROVE THE VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE  
OF THE DOWNTOWN

**CREATE A MIXED USE ENVIRONMENT:**  
A MIXTURE OF APPROPRIATE USES  
WILL REINFORCE EACH OTHER  
ADDING LIFE AND CHARACTER TO  
THE AREA

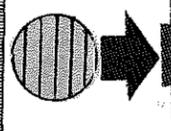
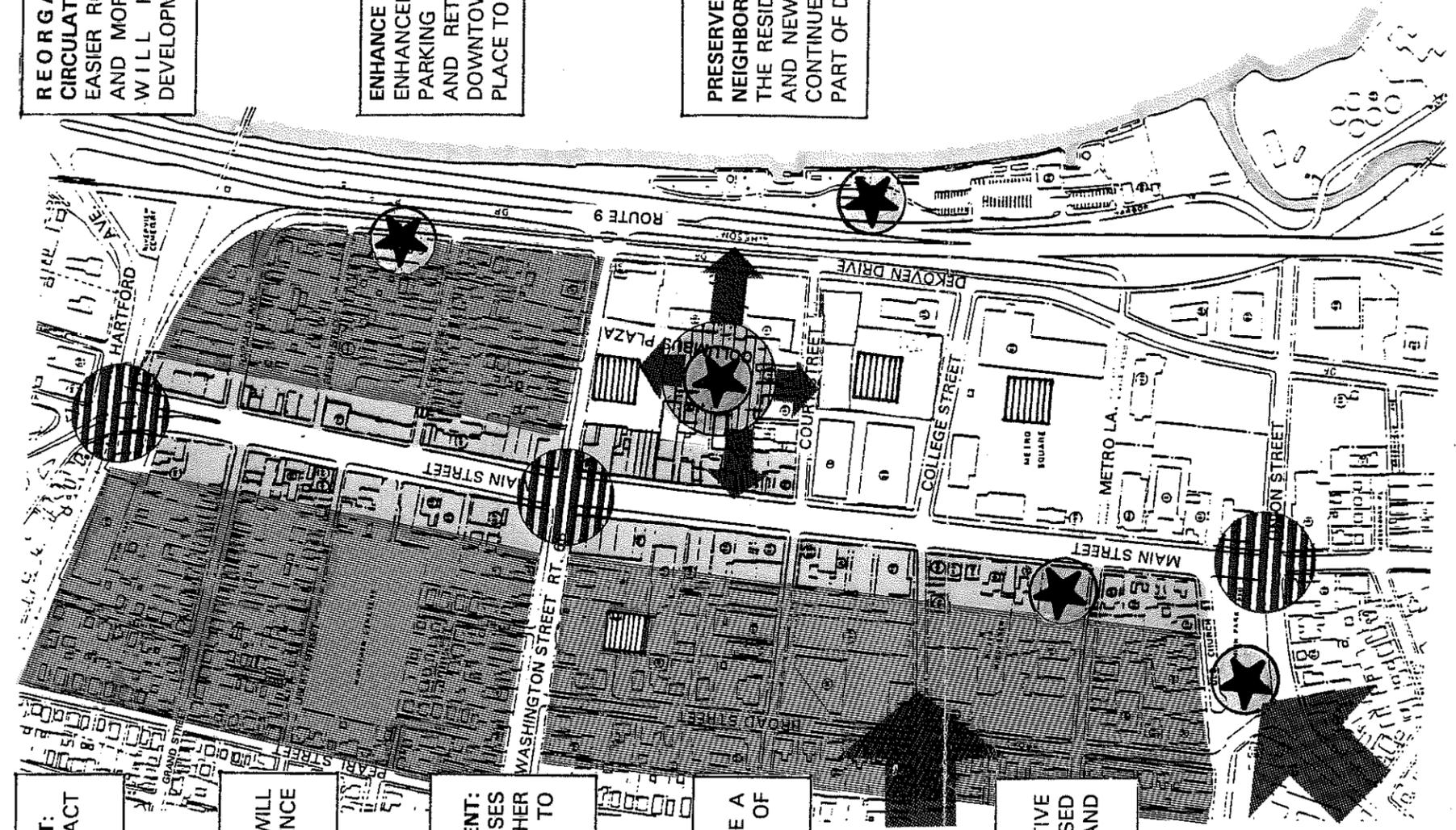
**PROVIDE IDENTITY:**  
THE DOWNTOWN SHOULD HAVE A  
CLEAR PERSONALITY, A SENSE OF  
PLACE

**PROVIDE PUBLIC SPACES:**  
THERE IS A NEED TO CREATE ACTIVE  
PUBLIC SPACES WHICH WILL BE USED  
BY RESIDENTS, SHOPPERS AND  
VISITORS ALIKE

**REORGANIZE VEHICULAR  
CIRCULATION:**  
EASIER ROUTE FOR AUTOMOBILES  
AND MORE CONVENIENT PARKING  
WILL HELP DRAW NEW  
DEVELOPMENT AND NEW USES

**ENHANCE PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION:**  
ENHANCED CIRCULATION BETWEEN  
PARKING AREAS, ACTIVITY NODES  
AND RETAIL NODES WILL MAKE  
DOWNTOWN A MORE DESIRABLE  
PLACE TO BE IN

**PRESERVE EXISTING RESIDENTIAL  
NEIGHBORHOODS:**  
THE RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS  
AND NEW NEIGHBORHOODS MUST  
CONTINUE TO REMAIN AN INTEGRAL  
PART OF DOWNTOWN.



NEIGHBORHOODS TO BE PRESERVED AND ENHANCED

CULTURAL AND CIVIC PLAZA

LINKS FROM PLAZA TO OTHER NODES WITHIN DOWNTOWN

PEDESTRIAN LINKS TO DOWNTOWN FROM NODES OUTSIDE DOWNTOWN

PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC CHARACTER

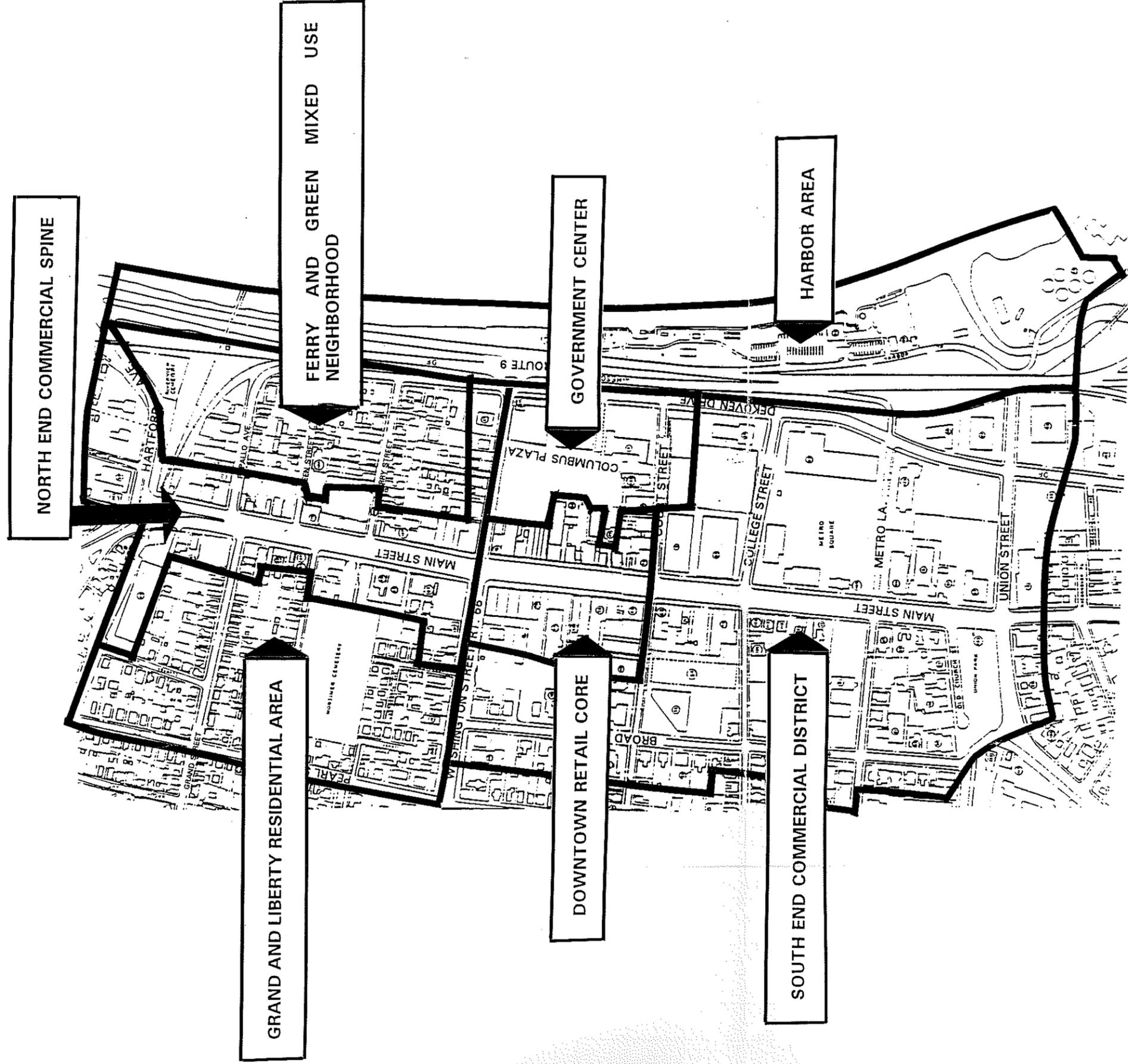
GATEWAYS TO IMPART A SENSE OF ENTRY TO DOWNTOWN

ACTIVITY NODES

REDESIGNED PARKING AREAS

**DOWNTOWN VISIONS  
2000 AND BEYOND  
CITY OF MIDDLETOWN**

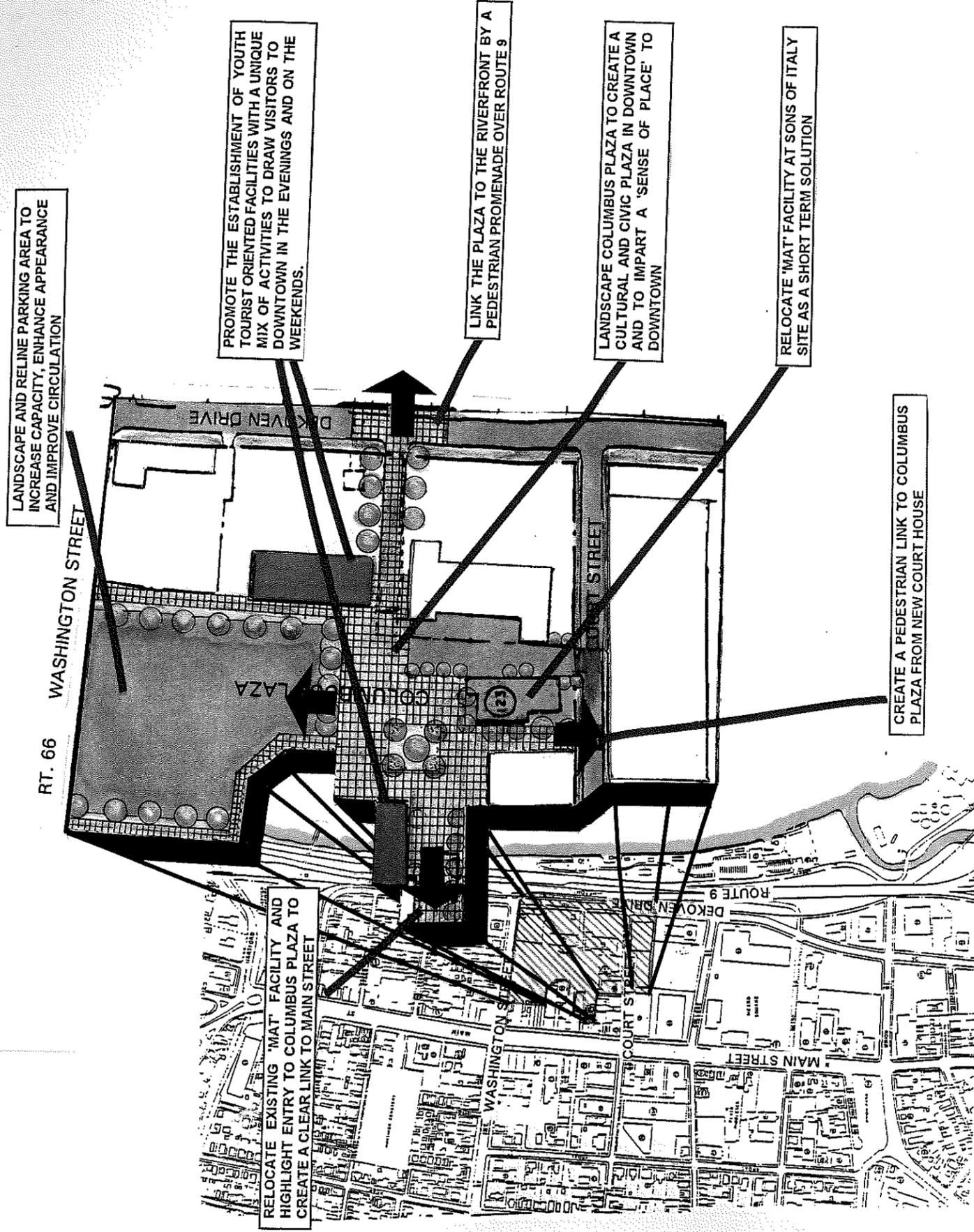
**URBAN DESIGN GOALS  
DOWNTOWN CORE**



**IV. SUB-DISTRICTS IN DOWNTOWN**

**INTRODUCTION**

Downtown Middletown is unique in that it consists of many sub-districts. While interrelated each has a distinct character of its own and thus has a different set of problems and opportunities. Dissimilarities also stem from the fact that each of these sub-districts cater to different groups of people and have different activity patterns. Understanding the character of each sub-district is extremely important to ensure that the specific recommendations are sensitive to the needs of each sub-district and serve to strengthen their unique individual characters while at the same time enhancing the overall downtown. The following pages discuss each sub-district and articulate more specific recommendations for each district.

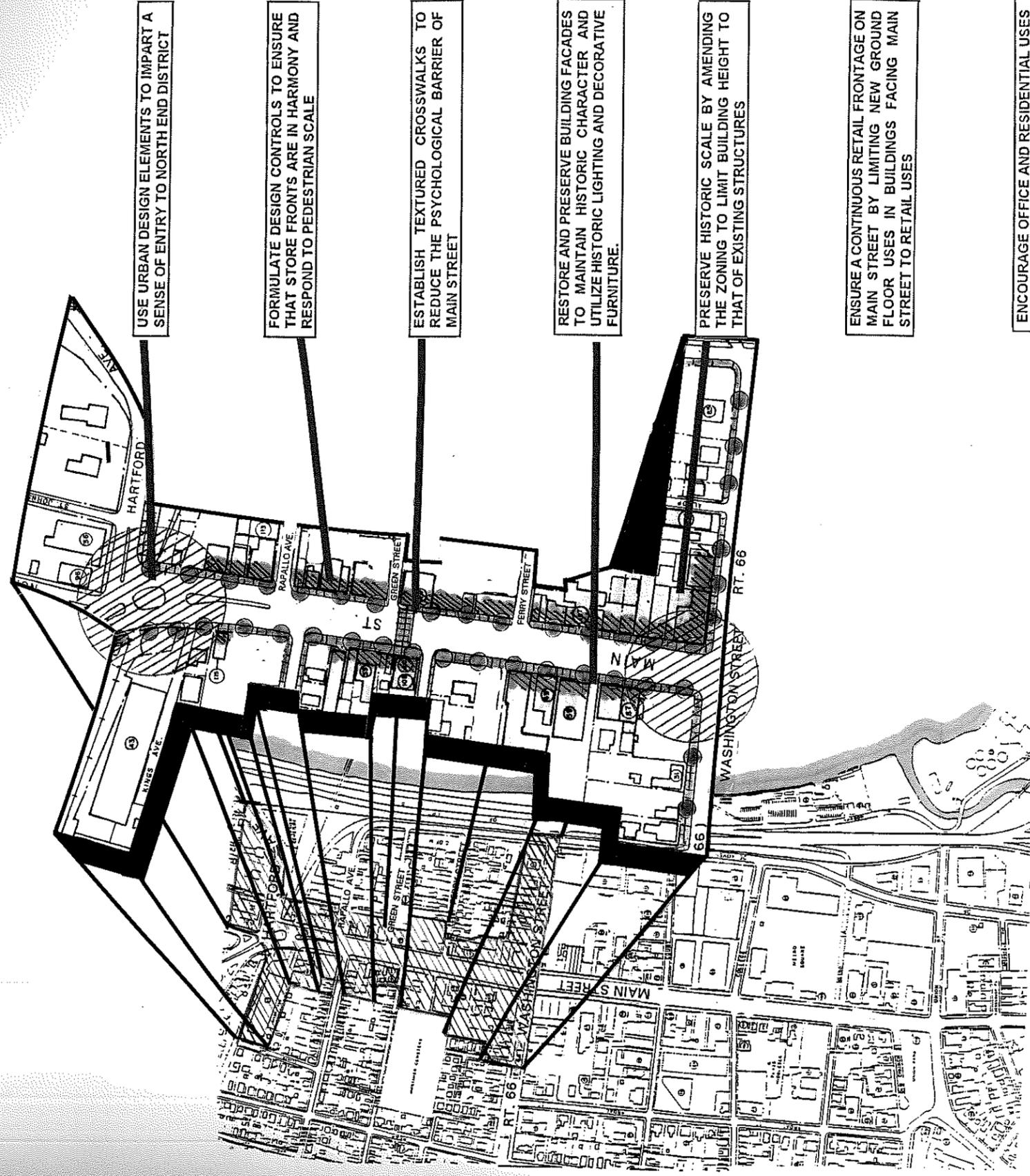


### GOVERNMENT CENTER

Located generally between Court Street on the South, Washington Street on the North, the rear of Main Street buildings on the West and Dekoven Drive on the East, this sub-district encompasses the City Hall, two former Court facilities, the Dekoven House, the new Middlesex Superior Court House and the Middletown Area Transit District Office. This district is the hub of governmental, judicial, and public transport activities. It is the physical as well as the symbolic center of the City and the Downtown. These governmental buildings, apart from being major employers in the Downtown, generate spin off offices and bring in other citizens who have business or are attending meetings at the City offices. These offices are a great source of downtown customers as the employees and residents utilizing these offices more likely than not shop at the downtown stores and have their lunch at area restaurants.

However, in the evening after the offices close, activity in the area declines significantly with the exception of important meetings of public agencies. Currently, a clear link to the Main Street retail core and the riverfront does not exist.

While the area has abundant public parking, it lacks any kind of a public space where people could congregate at lunch hours, for special events and on holidays. This area should remain a governmental center with an expansion of uses to attract more people after hours and on weekends.



USE URBAN DESIGN ELEMENTS TO IMPART A SENSE OF ENTRY TO NORTH END DISTRICT

FORMULATE DESIGN CONTROLS TO ENSURE THAT STORE FRONTS ARE IN HARMONY AND RESPOND TO PEDESTRIAN SCALE

ESTABLISH TEXTURED CROSSWALKS TO REDUCE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIER OF MAIN STREET

RESTORE AND PRESERVE BUILDING FACADES TO MAINTAIN HISTORIC CHARACTER AND UTILIZE HISTORIC LIGHTING AND DECORATIVE FURNITURE.

PRESERVE HISTORIC SCALE BY AMENDING THE ZONING TO LIMIT BUILDING HEIGHT TO THAT OF EXISTING STRUCTURES

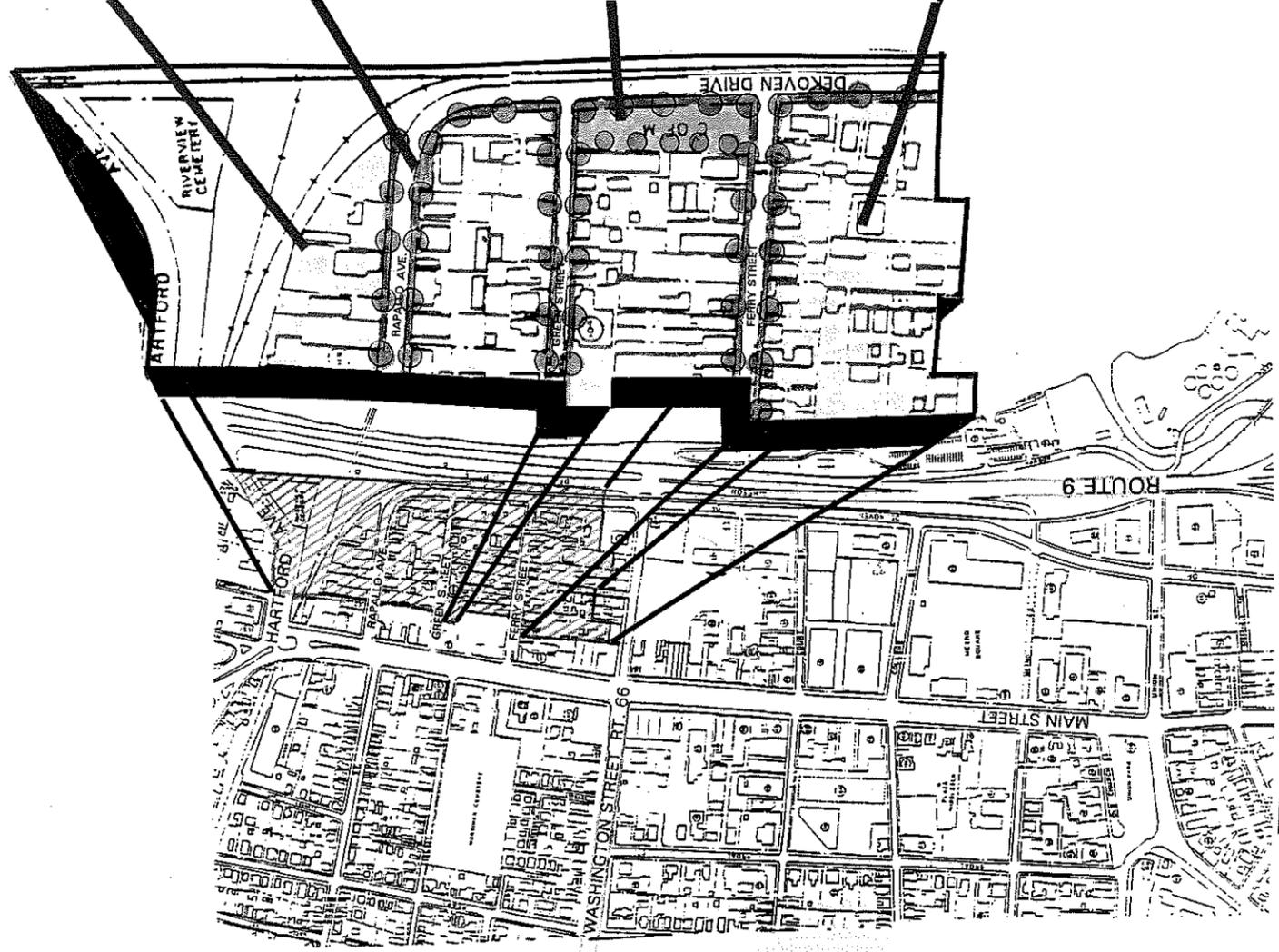
ENSURE A CONTINUOUS RETAIL FRONTAGE ON MAIN STREET BY LIMITING NEW GROUND FLOOR USES IN BUILDINGS FACING MAIN STREET TO RETAIL USES

ENCOURAGE OFFICE AND RESIDENTIAL USES ON UPPER FLOORS

TURN OF CENTURY THEME HISTORIC LIGHTING DECORATIVE FURNITURE

### THE NORTH END COMMERCIAL SPINE

This district encompasses the area at the northern end of Main Street between Washington Street and Hartford Avenue. The store fronts are at a smaller and a more intimate scale than that in the core area. Architecturally this district is the most interesting. The facades of the majority of the buildings fronting on Main Street are historically significant and there exists tremendous potential to utilize and maximize this resource. The shops on the east side of Main Street have a special international flavor due to restaurants and specialty food stores of different nationalities. The area is unique in that this is the only place in the City where one can find such a concentration of varied food and groceries of different ethnic groups. Most of the other commercial establishments are neighborhood stores and specialty shops catering to the needs of upper floor apartments in the district and the surrounding residential community. The retail activity here has its own captive clientele. The western side of Main Street is more public in character and has few commercial establishments. However, at each end of the district there are popular restaurants and night clubs. Intermingled between these two restaurants are two gas stations, the City Fire House, the Community Health center, and the Salvation Army. Also at the northern limit of the district exists a new manufacturing facility which has the potential to provide jobs to residents in the area. There is a general perception that the location of the Soup Kitchen and the Arriwani have negatively affected the image of the otherwise interesting and intriguing commercial spine. The area is most active from noon to late afternoon. Activity declines significantly in the evening and on the weekends. However, there are two churches in the north end which draw people on the weekend and residents from the surrounding neighborhood frequent the area. The perception that the area is unsafe does exist. However, frequent visits to the area did not reinforce this perception.



CREATE MULTI-MODEL TRANSPORTATION CENTER IN SCALE AND CHARACTER WITH SURROUNDINGS

IMPROVE STREET SCAPE BY UNDERGROUND UTILITIES AND PROVIDE LANDSCAPED AREAS ALONG SIDEWALKS.

IMPROVE STREET MAINTENANCE AND GARBAGE COLLECTION

REDESIGN CITY OWNED OPEN SPACE TO MAKE IT MORE INVITING TO THE RESIDENTS

PRESERVE RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD WITH APPROPRIATE ZONING

MAINTAIN THE EXISTING BUILT FORM CONSISTING OF ONE, TWO AND THREE, FAMILY HOMES URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

CONTINUE TARGETED CODE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT TO IMPROVE LIVING CONDITIONS

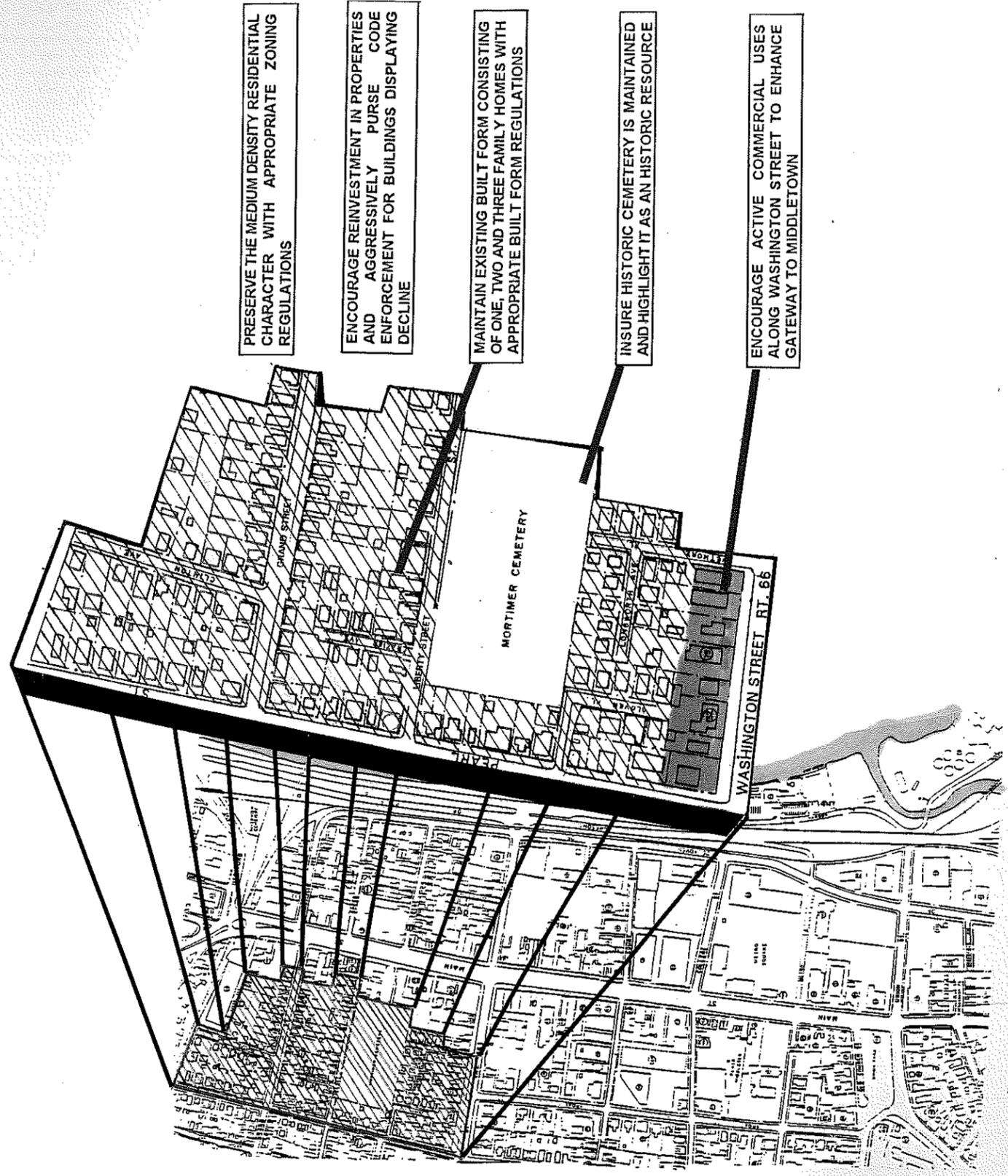
TARGET ASSISTANCE AND ENCOURAGE INVESTMENT IN RESIDENCES AND IN THE AREA IN GENERAL

PRESERVE AND MAINTAIN THE PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY, LOW SCALE STREET FACADES BY ELEVATION CONTROL AND DESIGN GUIDELINES AND ENCOURAGE FRONT PORCHES

FERRY AND GREEN MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOOD

This district is located at the northern end of Downtown in the area between Hartford Avenue on the north, Washington Street on the south, the rear of Main Street Buildings on the west and deKoven Drive on the east. The district is characterized by a mix of single family and multifamily residences, public buildings, small businesses and eating places. The area has a number of historic buildings.

Once a thriving residential neighborhood, the neighborhood now consists of individuals from lower socio-economic populations and is characterized by problems such as loitering, drug use, and in some cases substandard housing conditions. However, it is noted that there has been significant investment in the area and some of the housing stock is in very good condition. The neighborhood represents an important built in customer base for retail and service establishments located along the northern end of Main Street who are now catering to this diverse clientele. This neighborhood should be preserved and enhanced.



PRESERVE THE MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER WITH APPROPRIATE ZONING REGULATIONS

ENCOURAGE REINVESTMENT IN PROPERTIES AND AGGRESSIVELY PURSE CODE ENFORCEMENT FOR BUILDINGS DISPLAYING DECLINE

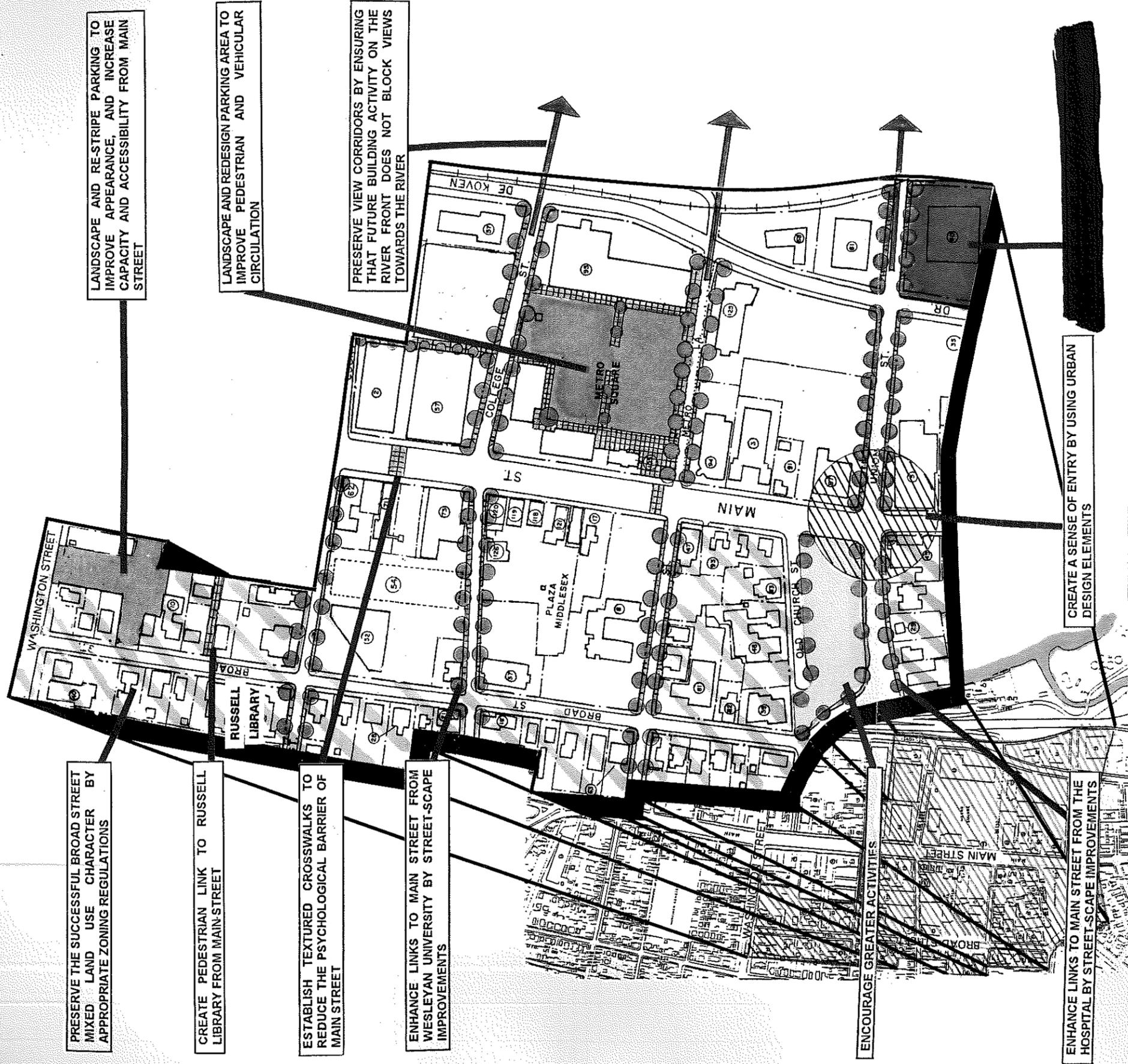
MAINTAIN EXISTING BUILT FORM CONSISTING OF ONE, TWO AND THREE FAMILY HOMES WITH APPROPRIATE BUILT FORM REGULATIONS

INSURE HISTORIC CEMETERY IS MAINTAINED AND HIGHLIGHT IT AS AN HISTORIC RESOURCE

ENCOURAGE ACTIVE COMMERCIAL USES ALONG WASHINGTON STREET TO ENHANCE GATEWAY TO MIDDLETOWN

GRAND AND LIBERTY RESIDENTIAL AREA

Located north of Washington Street and west of the rear of Main Street buildings, this sub-district is a stable residential community consisting of single family and multi-family homes. This sub-district, the most stable residential component of the downtown, is a great asset to the downtown in that it represents a built-in customer base for Main Street businesses. For the most part the buildings are in good condition and a majority are owner occupied. This neighborhood should be preserved and protected from uses which would detract from it; and owner occupancy should be encouraged.



PRESERVE THE SUCCESSFUL BROAD STREET MIXED LAND USE CHARACTER BY APPROPRIATE ZONING REGULATIONS

LANDSCAPE AND RE-STRIPE PARKING TO IMPROVE APPEARANCE, AND INCREASE CAPACITY AND ACCESSIBILITY FROM MAIN STREET

CREATE PEDESTRIAN LINK TO RUSSELL LIBRARY FROM MAIN STREET

LANDSCAPE AND REDESIGN PARKING AREA TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

ESTABLISH TEXTURED CROSSWALKS TO REDUCE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIER OF MAIN STREET

PRESERVE VIEW CORRIDORS BY ENSURING THAT FUTURE BUILDING ACTIVITY ON THE RIVER FRONT DOES NOT BLOCK VIEWS TOWARDS THE RIVER

ENHANCE LINKS TO MAIN STREET FROM WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY BY STREET-SCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

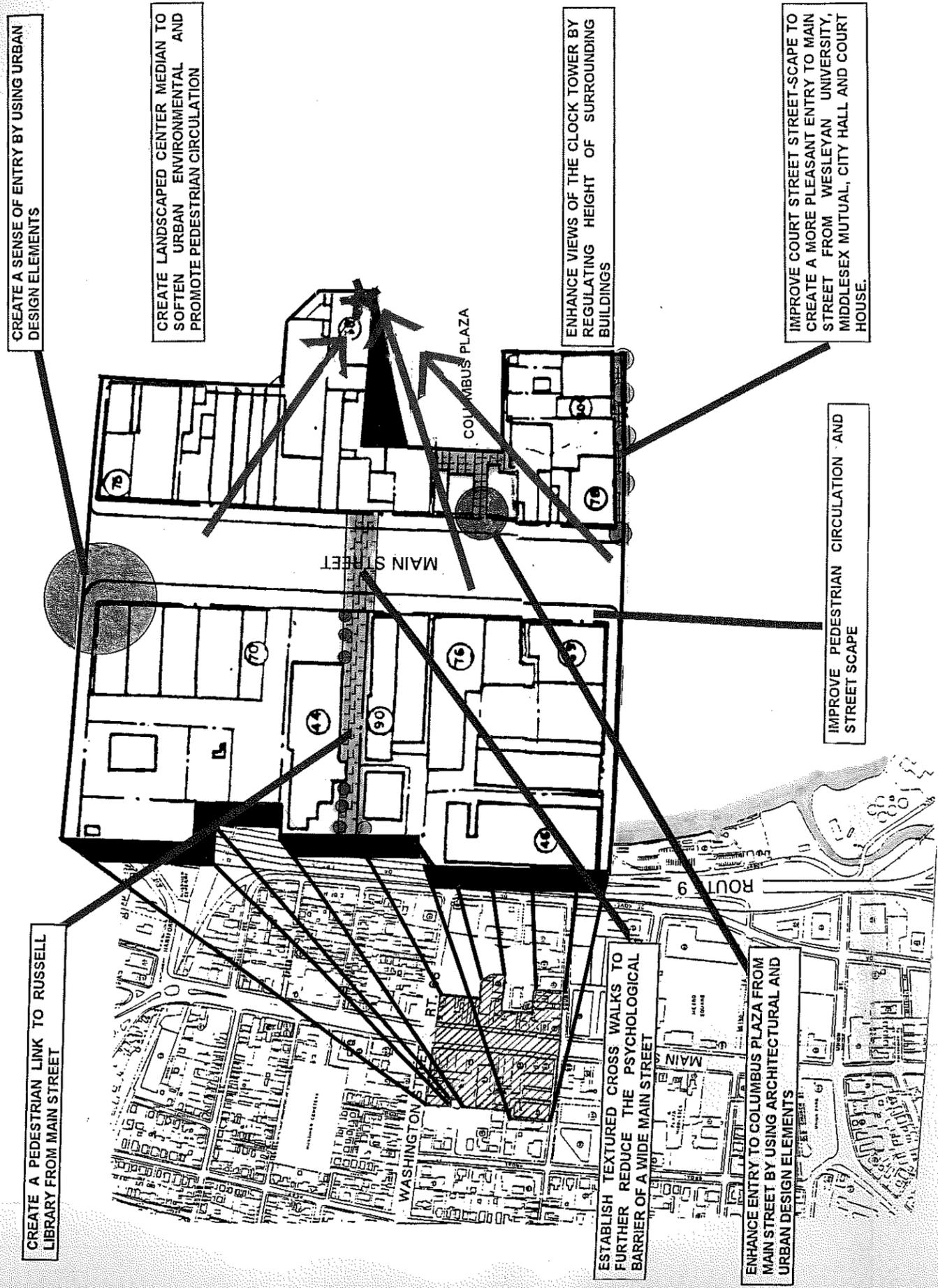
ENCOURAGE GREATER ACTIVITIES

ENHANCE LINKS TO MAIN STREET FROM THE HOSPITAL BY STREET-SCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

CREATE A SENSE OF ENTRY BY USING URBAN DESIGN ELEMENTS

**SOUTH END SUB-DISTRICT**

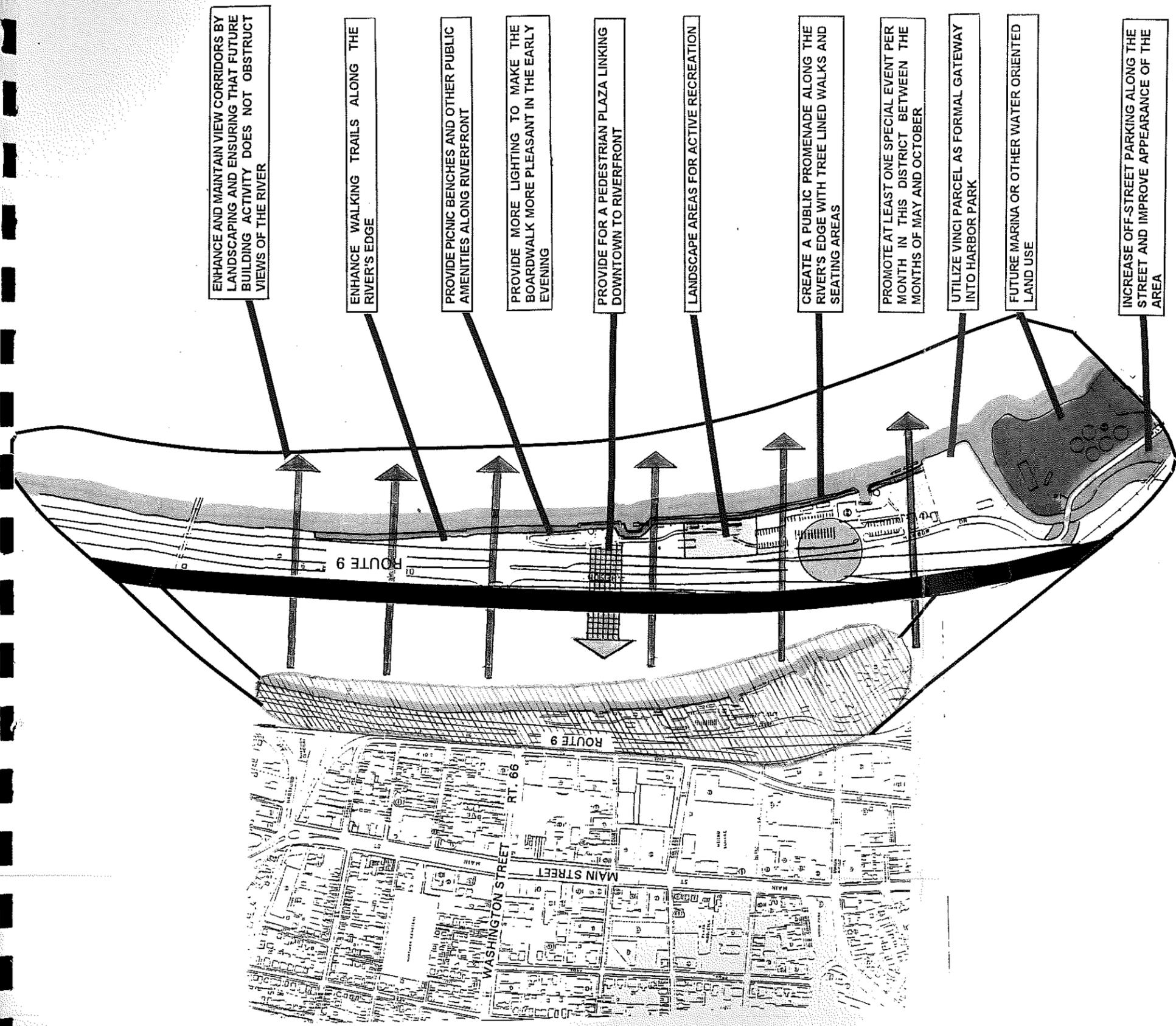
This sub-district consists of the area which underwent redevelopment in the 1960-1970's. The sub-district is characterized by a number of historic buildings, some of which were displaced from their original site to their present site during the redevelopment process. There is a perceivable change in the urban fabric as the continuous street facade and compact development of the older downtown core gives way to a more open development with parking plazas and green areas. This area is comprised of the finance, insurance, real estate and legal sector of the downtown. Middlesex Mutual Insurance company, one of the major of employers in the City, is located in this sub-district. One of the outcomes of the redevelopment plan was Metro Square, a shopping plaza. The location of Burger King, Dunkin Donuts and Baskin Robbins on the east side of Main Street attracts a number of people, especially the elderly, during the daytime. Sbona Towers, elderly housing and Rivers Edge luxury condominiums represent the residential component of the district. The southern end of this sub-district consists primarily of offices, The Middletown Press, Pelton's Drug Stores, the YMCA, the historic Armory and the South Green. To the south of the district is a predominance of medical offices and the Middlesex Hospital campus. This area which was redeveloped as "the new downtown" appears to be the area most susceptible to change. Large buildings which once housed major retail uses are now vacant and in all likelihood these buildings are too large to be filled by a single tenant. Change will come and it must be properly planned.



**THE DOWNTOWN RETAIL CORE**

Centrally located downtown between Washington Street and Court Street this sub-district is characterized by a strip of stores fronting on Main Street. The ground floor uses have a mix of retail uses with some restaurants and banks. The top floor uses are mainly offices. The Clock Tower Mall, Amato's, Bob's, Weathervane, Bob's Discount Furniture, and Itkins are the major retail anchors. The continuous north and south facade of attractive, and historic storefronts define both sides of the street and give shape to the character of this classic downtown area. Continuous on-street angle parking and the colorful storefronts encourage window shoppers along this stretch.

There were vacancies noted. Most notable vacancies were in the Clock Tower Mall and the former Woolworth and Kabachnick buildings. This sub-district is clearly most active during midday hours, however, activity remains fairly brisk in the late afternoons and on Saturdays and Sundays. This area should remain the retail core of the downtown. The stores are, for the most part, small enough to attract the type of owner occupied specialty retail and small service uses this plan envisions as the downtown's primary retail component. Continuous retail and restaurant frontage must be required.



### THE HARBOR AREA

One of the greatest assets to the City of Middletown is the linear stretch of land fronting the Connecticut River. The river is highly visible from Route 9 and the eastern side of the downtown. Other than being used by crew teams and an occasional fisherman and being the venue of America's Cup, a popular restaurant and night spot, the land along the river is under-utilized.

Three factors which contribute to the lack of use of the river front are a lack of direct, convenient, and safe pedestrian access from the downtown; a limited amount of parking when America's Cup draws large crowds; and the lack of a variety of activities and special events along the river front which would draw people to the river.

The river has great potential to become a highly desirable setting for active and passive recreational uses. The annual head of the Regatta rowing race and Fourth of July fireworks are excellent examples of special events in the Harbor area which draw thousands of people to the river and the Downtown in general. With suitable pedestrian access, parking problems in the park area could be corrected and the area would provide neighboring residential communities with much needed open space.

## V. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

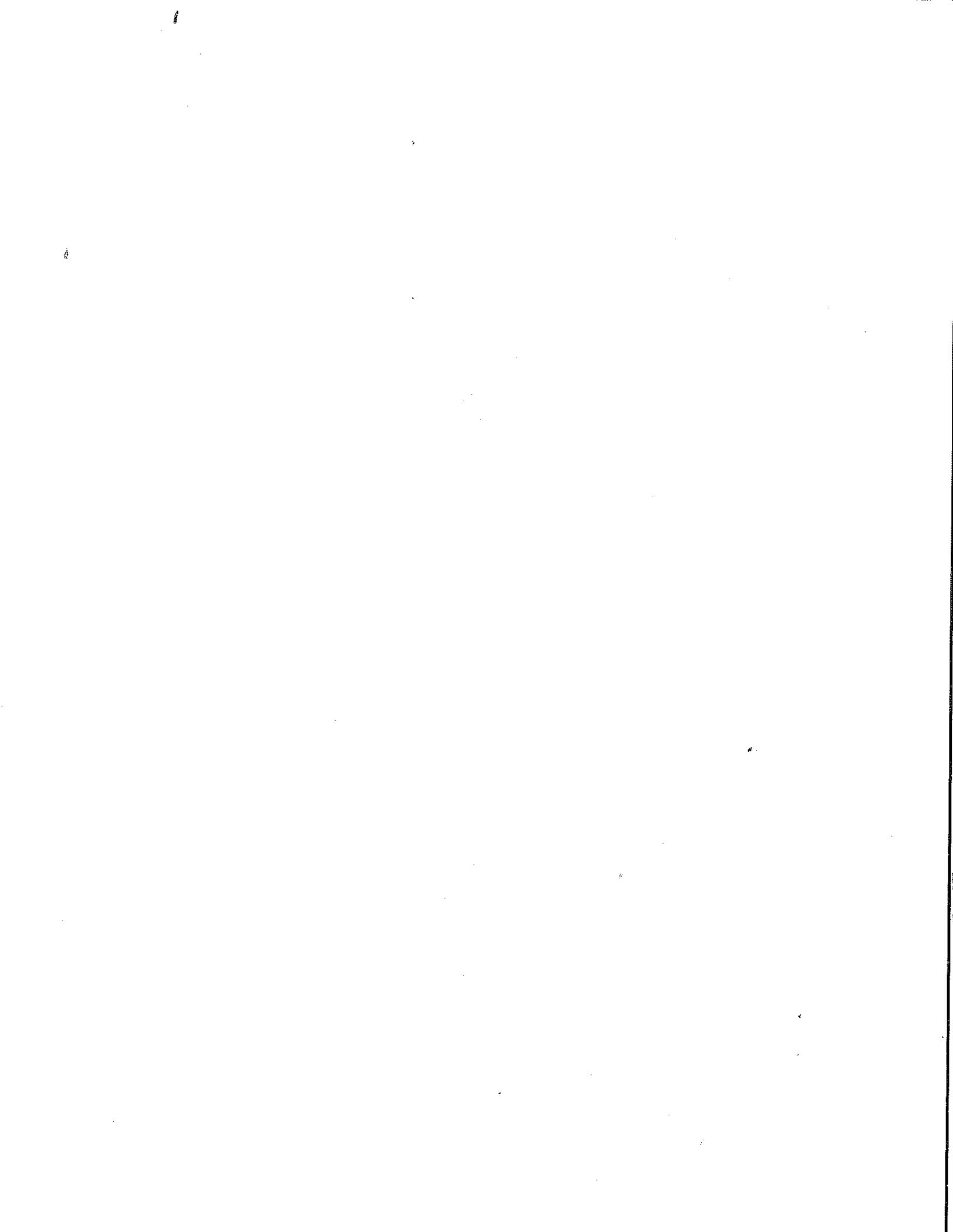
The downtown is the symbolic heart of Middletown. When people from other communities think of Middletown they think of the downtown. Therefore, our community's reputation is tied directly to the health and prosperity of the downtown.

In addition to this, the assessed value of the downtown area is \$88,596,290. This represents 5.2 % of the grand list for the City of Middletown. The assessed value of Pratt and Whitney is \$72,374,530, the assessed value of Aetna is \$175,465,500 representing 4.3 % and 10.4 % of the grand list, respectively. A comparison of the number of jobs would also no doubt reveal that the downtown area employs a number equal to that of Aetna or Pratt & Whitney. Clearly, if the downtown were to be treated as one entity, similar to a mall, it is one of our largest taxpayers and employers.

To protect Middletown's reputation as a healthy and prosperous small city, to preserve the downtown as a major taxpayer and employer, and to grow this segment of the grand list, widespread support of this plan is essential.

Currently, the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Downtown Planning Subcommittee, the Redevelopment Agency, the Parking Authority, the Economic Development Committee, the Preservation Board, the Harbor Improvement Agency, the Urban Forestry Commission, the Water Pollution Control Authority, the Public Works Commission, the Police Commission, the Police Building Committee, the Citizens Advisory Board, the Park and Recreation Commission, the Arts and Culture Commission, the Youth Center Committee, the Urban Trail Committee, the Rail Exploratory Committee, the Rockfall Foundation, the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, the Central Business Bureau, the Downtown Manager Advisory Board, the Downtown Manager, Middletown 2000, the YMCA, the Armory Group, the Connection, the Arriwani Hotel Committee, North End Arts Rising, the Community Health Center, Oddfellows Playhouse and Nehemiah Housing are just some of the well intentioned organizations committed to the improvement of downtown Middletown.

These groups include the public and private sector, both for profit and not-for-profit. Their missions range from the arts, to historic preservation, to housing for the homeless. Clearly the community has attempted to address each and every issue in the downtown. However, each agency has set its own priorities and these priorities have not been evaluated as to their relationship with any overall plan for the downtown. To date, there has been no agency or overall plan which articulates the long term vision or official policy for the downtown. Through this plan and its statutory mandates, the Planning and Zoning Commission will begin to take on this role.



This section will now identify the recommendations which are considered to be critical to setting the foundation for future growth and prosperity in downtown Middletown. For this reason, these recommendations should be fully implemented one year after adoption of this plan. These recommendations are organized using the national "Main Street" approach with categories for Organization, Promotion, Design and Regulation, and Economic Restructuring.

In order to keep the plan alive and continuously referenced, once the first series of recommendations are implemented, a Downtown Planning Sub Committee working, with the Special Services District, will develop the next set of recommendations which merit immediate action.

DOWNTOWN VISIONS : IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

PROPOSAL/ACTION	LEAD AGENCY/ACTOR	ESTI. COST	FUNDING SOURCES	COMMENTS
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>				
Formation of Downtown Planning Sub-Committee	P&Z Comm./Department	\$0	N.A.	
Creation of 3 phase Downtown Plan	P&Z Sub.Comm./Department	\$250	P&Z Budget	Printing
Formation of Downtown Manager Advisory Committee	Common Council	\$0	N.A.	
Appointment of Downtown Manager	Mayor/Advisory	\$50,000	City Budget	
Public Hearings on Downtown Plan	P&Z Comm.	\$0	N.A.	
Adoption of Downtown Plan	P&Z Comm. Common Council CBB Downtown Manager Advisory Board	\$0	N.A.	
Establishment of Special Services District (SSD)	Downtown Manager Board Property owners and Downtown Manager	\$0	N.A.	
Appointment of SSD Board of Directors and various committees	SSD	\$0	N.A.	
Appointment of SSD members to Parking Authority	SSD	\$0	N.A.	
Implementation of Parking Rec.	Parking Authority	\$0	N.A.	

DOWNTOWN VISIONS : IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

PROPOSAL/ACTION	LEAD AGENCY/ACTOR	ESTI. COST	FUNDING SOURCES	COMMENTS
<b>PROMOTION</b>				
Market Analysis for business retention and recruitment	Municipal Develop. Marketing Consultant	\$20,000	Econ. Dev. Fund, General Fund	
Community Design Contest to develop logo and slogan for downtown	Municipal Develop. Preservation Board	\$500	General Fund	Admin. Prize
Enhancement of Gateways with street trees	P&Z Dept./Urban Forestry	\$189,000	Fed. ISTE A	
Clearing of trees along Harborpark to enhance vistas to and from River	P&Z Dept./Urban Forestry	\$189,000	Fed. ISTE A	
Inclusion of Arrigoni Bridge on National Historic Register	P&Z Dept GMPT	\$200	General Fund	Important to protect most signif. landmark
Apply for grant to light Arrigoni Bridge	P&Z Dept. Northeast Utilities	\$350,000	Fed. ISTE A	Downtown Promotion of statewide signif.
Organize Downtown Promotions Committee	SSD	\$0	N.A.	Coordinated marketing

DOWNTOWN VISIONS : IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

PROPOSAL/ACTION	LEAD AGENCY/ACTOR	ESTI. COST	FUNDING SOURCES	COMMENTS
<b>ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING</b>				
Promote Special Services District	Downtown Managers Advisory Board	\$0	N.A. for downtown	essential component
Develop Database of Downtown Business	Downtown Manager	\$0		
Organize Bussiness Retention Recruitment Committee	Special Services District	\$0	N.A.	
Develop Economic Restructuring Strategy	Econ Restr. Committee	\$0		
Address issues such as window displays, common lease terms, merchandising, promotion	Econ Restr. Committee Special Services District	\$0		
Revise Reinvestment loan program to limit availability to downtown	Common Council Econ. Dev. Comm.	\$0	N.A.	