

Woburn Square Revitalization Plan

May, 2000



Woburn Redevelopment Authority, P.O. Box 72, Woburn, MA 01801 Phone: 781-935-3010

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Table of Contents

Summary	4
Section 1: Characteristics	8
- Map 1: Boundary Map	10
- Map 2: Topography	12
- Map 3: Zoning	14
- Map 4: Building Conditions	16
- Map 5: Parking Facilities	25
Section 2: Background	31
Section 3: Short Term Strategy	44
- Map 6: Short Term Objectives	49
- Map 7: Zoning Revisions	59
Section 4: Long Term Strategy	67
- Map 8: Median Household Income	77
- Map 9: Land Use	78
Attachments	81

Woburn Square Revitalization Plan

SUMMARY

Woburn Square has long been the civic and commercial center of Woburn. The City's traditional downtown lies at the intersection of most of Woburn's major arteries, and is home to most of its major public institutions. In recent decades, however, the commercial side of Woburn Square has clearly faltered, as the City's residents have chosen to patronize newer, more modern shopping centers for the purchase of their desired goods, services, and entertainment. As with most of the nation's older centers, Woburn Square has gradually experienced rising vacancy, and increasing deterioration in its buildings and infrastructure.

Today, however, there is clear consensus among Woburn's citizens that Woburn Square should remain the essential civic and commercial hub of the City of Woburn. To this end, the Woburn Redevelopment Authority (WRA) and the Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn (DRC) have formed the Woburn Square Partnership, to bring together local government, lenders, merchants, civic groups, and concerned citizens to plan a strategy for downtown revitalization. The Partnership is working together to improve the downtown, and to change the image of Woburn Square from that of an obsolete anachronism, to that of a creative, vibrant, and unique commercial center.

The downtown revitalization effort began in 1997 with a comprehensive visioning project funded by a Mass. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Planning Grant. The final report, entitled *Vision for Revitalization of Downtown Woburn*, provided a detailed market study and suggested a wide variety of short term revitalization activities. Building upon that report, in February, 1998 the Partnership began a planning and program design effort to prepare a strategy with a list of specific activities to implement that collective vision. This Woburn Square Revitalization Plan is the result of that effort.

This Revitalization Plan has been prepared in order to accomplish a number of purposes. First, it has provided a vehicle around which local officials, members of the downtown business community, and Woburn's interested residents could forge a consensus regarding the strategic direction for Woburn Square. Secondly, it provides the foundation for the expenditure of urban renewal funds currently held by the WRA. These funds are left over from the development of the Woburn Industrial Park, the WRA's last major redevelopment project. Under the terms of the Certificate of Completion for that project, executed between the WRA and DHCD, the funds are to be expended on the planning and implementation of a revitalization plan for Woburn Square. While a full urban renewal plan under M.G.L. Ch.121B is not required, the WRA must adopt a strategic downtown revitalization plan as a necessary prerequisite.

Thirdly, this Plan has also been prepared in order to meet the requirement specified in the guidelines for the Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) for a comprehensive development plan for the downtown revitalization area. Without a locally ap-

proved plan, downtown revitalization activities would not be eligible for the expenditure of CDBG funds. This program, also administered by DHCD, is a significant source of economic development funds for smaller communities throughout the Commonwealth, and is proposed as an important source of funds for various activities detailed in this Plan. Therefore, Section 1 also establishes that the Woburn Square Revitalization Area meets the definition of an area of “slums and blight,” as defined by the CDBG program guidelines, and throughout includes certain discussions specifically relevant to the guidelines of that funding source.



The first and most important part of the definition of “slums and blight” promulgated by DHCD requires that the target area meet the Massachusetts Ch.121B urban renewal statutory definition of “blighted, decadent or substandard.” Thus, it is still prudent for the WRA and the City of Woburn, through an affirming resolution of the City Council, to document and certify that the Woburn Square Revitalization Area meets that Ch.121B statutory definition as well, even though a full urban renewal plan is not required for the expenditure of the WRA funds which are already in hand. Section 1 of the plan, entitled “Characteristics,” provides the necessary Ch. 121B documentation and analysis. Without this documentation, the future expenditure of CDBG funds for downtown revitalization would be problematic.

The Woburn Square Revitalization Area encompasses virtually the entire commercial downtown, where blighting conditions are concentrated. It does not include the area characterized in this Plan as the “civic” downtown, dominated by governmental and other public institutions, which does not so directly meet the statutory definition. However, where the larger downtown is relevant for broader issues of design or analysis, it is considered within this Plan.

The central focus of the Woburn Square Revitalization Plan is a 24 month action program, which is designed to accomplish a specific set of short term revitalization objectives. This represents a realistic program for which funding is in hand or readily available, and around which there is a firm local consensus. This short term effort is primarily focused within the currently designated Woburn Square Revitalization Area, where blighted conditions are most concentrated. Other objectives which cannot likely be accomplished within the 24 month period are characterized as long term, to be more thoroughly reviewed and implemented within a period of two to ten years, if there proves to be both a local consensus and available funding. This group of activities includes, among other activities, major new construction and upgrade of off-street parking facilities, possible traffic improvements, and the assemblage of sites for new anchor development, .

Some of the long term objectives involve activities requiring major capital expenditures which



will require the successful solicitation and award of sizable community development, economic development or public works grants, which will not likely be available within the near term. The ultimate scheduling of these long term activities will be dependent upon state and federal budget and award decisions which are outside of the control of the WRA or the City of Woburn.

An important purpose of the short-term strategy is to demonstrate some clearly identifiable results, including the lever-

aging of substantial investment by existing downtown merchants and property owners, in order to develop a local revitalization “track record.” Through this effort, the WRA and the Downtown Committee hope to be able to organize an ever more effective constituency for the application of broader community resources over the longer term for capital improvements and other major projects. At the same time, in order to develop and maintain basic credibility with the public, it is also critically important not to raise expectations regarding the City’s ability to control the schedule of implementation of any long term program.

A central component of this revitalization planning effort is the Busy Bend Design Project. The Busy Bend is a historic block of retail stores and offices located on the eastern side of Main Street, between Montvale Avenue and Walnut Street. Because of its visual and historical prominence directly opposite the Woburn Common, the WRA selected the Busy Bend to be the subject of a comprehensive design exercise. Based upon the results, the WRA is developing specific guidelines and programs for storefront, streetscape, and parking area improvement, which will be applied to revitalization efforts throughout the Square. This has allowed for the development of a uniform and detailed streetscape program, without requiring the complete reengineering of the downtown street and sidewalk network. The Busy Bend Project is a participatory effort, providing opportunity for merchants, property owners, municipal officials, and the general public to offer suggestions and comments.

The specific short term activities proposed in this Revitalization Plan will guide the expenditure of Ch.121B urban renewal funds currently held by the WRA, and will also serve as the basis for seeking additional funding from other state, federal, and private sources. The proposed program includes:

- *Streetscape improvements*, including new lighting, sidewalk treatment, and street plantings and furnishings;
- *New pedestrian access*, through the design and construction of a new plaza/pedestrian accessway linking the Walnut Street municipal parking lot with Main Street;
- *Financial assistance* to merchants and property owners for façade improvement, as well as

business expansion;

- A *technical assistance* fund to assist merchants with business planning, permitting, business marketing, etc.;
- *Plans for parking system improvements*, including preparation of plans for a new Magazine Hill parking lot, and for improvements to the Walnut Street lot;
- New *zoning proposals*, to reflect the community's land use goals and objectives for Woburn Square; and,
- A *marketing strategy* and program for promoting Woburn Square as a good place to shop and conduct business.

The Woburn Square Revitalization Plan is one component of a larger effort by the administration of Mayor Robert M. Dever to bring a new dedication to municipal planning and programming within the City of Woburn. The Master Plan Advisory Committee, meeting under the supervision of the Planning Board, is conducting a review of the City's Comprehensive Plan, which was last updated in 1985. The Committee hopes to embark in the year 2000 on a major community-wide visioning project which will culminate in the adoption of a new Comprehensive Plan. In 1998, the Dever Administration embarked upon the preparation of the City's first Capital Improvement Program, which is providing the framework for a comprehensive program to upgrade the City's water delivery system, a critical issue to Woburn residents. In 1999, the Conservation Commission, in collaboration with the WRA and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, completed a long awaited update of the City's Open Space and Recreation Plan. Important to all of these planning activities is the ongoing revitalization of Woburn Square.

The City of Woburn is firmly committed to restoring its historic downtown to its position of prominence in the civic and commercial life of the community. In many ways, this effort is already underway. The adoption and implementation of the Woburn Square Revitalization Plan will be the catalyst to complete this important endeavor.

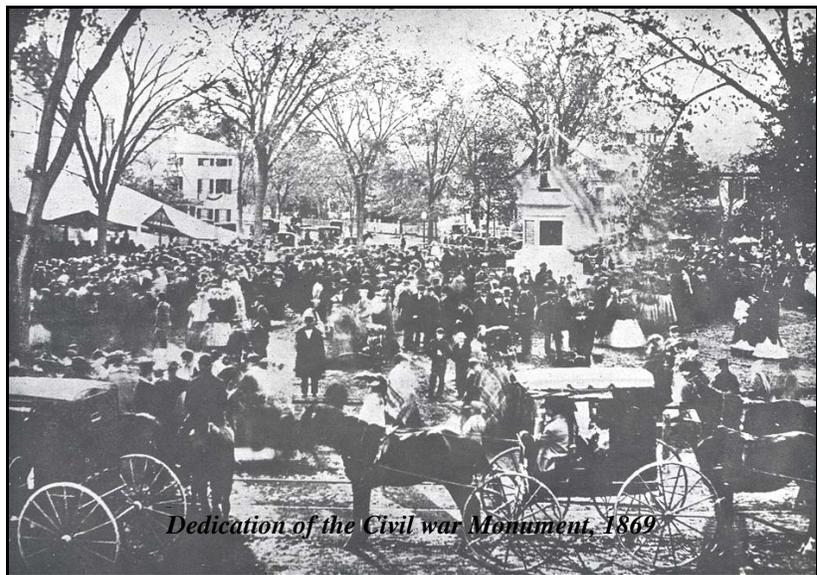
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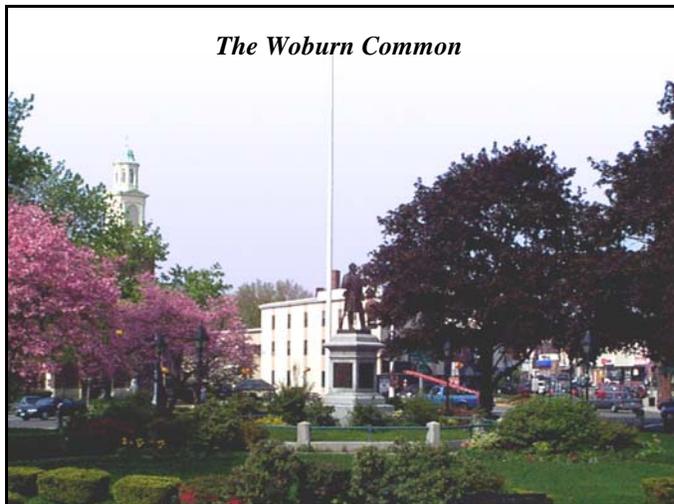
Section 1: Characteristics

I. Introduction: Woburn Square has long been the civic and commercial center of Woburn. The City's traditional downtown lies at the intersection of most of Woburn's major arteries, including Main Street, Montvale Avenue, Winn Street, Pleasant Street and Salem Street. These major thoroughfares provide connections for residents to the surrounding towns of Burlington, Lexington, Stoneham, Reading, Wilmington, and Winchester, and provide local commuters with direct access to Interstate Routes 93 and 128. As a result of its status as a hub, recent traffic studies have estimated that over 30,000 vehicles pass through the downtown on a daily basis. However, it is the conventional wisdom among local officials, residents, and members of the business community that very few of those passing through ever stop to do business. This Woburn Square Revitalization Plan addresses that fundamental problem.

At the center of the Square, forming the literal hub itself, is Woburn Common. This 18,000 square foot, triangular shaped park has been set aside as public open space since the founding of the Town of Woburn in 1642. At the center of the Common is a monument with a bronze infantry figure, commemorating the citizens of Woburn who served in the Civil War. The monument, dedicated in 1869, has long been the central focal point of the park. Surrounding the Civil War Memorial are additional memorials to the veterans who served in the American Revolution, the Spanish American War, both World Wars, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. In 1999, a new memorial was added to the Common, honoring the women of Woburn who served the country in each of its conflicts.

Well landscaped and maintained by the City's Recreation Commission, the Common is the center of what is essentially a busy traffic rotary, and is the visual focal point of Woburn Square. Throughout the Spring, Summer and Fall, there are always plantings in bloom, providing color and enchantment for commuters and shoppers alike. City Hall, the Woburn District Court, and several churches and lending institutions all face the Common. The Common continues its long tradition as a place for community celebrations. Memo-





rial and Veterans Day services are always held there, among the multitude of war memorials. In 1999, the annual Christmas on the Common Festival drew over 5,000 people.

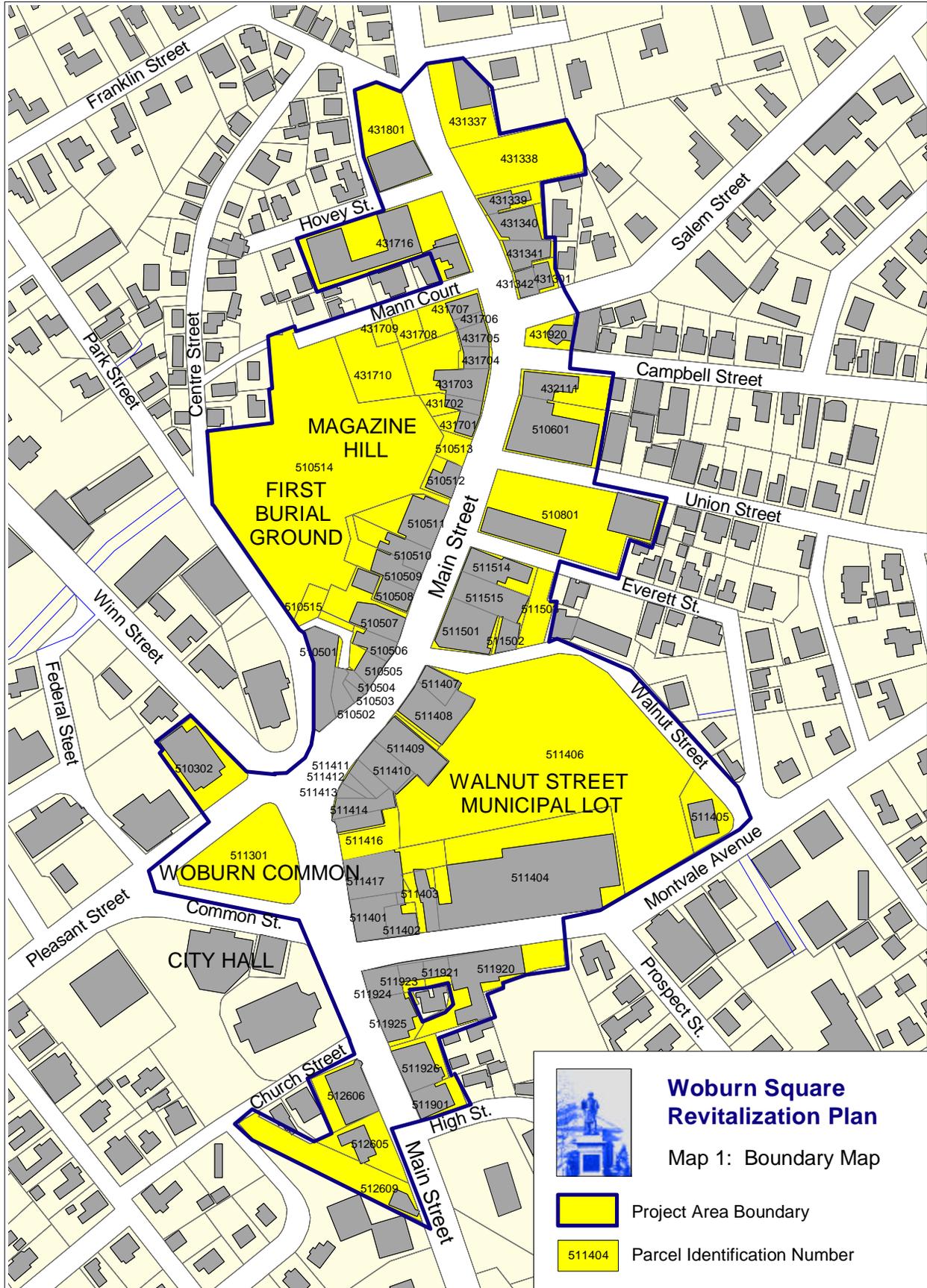
Geographers often talk about a concept called the “identity of place.” A great many important elements contribute to this identity, which define the history and culture of a community, creating a sense of shared background and experience, and thus connectivity, among its members. Among those critical ele-

ments are the important, unique landmarks of a community. Woburn Common is undoubtedly one of the central such landmarks of Woburn, along with the nearby Woburn Public Library, the first public library designed by the famed 19th Century architect, H.H. Richardson, a designated historic landmark. The identity of place, in which these public landmarks play such a major part, is important to everyone in the community, because the sense of place, the idea of “home,” is also a critical defining component of every individual’s sense of personal identity.

That Woburn Common is a central component of Woburn’s identity of place was made clear a few years ago, when a proposal was put forward to remove a historic artifact from the Common—an old, rusting naval vent, on display for many decades, which was said to have been salvaged from the U.S.S. Maine after its sinking in Havana Harbor. The authenticity of the vent had been questioned, but the public outcry against the plan was overwhelming and unexpected. The vent remains to this day.

Symbols are important. Thus, in the choice and design of the activities and improvements put forward in this Woburn Square Revitalization Plan, one important intent is the enhancement of the role of Woburn Common as the heart of Woburn Square. It is no accident that the image of the Common’s Civil War memorial was used by the Woburn Redevelopment Authority in the design of a new logo. More important, with the implementation of this plan, the landscape amenities and historic themes which permeate the Common will be extended throughout the square, permitting the entire commercial downtown to share in the identity of place now vested almost exclusively in the Common and other institutional structures. In addition, a new pedestrian plaza/accessway, planned for a location immediately across from the Common, will serve to link the Common, both visually and directly, with the Walnut Street Municipal Parking Lot, the largest and most central parking facility in Woburn Square.

II. Area Boundary: Most of the commercial activity in Woburn Square is located along a seven block length of Main Street, between High Street on the south, and Franklin Street on the north. This strip of approximately 60 older commercial properties, along with three major public spaces, make up the major components of the Downtown Revitalization Area. The total area represents just over 16.2 acres of land, not counting public rights of way. This commercial area



today stands in marked contrast to the attractive Common. Many of the buildings are deteriorating; others have had their original historic features obscured by siding, or by bland, nondescript façade treatments which mimic new, strip mall construction. The sidewalks, though relatively new, are generally too narrow for plantings, benches or other amenities, and are often described by the public as “barren.”

The exact boundary of the Revitalization Area is shown on the parcel map depicted on Map 1. The map also shows the outlines of building improvements located on each parcel. This and subsequent parcel maps utilize the City of Woburn’s Geographic Information System, which now provides the City’s official Assessor Maps, Zoning Map, etc. The six digit Parcel Identification Number is a unique identifier, which represents the Map, Block and Lot Numbers of each parcel. Attachment 1 of this Plan has the complete list of parcels in the Revitalization Area, indexed by PID number, with the lot size, building size, land use, and ownership of each building.

The boundary of the Downtown Revitalization Area was selected for two reasons. First, and most important, it encompasses as closely as possible the area both currently and historically devoted to concentrated commercial use. Secondly, the area must meet the eligibility requirements of the Massachusetts Community Development Block Program (Mass. CDBG) as an area of “slums and blight” under the Mass. CDBG Program Guidelines. The CDBG program establishes three criteria, in order to certify conditions and undertake a downtown redevelopment program on an area-wide basis. These are: 1) the target area must meet the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Ch.121B definition of a “blighted, decadent, or substandard area,” 2) the target area must have a substantial number of deteriorated buildings or public improvements, and 3) the proposed project must address the blighting conditions in a measurable way. The first two issues will be addressed later in this section. The last will be addressed in Section 3, Short Term Strategy.

III. Topography: The topography of the Revitalization Area is dominated by two major features, as can be seen on Map 2. The most significant is Magazine Hill (PID 510514), a major ledge outcropping which at its highest point abruptly rises over 40 feet above grade, just a few feet behind the row of retail storefronts located along the west side of Main Street. In the 18th and early 19th Centuries, this two acre parcel was the site of the community’s powder magazine. This Revitalization Plan includes the preparation of design plans for a new municipal parking facility to be constructed on Magazine Hill, which will provide between 100 and 125 new public parking spaces. This will require the removal of a significant portion of the ledge outcropping. The second major topographical feature is the Walnut Street lot (PID 511406), which in general rises be-





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Woburn Redevelopment Authority

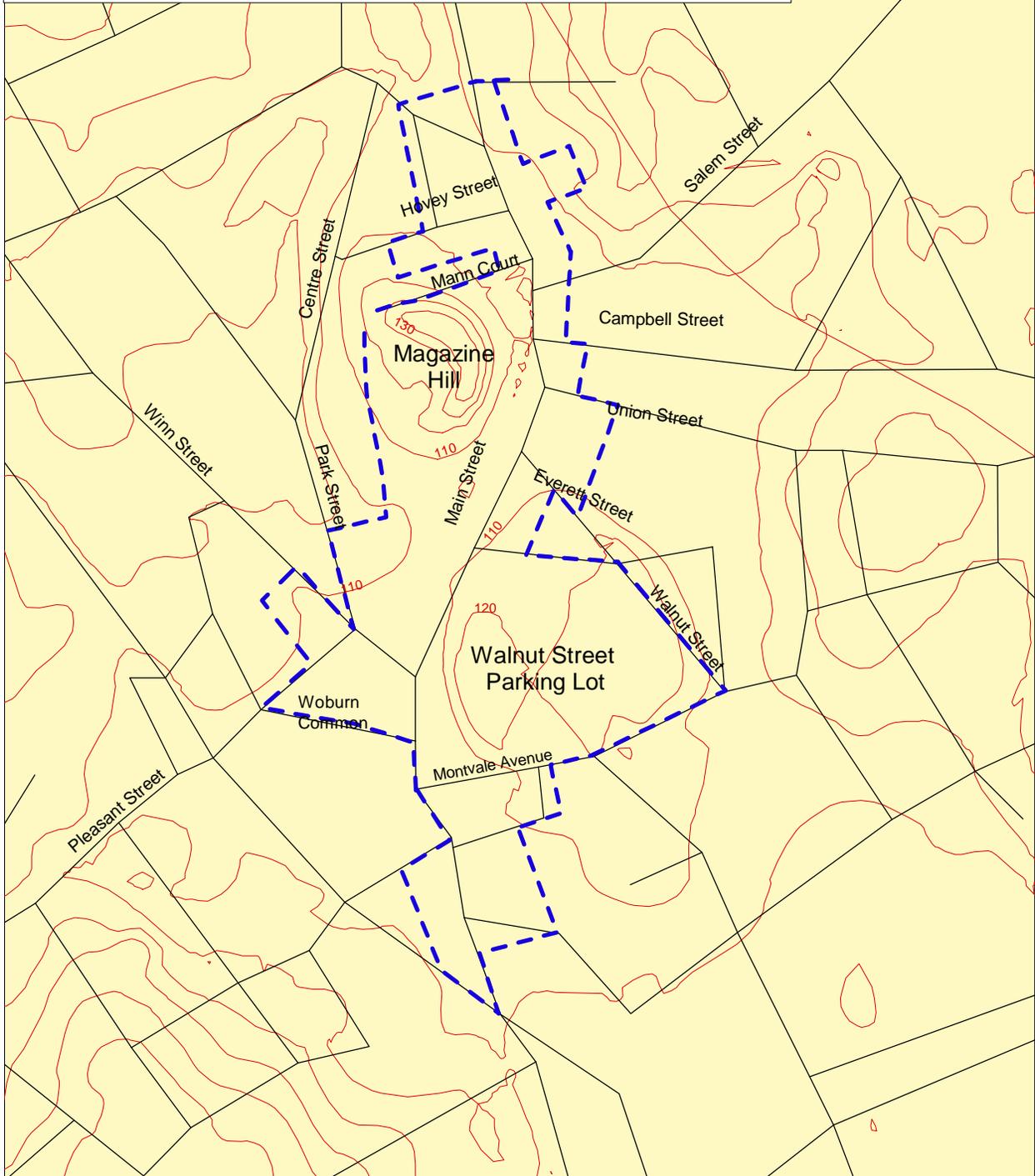
Map 2: Topography

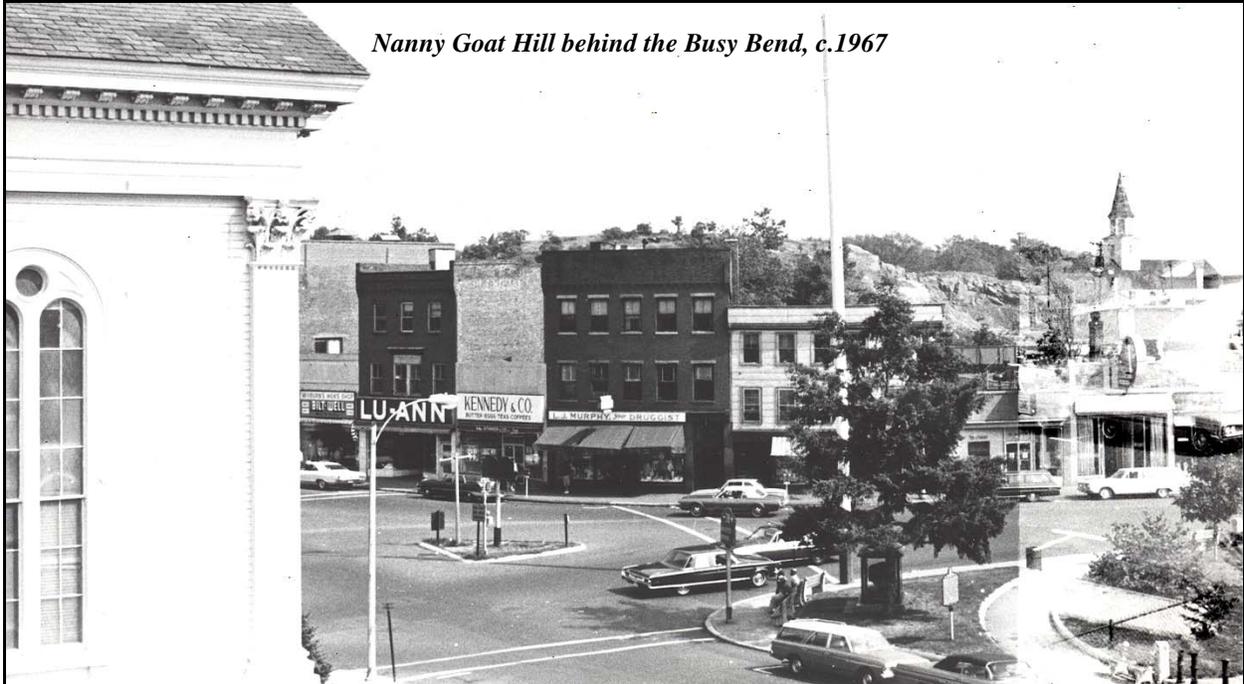


Revitalization Area Boundary



Contour Lines, 10 ft. intervals

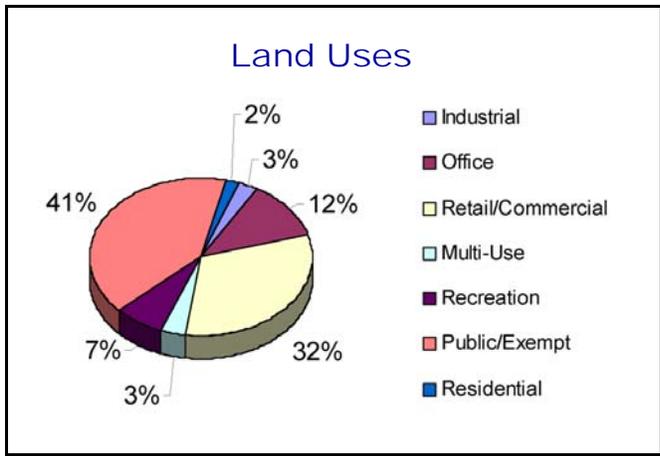




tween ten and fifteen feet above grade behind the businesses located along the “Busy Bend” on the eastern side of Main Street. At one time, this area was a significantly higher prominence known as “Nanny Goat Hill,” but in the late 60s, the ledge outcropping was leveled to its current grade, in order to construct the municipal parking lot. This 2.7 acre parcel now contains approximately 350 municipal parking spaces. The lot currently provides the major source of public off-street parking for the Woburn Square commercial area. However, the design and access to the lot require major improvement. Both spaces and circulation lanes are substandard in size, and the circulation pattern is confusing. There is no lighting, drainage, or landscaping. Though located immediately behind the retail businesses on Main Street, public pedestrian and handicapped access to the lot is problematic.

IV. Zoning and Land Use: Virtually the entire Revitalization Area is located within the B-D Downtown Business Zoning District, with the principal exception of Magazine Hill, which is primarily in the R-4 Multi-Family Residential District. This, and the district designations of the surrounding areas, is shown on Map 3. The B-D District allows most of the existing commercial uses found in the Area. However a significant number of issues regarding the B-D District regulations have been raised in recent years. These are addressed in Section 3 of this Revitalization Plan, with specific proposed revisions to the Woburn Zoning Ordinance, to ensure that the ordinance supports, rather than contradicts, the goals of the plan.

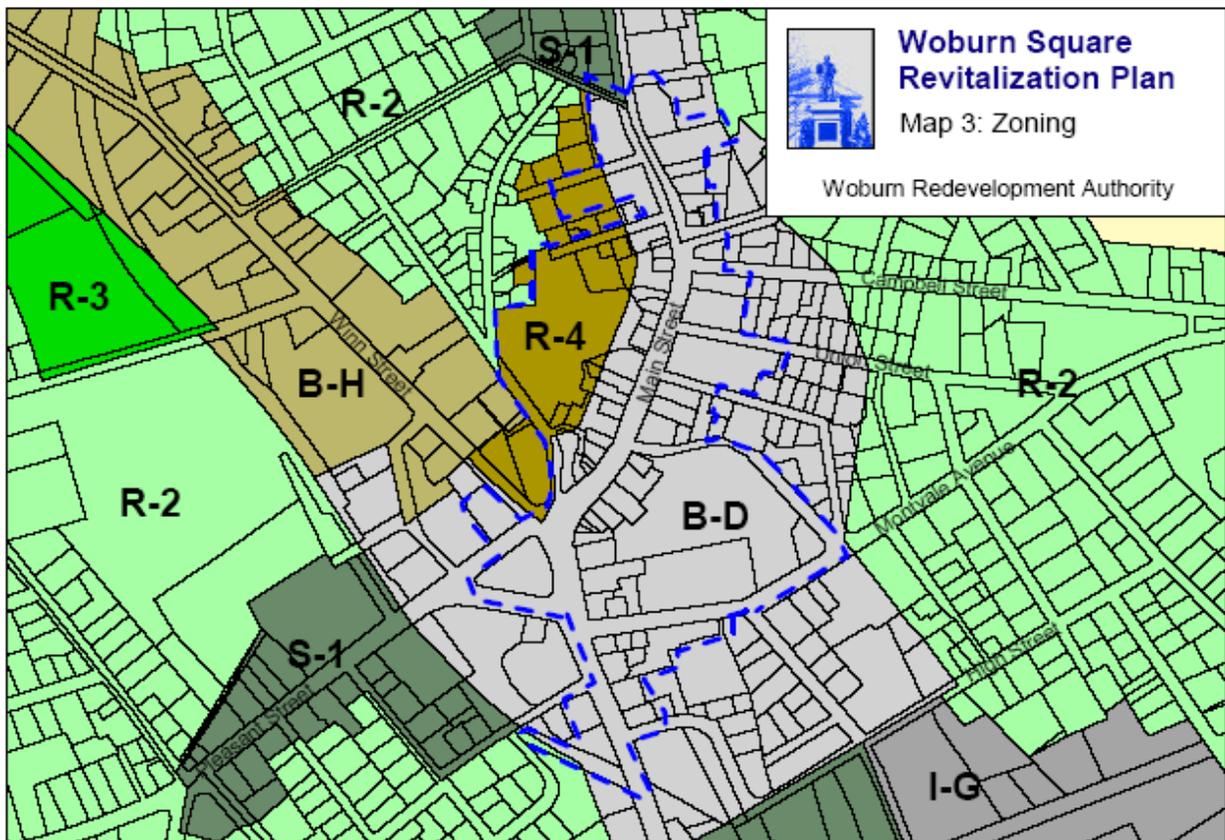
The Pie Chart on the following page indicates the distribution of land uses within the Revitalization Area. Data from the files of the Woburn Assessing Department provided the land use information and designations. This information was updated through site inspections and interviews with business proprietors and building owners by the WRA. Because of the large tracts of parking and open area represented by Magazine Hill and the Walnut Street Lot, Public and Exempt uses make up over 40 percent of the land use. Not surprisingly, Retail/Commercial



uses are the next largest group, with 32 percent. This category includes personal services, such as hair salons, restaurants and other food service businesses, in addition to conventional retail. Properties primarily in Office use make up another 12 percent. The Recreation use reflects only one parcel, a large 50,000 square foot building which includes both the Woburn Bowladrome and the Crest View Plaza function hall. Residential and mixed use properties account for the remaining 5 percent.

V. Eligibility: An essential step in this redevelopment planning process is the presentation of evidence that the Woburn Square Revitalization Area is an area of “slums and blight” under the Mass. CDBG Program Guidelines, which implement the regulations of the CDBG Small Cities program, promulgated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The CDBG program establishes three criteria which must be met in order to certify conditions and undertake a redevelopment program on an area-wide basis. These are:

- The target area must meet the criteria of a “blighted, decadent, or substandard area,” as de-



fined in M.G.L. Ch. 121B, the state urban renewal statute;

- The target area must have a substantial number of deteriorated buildings or public improvements; and,
- The proposed project must address the blighting conditions in a measurable way.

A. Ch.121B Definition: While most people in discussion use the term “blighted” in a general sense to refer to any deteriorating building or area, in the state urban renewal statute, the term “blighted” refers exclusively to an open, undeveloped area. In the case of a built up commercial area, the primary relevant classification is “decadent.” The statutory definition of a decadent area, and a portion of the definition of a “blighted open area,” is provided in the sidebar at the right. In reviewing the eligibility of the Woburn Square Revitalization Area, the following measures of decadence will be utilized:

- Number and percent of buildings which are out of repair or physically deteriorated;
- Level of first floor and upper floor commercial vacancy;
- Existence of rock ledge; and,
- Irregular lot sizes and configurations.

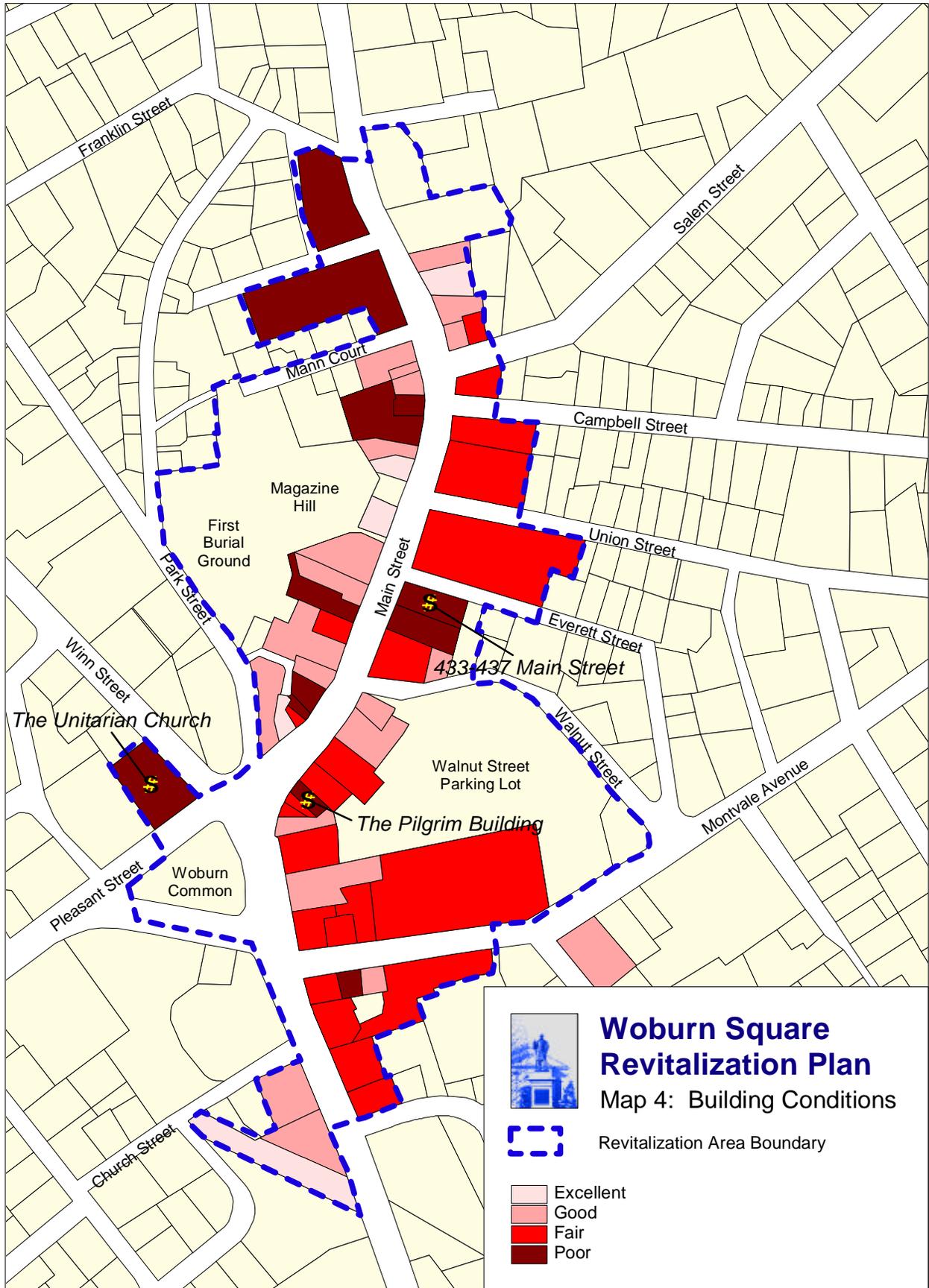
1. Physical Condition of Buildings: The primary measure of “decadence” in a commercial area is the physical condition of the commercial building inventory itself. The degree to which an excessive percentage of the supply of commercial property is deteriorating and in need of significant repair is both a symptom of deeper economic

problems, and a major psychological deterrent to any individual business or property owner who may be contemplating an investment. Fundamentally, the Woburn Square Revitalization Area meets this test, as over half of the properties within its boundaries were found to be either in fair or poor condition.

In order to measure the physical conditions of the individual properties, the Woburn Redevelopment Authority conducted a systematic series of exterior inspections between November, 1998, and February, 1999. A copy of the inspection form is attached; the completed forms are pro-

“Decadent Area,” an area which is detrimental to the safety, health, morals, welfare, or sound growth of a community because of the existence of buildings which are out of repair, physically deteriorated, unfit for human habitation, or obsolete, or in need of major maintenance or repair, or because much of the real estate in recent years has been sold or taken for non-payment of taxes or upon foreclosure of mortgages, or because buildings have been torn down and not replaced and under existing conditions it is improbable that the buildings will be replaced, or because of a substantial change in business or economic conditions, or because of inadequate light, air or open space, or because of excessive land coverage or because diversity of ownership, irregular lot size, or obsolete street patterns make it improbable that the area will be redeveloped by ordinary operations of private enterprise, or by reason of any combination of the foregoing conditions.

“Blighted Open Area,” a predominantly open area which is detrimental to the safety, health, moral welfare or sound growth of a community because it is unduly costly to develop it soundly through ordinary operations of private enterprise by reason of the evidence of ledge, rock, unsuitable soil, or other physical conditions...



vided in Appendix B, under separate cover. Among the factors considered were the overall structural integrity of the building, the integrity of wood, brick, masonry, stucco or metal surfaces, the condition of roofline and flashing, and the overall condition of the storefront elements, including display windows, entryways, signage, etc.

The four category titles of Excellent, Good, Fair, and Poor are specified in the guidelines of the Mass. CDBG Program, but are not specifically defined therein. In lieu of mandated criteria, the WRA has adopted general descriptive criteria summarized in the sidebar on the right, used by the staff in other projects. On the following page, Map 4 shows the rating applied to each property within the Revitalization Area. The chart on the following page graphically depicts the percent distribution of sixty properties, both by number of individual properties and by square foot of building area. Note that one out of five properties is actually in poor condition. While 57 percent of the properties by count are either Fair or Poor, nearly two-thirds of the total building area is within those buildings. This is primarily because the single largest building, the Woburn Bowladrome, was given a “fair” rating by virtue of the deteriorated condition of its signage and foundation, and the poor condition of one of its constituent structures, located at 18 Montvale Avenue. Several specific properties classified to be in “poor” condition are worth special note, and are further described below.

Categories of Physical Condition

EXCELLENT: This category includes those buildings which require no exterior facade work. Some have facades of modern design or style that appear to have been installed recently, others are traditional storefronts which are well maintained and in good repair. All in this category are in good or excellent condition.

GOOD: This category represents storefronts which are now showing the first signs of physical deterioration. Such early signs would be pock marks of rust on painted metal surfaces and water stains and other incipient deterioration on the painted wood surfaces. Buildings with non-conforming or inappropriate signage, if showing signs of deterioration, are also included in this category. Examples of this type of exterior sign include incandescent marquis signs, interior lit plastic signs, and neon illumination.

FAIR: Storefronts with this designation show clear signs of deterioration indicative of a commercial property that has not been maintained or renovated in 5 to 10 years. These may have at least 25% of their painted surfaces in a progressed state of peeling. In the case of brick surfaces, 25% of the surface area requires repointing. Small wood and metal trim pieces may be lifting away from primary storefront surfaces. Many of the Woburn Square storefronts in this category have older facades with architectural features which have been covered with sheet metal and other like materials from renovations of earlier decades. These covering materials are now showing signs of significant deterioration.

POOR: This category includes properties which appear not to have been renovated for at least ten years. Facades are likely to have missing and broken bricks or masonry surfaces. At least 50% of the painted surfaces may show signs of advanced peeling. A typical example of an architectural feature on a facade in this category is a flat sign that is lifting away from its background material and is in an advanced state of surface disrepair. Older style awnings may have torn fabric, and inoperable cranking mechanisms and metal ribbing.

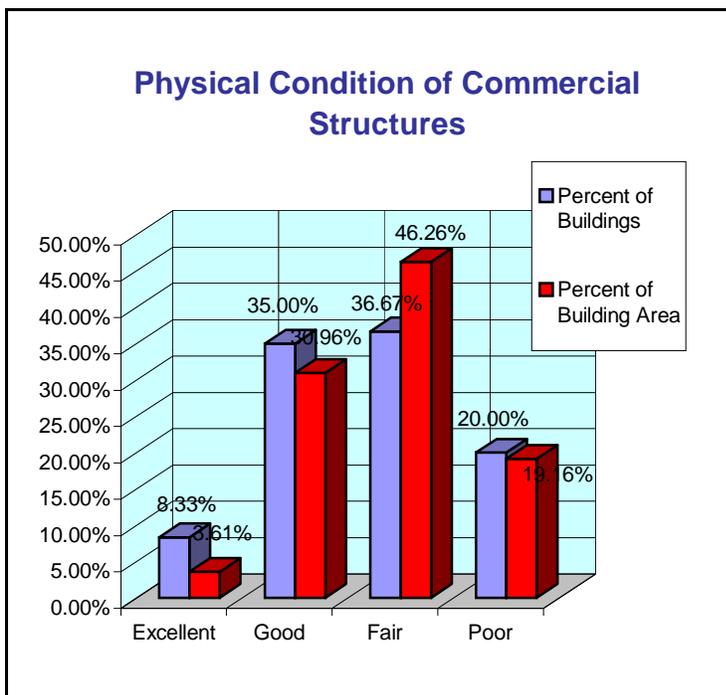
- *The Pilgrim Building (PID 511410):* So named because it once housed a business known as the Thrifty Pilgrim, this building experienced a substantial fire in the early 90s. The property, located at 385 Main Street, appears to be the only abandoned property in downtown Woburn. The photos on the following page show the front and rear of the building, and



clearly depict the substantial damage to the building structure. While it once contained over 6,000 square feet of space in three stories, it is now essentially an empty and incomplete shell. The building was purchased by the current owner in 1994 for the sum of \$51,000. After initial interior demolition and clean-up, and some limited rehabilitation, including, inexplicably, the installation of new front windows, the work ceased. The owner is now in arrears in local property tax payments, and no work has been attempted in over four years.

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- *The former Unitarian Church (PID 510302):* This large wood frame church, located at 1 Pleasant Street, is directly opposite the Woburn Common, and is one of the most prominent buildings in the downtown. The property was purchased from the Unitarians by the City of Woburn in August, 1992, and through an RFP process was sold in January, 1993 to the Satsang Center, a Hindu congregation which raised the purchase price of \$175,000 through a fund raising drive among its members. The large Greek Revival structure has proven extremely difficult to maintain, and after six years, a substantial amount of deterioration is now evident. The exterior paint is substantially peeling, and individual lengths of molding have begun to pull away.



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- *433-437 Main Street (PID 511514):* Among the smaller commercial buildings along Main

Street, this three story wood frame building stands out as an especially blighting influence. The exterior finish is primarily asbestos siding, which is in seriously deteriorated condition. Paint is peeling substantially on all wood surfaces, and many surfaces show signs of dry rot. Substantial settling in several areas indicates that the building may have serious structural problems. The owner of the building has expressed an interest in working with the WRA to rehabilitate the building, if feasible.



The commercial buildings in downtown Woburn reflect a wide mix of architectural styles and periods. Over the decades, Woburn Square has undergone a gradual evolution, as public taste and economic conditions have changed. The twelve distinct storefronts in the Busy bend Study Area, located between Walnut Street and Montvale Avenue, reflect styles in the downtown generally. The facades in this block can be characterized as follows:

<i>Colonial</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Victorian</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Art Deco</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Modern</i>	<i>4</i>

Many of the storefronts characterized as “modern” are merely wrappers covering the original storefronts. In most cases, it is not possible to determine just how much of the original historic features are still underneath the contemporary

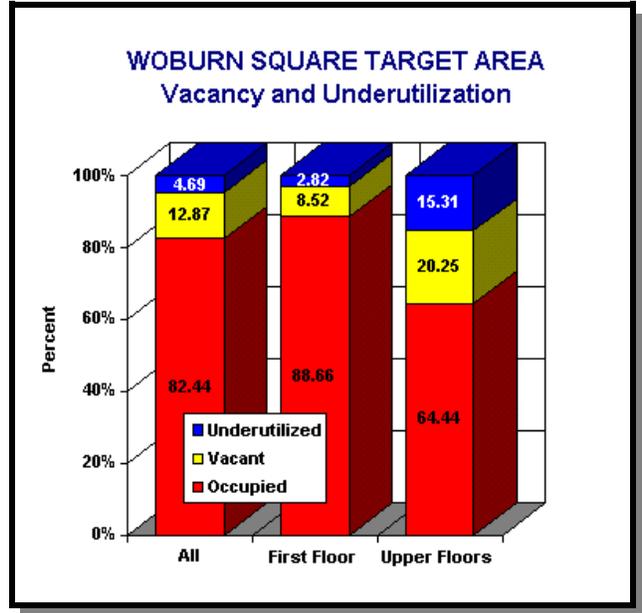


The former First Unitarian Church

vener. In any event, this eclectic mix of style clearly indicated to the WRA and the Committee that while a respect for tradition and a historic aesthetic must be a central component of any design guidelines, insistence on a specific historical style or period was both unfeasible and inauthentic.

2. Vacancy and Underutilization:

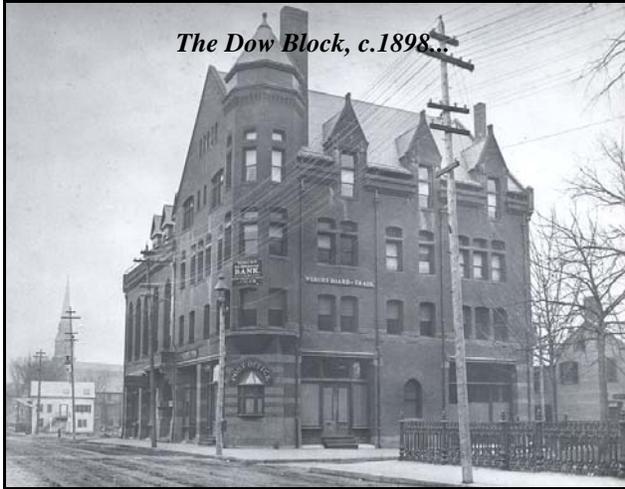
In October and November of 1998, the WRA conducted a survey of business occupancy for the commercial spaces located in Woburn’s downtown. The graph depicts the overall rate of vacancy and underutilization, for all space, and for first and upper floors. (Underutilization is operationally defined as space used by business owners for storage, because it could not be rented, or space which is occupied by a business which is seasonal or not maintaining regular business hours.) The overall vacancy rate was 12.9 percent, which represents approximately 39,000 square feet of vacant space. Not surprisingly, upper floor vacancy is far greater than the rate for first floor space, exceeding 20 percent.



In order to fully understand the market for local commercial space, a review of vacancy rates is not sufficient. It is also important to consider the extent of underutilization, the use of space which in some way falls far short of its potential. Usually, underutilized space is being rented at a substantial discount, or brings in no rent at all. Property owners accept these tenancies because they see no near term alternative. In a stronger market, such space might remain vacant, because a property owner (whether renting or selling) is generally willing to wait for a more attractive offer. In a weaker market, however, underutilization is perceived by property owners as a necessary strategy for minimizing losses, rather than increasing profits.



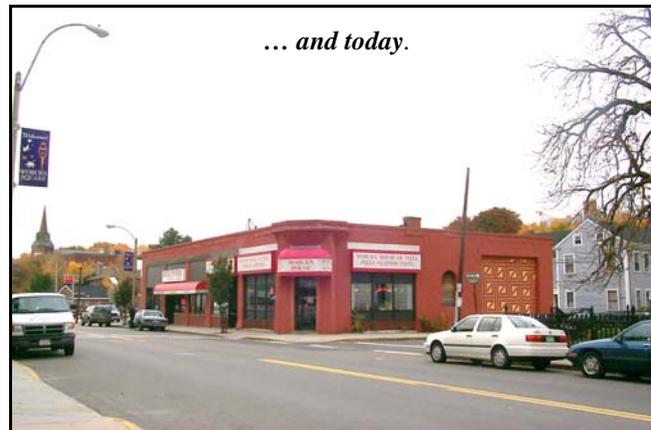
In Woburn Square, only 2.8 percent of the first floor space was underutilized. Much of that amount reflects the occupancy of a well-known tax preparation service, which only opens the first floor storefront office during the tax season, but does pay a conventional annual rent. Not surprisingly, upper floor underutiliza-



tion is far more prominent, with over 15 percent of the total amount of second and third floor space in that category. Much of that upper floor space is used for storage, a strategy which some property owners have admitted to be an act of last resort, taken only after they had failed over time to locate a conventional tenant. This brings the combined rate of upper floor vacancy and underutilization to a substantial 35 percent.

Upper floor vacancy is not a new problem in Woburn Square, but rather has plagued this and other older commercial areas since the

last century. A typical solution, first pursued in the years following World War I, was the radical demolition of some or all of the upper floors of a multi-story building. The brick structure located at 312 Main Street (PID 512606) is a typical example. Known historically as the Dow Block, this once notable four story gothic structure underwent major surgery sometime in the 1920s, and is now a one story brick and masonry storefront. The vestiges of its piers and pilasters have been brightly painted to create a modern impression, showing only the faintest glimmer of its former Victorian grandeur. The building now is home to the Roma Bakery and the Woburn House of Pizza.



Through extensive discussions with property owners, real estate brokers, and merchants, a number of factors can be identified as contributing to the relatively high rate of vacancy and underutilization in Woburn Square, particularly on the upper floors. According to local brokers, the general appearance of the downtown makes the recruitment of new businesses difficult, as it does not present an economically prosperous image. Many of the vacant spaces are too small, poorly configured, or otherwise obsolete for modern office or retail use. It is especially difficult to rent upper floor space without an elevator, but most of the downtown commercial buildings have far too small a footprint to justify the high fixed cost. Public parking throughout the downtown is unevenly distributed, and not easily accessible to many buildings, contributing to both vacancy and underutilization, especially along the western side of Main Street.

3. Existence of Rock Ledge: Throughout the City of Woburn, significant ledge outcroppings are a common geological feature. As early as the late 17th Century, Woburn Square began its development as the civic and commercial center of the community in a natural corridor between two major outcroppings, known as Magazine Hill and Nanny Goat Hill. Magazine



Hill was so named because of the colonial era powder magazine which once graced its precipice. Nanny Goat Hill to the east was originally higher, but was partially excavated by the City in the 1960's, in order to create the Walnut Street parking lot. Map 2, Topography, clearly indicates these features.

The ubiquity of this ledge has long been a serious problem for Woburn's downtown. As the community joined the nation in turning to the automobile for the majority of work and shopping trips, traditional downtowns similar to Woburn Square developed a typical accommodation whereby parking facilities were developed or expanded to the rear of the buildings along the Main Street business blocks. This strategy allowed the traditional street wall, which gives the downtown its pedestrian scale, to be maintained. Without this accommodation, the decline of the downtowns in the face of the rise of the shopping mall would perhaps have been far worse. In Woburn, the existence of the two confining ledge outcroppings made such improvements prohibitively expensive, and resulted in a less than satisfactory solution.

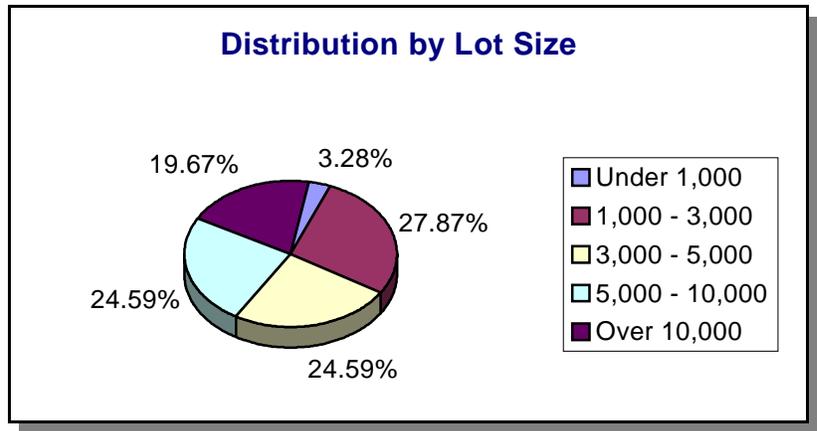
The outcome for the Walnut Street lot, excavated over a period of years, is indicative of the situation. The grade of the lot, by necessity, is still approximately 14 feet above the grade of Main Street. Thus, access to the parking lot from the rear of buildings is from the second floor level, and requires a rear access stairway. Because of the added expense of trenching solid rock in order to install utilities, no lighting, storm drainage, or planted areas were provided. As a result, pedestrian access is poor, and the lot is unsafe and difficult to maneuver, especially at night.

On the western side of Main Street, the idea of constructing a second lot on Magazine Hill has been discussed for many years. The City has never attempted it, because of the expense. In 1997, the Massachusetts legislature, in response to the leadership of the Downtown Revitalization Committee, authorized \$1.5 million for the project in the Transportation Bond Bill. The WRA is responsible for managing the design of that project, which will ultimately improve sig-

nificantly the distribution and balance of parking for the commercial downtown, and at the same time will further enhance the importance of the adjacent historic landmark, the First Burial Ground.

4. Irregular Lot Sizes and Configurations:

The constricting characteristics of the ledge in downtown Woburn



have exacerbated the irregular configurations of individual lots, found to some extent in most traditional downtowns. Three properties along the “Busy Bend” actually are triangular in nature, and have no rear access of any kind. Many of the other commercial properties have no practical rear access, as a result of the radical change in grade immediately behind the buildings. Overall, lot sizes in the Woburn Square Revitalization Area are generally small, as are thus the commercial and mixed use buildings which are built upon them. One of the impacts of this factor is that the installation of an elevator, required for both handicapped access and overall marketability of upper floors, is infeasible, because the fixed cost of the elevator cannot be spread over a sufficient amount of floor area. The distribution of built parcels by square foot of lot area is shown in the pie chart, above. Note that over half of the parcels are under 5,000 square feet, and about one-third are under 3,000 square feet.

B. Public Improvements: Under the Mass. CDBG program guidelines, an area can also be considered blighted if it has a significant number of deteriorating or substandard public improvements. In the Woburn Square Revitalization Area, the overall design, distribution and physical condition of the off-street municipal parking facilities, and the existing downtown streetlighting are the two major areas of blight within the inventory of public infrastructure.

1. Parking Facilities: Woburn Square is actually two downtowns. The first is the commercial downtown, which stretches along Main Street as along a spine, from Franklin or Church Street on the north edge, down to around High Street on the south. This is the area encompassed by the proposed Woburn Square Revitalization Area boundary. The lots are generally small, the buildings mostly aging one and two story structures, with retail space on the first floor, and offices or apartments on the second. When people in Woburn talk about the need to revitalize the downtown, this is generally the Square they are referring to.

The second Woburn Square is the center of local government and civic life. This downtown includes the City Hall, Woburn District Court, the historic Public Library, the U.S. Post Office, and, one might argue, in spite of its underuse and deterioration, the National Guard Armory. The civic Square also includes the financial institutions, four of which have offices in the downtown, and the churches. Most- though not all- of this public downtown is attractive, active, and vital. To evaluate the effects of the number, distribution, and condition of parking spaces upon the former area, it is important to include in that parking analysis the supply and demand of the

latter.

This subsection reviews parking in Woburn Square, and its relationship to use and occupancy throughout the downtown area. To understand the issue, however, it is important to remain mindful of the contrasting downtowns, the commercial and civic, as each effects the use and supply of parking in its own way.

- *The Parking Inventory:* As part of the preparation of the Woburn Square Revitalization Plan, a preliminary study of parking inventory and utilization rates in Woburn Square was completed. In early August, 1998, a complete inventory of all public and private spaces in Woburn Square was undertaken by the WRA. Using maps prepared as part of the inventory, an hourly survey of the utilization of the entire public and private parking supply was taken on Monday, August 10, from 7:00am to 7:00pm. On Friday, September 18, a second hourly survey was undertaken, exclusively for the Walnut Street Parking Lot, in order to have a basis for comparison with the August survey. Through the survey, a total of approximately 1,300 parking spaces were identified in the Woburn Square study area. The inventory breaks down as follows:

	Commercial	Civic	Total
Public On Street	179	63	242
Public Off-Street	434	276	710
Private	264	108	372
TOTAL SPACES	877	447	1,324

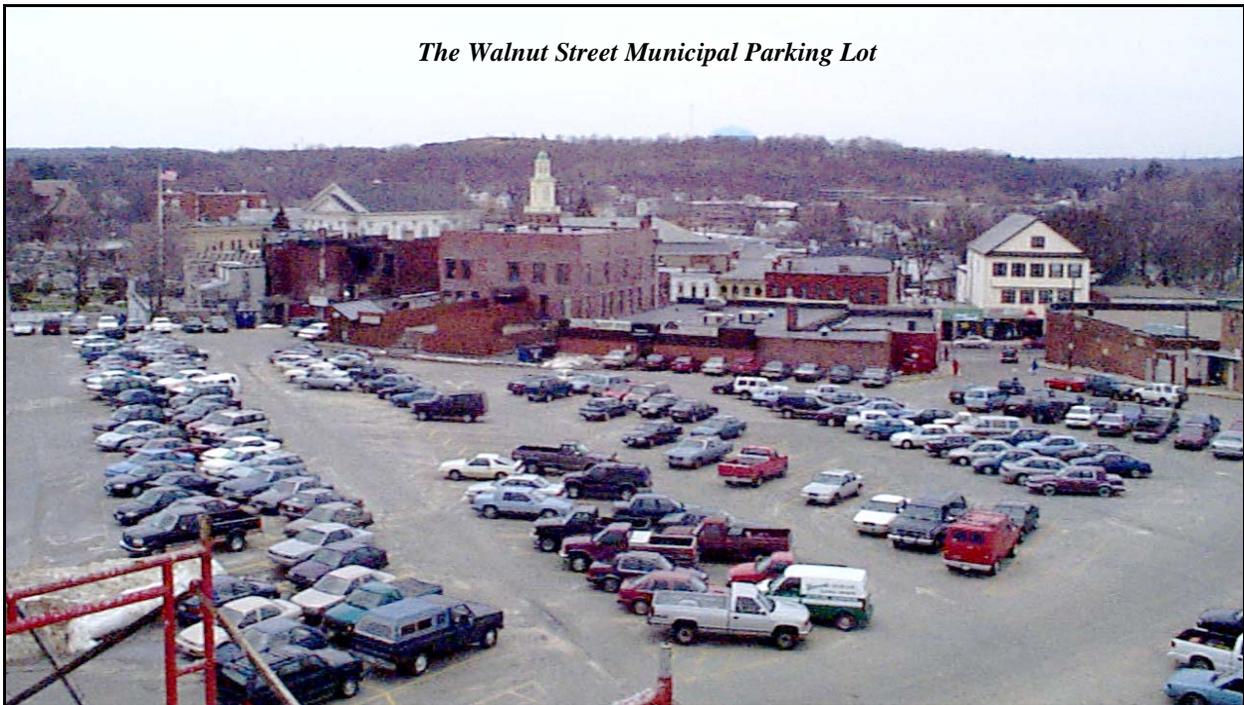
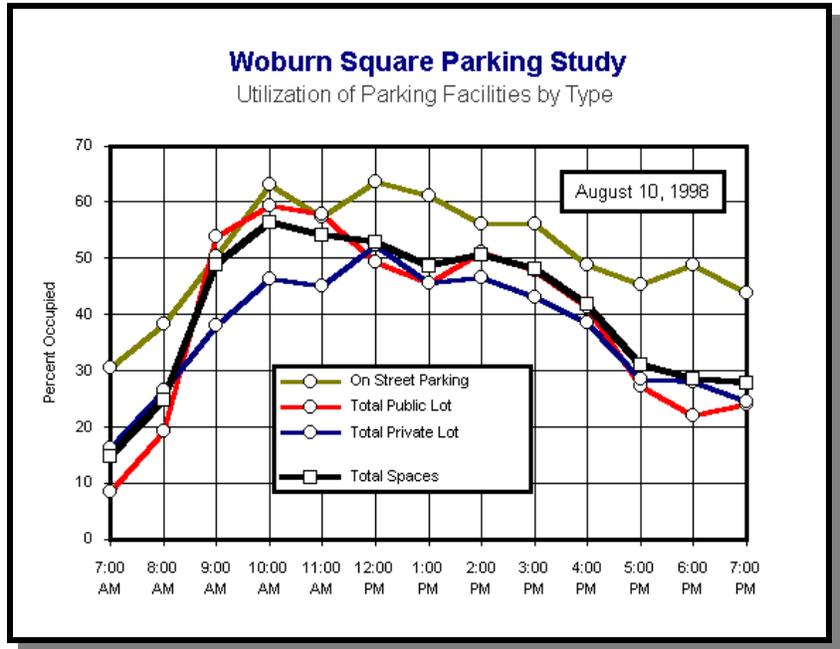
Map 5 shows the distribution of the public and private off-street parking locations with 20 or more spaces. Within the broader parking study area, there is approximately 450,000 square feet of commercial and governmental space which contribute to parking demand. This reflects an overall ratio of approximately one parking space per 340 square feet of area. Though not ideal from a business/real estate standpoint, this is a relatively high level for a traditional commercial center.

At first glance, the off-street spaces seem to be relatively evenly distributed. However, if one accepts the premise that both distance and traffic are barriers to convenience, then two areas are clearly underserved by available parking. These include the west side of Main Street between Mann's Court and Park Street, below Magazine Hill, and the east side of Main Street between Montvale Avenue and High Street. In general, if Main Street, Magazine Hill, and the Common are understood as the border between the commercial downtown and the civic downtown, then the approximately 877 spaces in the commercial area, both on- and off- street, public and private, must serve the approximately 350,000 square feet of retail and office space in this corridor. This represents approximately one space for every 400 square feet of area. Ideally, commercial space should have between 3 to 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet. Furthermore, only 613 of those spaces are in public lots or on-street, and thus available to the customers and employees of the many buildings without proprietary parking.

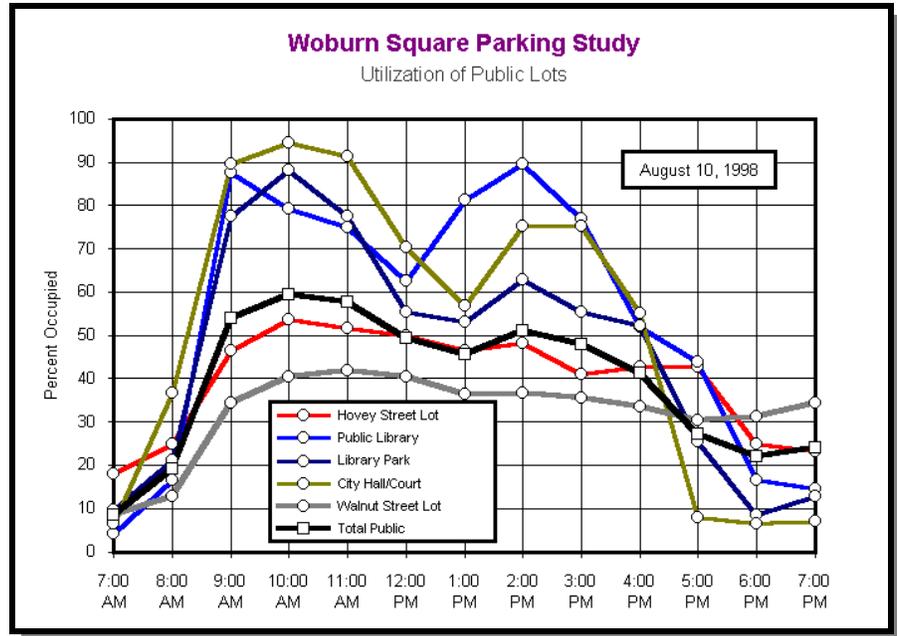
- *Utilization:* On August 10, 1998, WRA staff undertook an hourly survey of parking utilization throughout the downtown. The graph at right depicts utilization rates

(percent of spaces occupied) by type of space. In general, public spaces, both on and off-street, were utilized at a higher rate than private spaces in the morning hours. In the afternoon hours, on-street parking rates remain high, but occupancy of public off-street lots begins to decline, more resembling the occupancy rates of the various private lots.

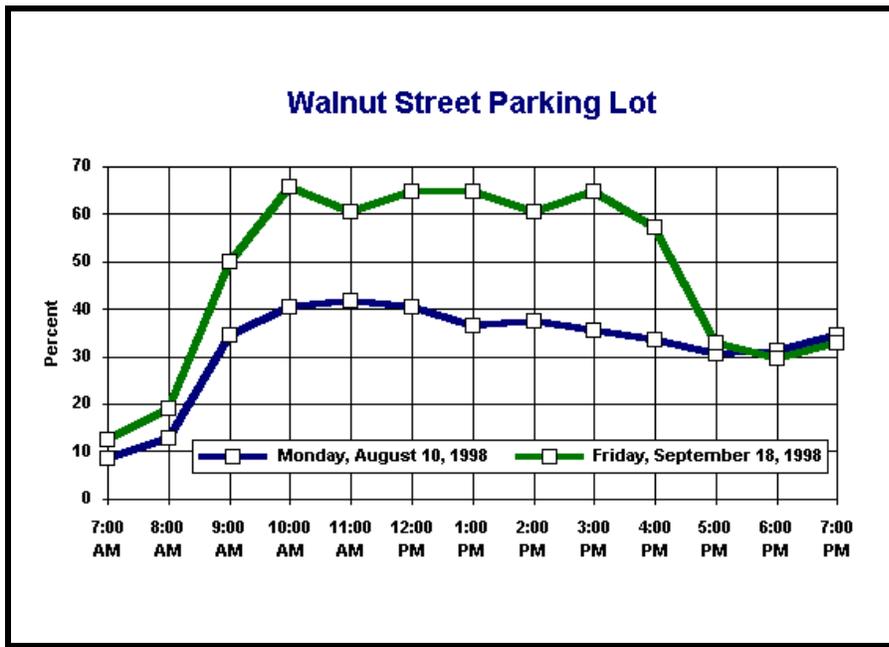
However, the utilization rates of individual public lots vary widely. The graph on the following page depicts the rates of the five major public lots over the course of the day. In the peak morning hours, the three “civic” lots west of Main Street reach a peak near or above 80 percent, while the Walnut Street lot has a utilization which is only half that number. In the afternoon, after what is apparently a wholesale “lunch break,” the utilization of the City Hall and Public Library lots remains high, while that of the Library Park lot, the most remote of the three public lots west of Main Street, begins a relative decline. All of the three major civic lots saw very little occupancy after 5:00pm. The Walnut Street lot, in contrast, begins to see a slight increase in utilization after 5:00pm.



- *The Walnut Street Lot:* the relative underutilization of the Walnut Street lot raises important questions, since this one area contains approximately 50% of the off-street spaces in the commercial part of the downtown. The first consideration was the extent to which the date effected the count. The count was completed in August, when many are away on vacation, and on a Monday, when a number of busi-



nesses are traditionally are closed. A second hourly count, exclusively for the Walnut Street lot, was conducted on Friday, September 18. The graph below compares the utilization rates of the



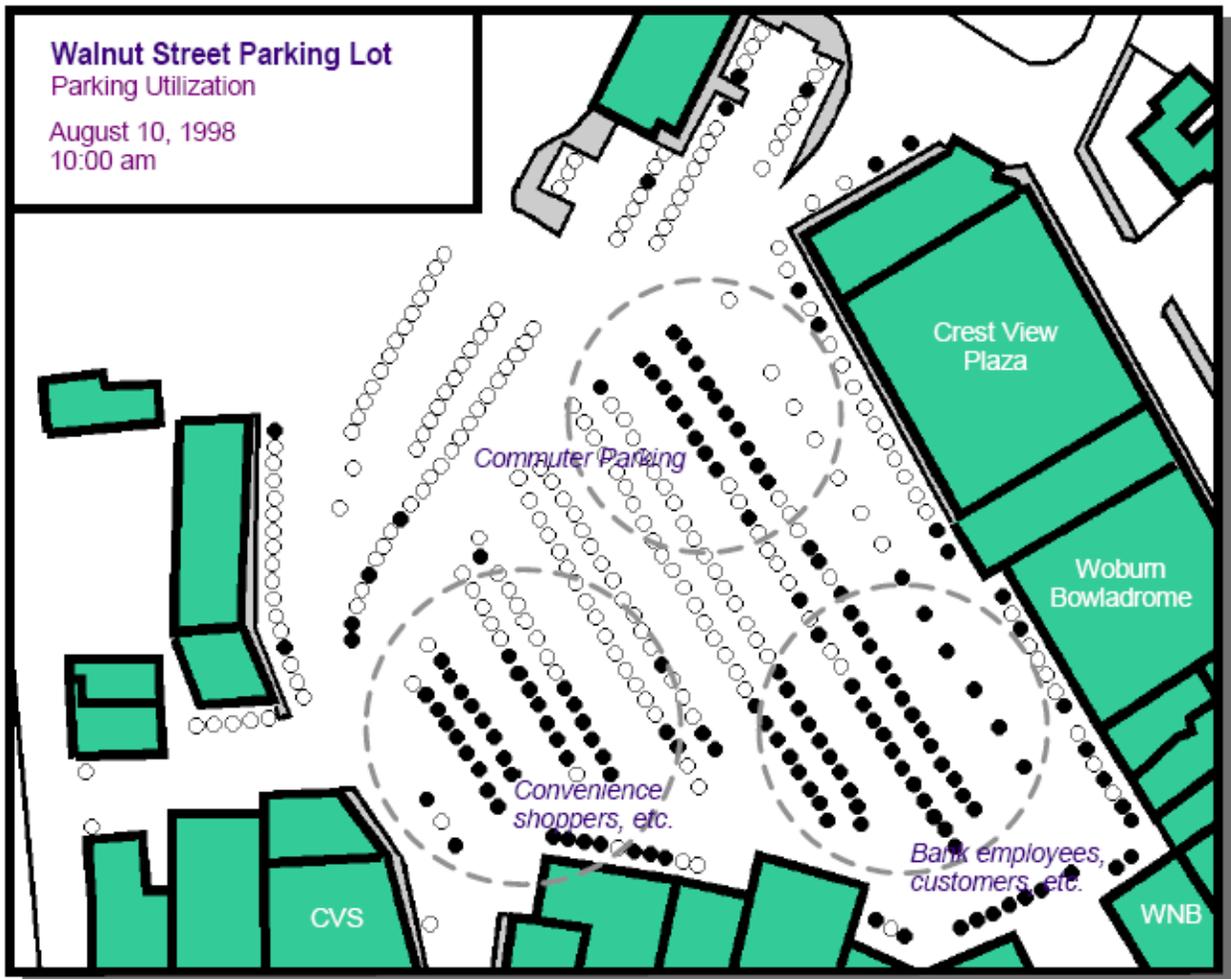
two dates, and in fact the September count showed a utilization rate consistently between 60 percent and 66 percent between the hours of 10:00am and 3:00pm. Spot counts taken at other times indicate that about half of the increase is due to the seasonal change, and the other half due to the day of the week of the count. However, even at its peak, the lot is still at least one third empty; this is still substantially below the occupancy rates of the other public lots.

Vacancies in the lot reflect vacancy and underutilization within the commercial buildings.

There are occasions when the Walnut Street lot reaches maximum capacity, due to sporadic demand generated by one of a few nearby high traffic businesses. These include the Crest View Plaza function hall, the Woburn Bowladrome, the Peterson HVAC School on Montvale Ave-

nue, and occasionally the Anchor Baptist Church, also across from the lot on Montvale Avenue. These periods of maximum capacity occur typically in the early evening hours, generally at least once a week.

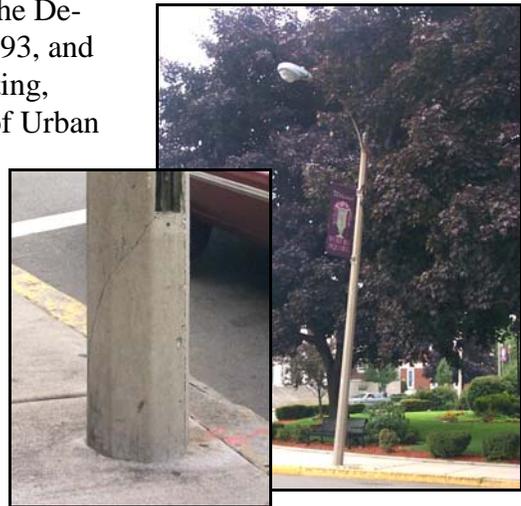
The map/diagram of the Walnut Street lot on the following page, showing the occupancy at 10:00am on August 10, gives strong clues as to the use of the lot (as did the observations of staff during the count). At this time of the day, which represents the peak, there were essentially three types of use. The first, though not the most important, were the commuters, who parked near the entrance to Montvale Avenue. Evidence indicates that this represents between 20 to 40 cars per day. (Late in the day, the commuters are replaced by students at the Peterson School, located at 25 Montvale Avenue.) The second are the employees and customers of the Woburn National Bank (now Citizens Bank), and to a lesser extent other employees and customers of Busy Bend businesses, who make use of the rear entrances to the Bank and other buildings. The third group are the employees and shoppers who use the convenient spaces located right at the Walnut Street/Main Street entrance. Spaces at the center and rear of the site are the last to be occupied, and generally remain vacant unless there is a function at the Crest View Plaza, or a bowling tournament at the Woburn Bowladrome, which are both adjacent to the lot. Some of the constraints on the full utilization of the Walnut Street lot are clearly related to its



design. Although there are a number of private pedestrian access points, including an exterior alleyway near the foot of Montvale Avenue, formal public pedestrian access is restricted to the driveway entrances. Furthermore, the lot itself, striped to maximize the number of spaces, is difficult to maneuver. The angled spaces are generally only 8 feet wide and 14 feet long, the equivalent of a compact space, and the circulation lanes are only 15 feet wide, which, even with the angled design, makes entering and leaving a space somewhat tight for a longer vehicle. There are no islands or curbing to guide traffic or provide opportunities for pedestrian safe havens, landscaping, or lighting. A better designed, more amenable parking area would likely encourage greater utilization, and better support the businesses in the surrounding area.

The overall commercial vacancy rate of approximately 17.5 percent, detailed earlier in this section, represents approximately 54,000 square feet of vacant commercial space. If all of this space were occupied, it would increase the demand for available parking by 100 to 200 spaces. These spaces currently do not exist in downtown Woburn.

2. Streetlighting: In general, the roadway and sidewalk surfaces throughout Woburn Square are in good condition, having been replaced by the Department of Public Works over a period beginning in 1993, and completed by late 1996. The exception is the streetlighting, which was installed around 1980, as part of a program of Urban Systems improvements. The concrete poles are now in very deteriorated condition, and must be replaced. Many of the poles are leaning, and some pole bases show stress cracks, indicating serious structural problems. In 1997, one of the poles actually broke off at the base, and fell into the street.



In addition to the physical condition of the lighting equipment, the nature and quality of the lighting generated by the 30 foot high, cobra-head style fixtures is also an issue. The light generated by these fixtures is more suited to a highway setting, than to a more pedestrian oriented commercial area. The height and spacing of the fixtures, approximately 30 feet in height and 100 feet apart, dictates that the light from the lamps is spread over a wide area. Upper floors, and the areas directly below the poles are exposed to excessive light, while the light at street level in the mid-areas between poles has been dissipated, and is actually underlit.

The relatively narrow width of Main Street through much of the Square, approximately 44 feet curb to curb, allows for greater flexibility in streetlighting design. Lighting fixtures could be spaced closer together, at a substantially lower height, with an effective radius for the general area of lighting of between 20 to 30 feet. This would be adequate for traffic safety, and allow for a fixture and lamp which is more pedestrian friendly, and provides for reduced glare and more evenly distributed illumination at the sidewalk level.

The last requirement for eligibility under the Mass. CDBG program is that the proposed activi-

ties address the blighting conditions in a measurable way. This issue will be reviewed in Section 3, Short Term Strategy. The next section presents a narrative of events which have occurred over recent years, and the steps which were taken in regard to organizational development, the building of a community consensus, and the preparation of this Revitalization Plan.

Woburn Square Revitalization Plan

Section 2: Background

I. The Woburn Square Partnership: The Woburn Redevelopment Authority has been recognized by the Mayor and the City Council as the lead agency in the revitalization of Woburn Square. In order to plan and implement the proposed downtown revitalization effort, the Woburn Redevelopment Authority has formed a cooperative alliance with the Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn (DRC). This alliance is referred to as the Woburn Square Partnership. A copy of the Memorandum of Understanding setting up the Partnership is among the attachments. This memorandum functions both as the primary mission statement and the organizational document for the Partnership, outlining the responsibilities of both organizations. The primary action of the Memorandum is to establish a formal relationship between the two groups: 1) the DRC is now the official Citizens Advisory Committee of the WRA, for the preparation and implementation of the Woburn Square Revitalization Plan, and 2) the WRA provides space and ongoing staff support for the activities of the Committee. Among the benefits of this action- it ensures the continuity of the extensive volunteer effort of the Downtown Committee since its inception to implement short term revitalization measures, and to promote citizen participation in the revitalization of the downtown. In addition to acting as the official CAC of the WRA, the Committee has and will continue its highly effective program of fund raising, promotion, and public improvement in Downtown Woburn.

The City of Woburn has proposed that the Woburn Square Partnership be recognized by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) as an eligible downtown organization, charged with the comprehensive revitalization effort for Woburn Square. The Partnership meets the structural requirements of a Public Organization, one of three models allowed under the Commonwealth's CDBG 1999 One Year Action Plan. DHCD approved the Partnership as the City's eligible downtown organization on June 4, 1999. The approval letter is among the attachments to this Plan. In the following sections, the recent history of events which has led to the development of the Partnership will be reviewed, including the activities which have served to identify issues, build public support, and ensure municipal coordination and cooperation in the downtown revitalization effort.

A. The Woburn Redevelopment Authority: The City's urban renewal authority was first established and appointed by the Woburn City Council in November, 1961. Organized in accordance with M.G.L. Ch.121B, the authority is made up of five members, four of whom are appointed by the Mayor, and one by the Governor of the Commonwealth. The by-laws of the WRA, and its current membership, are among the attachments. The core funding for the downtown revitalization effort is being provided by the WRA. In August, 1997, the WRA executed a Certificate of Completion with DHCD for the close-out of the Woburn Industrial Park Urban Renewal Project in North Woburn. It was mutually agreed among all parties, including DHCD, the City of Woburn, and the WRA, that the remaining urban renewal funds, approximately \$610,000, remain with the WRA to be expended on the planning and implementation of

a downtown revitalization plan for Woburn Square. The Certificate of Completion, and the related Resolution of the Woburn City Council, are among the attachments.

In February, 1998, the WRA hired its first full-time Executive Director in over a decade, with the primary responsibility to serve as the City's downtown coordinator, and prepare and implement the Woburn Square Revitalization Plan. In order to carry out those efforts, the Executive Director proposed the Partnership with the Downtown Committee, which is the organizational structure at the heart of this plan.

B. The Downtown Committee: The Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn was appointed as an ad-hoc advisory committee by Mayor Robert M. Dever, upon first taking office in January, 1996. The Committee's original membership of seven has since been expanded to thirteen. The Committee's current Articles of Organization, and a list of members, is attached. The DRC membership includes both representatives of the downtown business community and key municipal department heads, such as the Chief of Police, the Superintendent of the Highway Department, the WRA Chairman, Director of the Planning Board, and the Chairman of the Sign Review Board, in order to facilitate the coordination of downtown revitalization efforts between the Partnership and key municipal departments.

Since its inception, the Committee has moved beyond a strictly advisory role, to undertake a broad range of citizen participation and volunteer revitalization activities. One of its first accomplishments, undertaken in the Spring of 1996, was the completion of a Community Survey which solicited public attitudes and expectations regarding downtown Woburn. The survey was distributed through the two local papers, the Daily Times Chronicle and the Woburn Advocate. Approximately 1,200 were returned, and were processed by staff and students of the Business Education Department of Woburn High School. In response to the question "what actions should be taken to improve the downtown," the highest ranked response was "more attractive storefronts" (2.8 out of a possible 3.0). The Committee's report entitled *Highlights of the Community Survey on Downtown Woburn* is provided among the attachments.



Since its organization, the DRC has continued an ongoing fundraising effort, which since the inception of the Committee has generated approximately \$30,000 in private donations to the downtown effort. The funds have been used for a variety of short term activities, including the planting of new street trees, the purchase of new benches and trash receptacles, the purchase of downtown banners, the underwriting of downtown festivals and other promotional events, and the support of the WRA's ongoing sign replacement program.

**WOBURN SQUARE
SPRING FAIR**

**Saturday,
May 16, 1998
From 9:00 am**

PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES	ACTIVITIES
1. CJ's Restaurant	A. Wry Whiskey 10:00am
2. Leonard Furniture	Bluegrass Band
3. P&R Carbone R.E.	B. Safehouse, Rotary Club Boyle Insurance Agency
4. Curry Copy Center	C. Coloring Contest 10:00am
5. Bay View Eye Care Center Robert Newton Hair Care Yellow Cab of Woburn	Marco's Italian Cold Cuts
6. China Delight P&M Locksmith	D. Woburn Guild of Artists Exhibit 10:00am
7. Boyle Insurance	E. Farmer's Market Woburn National Bank lot Spence Farms McCue the Florist Heimlich Nursery
8. My Brother's Place Crystal Cleaners	F. Museum Tours 10:00am
9. Bookshelf	Library
10. Rev-It-Up R/C Hobby Shop	G. Hay Rides Paul Paris & John Cashill
11. Buck Stop Plus	I. Country Fever Band 11:00am
12. Bond Shoe	First Congregational Church Tours
12A. Beauty Stylists	J. Inflatable Fun - Boys and Girls Club
13. Alpha Travel	K. Lacey Tripp band 1:00pm
14. Eckstein Jewelers	Northern Bank & Trust Lot
15. National Music Company	Y. SCORE - Face Painting
16. Marco's Italian Cold Cuts	
17. Moore & Parker	
18. Oriental Restaurant	
19. Woburn Cleaners, Inc.	
20. Servicemaster	
21. Malvy's Flower & Gift Advanced Consumer Electronics	
22. 315 Main Street Restaurant	
23. Neighborhood Meal Market	
24. Northern Bank & Trust Co.	

ROVING CLOWNS, CRAFTERS & BALLOONS

II. The Downtown Vision and Action Plan: In February, 1996, the City of Woburn received a CDBG Pilot Planning Grant, to prepare a visioning document for downtown Woburn. The City, working closely with the DRC, retained the services of the Office of Thomas J. Martin, Economic Research and Management Consultants, to undertake the work. One year later, in February, 1997, the Committee and the City of Woburn released the *Vision for Revitalization of Downtown Woburn*, a detailed report which studied land uses, business mix, building conditions, traffic patterns, parking, market conditions and consumer attitudes. Also referred to as the Downtown Vision and Action Plan, the entire text of the document is among the attachments to this report. This Vision Plan proposed both short term and long term action steps, which have served as a general guide to the City, the Committee, and the WRA in planning ongoing short-term revitalization efforts. In the preparation of the Vision Plan, the DRC held a series of public meetings to review the progress of the effort, and received extensive input from local businesses and residents.

A. Market Evaluation: A major portion of the Vision Plan was devoted to a detailed analysis of the market potential of downtown Woburn. The consultant prepared a demographic profile of the community, described and analyzed the existing mix of downtown businesses, evaluated surveys of local residents/consumers, and undertook an additional attitude survey of downtown businesses. The consultant also considered the commercial competition posed by nearby shopping malls and other commercial centers. The existing business mix can be found on the table on the following page.

In general, the consultant found that only one-quarter of the businesses were retail in nature, and only one business which functioned as a true anchor, the CVS located at 415 Main Street. However, the Vision Plan recognized that there existed a lack of available vacant space large

Number of Businesses by Category		
Category	Number	Percent of Total
Non-Food Retail	16	16.5
Convenience Type Retail	5	5.2
Food Related Retail	4	4.1
Restaurants	16	16.5
Consumer Services	27	27.8
Banks	4	4.1
Insurance	7	7.2
Auto Related	8	8.3
Miscellaneous	10	10.3
Total	97	100.0

enough to attract a second significant anchor, and suggested instead as a primary focus the improvement of the small business mix within the existing inventory of commercial property.

Generally, the public and private sectors should encourage the upgrading of existing businesses and the attraction of new businesses that add to the vitality of the downtown area by enhancing the retail mix rather than duplicating existing businesses. In particular, the current offerings should be supplemented by a wider array of businesses. These include different restaurant types with an emphasis on full menu restaurants, destination retailing, retailing serving the consumer market; office uses to renovated upper floor levels and to fringe areas; services to business and consumer markets that are not already adequately served in downtown Woburn. (Vision Plan, page II-14)

In general, the Plan stated that “the overall strategy should be to attract strong businesses that can prosper in a downtown environment.” The Vision Plan included a lengthy table identifying specific types of businesses which were judged to be good prospects for expansion into Woburn Square (See Table VII-1, in the Attachment).

The Vision Plan consultant characterized Woburn Square as primarily a convenience shopping



location, in part based upon the survey response of local residents, three quarters of whom said that their typical downtown trip was 30 minutes or less. The Vision Plan consultants identified three groups or “market segments”

which should be the target of a broadened business mix. These include:

- *City Residents:* Woburn's 35,000 residents were estimated to spend over \$160 million annually in retail and service categories. The plan noted that all live "within a few miles of the downtown."
- *Downtown Workers:* Based upon the business survey, approximately 750 persons worked within the downtown's business establishments. This does not include individuals working within the public institutions in the downtown, including City Hall, the U.S. Post Office, the Woburn District Court, and the Woburn Public Library. "These people can be a base of market support for convenience shopping, lunch meals and consumer services."
- *Drive By Traffic:* The Plan estimated that over 30,000 vehicles drive through Woburn Square every day. These drive through trips represent an additional market segment.

Another market segment not mentioned by the Vision Plan are the 30,000 individuals who are employed within a few miles of the centrally located Square. As the mix of full and lunch menu restaurants and other consumer services expands in Woburn Square, the opportunity to attract a larger share of the lunch time expenditures of this group increases.

B. Action Recommendations: Overall, the Vision Plan proposed three broad action agendas:

- *Physical Infrastructure:* Improvements to the physical infrastructure of downtown Woburn, addressing parking and traffic concerns and improving the downtown streetscape and public spaces.
- *Private Property Development, Redevelopment and Improvement:* Steps to stimulate the development of new buildings and the redevelopment of existing buildings, including signage and facade improvements.
- *Marketing/Management Strategies:* Implement downtown marketing/management strategies, to be accomplished by both the public and private sectors.

In the following subsections, a summary of the specific proposals for each of the action agendas will be reviewed, with a brief discussion where appropriate of the steps already taken by the Partnership to implement each proposal.

C. Physical Infrastructure/Streetscape Plan: The Vision Plan proposed the preparation of a Streetscape Design Plan, to provide "an actionable design that will maximize the benefit of physical improvements." The streetscape design was to include the following items:

1. *Lighting Program:* New streetlights will "have the potential to dramatically improve the image of the downtown area." New streetlighting has been proposed as a

short term objective in this Revitalization Plan.

2. Public Furniture and Trash Receptacles: The downtown was determined by the Vision Plan to be “insufficiently served.” The Downtown Committee initiated a private fundraising program to install new benches and other furnishings in the downtown area.

3. Signage: The Plan proposed new public signage, both gateway signs and signs directing the public to municipal parking. A new carved wood “Woburn Square” sign was installed by the City on the Common, and new signs for identification of the major public parking lots were also erected.

4. Greenspace: The Vision Plan found the downtown “deficient in useable greenspace for relaxing, resting, and for visual relief.” This plan calls for the creation of a new plaza/accessway opposite the Common, to provide new public space in the downtown. Other opportunities will be created over the longer term with the construction and improvement of the Magazine Hill and Walnut Street parking areas, respectively.

5. Tree Planting: According to the Plan, there were “several areas that would benefit from a tree planting program,” including gateway areas, at selected sidewalk locations, and integrated into parking area landscaping. The Downtown Committee began a private fundraising effort to support the planting of new trees in specified downtown locations where there was sufficient sidewalk width to allow for plantings.

6. Sidewalks and Trim: The Action Plan recommended that the downtown’s new concrete sidewalks be enhanced with new decorative trim. “As light posts, tree plantings, pedestrian crossings and other physical changes are designed and constructed, a palette of trim materials may be chosen. However, wholesale changes of the sidewalks from current conditions is not recommended.” This recommendation is being followed in the design of a new streetscape program, through the Busy Bend Design Study.

In implementing the Vision Plan’s various streetscape suggestions, the WRA and the DRC elected not to prepare a comprehensive Streetscape Design Plan, showing specific engineering designs for all of the downtown commercial blocks. This would have been a time consuming effort, involving direct negotiations with the myriad of businesses and property owners throughout the downtown directly effected by the improvements. Many are still concerned and skeptical about the effect streetscape improvements may have upon the visibility and the availability of on-street parking for their businesses. Thus, a comprehensive, definitive streetscape design plan would have been potentially divisive at this juncture.

Instead, the Woburn Redevelopment Authority, working with the Downtown Committee, elected to undertake a pilot program, which would function as a demonstration project. To this end, the WRA commissioned the Busy Bend Design Study, which focused exclusively on a central historic block in the downtown. Within this block, which includes the Walnut Street Municipal Parking Lot, sidewalk widths and property and building lines were carefully surveyed.

As part of this study, the design consultant, with guidance from the WRA and the DRC, has prepared a uniform streetscape design program, selecting the lighting equipment, street furnishings, and other appropriate design elements. While the specific study area encompasses only one block, the streetscape program will function as a guideline and template for the expansion of the program into other blocks, as funds become available. This basic design “vocabulary” will then be ultimately replicated throughout the downtown.

D. Parking Improvements: The Action Plan’s short term objectives included the construction of the new Magazine Hill Park and Ride Facility, and the improvement to the Walnut Street Parking Area. The latter project, including restriping, recurbing, and landscaping was envisioned as a low cost project. The evaluation of the parking area through the Busy Bend Design Project, however, clearly indicates that this will be a major capital improvement project. The problems associated with installing new drainage, lighting conduit, and a proper construction base will raise the expense of this project significantly. Thus, the implementation of both of these major capital improvements is now viewed as a long term goal, as defined by this Revitalization Plan. However, the design of these two improvements will be among the Revitalization Plan’s short term objectives.

The other short-term Vision Plan parking objectives were as follows:

1. On Street Parking: The Plan proposed that on street spaces should be restriped, and short-term parking zones established. Long term parking should be relegated to off-street lots. This recommendation included the Pleasant Street Area as a separate objective. Some of these recommendations have been implemented. However, restriping has not yet been completed.

2. Hovey Street Municipal Lot: Located on Main Street, the Vision Plan suggested that this lot should be restriped and landscaped. At the request of the DRC, the Public Works Department repaved and restriped the lot earlier this year, although no landscaping was included.

3. Pedestrian Connections: The Action Plan recommended improved pedestrian access through vacant parcels along Main Street and/or Montvale Avenue. A proposed plaza/accessway at 365 Main Street implements this recommendation.

4. Crosswalks: The Plan also recommended clearer marking of crosswalks throughout the downtown area, to enhance visibility and safety. This step was implemented in 1998.

E. Downtown Management and Marketing: The Vision and Action Plan included a variety of action steps intended to coordinate and manage the overall downtown revitalization effort. These included:

1. Downtown Association: The Vision Plan recommended the creation of a downtown business association to promote “positive land use, beneficial activities, busi-

ness activity and general public benefit in the downtown area.” The Downtown Committee appointed a Merchants Action Committee to organize the downtown merchants around revitalization issues. The Merchants Action Committee has focused to date on the organization of special events, such as the biannual downtown fairs, and the sponsorship of group advertising.



2. Recruit Targeted Businesses: The Vision Plan suggested that the community “identify and recruit targeted retail and service businesses which will optimize the downtown’s business mix, and best serve Woburn’s residents and businesses.” The Plan provided a list of business categories which the consultant determined were underrepresented and yet likely feasible in the downtown. However, specific attempts to recruit new businesses by the WRA, Committee members and others have had very limited results; even when a space of suitable size and configuration was available, potential business owners and managers have generally critiqued the appearance of the downtown, and decried the level and distribution of off-street parking. These generally unsuccessful recruitment efforts have served to highlight the need for a more visually attractive downtown, with a more coherent visual image. This has led both the WRA and the Downtown Committee to conclude that before systematic recruitment efforts can be successful, a program of public improvement must be underway. Once that has been accomplished, the Partnership will focus more directly on fine tuning the business recruitment effort, and on the question of whether further enunciation of the types of businesses and retail sectors to be targeted is feasible or advisable.

3. Coordinated Business Hours: The Plan suggested that coordinated hours “should be discussed within the business community.” The Merchants Action Committee attempted to implement this action item by coordinating Thursday evening hours among the downtown merchants. The Committee scheduled live music in the existing “pocket park” adjacent to Magazine Hill, and other coordinated evening activities. After several months, participation in the Thursday evening opening remained low, and it became clear that the effort was premature.

4. Downtown Marketing: The Vision Plan outlined a variety of areas to improve downtown marketing. These included:

- a. *Co-op advertising* for the downtown merchants, to lower market costs

and improve advertising effectiveness. The Merchants Action Committee organizes a full page ad for downtown businesses twice a month, which features a photo and description of a different participating merchant each time.

b. Events such as sidewalk sales, seasonal promotions, etc. The Merchants Action Committee has organized a variety of special events for downtown promotion, in addition to the biannual fairs.

c. Direct marketing to likely customers, such as downtown employees. This proposal has not yet been implemented.

d. Joint promotion of the downtown during festivals and events. This strategy was followed by the Merchants Action Committee in the planning of events.

e. Publicity, such as placement of success stories in the local media, and encouraging supportive editorials. Both local newspapers have been very supportive of the downtown effort. Reporters attend most of the monthly meetings of the WRA and the Downtown Committee, and the Merchants Action Committee has actively solicited coverage of both new and established businesses.

f. Business profiles in the local paper. The Merchants Action Committee has implemented this through the bimonthly advertising effort mentioned above.

g. Welcoming new businesses to the downtown. The Merchants Action Committee has been informally carrying out this recommended activity.

h. Common themes in promotion, to create a coherent downtown image, such as adopting a Woburn Square logo. The Downtown Committee has not yet explored the selection of a permanent downtown theme or logo.

The Downtown Committee has pursued the implementation of the above suggestions through the formation of various subcommittees, as was suggested by the Vision Plan. These included the Merchants Action Committee, the Public Improvement Committee, and most recently, the Streetclock Committee. The DRC has initiated a successful series of promotional and fundraising events, all of which provide additional avenues for the active involvement of local businesses and residents in the downtown revitalization effort.

III. The VHB Traffic Study: Shortly after the completion and release of the Vision Plan, the City of Woburn retained the services of the firm of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB) to investigate traffic conditions in Woburn Square, and complete the following tasks:

- Study the feasibility of eliminating Common Street in front of City Hall and identify road, intersection and traffic/signal/signage alterations to effectively implement the project.

- Study the signalized intersections within the study area relative to prescribing needed improvement for traffic signal hardware, additional/modified traffic control and direction signs, sequence changes to the signals and lane configurations.
- Study on-street parking conditions within the study area relative to defining parking time limits.
- Study the vehicle and pedestrian access for the planned Magazine Hill parking lot.

After a thorough investigation, VHB found that the long standing proposal to close Common Street would create significant problems unless accompanied by alterations requiring “major disruptions to adjacent land uses.” Even if implemented, the closure would result in “no significant benefit to traffic movement.” The firm did propose a second alternative, narrowing Common Street to one lane. This proposal, however, also called for major roadway alterations, and the elimination of a significant number of on-street spaces from Pleasant, Winn and Main Streets in various locations. VHB stated that the alternative proposal would require additional study “to confirm the long-term traffic operational viability and engineering feasibility of such improvements.” This additional study has not yet been undertaken, but is among the long term strategic objectives outlined in Section 4 of this plan.

VHB studied three key intersections in the downtown, and provided a list of short term recommendations to rectify problems identified during field inspections. These include improved signage, modest geometric improvements, and retiming of signalization. These proposals were forwarded to the City Engineer and the Superintendent of Public Works for review. Those proposals which were determined to be appropriate and affordable were implemented.

After a general review of on-street parking in the downtown, VHB found that the existing time restrictions and designations appeared “reasonable.” The firm recommended improved striping and signage. The firm’s study of the proposed Magazine Hill parking area stated that the anticipated 30 to 50 vehicle trips during peak hour could be “reasonably accommodated,” but that handicapped and pedestrian access required “refinement.” The VHB proposal for further traffic study will be reviewed as part of the long term planning effort for Woburn Square, which is described in more detail in Section 4.

IV. Further Planning and Implementation: The Downtown Revitalization Committee and the WRA have continued their efforts to implement the short term recommendations of the Vision and Action Plan. The more important efforts are reviewed below:

A. The Sign Review Ordinance: One of the first of the short term goals recommended by the Vision Plan to be implemented by the Downtown Committee was the drafting of stronger signage controls for the downtown area. After months of work by the Downtown Committee, working in cooperation with the Woburn Planning Board, the City Council in July, 1997, adopted a new Sign Review Ordinance, which establishes new design guidelines and requirements for commercial signage and sign awnings in the downtown area. Among the key requirements- signage is limited in area to one square foot of signage for each linear foot of frontage, and only externally lit signs are permitted. The ordinance established a five member Sign



Review Committee, which reviews and approves all sign permit requests in the downtown area.

B. The Sign Up Program: In order to complement and assist the work of the City's Sign Review Committee, the WRA establish a sign improvement grant program, called the Sign Up Program, in March, 1998, with private grant funds from the Monsanto Chemical Corporation. Since its adoption, sixteen businesses in twelve buildings have been assisted. The Sign Up Program was also important as an introduction for the WRA Board and the Downtown Revitalization Committee to the substantial issues involved in designing, marketing, and implementing a small business assistance program. The current Sign Up Program Guidelines are among the enclosures. The WRA Executive Director has assisted many of the applicants in developing sign designs, preparing the application for a sign permit, obtaining additional financing, and obtaining quotations from signmakers.

C. The Busy Bend Design Project: In December, 1998, the WRA chose the firm of Pierce Lamb Architects to serve as the lead design consultant for the Busy Bend Design Project. The Pierce Lamb team included the firm of Paul C.K. Lu Associates for the landscape architectural portion of the work. The purpose of the project was two-fold: 1) to develop a comprehensive set of storefront façade schematic designs, to articulate a comprehensive thematic approach to storefront design while maintaining and celebrating the individual character of buildings and businesses; and, 2) to prepare a conceptual plan for streetscape, parking, and ac-



cess improvements, with thematic components which could be used as a guideline to be repeated throughout the Square.

In January, 1999, a brochure describing the project was prepared and distributed to the merchants and property owners in the Busy Bend target area. The architect and the WRA staff conducted individual interviews with each merchant and property owner in the design area, in order to provide the maximum opportunity for detailed input. The project was first reviewed with the general public at a public hearing held in City Hall on June 10, 1999. After initial work by the design consultants, a meeting was held on September 23, 1999, to review the first draft of the streetscape plan with Busy Bend merchants and owners. The detailed Busy Bend proposal will be presented to the public for comment at a public hearing to be held in the coming weeks.

V. Other Agencies and Organizations: The Woburn Redevelopment Authority and the Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn are working closely with a number of other public agencies and institutions in the planning and implementation of this revitalization plan. Most are represented within the membership of the Downtown Committee, which serves as a coordinating vehicle. These include the City of Woburn Mayor's Office, Public Works Department, Police Department, Planning Board, Sign Review Board, and Redevelopment Authority. A key private non profit institution, the Woburn Development Corporation, provides below market interest loans to businesses in Woburn Square. A WDC member chairs the Downtown Committee. This key organization will be more fully described in the next section.

VI. Compliance with Overall Economic Development Strategy: The Woburn Square Revitalization Plan is one component of a wider review of land use and economic development goals and strategies currently underway in the City of Woburn. The overall strategy which had guided the City's policies throughout much of the last three decades was first articulated in the City's Master Plan adopted in 1967. This plan was primarily focused upon the development of large tracts of underutilized land found in North Woburn. The completion of Interstate 93 earlier in the decade had created at the junction of Route 128 what would soon become the busiest interchange in New England. A multi-faceted strategy took advantage of that newly created highway access, to create new, modern industrial demand for the area then dominated by tanneries, piggeries, and junkyards. The creation of the Woburn Industrial Park by the WRA, through the state urban renewal program, provided both new infrastructure and new development parcels, while municipal zoning changes provided the necessary regulatory backdrop. As part of the program, the MBTA's principal commuter rail station in Woburn was relocated to Mishawum Road, in the new industrial park.

The North Woburn effort was a tremendous success. Employment growth in Woburn exploded; it is currently estimated that as much as two-thirds of the 30,000 jobs located within the City are found within businesses located in the original Woburn Industrial Park and its subsequent expansions. Construction of the new I-93 Interchange, spearheaded by the WRA, which funded the initial design, has stimulated the development of one of the last of these underutilized areas, in the immediate vicinity of the EPA Superfund site in North Woburn.

The success of this long term economic development strategy has shifted the focus of the City's land use and economic development discussion towards the need for better growth manage-

ment, as explosive growth threatens to overwhelm the City's existing infrastructure. In October, 1999, the City Council adopted Woburn's first impact fee ordinance, an idea first proposed in the City's 1985 Master Plan update. In the coming year, the Master Plan Advisory Committee, through its proposed visioning project, will be completing a comprehensive growth management policy review which will culminate in zoning revisions, and eventually a new Master Plan. The primary goal of this effort is to preserve the remaining inventory of open and undeveloped land left in the City, in order to preserve the quality of life for all of the City's residents.



One way to accomplish that goal is to enhance the viability of the City's traditional commercial center, increasing the attractiveness and market demand for its vacant and underutilized space in relation to the rest of the City. By increasing the competitiveness of Woburn Square, the pressure and need for the development of new commercial spaces on undeveloped land is potentially reduced.

The WRA is coordinating the development of the Woburn Square Revitalization Plan with the Master Plan Advisory Committee. A member of the WRA Board sits on the Master Plan Committee, and provides an avenue of communication between the two groups.

Woburn Square Revitalization Plan

Section 3: Short Term Strategy

I. Introduction: In this section, the short term downtown revitalization strategy for Woburn Square will be described in detail. For the purpose of this Revitalization Plan, the activities proposed for this short term strategy have been designed to meet a set of specific objectives which are achievable within 24 months. Many of these activities, in particular those related to beautification and public improvement, were originally proposed in the Vision Plan described in Section 2, prepared by Thomas J. Martin and Associates. During the deliberations and preparation of this plan over the last 18 months, however, a consensus developed among the members of the Partnership that a more articulated business development program needed to be added to the proposed program. In part, this insight was the result of the experience gained in undertaking the various promotional activities sponsored by the Downtown Committee, and through the administration of the Sign-Up Program and other technical assistance efforts by the WRA. In addition, a zoning review was also undertaken, as part of the revitalization planning effort. As a result, three general activities were added which were not included in depth in the original Vision program. These include: 1) guidelines, financial incentives and technical assistance for the upgrade of the existing commercial buildings, 2) a small business development program, including improved access to capital and small business technical assistance, and 3) a review of existing zoning and other land use controls, to ensure that the existing regulations contribute and not contradict the overall vision and goals of downtown revitalization. These additional activities have been incorporated into this Woburn Square Revitalization Plan short term program.

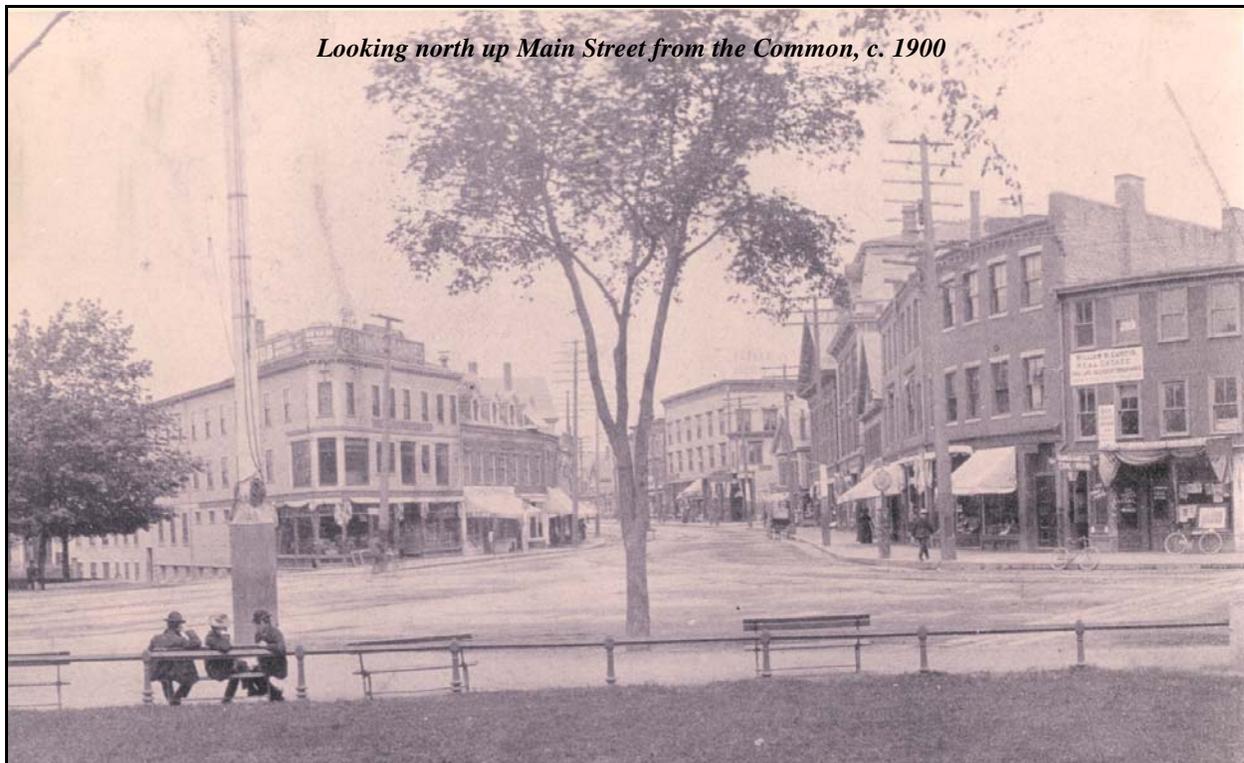
II. The Revitalization Strategy: As detailed in the discussion in the previous section, many of the short term goals put forward by the original Vision Plan were carefully reviewed and implemented by the Downtown Revitalization Committee over the last several years. Given the essentially volunteer nature of the Committee, the primary emphasis has been on readily achievable objectives, including 1) beautification improvements such as the planting of new street trees, and the installation of new benches, receptacles, and banners, 2) adoption and enforcement of new signage regulations, and 3) the staging of promotional events, such as the biannual downtown festivals. While these efforts have made an important contribution to the overall appearance of the Square, and to initiate a sense of community among the downtown merchants, the underlying business mix in the Square has remained relatively stagnant, and the vacancies and blighted conditions of properties found in the surveys detailed in the earlier sections continue to persist. Attempts by the Downtown Committee and the local real estate community to recruit new businesses have met with very limited success, due in great part to the perception, supported by the Square's overall appearance and business mix, that Woburn Square has lagged behind many other traditional commercial areas in the region in accomplishing progress in downtown revitalization.

During the 18 month planning process which has culminated in the preparation of this Woburn Square Revitalization Plan, a broad revitalization and business development strategy has been

designed to implement the fundamental Vision Plan objective of broadening the business mix in the downtown by attracting a wider array of businesses. This multi-faceted economic development strategy employs the following components:

- **Streetscape Improvements:** The construction of uniform streetscape improvements, including new traditional streetlighting, street furnishings, and sidewalk treatment. As recommended by the Vision Plan, the existing concrete sidewalks will be retained, but will be offset with new brick trim installed along the curbline. A total of sixty-five (65) new streetlights will be installed throughout the downtown, employing a traditional decorative “acorn head” fixture which will complement the mix of traditional architectural styles found throughout the downtown. In order to accommodate additional street trees, benches, and other sidewalk furnishings, a prototype bump-out has been designed. These will be installed incrementally in locations throughout the downtown, which will be selected after discussions with the City Engineer, and the downtown merchants and property owners who will be directly impacted. These improvements will help extend the positive identity of place now enjoyed by the Woburn Common throughout the commercial downtown, and link those commercial blocks with the Common’s central focal point. This is a critical step, as the overall appearance of the downtown has proven to be a major deterrent to the recruitment of new businesses.
- **Greenspace:** A new proposed plaza/accessway, to be located at 365 Main Street, will provide needed public space while providing a direct pedestrian and visual connection between the Walnut Street Parking Lot and the Woburn Common. The new accessway will provide a location for employees and customers of downtown businesses and institutions to congregate during the regular working day, while also providing a new activity location for special events. The plaza also provides an opportunity to install additional landscaping into the downtown environment. As with the above streetscape improvements, the Plaza/Accessway will visually improve the downtown, contribute to the overall pedestrian circulation system, and enhance the overall revitalization concept of the downtown plan. This concept builds upon the central role of the landmark Woburn Common as the hub and focus of the downtown vision. Rather than compete with that landmark, the Plaza/Accessway will reinforce its centrality.
- **Storefront Façade Improvements:** Given the deteriorated condition of the existing commercial structures, the public streetscape improvements must be complemented by a program of private upgrade. This is important both to further enhance the identity of place, and also to telegraph to the wider consumer and business community that investment in downtown Woburn is feasible and prudent. The Woburn Redevelopment Authority has developed guidelines for the Woburn Square Storefront Improvement Program, and projects the reha-





bilitation and upgrade of fifteen (15) existing storefronts in the Woburn Square Revitalization Area. The intent of this program is to “prime the pump.” The WRA believes that the example set by the first fifteen façade renovations, coupled with a general improvement in the appearance and overall market strength of the Square, will begin to stimulate an increase in unsubsidized maintenance and renovation of downtown storefronts on an ongoing basis.

- *Small Business Development:* Streetscape and façade improvements alone, though critically important, will not by themselves improve the business mix in Woburn Square. Virtually all of the newer businesses which have been attracted to downtown Woburn have been sole proprietor, owner-managed businesses, rather than national chain or franchise businesses. There is a positive side to this trend, as sole proprietorships tend to contribute a uniqueness to the commercial mix which can expand the potential market area. A good quality ethnic restaurant such as the Thai Hut, or the Café Amante, two recently arrived Woburn Square businesses, will draw customers from a wider area than a chain such as a Papa Gino’s, which already has a presence in many of the surrounding communities, even though the actual number of daily customers the ethnic establishment attracts may be far less. However, sole proprietorships are also generally less capitalized businesses, so access to affordable loans, timely review and approval of occupancy plans, and small business technical support become critical factors to their chances for long term survival.

This Revitalization Plan thus includes a two-faceted small business development component, which is designed to both assist in attracting new businesses, and help to ensure their chances of success. The two facets of this small business component are: 1) enhanced cooperation between the WRA and the Woburn Development Corporation, which maintains a

long-running program providing low interest loans to small businesses in Woburn Square, and 2) the development of a Microenterprise Technical Assistance Fund, to provide needed information and technical assistance for business expansion and start up. The WRA's short term (24 month) objectives are to provide assistance to four businesses in the Revitalization Area in the preparation of successful WDC loan applications, and provide technical assistance to five (5) microenterprise businesses, to assist with plans for start-up or expansion.

- **Zoning Ordinance Revisions:** The WRA and the DRC have proposed revisions to the Woburn Zoning Ordinance, by amending the boundary of the Downtown Business (B-D) Zoning District, and reducing the allowed height of buildings, and other revisions, all required to preserve the use and character of Woburn Square as the City of Woburn's civic and commercial center.
- **Business Recruitment Activities:** Under this plan, a goal has been established to attract eight (8) new businesses to the downtown over the short-term period. In the short term, rather than stress an independent advertising campaign, the Partnership of the WRA and the DRC will work directly with the private real estate brokering community to recruit prospective businesses, by developing and providing a package of informational materials, and providing direct assistance to new businesses coming into the Square. These efforts will complement the various ongoing promotional efforts sponsored by the DRC and the Merchants Action Committee.
- **Job Creation:** Through assisting in the expansion of existing businesses and the attraction of new businesses into Woburn Square, the Partnership effort projects the creation of 45 new job opportunities. These job creation goals are based upon the assumption that 19,500 square feet of commercial space will be occupied by new or expanding businesses as a result of the program. A ratio of one job per 430 square feet of space was determined through a sample survey of 21 businesses currently in the downtown. The average full-time equivalent employment per business was 5.8.

IV. Short-Term Project Activities: In the following subsection, the activities which implement the above objectives will be described in detail.

A. Public Improvements: The program of public improvements detailed in this section are a critical complement to the small business development public/private partnership activities, described later in this section. The proposed public infrastructure improvements are as follows:

- New Woburn Square Streetlighting and Streetscape Improvements;
- New Busy Bend Plaza/Accessway;
- Development of a Downtown Parking Plan; and,
- Design of Magazine Hill Park and Ride Facility.

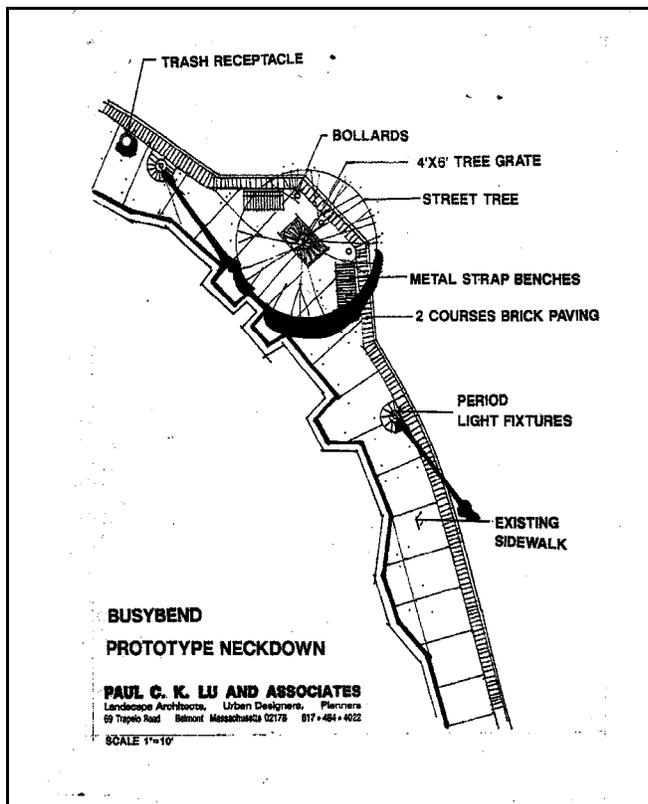
In the design and implementation of the public improvements, the WRA will be working closely with the Woburn Engineering Department, and the Department of Public Works. The initial conceptual designs for each component are the responsibility of the WRA. Detailed construction plans and bid documents for new streetlighting and other streetscape improvements will be completed by the Woburn Engineering Department, following the conceptual template developed through the Busy Bend Design Study. Construction designs for the Magazine Hill Facility, and the Plaza/Accessway, will be the responsibility of the WRA, which will be using a private engineering consultant for both efforts. The development of the Downtown Parking Plan will be a cooperative effort of the WRA, the Downtown Committee, the Engineering Department, and the Police Department. All public works construction under this short term effort will be the responsibility of the Woburn Public Works Department. Construction of the Magazine Hill facility, a long term objective described in the next section, will be the responsibility of the Mass. Highway Department (MHD).

1. Streetlighting and Streetscape Improvements: A central activity of the Woburn Square Revitalization Plan is the installation of new streetlighting and other streetscape improvements throughout the area. The single largest activity is the replacement of the existing, deteriorated highway style cobra-head fixtures with 65 new, traditional style streetlighting fixtures, more in keeping with the overall goal of producing a more historic, pedestrian scale and orientation for the downtown area. These fixtures will be placed within the sidewalk along eleven contiguous block faces shown on the Map 10, on the following page. Fixtures will be placed approximately 42 feet apart. Through the Busy Bend Design



Study, the WRA and the DRC have proposed a decorative “acorn head” fixture, with a traditional pole and base.

Most of the sidewalks in the Revitalization Area have been constructed within the last decade, and are in essentially good condition. Throughout most of the downtown, the sidewalk widths are eight feet or less, which does not provide adequate space for the installation of tree wells, public benches, trash receptacles, or other public furnishings. The Busy Bend design consultant has proposed the construction of neckdowns or “bump outs,” which would project 8 to 10 feet into the right of way, not directly obstructing existing travel lanes, and would be between 12 and 18 feet in width. This additional sidewalk area would eliminate one on-street parking space for each bump-out.

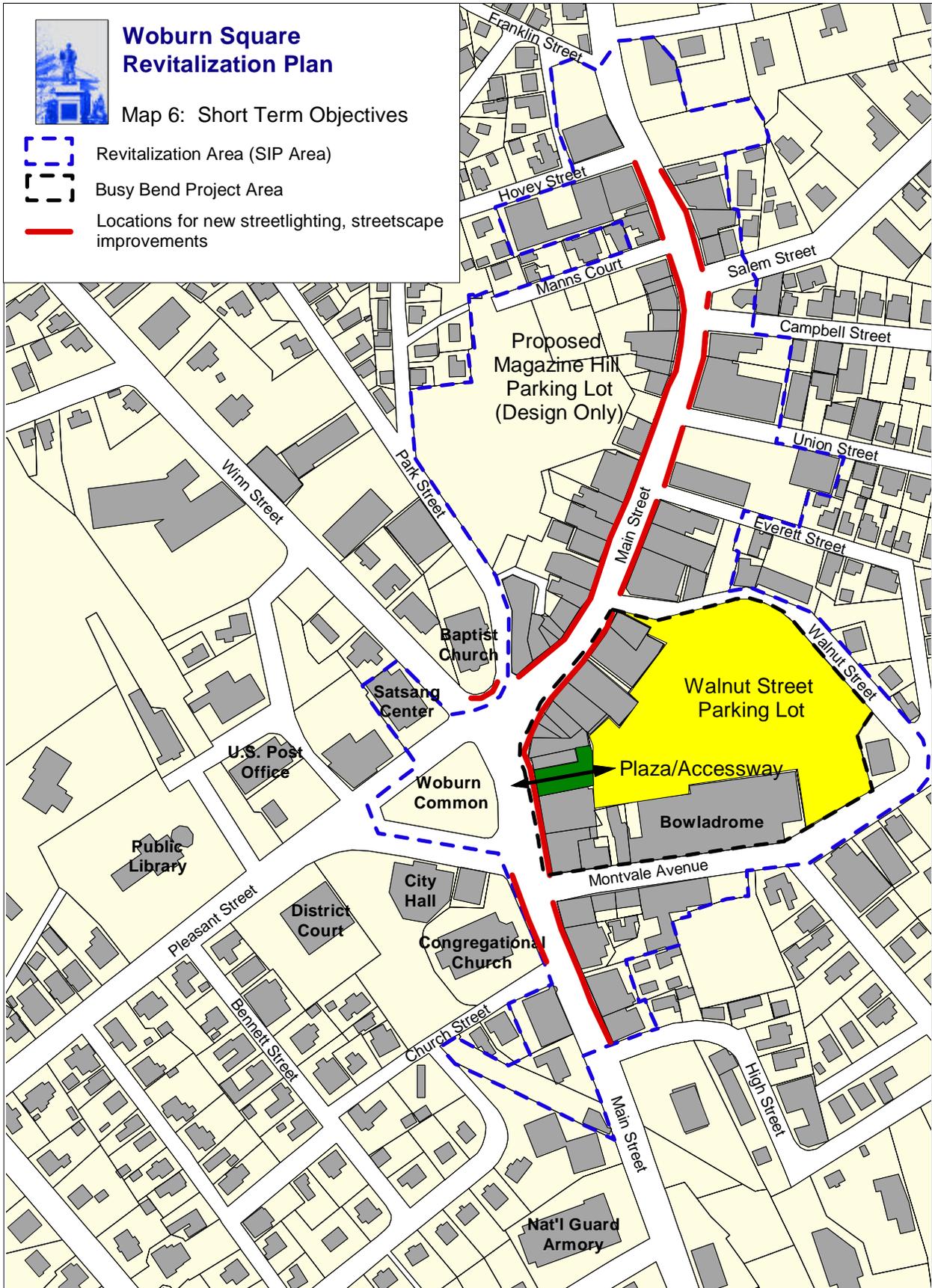




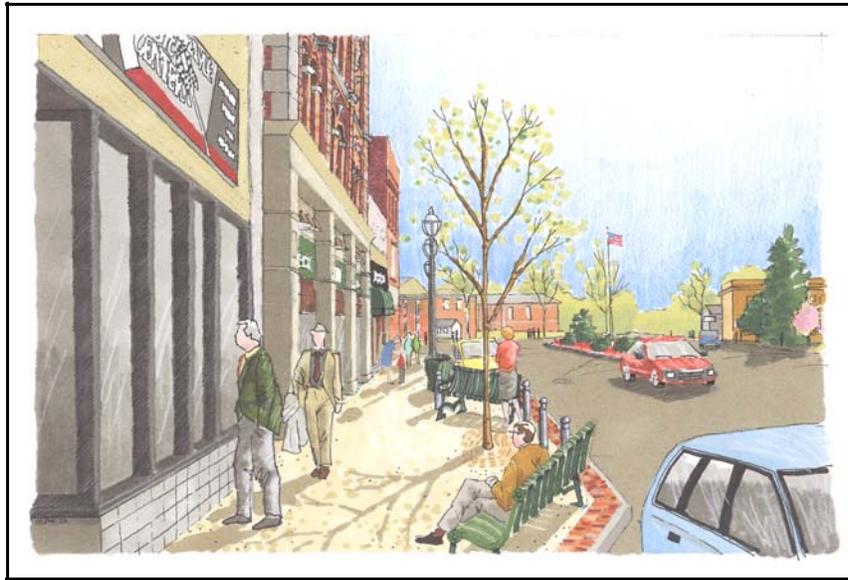
Woburn Square Revitalization Plan

Map 6: Short Term Objectives

-  Revitalization Area (SIP Area)
-  Busy Bend Project Area
-  Locations for new streetlighting, streetscape improvements



The bump-outs would effectively serve several purposes. As a traffic calming measure, particularly at crosswalk locations, the distance pedestrians needed to negotiate would be shortened, and the sidewalk “safe haven” would be extended further into the right of way. Each bump-out would also provide opportunities for additional tree plantings, benches, and other streetscape improvements.



The guidelines of the streetscape program specifying the exact furnishings, fixtures and equipment which will be utilized, were developed as part of the Busy Bend Design Study, and are among the attachments. Bump-out locations will be determined on a block by block basis, after consultations and negotiation with the City Engineer and the business proprietors and building owners who would be impacted by the improvement.

The Mass. CDBG RRF program is the proposed funding source for the proposed downtown streetlighting, and for the part of the cost of the initial streetscape improvements in the Busy Bend project area. Additional streetscape amenities will be primarily funded through the private fundraising efforts of the DRC, and through local and state highway funds, as they become available. Over the last several years, the DRC has been successful in raising over \$30,000 from a variety of activities, and these efforts will be continued. This plan establishes a target of \$50,000 over the next 24 months. Of these funds, \$20,000 will be devoted to general streetscape improvements.

2. Busy Bend Plaza/Accessway: At the center of the Woburn Square Revitalization Area, and at the heart of the program of public improvements, is the proposed new plaza/accessway at 365 Main Street. This accessway will provide a direct, highly visible pedestrian connection between the Walnut Street lot and the businesses along Main Street, particularly those along the Busy Bend itself, and along both sides of Main Street south of Montvale Avenue. The plan and rendering below and on the following page depict the design concept of the accessway prepared by the consulting landscape architect, Paul C.K. Lu and Associates. The accessway will have two sitting areas, one at street level, and a second midway through the plaza, about five feet above grade. Both sitting areas will with ample space for trees and other plantings, benches, and other furnishings. A stairway, approximately ten feet in width, will run along the southern edge of the plaza. A nearby crosswalk will be relocated to connect with a new curbside “bump-out” to be constructed directly in front of the plaza, which will provide a direct line of pedestrian access from the Walnut Street lot to the Woburn Common. Private donations are being solicited by the DRC to install a four dial streetclock in the bump-out, which



would be visible along both the vehicle and pedestrian axis.

Since the completion of the concept design, preliminary cost estimates indicate that a full handicapped access ramp, which would have to be over 200 linear feet in length, is cost prohibitive and of questionable utility. The WRA is now investigating the possible installation of an elevator as an alternative, perhaps as part of a private sector building improvement effort.

As designed, the new plaza will provide both improved pedestrian access and an opportunity for shoppers and other pedestrians to rest, observe, and participate in the activity in the Square. It will also provide a much needed area for special event activities, for the downtown fairs, holiday celebrations (including the upcoming Millennium), and other special occasions.

3. Downtown Parking Plan: A variety of parking reviews and recommendations have been completed by VHB, Thomas J. Martin and Associates, and in-house by the WRA, but these efforts still must be compiled in a Woburn Square Parking Management Plan. This parking program will make comprehensive proposals for both on-street and off-street parking regulation and management. It will be based both upon work already completed, and some additional parking utilization survey, where needed. The WRA will coordinate the preparation of this plan, working with the Downtown Committee, the City Engineer, the Woburn Police Department, and other relevant groups.

4. Design of Magazine Hill Park and Ride Facility: While the construction of the Magazine Hill Park and Ride Facility is a long term activity under this plan, the feasibility study and preparation of construction designs is a short term objective. However, the discussion of this design effort is deferred to Section 4, Long Term Strategy.

B. Woburn Square Storefront Improvement Program: It is a dilemma of the small retail business, and in particular those operating in a traditional commercial center, that an investment in upgrading the outside appearance of the business, however costly, does not automatically translate into increased sales. In an area such as Woburn Square, with the visual evidence of substantial façade disinvestment all around, a business or property owner making a substantial façade investment has no guarantee the commercial neighbors will follow suit. Thus, the impact of a singular investment may well be dissipated in the overall impression of the surrounding blight. It is no wonder that over time, disinvestment escalates, and major façade investment is relatively rare. When façade investment does occur, only the minimum is



pursued, and the extra cost of a historically sensitive restoration, or an exceptional architectural design aesthetic, is almost never considered. However, the collection of storefront façades, as the term

suggests, represent the face of the downtown, and create the all important first impression to potential customers, as well as prospective businesses. If the building facades do not telegraph an image of commercial success, the area will be by-passed.

The only way to reverse the pattern of façade disinvestment evident in Woburn Square is to encourage collective action. Property owners and businesses will invest, if they understand their decision will be part of a group effort. In order to lead that effort, and provide the financial incentives to encourage the higher design values of a historically sensitive and aesthetically attractive restoration, the WRA has developed guidelines and begun promoting the Woburn Square Storefront Improvement Program. Under this program, businesses and property owners in the Woburn Square Revitalization Area will be provided with technical and financial assistance for the restoration and renovation of commercial building facades. This will include a grant equal to 50 percent of the cost of façade improvements, up to a maximum grant of \$20,000. Property renovations will be required to meet the design criteria developed through the Busy Bend Design Project.

The Woburn Redevelopment Authority (WRA) will provide free architectural services to program participants who have not already hired their own architects. The WRA will solicit quotations on a case by case basis for each storefront from a list of architects experienced in storefront façade design. (Within the Busy Bend Design Project Area, the WRA will use Pierce Lamb Architects, the design consultant already retained for that effort.) De-



sign services provided by the architect retained by the WRA through the solicitation process (and also required of any architect employed directly by the participant) include:

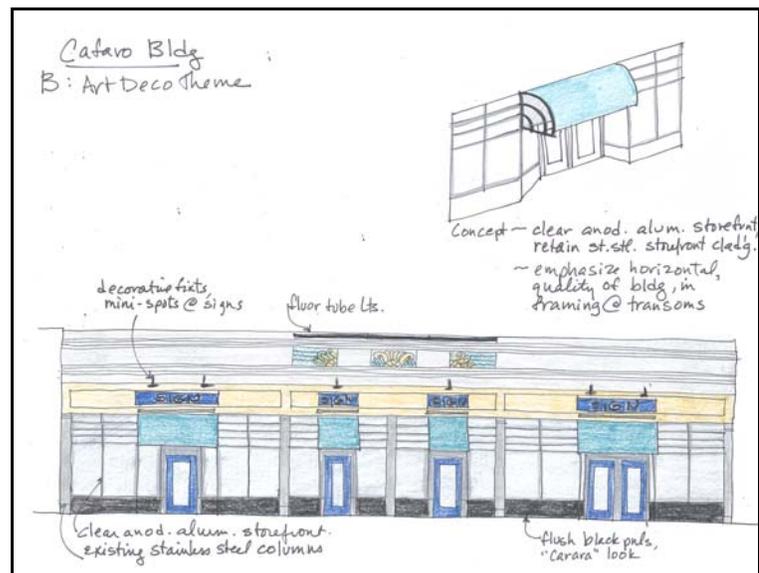
- A preliminary meeting between the Architect, the WRA Executive Director and program Participant;
- Consultation and preparation of design alternatives, for the WRA and the Participant's review;
- Preparation of preliminary design drawings, and cost estimates, for review;
- Preparation of final façade construction drawings, specifications, and bid documents; and,
- A final inspection and completion certification by the Architect at the conclusion of the work.

Program participants receiving free architectural services from the WRA will be required to submit a deposit equal to 30% of the architectural fee; this will be refunded upon completion of the project as long as the project is found to be in full compliance with the architectural drawings and the SIP Agreement.

Property owners or merchants participating in the program will receive a rebate equal to 50% of the actual cost of eligible improvements, or 50% of a cost estimate prepared by the WRA Architect, whichever is less. A project with a total eligible cost of \$24,000, for example, will result in a rebate of \$12,000. As a rebate, storefront assistance is only paid after total completion of the project, after the participant provides evidence that all contractors, etc., have been paid in full. Individual projects will be limited to a maximum rebate of \$20,000.



All improvements must comply with standards set forth in the City's zoning ordinance and building codes. Improvements to buildings without significant architectural features will be carefully designed and constructed to be in scale with the existing structure. Buildings which have significant architectural features will be required to restore and maintain those features. Handicapped access in compliance with



the Massachusetts Building Code will be required.

Applicants for participation in the program must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Applicants must be property owners or tenants operating retail businesses, service establishments or offices. (*Tenants must have written approval from property owners*);
- Commercial properties must be up to date on all federal, state, and municipal fees and taxes prior to participation in the program;
- Proposed renovation must comply with the design guidelines developed for Woburn Square through the Busy Bend Design Project;
- Commercial properties must comply with state and local code requirements;
- Participants must comply with all state and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing and permits; and,
- The proposed façade work must not have been completed or begun prior to the approval of the design and grant award by the WRA.

In the event that the available funds are not sufficient to cover all applications received, the WRA will select from among applications received based upon the following priorities:

- Properties which are located within the Busy Bend Design Area, from Montvale Avenue to Walnut Street (see map);
- Properties which have at least one commercial unit occupied by the owner of the building;
- Projects which will include the restoration of significant historical or architectural building elements;
- Properties which are a significant blighting influence on the downtown area; and,
- Projects which include an investment in private funds greater than the minimum required.

As part of the preparation of this Revitalization Plan, the WRA has approved guidelines and an application package for the proposed Woburn Square Storefront Improvement Program, and authorized the soliciting of applications by staff. The guidelines and application package are among the attachments. As a result of the original solicitation, the WRA has received to date a total of five applications. Three are in the Busy Bend project area, and two are outside. Architectural designers have been retained for the two projects located outside of the Busy Bend Design Area. In all, the WRA projects that a total of fifteen (15) projects will be completed under this program, assuming an average grant of \$10,000, and an average architectural fee of \$3,000.

C. Woburn Development Corporation Small Business Loan Program: The Woburn Development Corporation is a non-profit local development corporation set up in 1980 through a special act of the Massachusetts legislature. The primary purpose of the WDC is to make low interest small business loans, primarily in Woburn Square. The corporation started with an original capitalization of \$254,000, including \$90,000 from the CDBG Small Cities

Program, with the remainder from four local banking institutions. The governing body of the corporation is a twenty-five member Board of Directors, which includes the Mayor, representatives of each of the participating banks, and citizens appointed from the community at large. A seven member executive committee, including the Mayor, the banking representatives, and two at-large members, reviews and approves each specific loan application. The Chairman of the WRA has recently been elected to both the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee of the WDC.

Over the last nineteen years, the WDC has originated just under \$600,000 in loans to approximately twenty businesses. Loans are generally on a participating basis with private banking institutions acting as the primary lender. The rate is typically six percent, and the WDC is willing to take a second position. The WDC still has approximately \$200,000 available to lend, and has made a commitment to work in tandem with the WRA and the DRC to stimulate further investment in the downtown. The WDC Letter of Commitment is among the attachments. As part of the general technical assistance activities under the plan, the WRA will assist small businesses and property owners in the preparation of loan applications and proposals to the WDC and to private lending institutions.

D. Microenterprise Technical Assistance Fund: As part of the business development strategy outlined above, the Woburn Redevelopment Authority intends to set up and administer a \$25,000 Microenterprise Technical Assistance Fund, to provide specific case by case technical assistance to new and expanding businesses which meet the definition and criteria as a small business “microenterprise,” as promulgated by the Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant program. Under the guidelines of that program, a microenterprise is a business with five or fewer employees- including the proprietor. The proprietor must meet the CDBG definition of “low and moderate income.”

The WRA will not be retaining additional staff to offer technical assistance. Instead, the fund will be used to retain on a one-time basis professional or technical experts as ad hoc consultants to provide case specific assistance tailored to each business. The expert in question may be an accountant, business planner, architect, advertising/marketing agency, or other professional or technical person or firm whose specialty is required for the needs of the particular microenterprise business. A ceiling of \$5,000 in the cost of assistance per business will be applied.

In administering the program, the WRA will work with a new three member Technical Assistance Subcommittee of the DRC, to be appointed by the Chairman. The members of the subcommittee will be selected from among those DRC members with experience in commercial lending, or in owning and managing their own business enterprise. The WRA Executive Director and the Technical Assistance Subcommittee will work with each program Applicant to evaluate the technical assistance needs of the business, select the appropriate technical consultant through a solicitation process, and monitor the progress and outcome of the technical assistance effort.

Technical assistance under the Program may include, but is not limited to:

- *one-time accounting and bookkeeping services*, for the purposes of establishing the financial condition of the business, and for the preparation of loan applications or preparation of business plans, but not ongoing accounting services;
- *general business planning*, including the preparation of a comprehensive business plan;
- *legal assistance* related to a specific business expansion/job creation proposal;
- *market analysis and promotional consulting*, including the one-time preparation of advertising materials, but not the actual cost of advertising;
- *architectural and engineering consulting*, including the preparation of construction plans;
- *web site development*, for businesses with a demonstrated potential for successful internet marketing;
- *appraisal services*, for purposes of establishing asset value for loan application purposes;
- *job training* for existing or new employees, in the use of new equipment, procedures, or processes related to a specific business expansion/job creation proposal, etc. but not for general ongoing job training; and,
- any other type of technical assistance deemed appropriate by the WRA, and consistent with funding program regulations.

E. Woburn Square Promotional Program: As part of the implementation of this revitalization plan, the WRA will continue to support the ongoing efforts of the DRC and its associated Downtown Merchants Action Committee, in their efforts to organize downtown festivals, group advertising, and other ongoing promotional activities and events. In addition, the WRA, working with the DRC, will also undertake a series of specific activities to further the marketing and promotion of Woburn Square as a good place to shop and conduct business. These include:

1. Preparation of a *business recruitment package*, which will be developed by WRA staff, working closely with the DRC. The package will be distributed to prospective businesses which have made serious inquiries, and will be distributed through the WRA, other municipal departments, local commercial real estate brokers, and local lenders. The package will contain the following items:
 - a. A brief four page brochure which provides a demographic and economic abstract of the City of Woburn;
 - b. A tri-fold brochure which promotes Woburn Square, with a map and listing of the businesses, agencies, and key landmarks in the downtown;
 - c. A brochure entitled “How to Do Business in Woburn Square,” listing and explaining the range of licenses, permits and other approvals which may be required to open up a small business, with contact names and addresses, and key issues.

- d. A list of all commercial properties in the Woburn Square Revitalization Area currently available for sale or lease, with contacts and price, if available; and,
 - e. Brochures and/or guidelines for the Woburn Square Storefront Improvement Program, the Woburn Development Corporation loan program, the Microenterprise Technical Assistance Fund, and other relevant state and federal small business assistance programs.
2. Development by the DRC of a *marketing slogan* for Woburn Square, to use in promotional materials, advertising, etc. This could be done through the vehicle of a local contest, with ideas solicited from school children, the general public, and the local business community.
 3. Development and maintenance of a *web site*, which will provide information about Woburn Square, its businesses and landmarks, and the various revitalization programs and activities which are underway.

Other marketing and promotional activities will be developed by the WRA and the DRC as the project progresses.

IV. Zoning and Land Use Regulation: The control of land uses, densities, site coverage, and other site development criteria in the Woburn Square Revitalization Area is controlled primarily through the administration of the City of Woburn Zoning Ordinance. In order to ensure that the ordinance supports the revitalization objectives stated in this plan, the planning process included a review of the existing zoning, and the determination of the influence of that zoning upon downtown development.

The zoning revisions proposed in this Section are in draft form, and are presented in this draft Plan for discussion purposes. It is the intent of the WRA to work closely with the DRC, the Planning Board, the Masterplan Advisory Committee, and the City Council, to ensure that the revisions as adopted will complement the City wide efforts to revise zoning and land use regulations, and are in keeping with the overall goals of the City's planning efforts.

A. Existing Zoning: For the most part, the Woburn Square Revitalization Area falls within Woburn's Downtown Business (BD) zoning district. If a primary goal of the Woburn Square Revitalization Plan is to maintain the historic character of the downtown, it cannot be said that the current requirements of the BD zone further that goal. On the contrary, the implicit goal of the BD zone is just the opposite, to facilitate the demolition and removal of the current commercial structures, and encourage their replacement by new construction at a much higher level of density. A brief review of the fundamental land use, dimensional, and parking requirements of the BD district will bear this out.

1. Allowed land uses: In general, a broad range of retail, commercial, and service uses are allowed in the B-D District, while most manufacturing, R&D, warehousing and other



industrial uses are not allowed. This is fairly consistent with business zoning principals in general, and does not inhibit the retail and commercial uses targeted by the Vision Plan for the downtown area. Instead, the major land use issue is the prohibition in the downtown of virtually all residential uses except the most intense, “elevator apartment.” Two specific prohibitions have arisen as issues over the last several years: 1) the prohibition against townhouse development in the B-D District, and 2) the interpretation of the table of uses by the City such that only one dwelling unit is allowed in a mixed-use building. A recent attempt to allow townhouses in the district was defeated, in part because of a lack of agreement as to the appropriate density. Several townhouse developments have been proposed, and one is currently under construction, just beyond the BD zone.

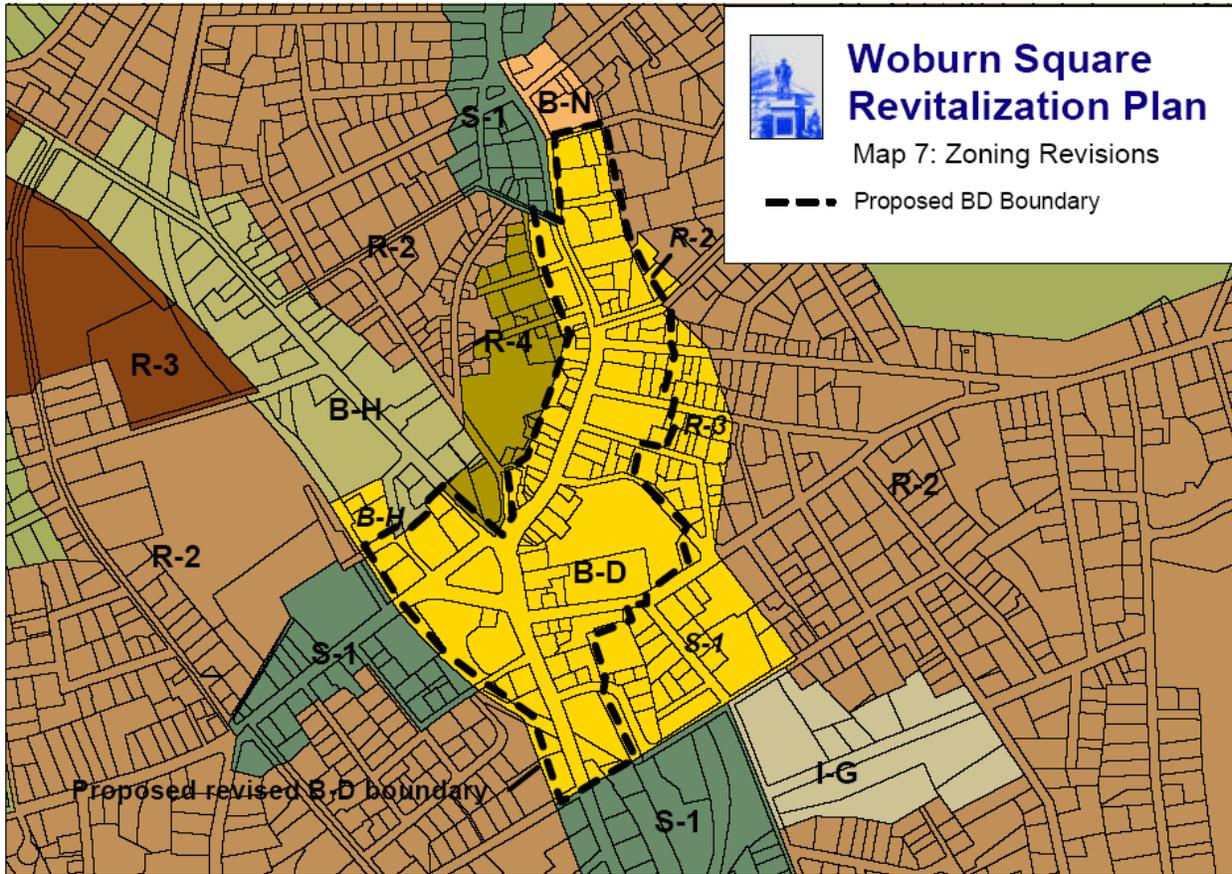
2. Dimensional Requirements: The B-D Zone currently has the most lenient set of dimensional requirements of all of the City’s zoning districts. There is no minimum lot size, no front, side or rear set back requirements, and no open space requirement. It is the only zone which allows 100 percent lot coverage. The minimum frontage is 40 feet, a requirement shared with a number of other residential and commercial zones, but the minimum lot depth of 50 feet is by far the least restrictive in the City. Overall, there is no maximum floor area ratio (F.A.R.).

These limited restrictions reflect the current traditional development pattern of the commercial downtown, and are not necessarily inappropriate. They allow new infill development in keeping with the traditional streetscape, and promote the maintenance of the pedestrian friendly scale and environment. What does not reflect the current development pattern is the height limit of 80 feet, and 7 stories, which is far greater than any existing downtown commercial building, which nowhere in Woburn Square exceeds 3 1/2 stories. While a commercial building of 7 stories is not likely in today’s real estate economy, a residential elevator apartment is a distinct possibility, as seen in the development of 44 Montvale Avenue. A structure of this scale fronting on Main Street would destroy the traditional fabric of the downtown, as can be seen in the simulation above.



3. Parking Requirement: In most zoning ordinances, the parking requirement acts to temper the effective build-out for any individual parcel, and as a result, the maximum structure which can be constructed, for all practical purposes, is often well below the maximum height, density or coverage permitted in the dimensional regulations. However, the Woburn Zoning Ordinance states that:

Within the B-D District, municipal parking facilities may be substituted



for the required parking if such facilities are within five hundred (500) ft. of the use to be served. (Sec.8.3.1)

Given the distribution of public parking facilities throughout the downtown, this section effectively exempts all downtown business and new development from any requirement to provide parking.

The public parking inventory in Woburn Square- with the improvement in number and distribution proposed in this Revitalization Plan- will be sufficient to accommodate the additional demand created by the greater utilization of existing space. In contrast, as detailed in Section 2, it is clearly not adequate to accommodate any substantial increase in commercial retail or office space in the downtown. Applying a parking requirement to existing retail and office spaces which are turning over occupancy through the exercise of market forces, is unrealistic. In downtown Woburn, parcels are generally built-out in terms of site coverage. A parking requirement would force small property owners, upon a change in tenancy or use, to acquire and demolish existing adjacent buildings to create proprietary off-street parking. Besides threatening the financial feasibility of downtown buildings, such a requirement would also contribute to the destruction of the traditional fabric this Revitalization Plan attempts to preserve.

B. Proposed Zoning Revisions: The WRA and the DRC are proposing the following revisions to the City of Woburn Zoning Ordinance, in order to bring the ordinance into unity

with the goals and objectives of the revitalization effort. The overall objective is to transform the B-D district so that it functions as a preservation zone, but reduce its size to encompass only the traditional downtown streetface itself. Other B-D areas would be rezoned to reflect the uses and land use objectives for the adjacent commercial or residential areas. The reduction of the size of the zone also serves to ensure that the parking exemption of Sec.8.3.1 only applies to the areas of the Square currently in commercial use, so that the use of the exemption does not place excessive demand on the limited supply of public parking. The text of the proposed changes are found among the attachments, and can be summarized as follows:

- The B-D district boundaries would be revised as shown on the map below, encompassing only those commercial sites fronting along Main Street, Pleasant Street, and Montvale Avenue, which have historically been part of Woburn's downtown, including a few small commercial parcels along intersecting streets;
- The table of uses would be revised to prohibit elevator apartments in the BD District;
- Buildings in the B-D zone will be restricted to a height limit of 3 stories and 40 feet, as measured from grade at Main Street. All other dimensional requirements would remain unchanged;

The proposals above address the most critical land use issues related to Woburn Square. Other principal issues directly related to the redevelopment of the downtown, such as the issue of residential conversion, and architectural design review, will be discussed by the WRA and the DRC, in conjunction with the City's other relevant boards, committees, and organizations, and may possibly be the subject of further zoning proposals at a later date.

C. Chapter 139 Nuisance Law: It is the intent of the WRA to work with all existing merchants and property owners on a voluntary basis to effect the upgrade of the commercial properties in Woburn Square, especially those in the most blighted, deteriorating condition. During that short term period, the WRA will be reviewing and determining whether for specific properties in the most deteriorated condition, it may be necessary to request that the City Council take action under MGL Ch.139, the public nuisance law for burnt or dangerous buildings. Under the law, the City Council is authorized to determine a building to be a public nuisance, and order the owner of the building to take specific corrective action. If the owner fails to take action within the prescribed period, the City may take the required corrective action, usually demolition, and place the cost against the property as a municipal lien.

VI. Financial Plan: In this subsection, the proposed funding for all of the above proposed activities will be reviewed. Each funding source will be described in detail, including how the regulations and requirements of each relate to the proposed uses. The spreadsheet on the following page outlines on one table both the sources and uses of the specific funds. In the discussion below, each funding source will be described in detail.

In assigning activities to each specific funding source, a number of critical factors were considered. The first factor was the list of specific eligible activities towards which a particular source of funds could be applied, according to the statutes, regulations and guidelines associated with

each. The second consideration was the schedule under which funds would be available for use. Priority activities, such as the acquisition of 365 Main Street, were allocated to WRA Ch.121B funds, which are already in hand.

Note that for the proposed Site Improvements, approximately 10% of the cost is assumed to be for outside engineering, such as lighting studies, etc. Construction plans for streetscape improvements will be supplied by the Woburn Engineering Department on an as-needed basis. The WRA contribution of \$20,000 towards the cost of the Pedestrian/Accessway is also specifically for construction engineering.

A. Woburn Redevelopment Authority Ch.121B Funds: The core funding for the Woburn Square Revitalization Plan is represented by approximately \$500,000 (as of November, 1999) in remaining proceeds from the WRA’s Woburn Industrial Park Project. Under the Certificate of Completion executed with the Massachusetts DHCD in August, 1997, it was agreed that the proceeds “whether heretofore or hereafter collected, shall be expended by the WRA for further planning and/or implementation of the urban revitalization plan for the downtown area of Woburn in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 121B and 760 CMR 12.00.” The Ch.121B funds are primarily dedicated to three activities:

1. *Acquisition* of the vacant lot located at 285 Main Street, adjacent to Citizens Bank, for the purpose of constructing the proposed Plaza/Accessway to the Walnut Street Municipal Parking Lot;
2. *Engineering Services* for the design of the Plaza/Accessway;
3. *Grants and architectural services* under the Woburn Square Storefront Improvement Program; and,
4. *Administration* of the WRA for an 8 month period, and other miscellaneous soft costs.

Annual administrative costs for the WRA are projected as follows, based upon the experience of the previous 24 months:

B. Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant: the City of Woburn, on behalf of the Woburn Square Partnership of the WRA and the DRC, will be applying for a grant of \$390,000 from the Mass. CDBG Ready Resource Fund (RRF). The RRF is a subcomponent of the CDBG Business Development Fund, which as the title suggests, represents the dedicated economic development component of the CDBG

WRA Annual Administrative Expenses	
Executive Director Salary	\$60,000
Health and Retirement Benefits	\$16,000
General Legal Services	\$4,500
Accounting Review Services	\$2,600
Liability Insurance	\$5,000
Printing, Office Supplies	\$5,000
Telephone	\$1,000
Electricity	\$2,000
Gas Service	\$1,300
Other Miscellaneous Expenses	\$2,600
TOTAL	\$100,000

**Woburn Redevelopment Authority
Downtown Revitalization Plan: February, 2000
Financial Plan**

	Total	WRA	CDBG	City	WDC	MHD	Gifts	Other Sources
Acquisition	\$225,000	\$225,000						
Site Improvements								
- New Street Lighting	\$200,000		\$200,000					
- Other Streetscape Improvements	\$170,000		\$50,000				\$20,000	\$100,000
- Walnut Lot Pedestrian Access	\$300,000	\$20,000		\$250,000			\$30,000	
Financial Assistance to Small Businesses								
- Storefront Improvement Program	\$200,000	\$100,000	\$100,000					
- Technical Assistance Fund	\$25,000		\$25,000					
- Small Business Loans	\$200,000				\$200,000			
Magazine Hill Engineering	\$100,000					\$100,000		
Marketing	\$15,000		\$15,000					
Other Soft Costs	\$25,000	\$5,000						
Administration	\$200,000	\$70,000						\$130,000
Contingency	\$50,000							
Total	\$1,710,000	\$420,000	\$390,000	\$250,000	\$200,000	\$100,000	\$50,000	\$230,000

program. According to the RRF guidelines:

Applicants may apply for a wide range of eligible activities in economic development, including, but not limited to: planning and pre-development studies; acquisition; micro and small business technical assistance programs and revolving loan funds; projects within the downtown—Downtown Related Projects—such as façade/sign programs, streetscape improvements, and business technical assistance; public social services related to economic development; and infrastructure and public facilities projects in support of economic development. (FY 1999 CDBG Application, pg. 20)

In general, activities funded through CDBG must meet one of two national objectives: 1) provide benefit to low and moderate income persons, or 2) aid in the prevention or elimination of slums and blight. Section 2 of this Downtown Revitalization Plan provides the data and analysis which demonstrates that the Woburn Square Revitalization Area is a blighted area, due both to the deteriorated condition of existing commercial buildings, and the condition of the public infrastructure. This analysis will be repeated in the City of Woburn's CDBG RRF Application.

The CDBG RRF grant will be used to finance the following plan activities:

1. *The installation of new traditional style streetlighting*, and a portion of the cost of the accessway improvement;
2. *The installation of the first phase of downtown streetscape improvements*, along with other sources of public and private funds;
3. *Small business technical assistance* under the proposed Microenterprise Technical Assistance Fund; and.
4. *Production of downtown marketing materials*, as described in Section 2.

C. City of Woburn Capital Appropriation: Under this plan, the City of Woburn will be asked to allocate the sum of \$250,000 from its FY2000 capital appropriation to pay for a portion of the cost of the proposed Plaza/Accessway, and for some streetscape improvement.

D. Woburn Development Corporation: The Woburn Development Corporation, described in detail in Section 3, has reaffirmed its commitment to provide direct and participatory financing to small business and property owners in the Woburn Square Revitalization Area. The WDC currently has approximately \$200,000 available to lend.

E. MHD Reimbursement: The WRA has entered into an agreement with the Massachusetts Highway Department for the engineering design of the proposed 100-125 space Magazine Hill Park and Ride Facility. The WRA will be contracting directly with the design-engineering firm, and will be reimbursed 100 percent by MHD. In order to carry the cash flow for this design effort, the WRA will be making interim use of Ch.121B funds, which will be replenished upon reimbursement. Thus, the engineering has been included as an activity under

this plan. The construction of the project will be the responsibility of the MHD, as a state transportation project, and thus is outside of the financial plan for this urban renewal effort.

F. Contributions: The DRC, in recent years, has had considerable success to date raising funds for downtown streetscape improvements. This effort will continue, with a projected goal of \$50,000 over 24 months, to be divided between paying for a portion of the cost of the Plaza/Accessway, and for continuing general streetscape improvements.

G. Other Sources: The WRA and the DRC will be pursuing a variety of other funding sources for other associated costs, including contributions from the City of Woburn, both cash and in-kind, from other public and philanthropic grant sources, and from additional private sector contributions, for the cost of streetscape improvements and other administrative costs.

Woburn Square Revitalization Plan

Section 4: Long Term Strategy

I. Introduction: In the previous section, the short-term revitalization program, defined as the program which could realistically be implemented over the next 24 month period, was presented in detail. The successful implementation of this short term program will provide both the organizational and economic basis for the development and adoption of a longer term revitalization strategy. While more local planning and consensus building still must be done to solidify the elements of a long term program, many of the issues, and some of the components, are already well understood. These can be divided into two broad categories– objectives within the Woburn Square Revitalization Area itself, and objectives and issues bordering or adjacent to the currently designated area. These include:

- *Objectives Within Revitalization Area*

- Parking Improvements:
 - Improvements to Walnut Street Municipal Parking Lot
 - Construction of Magazine Hill Park and Ride Facility
- Design and Implementation of Woburn Square Traffic Improvements
- Assemblage of Sites for Anchor Development

- *Objectives Outside of Revitalization Area*

- South Woburn
 - Development of Woburn Loop Bikeway Corridor
 - Establishment of South Woburn Neighborhood Revitalization Area
- Downtown Woburn
 - Expansion of Woburn Public Library
 - Relocation of Juvenile Court

Before beginning a detailed discussion of the long term objectives listed above, it is important to review the organizational issues inherent in establishing the long term plan. In the short term program, the lead agency is the Woburn Redevelopment Authority, whose full time executive director functions as the downtown coordinator for the revitalization effort. The WRA will directly administer the Storefront Improvement Program, small business technical assistance, and other business development efforts. The WRA works closely with the Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn, through a formally adopted Memorandum of Agreement. The Downtown Committee, among other responsibilities, helps to coordinate the activities of various institu-

tions, and contains within its membership the Mayor, and representatives of the Planning Board, DPW, Sign Review Board, and other key agencies.

Like the Revitalization Area strategy itself, committed funding for the WRA's staffing and coordinating role is short term; current Ch.121B funds earmarked for administration will be depleted with the completion of the 24 month program. It is the intent of the WRA to continue this coordinating and administrative role, in tandem with the Downtown Committee, over the long term as well. The WRA will pursue additional sources of funding for this continued administrative and planning effort.

II. Objectives Within the Revitalization Area: Both the Vision Plan and the evaluation completed by the WRA in the preparation of this revitalization plan identified a set of issues which could not be completed within the time frame of the short-term strategy detailed in the previous section. Though a primary reason is the need to assemble substantial funding, other issues also influence the timing decision, including the need to broaden community support through the attainment of the short term objectives, and the need to first accomplish initial improvement to the underlying economic market conditions in Woburn Square, as a good place to conduct business. However, as that short term program is being put in place over the next several years, discussions and planning for the longer term effort will be well underway. Within the Revitalization Area, the primary long term issues are parking, traffic, and the assemblage of anchor development sites.

A. Parking Improvements: Currently, there is approximately one parking space in Woburn Square for every 400 square feet of commercial space, including on-street spaces and spaces in private lots. Though not an ideal amount of parking for a commercial area, as an absolute number it does not represent a crisis deficit. However, the majority of off-street public spaces available for use by the employees and customers of the Square's commercial businesses are located in the Walnut Street Municipal Lot, which is poorly designed, in deteriorated condition, and inaccessible to several major areas of downtown Woburn. The long term parking program responds to this problem with two major capital improvements, which together will cost in excess of \$2 million. The Walnut Street lot will be upgraded, with new lighting, new striping, pedestrian islands, drainage and landscaping, which will make the lot far safer and easier to use. However, this will result in the reduction of approximately 40 spaces. These spaces will be replaced by the construction of approximately 100 new spaces across Main Street on Magazine Hill, which will both provide a net increase in the level of available parking, and more evenly distribute the parking within the commercial area. The discussion below details the steps taken to date, and the specific design and funding issues related to each capital improvement.

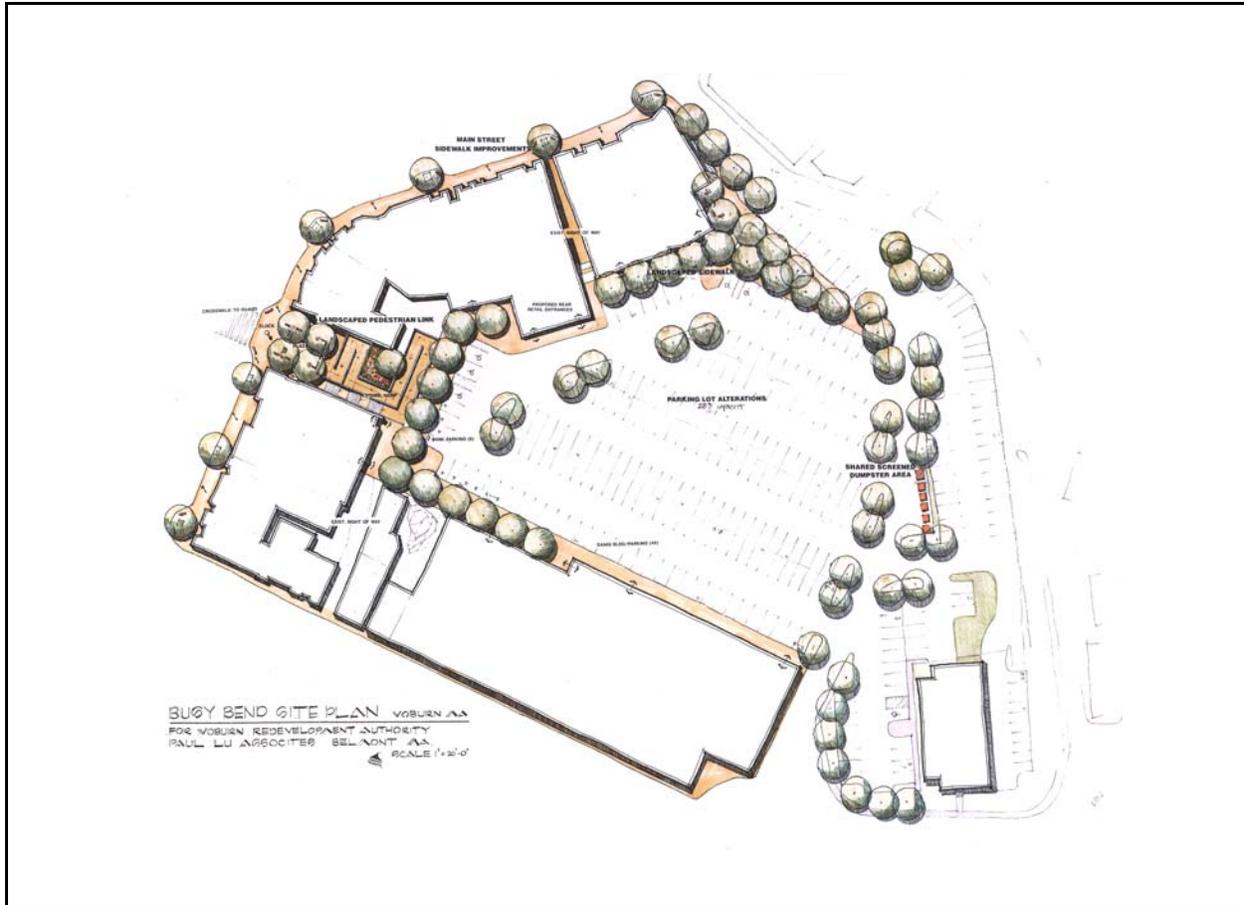
1. Walnut Street Parking Lot Improvements: Among the major recommendations of the 1997 Vision Plan was the improvement through restriping, recurbing, and landscaping of the Walnut Street Parking Lot. When originally constructed in 1968, a significant effort was expended in the removal of the large volumes of ledge from the outcropping known then as "Nanny Goat Hill," to create the current parking lot grade. Topographical maps from that time indicate that at its highest point, the hill was almost sixty feet above the street grade at Main

Street. Perhaps it is not surprising that the finishing of the lot itself was thus minimal; just a paved surface with no lighting- beyond the minimal light cast from adjacent buildings- and no islands or landscaped area to assist in the flow of traffic, and provide safe havens for patrons going to and from their vehicles. As currently striped, the majority of spaces are substandard, and the search pattern is confusing.

As part of the Busy Bend Design Study, a new concept design for the Walnut Street lot has been prepared, which addresses the serious flaws of the current layout. The essential principles of the new design are as follows:

- *Spaces are designed to a retail standard.* Spaces are perpendicular (90 degrees) instead of the current angle (60 degrees), with a full lane width of 10 feet. This provides adequate space for shoppers to load packages, and for safe and convenient access in and out of the space for all types of passenger vehicles.
- *Circulation lane widths are a full 24 feet.* This allows full two-way traffic, and a logical and convenient search pattern for vehicles.
- *Islands are located at the ends of each lane:* These provide important visual definition of the locations of each parking lane, and also provide safe havens for pedestrians crossing the parking lot. These important functions are totally lacking in the current layout.
- *New light poles are provided at the end of each lane.* The current lack of lighting is a serious safety issue for nighttime use of the lot. Drivers have even greater difficulty interpreting the contradictory search pattern and identifying the precise location of lanes, spaces, and intersections. For persons entering and leaving their vehicles in the low light conditions, the area feels insecure.
- *Adequate storm drainage is built into the design.* Despite its two and a half acres of impermeable surface, the Walnut Street lot relies entirely upon surface drainage to remove storm runoff. The lot has been graded so that water flows generally towards the Walnut Street exit, out to Main Street and the catch basins and drains located along the curbing of that right of way. However, during periods of heavy runoff, water may also be flowing down other unintended channels, and exacerbating flooding conditions within buildings around the perimeter, already created because of the extent of the subsurface ledge and a generally high water table.

While the Vision Plan assumed that the improvement of the Walnut Street lot would be a short-term, low cost item, preliminary estimates place the cost of construction of the proposed schematic design at between \$1 million and \$1.3 million. Funding for the project has not yet been identified. However, these improvements would be eligible under both the Mass. Public Works Economic Development Program (PWED), administered by the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC), and the Mass. Community Development Action Grant (CDAG), administered by DHCD. Should funds from either of those programs become available, the City of Woburn will consider an application for funding. Furthermore, since the improved lot will result in the loss of approximately 40 spaces, it is critical that the new facility proposed for Magazine Hill be constructed first, in order to avoid a negative impact upon the economic vi-



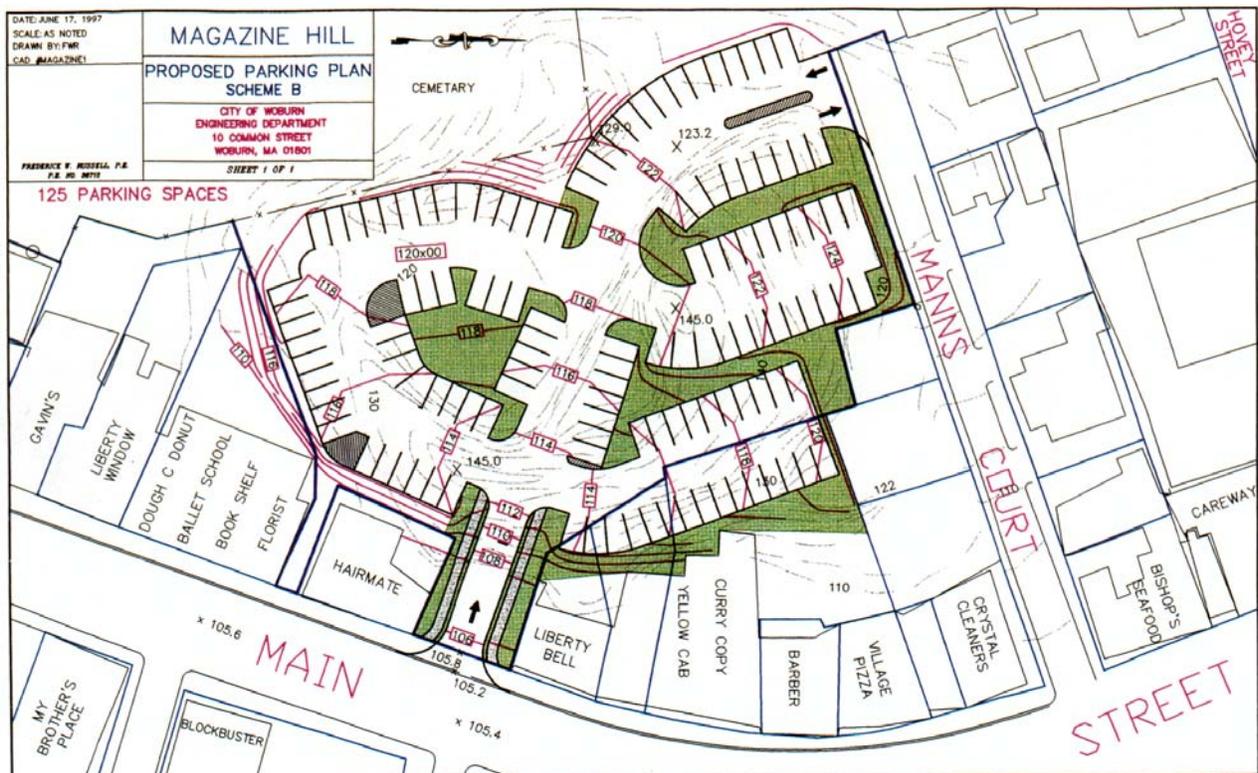
ability of downtown businesses.

In order for the proposed design to be implemented, the Woburn Redevelopment Authority will need to negotiate easements with abutting property owners, most notably the owners of the Woburn Bowladrome and Citizens Bank, which each own parcels along the southern edge of the parking lot.

2. *Magazine Hill Park and Ride Facility:* The City of Woburn and the Woburn Redevelopment Authority have proposed the construction of a 100 to 125 space park and ride facility to be located in the heart of Woburn Square, on Magazine Hill. The funds for this facility were earmarked in the transportation bond authorization passed by the Massachusetts General Court in the Fall of 1997. The Downtown Revitalization Committee played a major leadership role in obtaining the approval of the proposal. The project has been budgeted at \$1.5 million. The proposed site for the park and ride facility is a city-owned parcel of land containing approximately 60,000 square feet, located approximately 400 feet north of the Woburn Common. The engineering design of this facility is among the short term objectives detailed in the previous section. However, due to its substantial cost, and the general regional demand for funding for transportation projects, it is assumed that actual construction will require a longer implementation.

A number of abutting commercial property owners have expressed a willingness to negotiate easements or other arrangements in order to allow the modest expansion of the proposed lot beyond the current boundaries of the municipal parcel. Thus, the final design and plan may encompass some easements or takings, but the majority of the site is public property, and additional acquisitions are expected to be minimal. The major liability of the site is its grade and geology. With substantial ledge outcroppings, which appear to be of shale, sandstone, and granite, Magazine Hill, at its two highest points, is just under 40 feet above the grade at the crown of Main Street. Construction of a parking facility will thus mean that, depending upon the final design, a substantial amount of ledge material and soil will need to be excavated, removed, and disposed as part of the work effort.

In June, 1997, the City of Woburn Engineering Department completed a preliminary *Proposed Parking Plan* (below), which allowed for the creation of 125 spaces, with access into the site from Mann Court and the vacant lot at 460 Main Street, already acquired by the City of Woburn, and egress from the site at Manns Court, only. This design represented a maximizing of the parking potential of the site. This preliminary schematic was subsequently assessed by the firm of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., as part of a larger, limited study of Woburn Square traffic, released in November, 1997. In general, VHB found that the increase in traffic generated by the lot would have minimal impact on Main Street traffic. The consultant recommended the addition of further pedestrian amenities, with special consideration given to the provision of handicapped access, and suggested that the alley between 446 and 454 Main Street be converted to a pedestrian access walkway, with replacement parking provided to the effected businesses within the Magazine Hill lot.





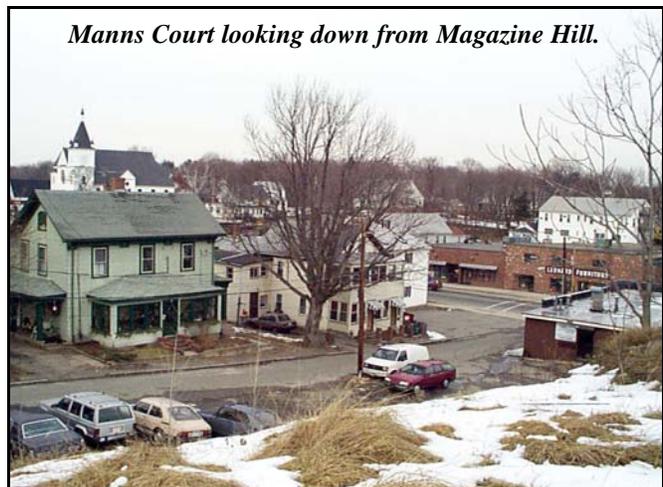
The First Burial Ground, adjacent to Magazine Hill

With the completion of the traffic review, the Woburn Redevelopment Authority (WRA) was identified by the City as the lead agency in developing the new park and ride facility. In addition to the WRA, other key agencies and groups involved include the City of Woburn, in particular the Engineering Department and the Planning Department, and the Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn.

In April, 1998, the WRA solicited proposals from civil engineering/design teams for the design of the Magazine Hill Park and Ride Facility. Six proposals were received; each was submitted by a multi-disciplinary team with member firms skilled in civil engineering, geotechnical engineering, traffic analysis, and urban landscape design. All six proponents were interviewed by an ad hoc committee of the WRA Board, and including the WRA Executive Director and the City Engineer. In June, 1998, the team led by the firm of Allen & Major, Inc., was selected and approved by the WRA. The other team members include VHB, traffic analysis, GEI, geotechnical engineering, and Pressley Associates, landscape design. The contract for design services is now being executed by the Massachusetts Highway Department. The cost of the engineering design will be reimbursed by MHD from state transportation funds; WRA Ch.121B funds will be used as interim funding in order to handle the cash flow for the design effort.

The construction of the Magazine Hill Park and Ride Facility is a vital component of the revitalization of Woburn Square. In Woburn, the decision made decades ago to close the so-called Woburn Loop terminated commuter rail service to downtown Woburn. In the near future, commuter rail service in Woburn will center on the new Regional Transportation Facility in North Woburn, near the new Route 93 Industriplex Interchange. Though well located to serve regional needs, the new facility will further isolate Woburn's downtown residents and businesses from mass transit service.

Downtown Woburn does continue to be served by local and regional MBTA bus service. Recent studies estimate that between 40 to 50 bus commuters currently use the Walnut Street municipal parking lot, located near Magazine Hill, for all day parking. The City of Woburn and the WRA envision the Magazine Hill Facility as an opportunity to broaden these commuter patterns, providing a more convenient bus or car-pool oriented alternative

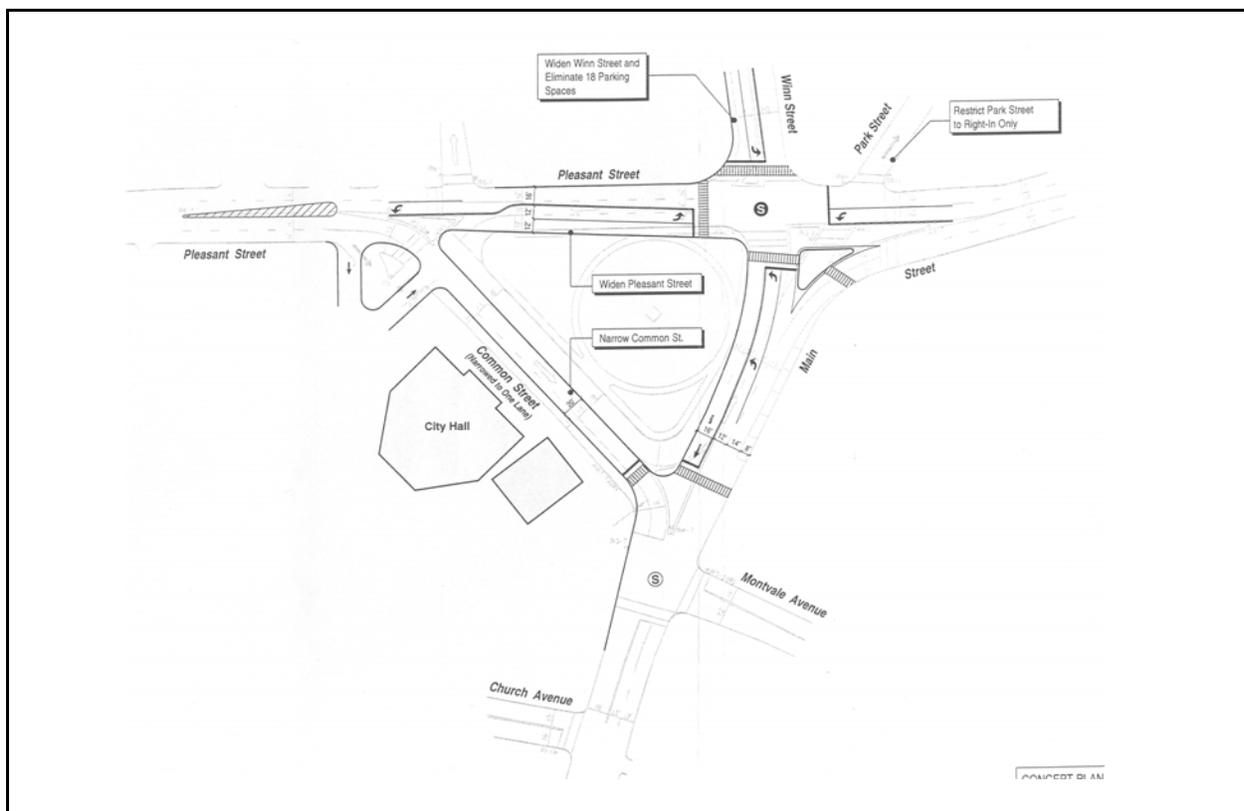


Manns Court looking down from Magazine Hill.

for residents in the South Woburn and Woburn Square areas, who will be effected should the MBTA Commuter Rail station at Mishawum Road be relocated to the Regional Transportation Facility. As part of the Magazine Hill effort, the WRA will take the lead in preparing a Transportation Systems Management Plan for Woburn Square, to identify ways to provide links with the new regional facility, and to further two complementary goals: 1) greater reliance on car-pooling and bus service for travel to other regional centers, and 2) more shopping and business activity in Woburn Square.

B. Design and Implementation of Woburn Square Traffic Improvements: In their traffic analysis completed in November, 1997, the consulting firm of Vanasse Hagen Brustlin (VHB) estimated that over 30,000 vehicles per day went through Woburn Square. Level of Service at key intersections during peak hour was often found to be at level E, very congested. The report suggested a specific scenario, which involved reducing Common Street to one eastbound lane, and widening Pleasant Street along the northern edge of the Common to accommodate a two direction flow of traffic. VHB suggested that the proposed improvements could theoretically result in an increase in the level of service to level C, considered adequate traffic flow. However, given the intricacy of the design- far more complex than the current layout- the firm stated that substantially more study was required to prove that the scheme was actually feasible. The scenario would require the removal of a substantial number of on-street parking spaces from Pleasant, Winn and Main Streets, in order to create and guarantee the necessary additional travel lanes needed to improve traffic flow.

The issue of traffic congestion will force the WRA and the Downtown Committee to reopen a



public debate concerning the inherent conflict among the objectives of traffic flow, pedestrian safety, and the economic needs of businesses in older commercial areas. In an area with the level of traffic and limited space found in Woburn Square, it is not possible to completely reconcile these conflicting issues.

This is not a new debate for Woburn Square. In the late 70s and early 80s, Woburn Square went through a major redesign of traffic geometry and flow under the Urban Systems program. The result is the current one way rotary pattern which uses the Woburn Common as the hub. When first implemented, the design proved controversial and divisive. Eventually, most of the on-street parking spaces originally removed under that plan were essentially restored in reaction to the impact of the loss of on-street parking upon downtown businesses. While the vehicular capacity of the Square did clearly increase as a result of the changes, the improved level of service proved illusory, as both induced and gradual increases in average daily traffic negated the positive impacts.

The increase in traffic capacity and flow was matched by a clear perception among merchants, shoppers, and workers within Woburn Square of a corresponding negative impact upon pedestrian safety at key intersections. The response of the City of Woburn has been to place uniformed police officers at several key intersections during the business day, to manually interrupt traffic for crossing pedestrians.

Regardless of the overall wisdom of reopening the traffic design debate, the cost of a full traffic study and redesign, estimated by VHB to be between \$50,000 and \$100,000, was beyond the budgetary limits of the short term program. Since traffic design and engineering is no longer an eligible expense under state and federal transportation program guidelines, any cost of further study will have to be born by the City, or be funded through a DHCD planning or community development grant. Furthermore, any design which substantially sacrifices traffic flow to improve pedestrian safety is not likely to be funded by the state or federal transportation agencies.

One short-term proposal, developed under the Busy Bend Design Study, will test on a pilot basis the creation of sidewalk “bump-outs” at pedestrian crosswalks, in order to shorten the actual distance in pavement that pedestrians will need to traverse when crossing at key locations. It is hoped that these will also function effectively as traffic calming measures. In general, however, the discussion regarding further traffic study and redesign will be taken up after the approval of this plan by DHCD, and the implementation of the short term program has begun.

C. Assemblage of Sites for Anchor Development: One of the key problems first identified by the Vision Plan was the lack in Woburn Square of strong anchor businesses which could attract primary shoppers, who would then be likely to shop at other downtown businesses. According to the report’s authors, Thomas J. Martin and Associates, the only business which could reasonable meet the criteria of an anchor was the CVS located at 415 Main Street. However, the consultant recognized that vacant space did not currently exist within the downtown to accommodate an additional anchor. As detailed in the first section of this plan, the existing pattern of development, hemmed in by ledge, and characterized by small and irregular lot configurations, has made the cost of a multiple parcel assemblage by the private sector prohibitive un-

der current market conditions. The Vision Plan consultant recommended instead that efforts be directed to improving the business mix within the existing inventory of commercial property.

This recommendation has guided the development of the short term strategy adopted by the Partnership and detailed in the previous section of this plan. The successful implementation of that strategy, which should begin to improve overall market conditions in the downtown, must precede any attempt to leverage site assembly for a larger scale redevelopment. Ideally, the initiative for achieving the selection and control of larger development sites will come from the private sector, and will not require direct public intervention. The targeted zoning revisions outlined in Section 3.V of this Plan will guarantee that private reuse initiatives will conform to community land use objectives for the downtown. In that event, the major role of the Partnership will be to facilitate the public review process, and to provide assistance in identifying and leveraging additional development incentives or direct financial support for the private sector effort, where appropriate. The latter could include the preparation of proposals to both state and federal programs, such as the Mass. Community Capital Fund administered by DHCD.

Only the passage of time, and the implementation of the short term strategy, will verify if private sector initiatives alone will create additional anchor sites in Woburn Square. Should this prove not to be the case, then the WRA and the DRC will need to reopen a public discussion as to whether site assembly by a public agency is both advisable and feasible. Should such direct public intervention be required, then the WRA would have to develop an urban renewal plan targeting specific parcels for acquisition. This will also be true if key blighted parcels in the downtown described in Section 1, which are clearly serious obstacles to long term revitalization, do not respond to the proposed short term program of voluntary revitalization, or to the enforcement of the nuisance statute by the City of Woburn.

III. Objectives Outside of the Revitalization Area: As the short term downtown revitalization strategy is finalized, work on a broader area of focus has already begun. This broader focus involves both 1) the expansion of the revitalization effort into South Woburn, and 2) support for and coordination with other critical public projects in the civic/institutional part of the downtown not currently part of the Revitalization Area.

A. South Woburn Revitalization: Long before the development of the Woburn Industrial Park in North Woburn in the late 60s and early 70s, the industrial heart of the City was located in South Woburn. Historically, Woburn was a city heavily dominated by tanneries and related industries, with much of that industrial activity located in a corridor between Woburn Square and the Winchester town limit line, along a railroad line known as the Woburn Loop. In the shadow of these tanneries, and along the adjacent hills, arose a neighborhood of modest houses for tannery workers and their families, within easy hearing of the tannery whistles.

The old Woburn Loop was originally constructed in the 19th Century by the Boston and Maine Railroad as a by-pass of the Lowell Branch which allowed commuter trains from Boston to stop in Woburn Square, on the way to Lowell. This by-pass began in Winchester Center, passed through downtown Woburn through the train station located next to City Hall, and reconnected

with the main branch near the location of present day Route 128. By the late sixties, the section of the loop north of the downtown had long been discontinued, but commuter service was still available from the Square into Boston from a temporary station located at the effective terminus near High Street. By the end of the decade, this service too had been eliminated, as the Woburn commuter rail stop was moved to the new Mishawum station, located in the Woburn Industrial Park. The old Woburn Loop, under the control of the MBTA after 1975, was permanently abandoned, one of many obsolete rights-of-way owned but forgotten by the authority. Today, the old Loop is overgrown with weeds, encroached upon along its length by private businesses, and plagued by illegal dumping.

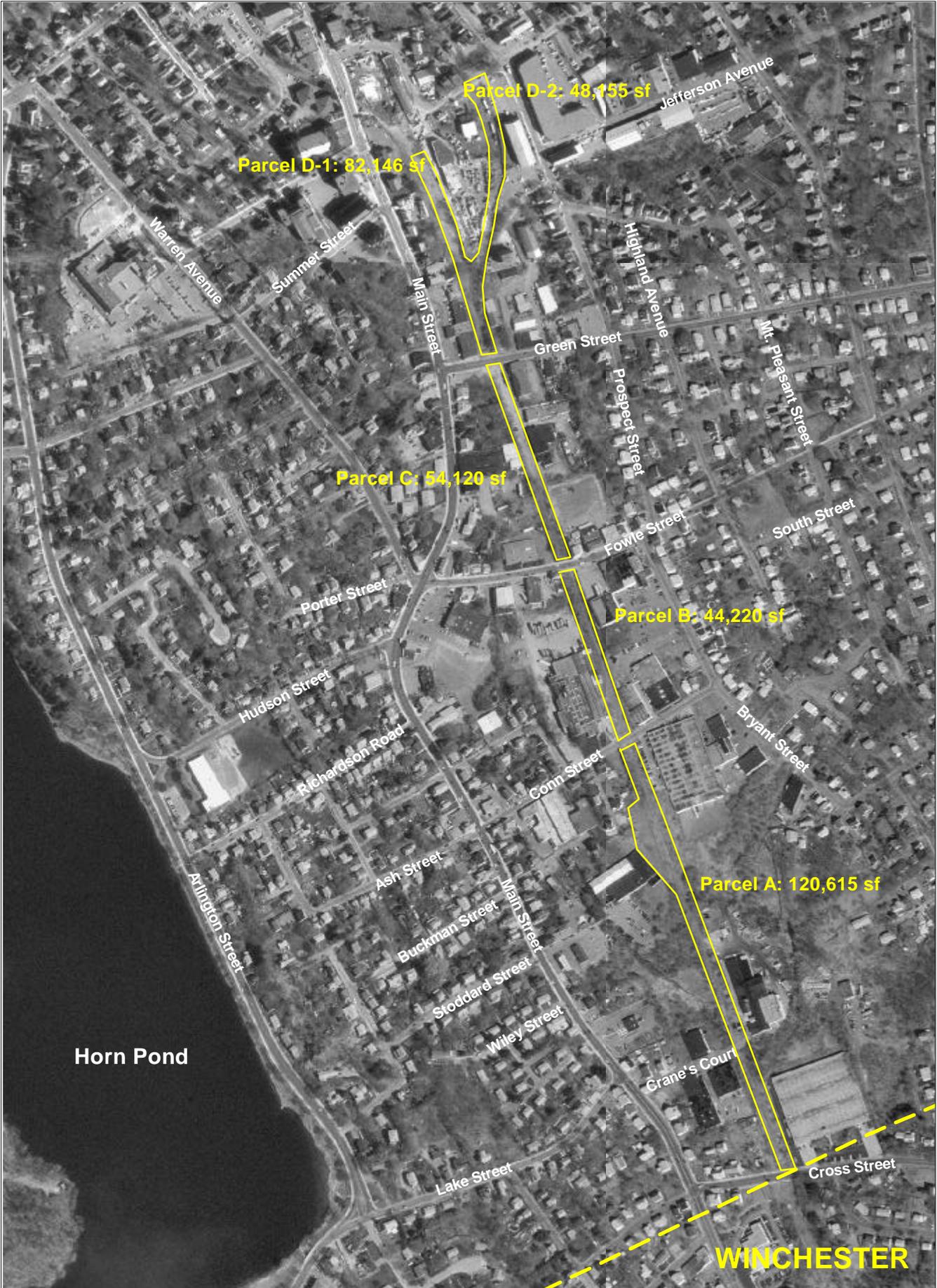


Today, the Loop is now on the market. The MBTA is under a directive from the Massachusetts legislature to dispose through sale all surplus railroad real property not required for current or anticipated future railroad use. Under this legislative mandate to raise funds, the MBTA approached the City of Woburn in 1997 with an offer of first refusal, prior to the property being placed on the open market, to be divided and sold to abutters. As the spine connecting the entire South Woburn industrial area, the Loop holds an important key to leveraging the future land use of this blighted and underutilized area. In response to this opportunity, the WRA, working in tandem with the Woburn Planning Board and the Woburn Bikeway Committee, has begun developing a proposed strategy to take advantage of this unique opportunity.

1. Woburn Loop Bikeway: The proposed Woburn Loop phase of the Tri-Community Bikeway/Greenway is an important both for the revitalization of Woburn Square and for the development of a program for South Woburn. This Tri-Community project is a cooperative effort involving Stoneham, Winchester and Woburn. As originally conceived, the bikeway begins at Recreation Park near Stoneham Square, and follows the abandoned B&M Stoneham Branch under I-93 to central Street in East Woburn. There it picks up the Aberjona River, and follows the river into Winchester Center. As originally conceived, the bikeway was to connect with the existing Horn Pond Brook Bikeway, which takes the path to a proposed terminus at Horn Pond in Woburn. The total length of the original project is approximately 6.6 miles. Funds for preliminary engineering design have been awarded by the Mass. Executive Office of Transportation and Construction under the Transportation Enhancement Program.

The City of Woburn has proposed an alternative leg to the bikeway, to replace the Horn Pond section, which would follow the old Woburn Loop from Winchester Center into Woburn Center. This phase would accomplish several long term community development objectives:

- Woburn Square would be connected by bikeway directly to Winchester Center and Stoneham Square, which would enhance the revitalization of Woburn Square;



- Woburn Square and South Woburn would be connected directly to the Commuter Rail Station in Winchester Center, providing a viable non-traditional bi-modal commuting alternative to residents of South Woburn;
- The development of the bikeway/greenway through South Woburn would create a stimulus for additional housing and commercial development along the right-of-way.

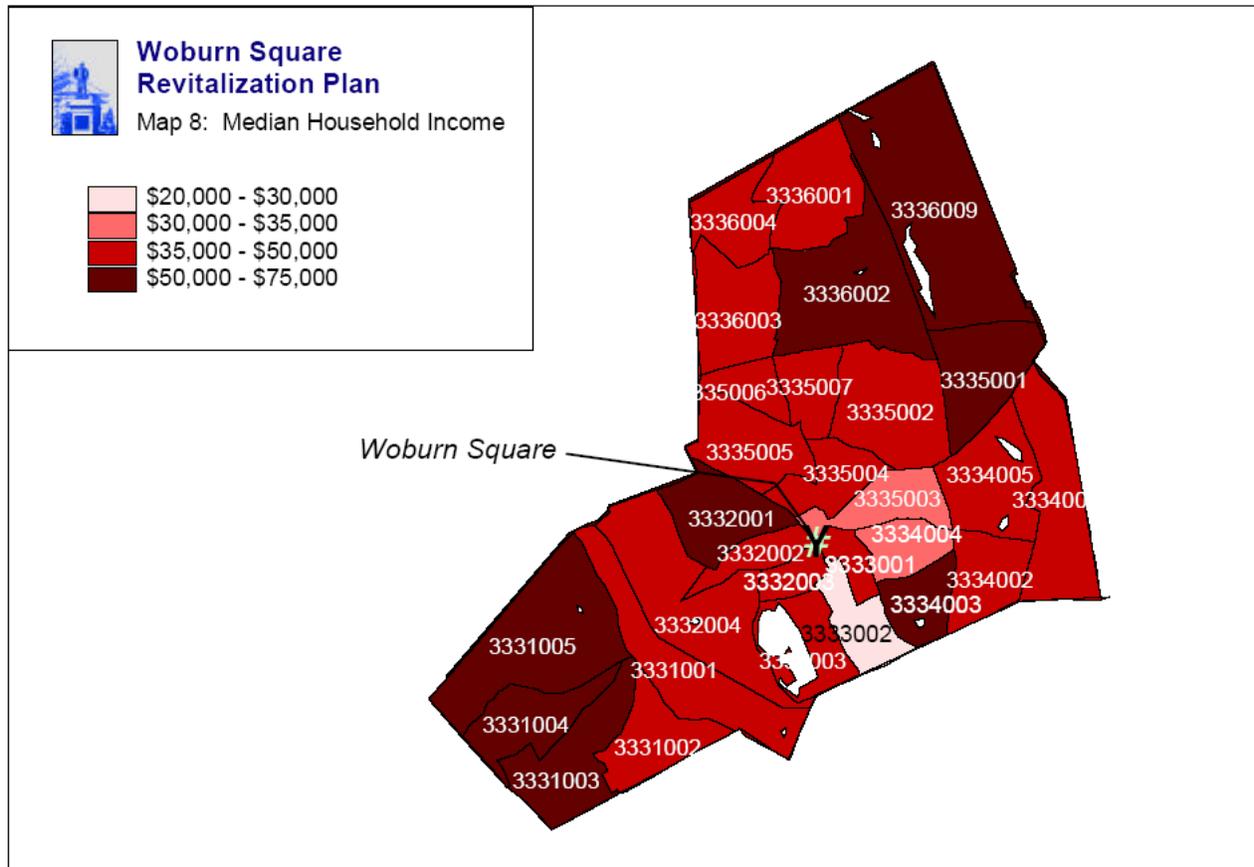
In June, 1999, the WRA assisted the Tri-Community Bikeway Committee in the preparation of an application to the Transportation Enhancement Program for \$1.7 million, primarily for the acquisition of the Woburn portion of the Woburn Loop, and for the portion of the Stoneham Branch in Stoneham and Woburn, still in MBTA possession. Following the program procedures, the application was reviewed by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, which recommended it for funding. The application is currently under review by the Massachusetts Highway Department, which makes the final recommendation to the Secretary of Transportation.

The former right-of-way offers tremendous potential for leveraging additional development and revitalization in South Woburn. First, experience in other communities has demonstrated that bikeways in general are a significant positive marketing factor, particularly for developments which directly abut the path. Second, the Woburn Loop is for most of its .85 mile length more than sixty feet wide. Proper bikeway design requires a minimum width of approximately twenty feet. This leaves a potential width of approximately forty feet which could, in strategic locations along the right-of-way, be allocated to other uses or to dual use. Under the WRA's proposal, a Bikeway Corridor Master Plan will be developed to determine the optimum concept design for each segment. Various options for the residual portion include:

- Public open/space recreation areas, including rest areas with benches or tables;
- New public or private access roads, opening up key landlocked parcels for redevelopment as housing or commercial use;
- Public parking area, particularly at the trailhead, near High Street; and,
- Private parking or open space, improved as part of an adjacent development.

The WRA proposal anticipates that any proceeds from the sale or lease of any residual right-of-way will be utilized for the design and construction of the bikeway and associated public improvements. Further, any private use of any portion of the right-of-way would be contingent upon the construction by the abutter of a landscaped buffer or other transitional improvement approved by the City of Woburn. In any event, a continuous bikeway meeting minimum and appropriate standards will be constructed and maintained for the entire length of the Loop right-of-way.

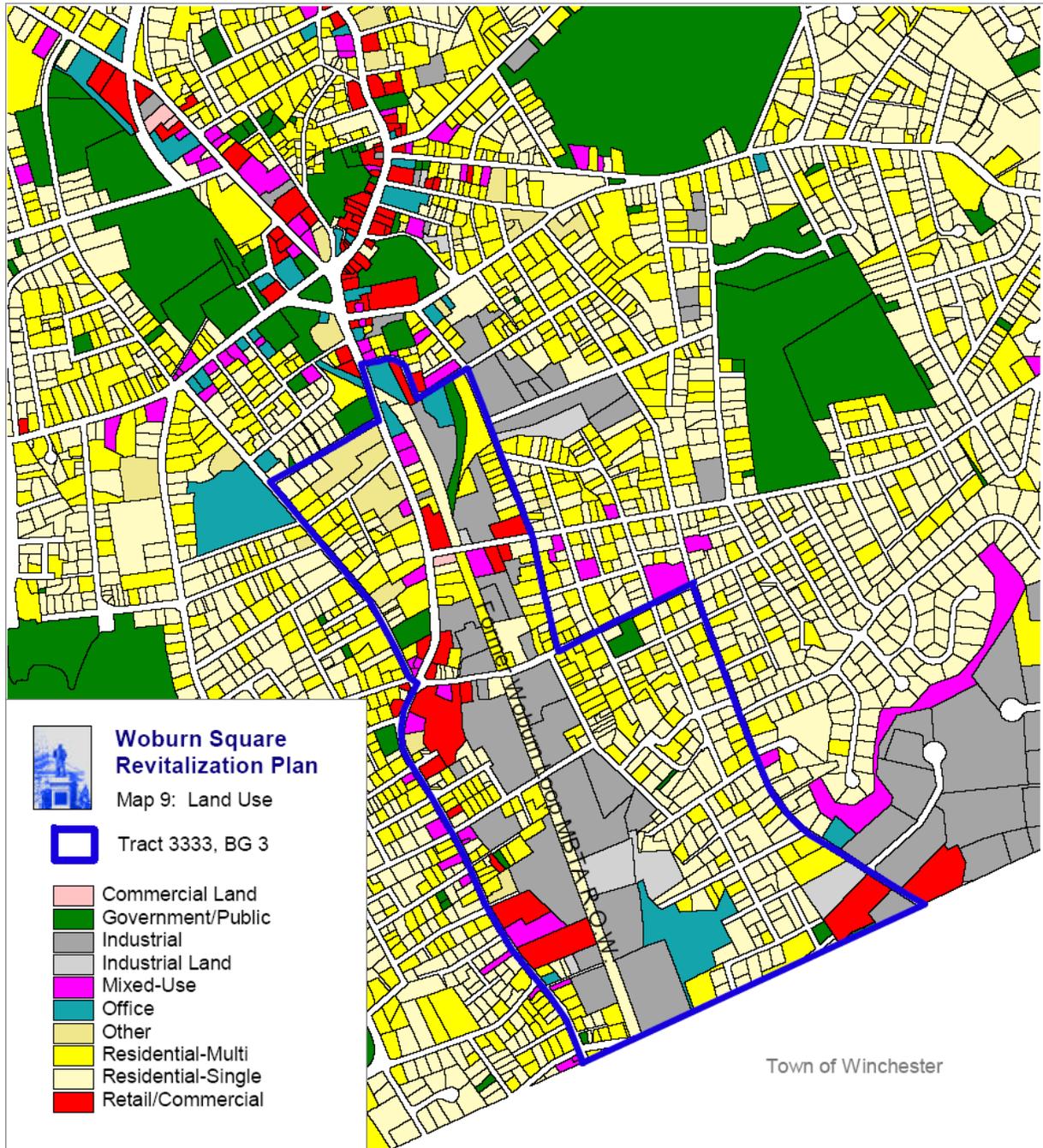
2. *Establishment of South Woburn Neighborhood Revitalization Area:* The old Woburn Loop extends southward through one of the oldest developed areas of the City. The



neighborhood surrounding the right-of-way and its industrial abutters is for the most part comprised of modest one- to three-family wood frame homes. These were originally constructed in the 19th Century to provide housing for the workers in the tanneries and related industries which grew up along the corridor. Demographic data, including family, housing, and income data, is available from the 1990 U.S. Census for this area at what is known as the “block group” level. The Loop is wholly within Block Group 2 of Census Tract 3333. Of the thirty block groups across the City, this group had, at \$24,000, the lowest median household income.

A complete demographic analysis of this neighborhood is beyond the scope of this plan. However, once the short-term program is underway, the WRA, working with the Planning Board and the Master Plan Advisory Committee, will undertake a detailed revitalization planning study of this and surrounding areas. This study will include:

- A complete review of all relevant demographic information from the U.S. Census and other sources, including total population, age distribution, racial distribution, household and family size, school enrollment, educational attainment, employment, household income, unit size, and overcrowding;
- A windshield survey of all public infrastructure and residential properties in the area, to determine the degree of disinvestment, if any, and the need for residential rehabilitation assistance; and,



- An analysis of the residential housing market, and the need for more affordable housing opportunity.

The WRA and its partnering organizations will hold public hearings and neighborhood meetings to receive comment from neighborhood residents. Key neighborhood organizations will also be identified, and involved in the revitalization planning process. From this effort, the WRA and the City of Woburn will develop a specific neighborhood revitalization program, which will form the basis for future funding requests from the Mass. CDBG Community Development

Fund (CDFII), and other related housing, economic development, and neighborhood revitalization funding sources.

B. Downtown Woburn: As part of the long term agenda for this Revitalization Plan, two important projects which effect Woburn Square are particularly noteworthy, although neither is directly within the responsibility of the WRA. These are the expansion of the Woburn Public Library, and the relocation of the Middlesex County Juvenile Court. Both of these developments will or could have a major impact upon Woburn Square, and the WRA and the Downtown Revitalization Committee will be seeking input in the decision making process regarding each.

1. Woburn Public Library Expansion: The Woburn Public Library is located on Pleasant Street, at the western edge of Woburn Square. This historic 19th Century landmark is the first public library designed by the American architect H.H. Richardson, and is on the National Register of Historic Places. It is one of the last of the noted architect's libraries to remain essentially unaltered, a fact which contributes both to its charm and its obsolescence. Though the public library is clearly the City's most important and beloved landmark, the existing library layout is inadequate both in terms of state building and safety codes, and the needs of a modern, functioning library.

The Woburn Library Board of Trustees, with funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, retained the services of an architectural consultant, J. Stewart Roberts, Associates, of



Somerville, Massachusetts, to develop a program for the modernization and expansion of the library, and to assist in the selection of a design architect. In the Spring of 1999, the architectural firm of Shepley, Bullfinch, Richardson and Abbott was retained after an extensive designer selection process. They will be providing a final conceptual design scheme and conceptual cost estimate by the summer of 1999.

The Woburn Public Library is an important civic anchor in Woburn Square, and with its expansion, this anchor role will be enhanced. The WRA and the Downtown Committee will remain involved in the public deliberations throughout the planning stages of this critical project.

2. Relocation of the Middlesex County Juvenile Court: If the Woburn Public Library is one important anchor of the downtown, then the Woburn District Court of Middlesex County is certainly another. The location of the Court, directly adjacent to City Hall, has clearly brought business to Woburn Square. Court personnel are frequent and loyal patrons of local restaurants and other service businesses, and the court's proximity contributes to the demand for

office space by legal professionals.

For several years, the court system throughout Massachusetts has been under a directive from the Massachusetts legislature to place juvenile court functions in a separate location from the adult court. The Middlesex Division of the Juvenile Court Department has over the last several years attempted to use this mandate as an opportunity to consolidate its operations in fewer locations. Several sites in Woburn Square have been investigated, though to date none have proved feasible. The Juvenile Court requires approximately 18,000 square feet of space, and the same lack of available space which prohibits the recruitment of a second commercial anchor business also has inhibited the Courts search for space in Woburn.

The Downtown Revitalization Committee has publicly supported the general concept of maintaining and expanding the Juvenile Court in Woburn Square, provided a feasible and appropriate site can be found.

IV. Summary: The long-term objectives detailed in this section represent an ambitious program for the WRA and its partnering organizations in the City of Woburn. However, it must be noted that while public funding sources are available, most are discretionary in nature. The WRA and the City of Woburn must compete with other communities for scarce resources, and funding will likely prove sporadic and unpredictable. Thus, while these activities are projected to be completed over a period of two to ten years, it is still far too early to prepare or suggest a specific schedule of activities, or a specific budget.

Second, the long-term program has also not been subject to the intensive public debate and scrutiny which has characterized the short-term revitalization program described in Section 3. As the issues are further defined, articulated and debated, the priorities among the various long-term objectives may shift over time. This is likely to hold true at both the local and the state and federal levels, as long term policies and programs change direction, and shift requirements. In periods of economic growth, for example, affordable housing often becomes the focus of state policy and resources, while during times of recession, employment growth becomes more important. Local communities such as Woburn must adjust their responses in terms of both local need and available programs.