

Busy Bend Design Study

City of Woburn, Massachusetts

Robert M. Dever, Mayor

Woburn Redevelopment Authority

Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn

October, 2000

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ATTACHMENTS (Final Plaza Design)

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Text and drawings by Deborah Pierce, AIA, unless noted

Editing, layout, and photographs by Donald J. Borchelt

FOREWORD

If Woburn Common is the visual centerpiece of downtown Woburn, then the “Busy Bend” is surely its backdrop. This block of retail stores and offices is located on the eastern side of Main Street, between Montvale Avenue and Walnut Street. A very visible part of Woburn Square, sooner or later every Woburn driver will have the Busy Bend framed in his or her windshield. Because of this visual and historical prominence, in late 1998 the Woburn Redevelopment Authority (WRA) and the Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn (DRC) selected the Busy Bend to be the subject of a comprehensive design exercise. This study is the final report of that effort. Incorporated within are detailed guidelines for storefront, streetscape, and parking area improvement, developed through and illustrated by the proposed designs. These guidelines will ultimately be applied not only to the Busy Bend, but to revitalization efforts throughout the Square. The Busy Bend Design Project has been a participatory effort, providing ample opportunity for merchants, property owners, municipal officials, and the general public to offer suggestions and comments. The outcome is a vision of revitalization which reflects broad community consensus and support.

The Consultant: To assist in this effort, the WRA retained the services of Pierce Lamb Architects, a firm with over twenty years of experience in storefront design and renovation. The West Newton based firm has designed new or restored facades for over 100 commercial buildings. Pierce Lamb Architects was the unanimous choice of the WRA Board, from among the dozen design firms which responded to the Request for Proposals (RFP). The architectural firm was assisted by Paul C.K. Lu Associates, a landscape architectural firm with over 30 years of experience in the design of urban streetscapes and public spaces.

Project Components: The Busy Bend Project has three specific components, all of which are closely related. These are:

- **Streetscape Design:** Working closely with all parties, the consultants prepared, presented and reviewed various alternatives for the design of so-called “streetscape” improvements. New thematic street lighting, plantings, and other sidewalk furnishings were included in the final streetscape design.
- **Parking Lot/Accessway Design:** The consultants also prepared proposals for the redesign of the Walnut Street Parking Lot, and for the creation of a new pedestrian accessway between this often underutilized parking lot and Main Street. The site chosen for the new pedestrian plaza/accessway was the vacant lot located at 365 Main Street, next to the Citizens Bank. The WRA has recently purchased the lot, along with the adjacent building at 371 Main Street, for this pur-

pose. The original intent, still reflected in the design presented in this report, was to create a handicapped access ramp as part of the accessway. Cost estimates, however, showed this aspect of the proposed improvement to be financially infeasible, and the decision was made to remove the ramp from the final design. Instead, additional handicapped spaces will be designated along Main Street.

In January, 2000, Mr. Lu passed away suddenly. To complete the necessary revisions to the accessway design, the WRA subsequently retained the team of Allen & Major Associates, Inc., and Morris Architects. This work is still underway, and will not be incorporated in this report. Thus, the original conceptual design proposed by the team of Pierce Lamb Architects and Paul C.K. Lu Associates is still presented here.

- **Facade Design Schematics:** In close consultation with the individual merchants and property owners, Pierce Lamb Architects prepared preliminary design drawings for each building façade along the Busy Bend. These illustrated proposals for the renovation of each storefront graphically depict how a unified appearance can be created along the entire block, while still respecting the individual style and character of each building, and the unique personality of each business.

The Revitalization Plan: The Busy Bend Project is just one part of the larger downtown revitalization planning effort. The WRA, working in close cooperation with the Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn, has prepared the Woburn Square Revitalization Plan, which provides the overall framework for the community's downtown revitalization effort. The plan, submitted to the Mayor and City Council on April 3, 2000, includes an evaluation of existing conditions in the downtown, and presents a list of proposed revitalization activities and public improvements which will address the identified problems.



left to right: Paul Lu, Don Borchelt, Mayor Robert Dever, Deborah Pierce, Cathy Neil

The list of proposed activities provides the program for the expenditure of revitalization funds currently held by the WRA, and also serves as the basis for seeking additional funding from other state, federal, and private sources. The complete program includes:

- **Streetscape improvements,** including new lighting, sidewalk treatment, and street

plantings and furnishings;

- **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.;
- **Parking system improvements,** including plans for a new Magazine Hill parking lot, and improvements to the Walnut Street lot, including new pedestrian access;
- **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 drawings and text presented in this report were prepared by the design team of Pierce Lamb Architects and Paul C.K. Lu and Associates, with the exception of the general storefront façade design guidelines presented in Section 4, A through C. Though based upon the architect's work, the text of the general guidelines was prepared by the WRA.

The Woburn Redevelopment Authority and the Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn are now poised to begin the implementation of this exciting effort. This implementation of the downtown revitalization program will take time, and will not happen overnight. It's ultimate success will depend on many factors, including the continued health of the region's economy, the active participation of Woburn Square's merchants and property owners, the financial assistance of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through its various community development programs, and, most important, the enthusiasm and support of Woburn's citizens.

To this end, the WRA and the DRC welcome the comments and ideas from everyone in the community. Of course, the most effective contribution to the ongoing revitalization effort that a Woburn resident can make is to continue to do business with our downtown merchants.

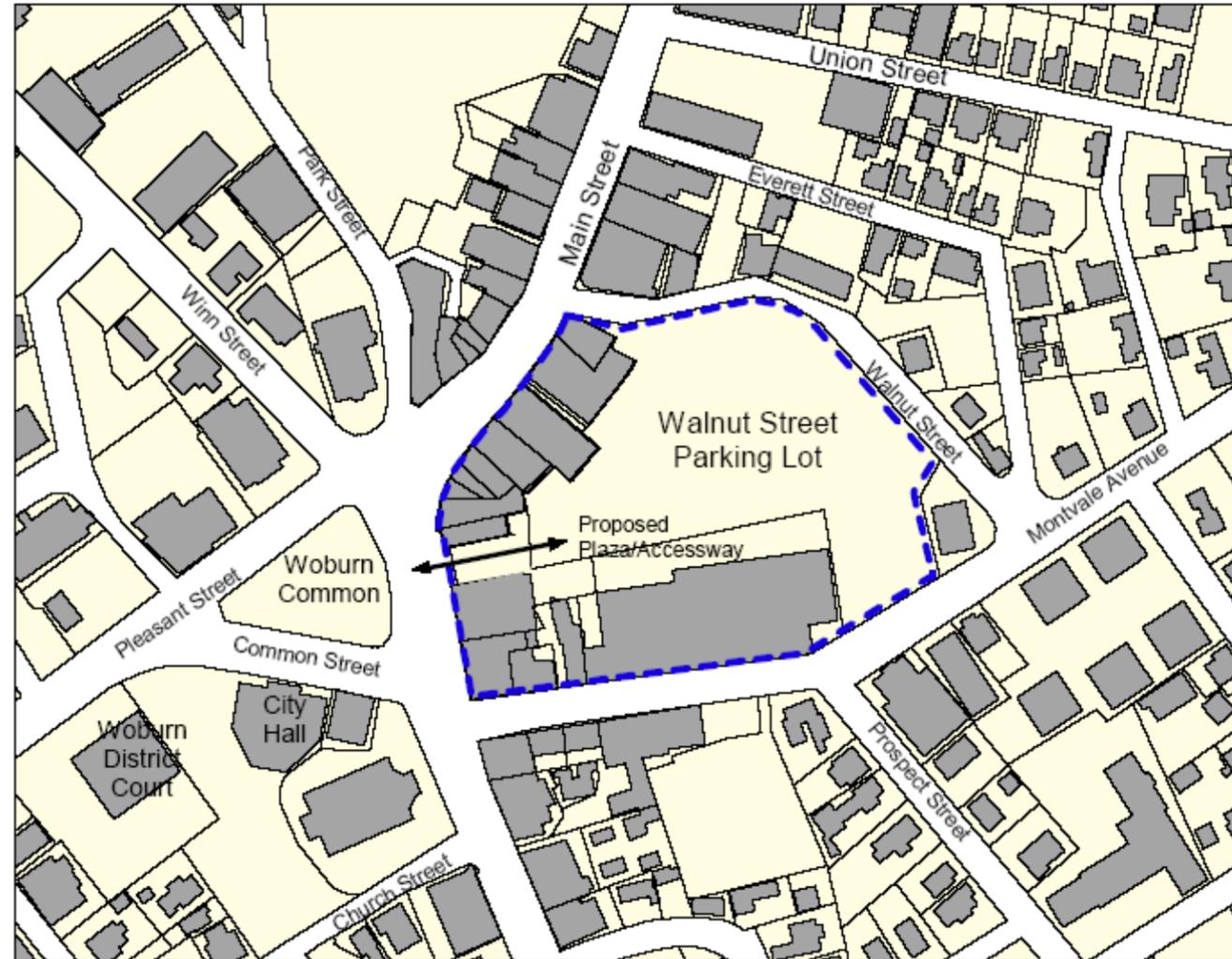


1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Busy Bend is a block of one- to three-story commercial buildings in the heart of downtown Woburn, opposite the Common. The front entrances face on Main Street, while the rear entrances of most buildings face the Walnut Street municipal parking lot. A few of the buildings are landlocked and have no rear access to the lot. A grade change of up to 14-feet occurs between Main Street and the parking lot.

This report describes a year-long landscape and architectural design project, intended to determine a feasible approach to the renovation of the Busy Bend. A combination of public and private initiatives are planned, including upgrading of both the sidewalks and parking lot, as well as storefront and facade renovations. A vacant lot in the center of the block is to be landscaped and constructed as a public pedestrian accessway, linking the Main Street shopping area with the parking lot.

Over the course of the design project, meetings were held with each property owner and merchant to determine attitudes concerning priorities for spending and the most appropriate design image to guide both public and privately funded improvements. Upgrading of the parking lot was unanimously viewed as a priority among those whose buildings face the lot, with other public-space improvements also seen as very important. Although the downtown has many buildings dating from both the Victorian period (late 1800's) and Art Deco period (1930's), all agreed that facade renovations should remain true to the unique style of each building and that no attempt should be made to enforce a uniform architectural character on the block. For public space improvements, however, a classical historic style was preferred; therefore a palette of street furnishings representing "period" fixtures was selected.



2. BACKGROUND

The recommendations of this Study were prepared with extensive input over the course of the project, from the Busy Bend businesses and building owners, and from the Woburn Redevelopment Authority, and the Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn. The downtown was observed at all times of the day and year, including both daytime and evening, both summer and winter, to ascertain patterns of pedestrian use, sunlight, and night-lighting.

A. Merchant Outreach: Interviews were held with both property owners and merchants, in order to elicit comments on plans for individual business development and possible building renovations, expansion and change. Lists of specific improvements under consideration to the public spaces downtown, under consideration



by the WRA and the Committee, were also reviewed during the interviews and prioritized.

Physical conditions of downtown buildings were assessed and measurements taken, to use both in designing facade and storefront upgrades, and in evaluating the potential for linking upper levels of buildings in an accessible pathway of pedestrian travel. There was near-universal agreement among both merchants and build-

ing owners that the Busy Bend area would most benefit from improvements to the Walnut Street parking lot, and from construction of a safe and attractive pedestrian accessway linking the lot with the Main Street shopping area; for the few buildings without direct connection to the parking lot, improvements to the Main Street sidewalk held a higher priority.

A public meeting was held to follow-up on the individual interviews, to review the plans for the Walnut Street lot and pedestrian accessway, and to discuss the feasibility of establishing a design theme to guide selection of materials and provide a unifying principal for facade and landscaping improvements. Three thematic options were identified, based on the character and history of individual buildings in the Busy Bend:

1. **Historic Victorian**, emphasizing the three-story late-19th century brick structures;

2. **Art-Deco**, emphasizing the one-story early-20th century cast concrete structures; and,
3. **Eclectic**, in which each building renovation is guided by the qualities of its own design and past.

There was some sentiment expressed for the *historic* theme, often expressed as a desire to emulate the character of downtown Lexington and Winchester. At the same time, it was generally recognized that the Busy Bend has an unusually large number of early 20th century Art-Deco era buildings, the emphasis of which would give the downtown a uniquely classic contemporary and stylish character, when compared to other communities in the area. The final consensus of the meeting held that an *eclectic* theme was most appropriate for the downtown buildings, to reflect the varied backgrounds and architectural styles of existing structures, but that selection of street furnishings in an *historic* character would emphasize an overall respect for tradition and bring a familiar touch to the downtown. These decisions have guided the designs presented in this Study.

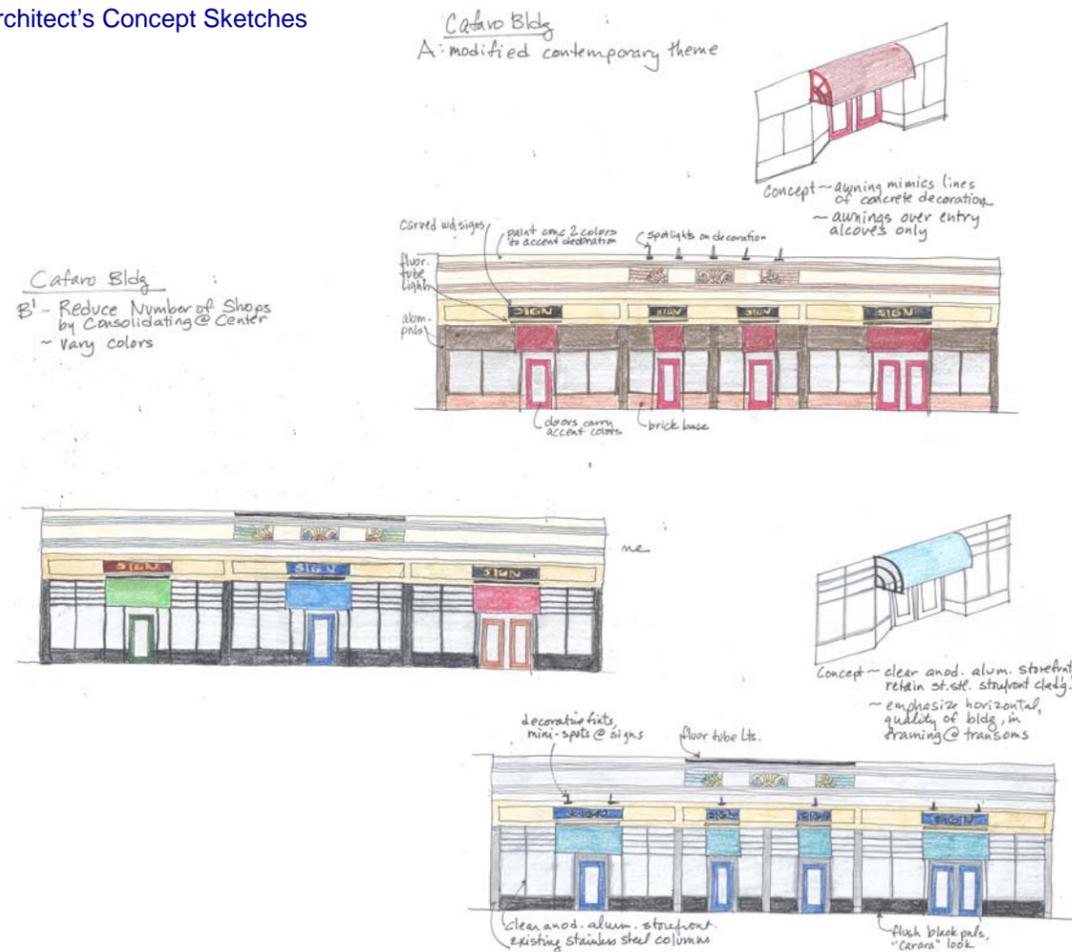


B. Public Space Design: The Walnut Street Lot and Pedestrian Accessway were designed in close coordination with the WRA Board and Director. Two parking lot design options were identified, illustrated in drawings, and discussed in detail: 1) a continuation of the present parking lot layout with addition of some amenities, and 2) a new layout meeting Zoning Ordinance requirements for stall size, both with a perimeter pedestrian sidewalk. The latter was selected as offering best vehicle maneuverability and pedestrian safety. A plan was prepared to illustrate the selected option, and is included in this report.

Several sets of street furnishing choices were prepared, each implementing the historic theme in a different way, and were presented to the Downtown Committee for their selection. The Committee selected a traditional decorative acorn style light fixture, which would implement the historic theme yet still compliment the classic contemporary look of the Deco style buildings. Other furnishings were chosen to continue the traditional styles already installed in the area of the Common and City Hall.

C. Facade Design: In order to prepare façade design concepts, an initial meeting was held with each building owner and merchant. An average of five concept sketches for each building and storefront were prepared, including in most cases colored renderings to illustrate the effect of the completed work. These were shown to the interested owners and merchants in a follow up meeting. The facade designs included in this report represent the owner or merchant's wishes for budget and image, the architect's recommendations for design, building needs and code compliance, and the WRA's goals for achieving a feasible and realistic upgrading of the downtown.

347-353 Main Street
Architect's Concept Sketches



379 Main Street
Architect's Concept Sketches



In the following section, specific design recommendations for improvements to the Walnut Street Parking Lot and the Main Street sidewalk area will be provided in detail, including a proposal for new pedestrian access from Main Street to the lot. In Section 4, general storefront façade design guidelines, with specific recommendations for each Busy bend storefront, are outlined and illustrated.

389-393 Main Street
Architect's Concept Sketches



375 Main Street
Architect's Concept Sketches



3. SITE PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

A. *Walnut Street Parking Lot:* The major consideration guiding design of the Walnut Street parking lot was to improve both the actual safety of the lot, and the public's perception of that safety factor, for both pedestrians and autos. Two sources were used in evaluating patterns of usage at the Walnut Street lot. The first was the planning report prepared in 1997 by Thomas J. Martin and Associates, entitled *Vision for Revitalization of Downtown Woburn*. This was supplemented by a parking utilization study completed by the Woburn Redevelopment Authority during the summer and fall of 1998, which verified the conclusions of the Vision study. As noted in these reports, and as offered in interviews with Busy Bend business owners, the lot is often crowded, chaotic, dark, and hazardous for pedestrians. Goals of the re-design are listed below:

1. Upgrade traffic aisles to allow space for cars to pass and turn.
2. Improve layout and efficiency of parking spaces to eliminate cars straddling two spaces and allow easier entry.
3. Identify separate areas for long-term parking (commuters and employees) and for parking by oversize vehicles (buses, trucks), to clear space near buildings for short-term shoppers.
4. Create and clearly mark pathways for pedestrian passage, including mid-lot crosswalks and perimeter sidewalks.
5. Upgrade night-lighting to provide well-lit pedestrian passage and reduce vandalism.
6. Add trees and landscape elements to create a more comfortable and appealing space.
7. Reduce visual impact of dumpsters, while improving service access for unloading.
8. Improve signs at Main Street designating the Walnut Street parking lot.

Two options for layout of the Walnut Street lot were explored in this Study. Both created a perimeter pedestrian sidewalk, added crosswalks and landscaping, and consolidated dumpsters in a centralized location. Option A continued the present

aisle widths and angled parking stalls, both substandard according to the Woburn Zoning requirements as well as parking standards in practice in other communities. Option B widened the aisles, established a 90-degree stall layout, and also enlarged parking spaces, from the current compact size of 8 1/2' by 14' to 9' x 18'. While Option B does reduce the overall number of cars within the lot by approximately 50 spaces, this layout is seen as far superior, complying with accepted design standards, and improving circulation both for vehicles and for pedestrians. Additional parking is being planned for another downtown site, which would offset the necessary loss of spaces. The layout recommended in this Study is a variation on Option B, which utilizes wider aisles, the 90-degree parking configuration, a typical 9x18 parking stall, and the perimeter pedestrian sidewalk system.

The rear wall of Busy Bend buildings facing the parking lot should be improved at the same time as the infrastructure upgrades discussed above. Many buildings are unsightly, in extremely poor condition, and give the parking lot a blighted appearance, contributing to the sense that the downtown is an unsafe and unpleasant place to be. Although renovation designs for the rear of these buildings is beyond the scope of this study, it must be noted that a concerted and coordinated public-private effort is necessary to improve appearance of this parking/business interface.

B. Access Between Walnut Street Parking Lot and Main Street: Several options for linking the Main Street stores with the Walnut Street lot were considered. With a change in grade of approximately 4 feet between the lot and Main Street, any use of public funds must in-



BUSY BEND SITE PLAN Woburn MA
 For Woburn Redevelopment Authority
 Paul Lu Associates Belmont MA Scale 1"=20'-0"
 NOVEMBER 24, 1999
 TOTAL PARKING SPACES: 291
 284 STANDARD (9'X18') SPACES
 7 H.C. SPACES



Busy Bend Design Study

Walnut Street Municipal Parking Lot

Woburn Redevelopment Authority
 Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn
 Pierce Lamb Associates, Architects
 Paul C.K. Lu and Associates, Landscape Architects

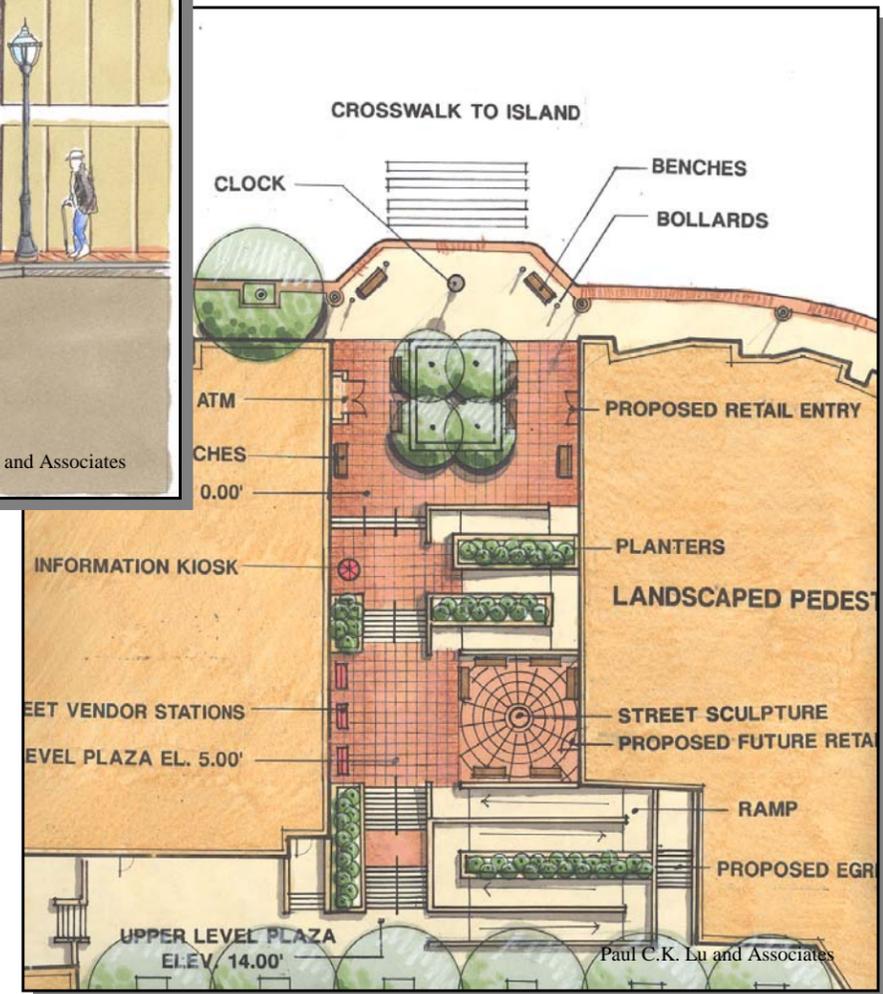


clude consideration of either a handicapped access ramp or elevator. The existing alley right-of-way between the Woolworth building and Performance Music is too small for a ramp or elevator in addition to a stair, and locating a public elevator facility on private property raises many thorny issues regarding responsibility for maintenance, safety, and security, while also decreasing the amount of income-producing tenant office space. Although too steep for a ramp at present, the Walnut Street sidewalk could be used as-is under a "grandfathered" reading of code requirements, but this area is narrow and too remote from most Busy Bend shops to be of great value to the downtown, and is currently seen as insufficient. A right-of-way on Montvale Avenue appears wide enough for both a ramp and stair; however, this space is not available for such construction, and its location is even more remote from the center of the downtown and Busy Bend shops than the Walnut Street sidewalk.

The best option for a pedestrian accessway linking the parking lot with Main Street is the existing open lot beside the Citizens Bank, opposite the Woburn Common. This space is wide enough for a ramp and stair, with plenty of space for landscaping, as well as paved, terraced, and furnished plaza areas, to support programmed activities in the downtown. It is central to both the parking lot and the retail shopping district. The visual link to the Common gives a greater presence to both spaces in the downtown.



* Note that subsequent cost estimates prepared for the WRA have determined that the construction of a full access ramp from sidewalk grade to parking lot is not financially feasible. However, an access ramp connecting the upper and lower levels within the plaza is still a part of the design. The final design and construction plans are attached.



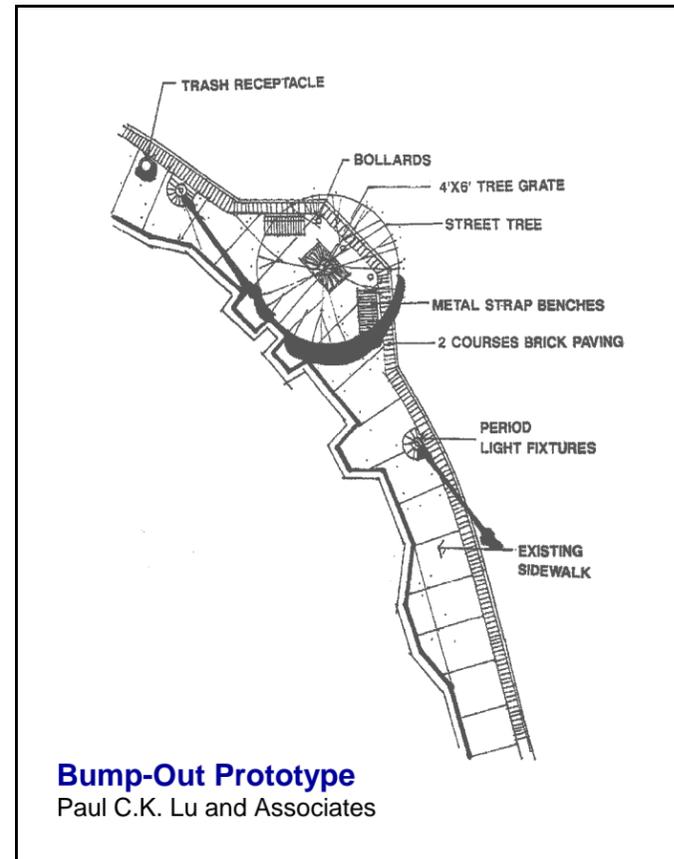
Busy Bend Design Study

Proposed Plaza/Accessway (Citizens Park)

Woburn Redevelopment Authority
 Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn
 Pierce Lamb Associates, Architects
 Paul C.K. Lu and Associates, Landscape Architects



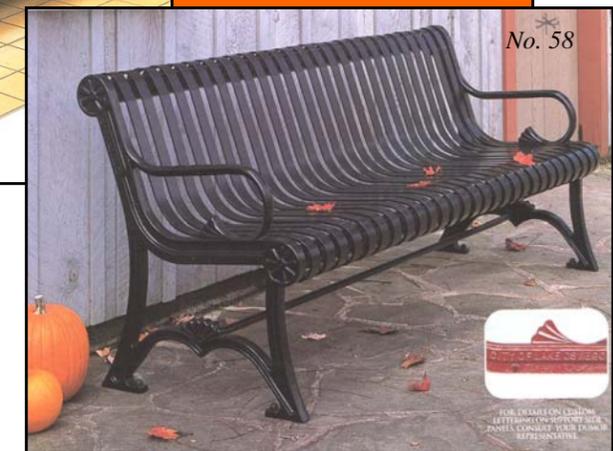
C. Main Street Sidewalk Improvements: Improvements to the Main Street sidewalk are designed to carry upgrades at the parking lot into the commercial district: new pedestrian-scale "period" style street lights, a paved brick border along the sidewalk, tree plantings, and street furnishings (benches, trash receptacles, bollards). Since the sidewalk is currently quite narrow, a sidewalk bump-out is planned to provide enough space for a comfortable seating arrangement and trees. This bump-out is designed as a prototype that can be reproduced in other areas of the downtown for pedestrian comfort.



D. Outdoor Cafes: With many restaurants located in the downtown, outdoor cafe-style seating is a natural for Woburn. Since the Main Street sidewalk is quite narrow, a good location for outdoor cafes can be found at the upper level parking lot, designed as mini-plazas within the new perimeter sidewalk. Provision of permits for outdoor pushcarts and food vending would be a good complement to the proposed pedestrian plazas. See page 25 for a view of an outdoor seating and food service area associated with the rear entrance to Marco's.

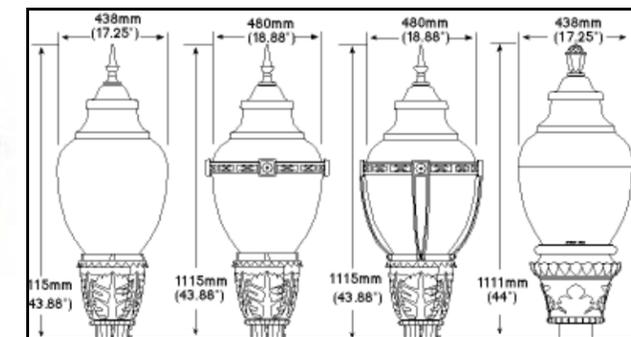
E. Street Furniture: A full range of street furnishings was selected in this Study with the unanimous agreement of the Downtown Committee. The furnishings were selected to represent an historical design theme, after review of several options, including an Art Deco 20th century theme and an elaborate Victorian theme.

- Benches:** Slatted benches with backs were selected, matching those already in place around the Common and City Hall. Black metal benches manufactured by DuMor, Inc., are recommended for the sidewalks, and matching wood-slat benches are recommended for the Pedestrian Accessway, as the down-



town's "living room." The DuMor No. 58 bench is already in use in the sidewalk area in front of City Hall, and around the Woburn Common, and fits within the overall theme established for the Busy Bend streetscape.

- Pedestrian Sidewalk Lights:** A human-scale acorn-type pole light is recommended to emphasize the historic character, provide a warm glow of light at the sidewalks, and complement the pedestrian experience. The fixture selected by the WRA and the Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn is the Washington Postlite Series, prismatic glass acorn from the Holophane Outdoor Architectural Lighting, Inc. The fixture is similar to the fixture already in place at the apartment building abutting the Walnut Street Lot, but with a somewhat more



decorative appearance. To complement the acorn fixture, a cast iron fluted colonial post and base was selected, the Hamilton Series H14/16-CI, from Holophane Outdoor Architectural Lighting, Inc.

3. **Parking Lot Streetlights:** A taller and more utilitarian, automobile-scale fixture is recommended at the parking lot. With two lights per pole, this fixture can be spaced more widely apart than the pedestrian-scale fixture, with some savings in cost to the City. The light fixture is designed to provide even illumination at the parking lot, without glaring into the windows of nearby buildings.



4. **Bollards:** Bollards are short posts used to define the borders of a space and to keep vehicles away from pedestrian areas. Metal bollards are selected to complement the design of the pedestrian sidewalk lights. The cast aluminum Holophane BOL/H46/10/LW is 46 inches in height, and is manufactured with a white acrylic lens to accommodate an interior lighting fixture. These are placed at the sidewalk bump-outs and at junctures between plaza areas and the parking lot at the upper level.



5. **Trash Receptacles:** Metal slatted trash-can holders, designed to match the benches, are recommended. The selected unit is the DuMor No.42, with a 32 gallon capacity. These are strategically placed near groups of benches at the plaza areas. Covers are recommended to prevent trash from spilling and blowing out onto the ground.

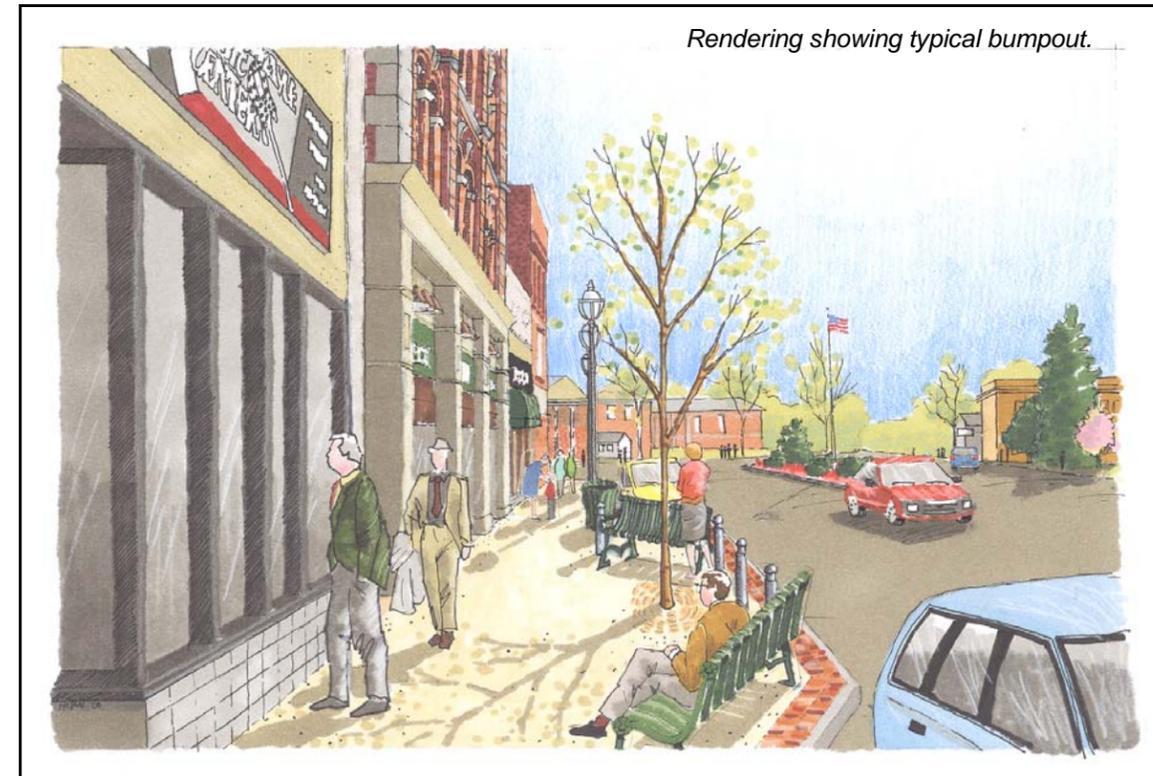
6. **Tree Guards and Grates:** Metal slatted grates are placed on the ground around every tree trunk, allowing water to get at the roots while offering protection. Grates have a radial pattern, set into a rectangular frame. The grate can be adapted as the tree grows. Two cast iron grates are specified: a 6' x 6' Neenah R-8718, with a 1/4 inch slot, and a 4' x 6' Neenah R-8811, with a 3/8 inch slot. The DuMor Model No. 108 tree guard has a slatted design, to match the other furnishings.



7. **Landscaping:** Most planters are built-in masonry boxes, in-

tegrated into the system of low-walls around ramps and stairs at the Pedestrian Accessway. With extensive ledge underlying the downtown, these raised planters allow landscaping to be incorporated into the design with a minimum of blasting to create space for soil and roots. A combination of low-maintenance shrubs and seasonal flowers are recommended for the planters. Freestanding portable and hanging pots are recommended to complement the built-in planters at private open spaces, building walls, and outdoor cafes.

8. **Trees:** Adding trees to the downtown provides many benefits, including shade from the sun, an attractive user-friendly environment, a link with the Common, and a seasonal atmosphere. Some blasting is anticipated in order to plant trees in areas of ledge, however. Trees should be selected for their hardiness, and to provide a filtering light.
9. **Street Clock:** A pole-mounted Historic style street clock is recommended for the Pedestrian Accessway, as a civic amenity and focal point. The Downtown Committee will be raising private donations to pay for the cost of the streetclock.



4. FACADE RECOMMENDATIONS

Storefront and building facade (i.e., exterior building wall) designs were prepared for the Busy Bend. Meetings were held with individual building owners to discuss their ideas for renovation, and then to review options for design of each storefront and building. Sometimes several meetings and dozens of design sketches were required in order to reach agreement on the appropriate treatment for a building.

Although the rear wall of buildings facing the Parking Lot was not included in the scope of work for this study, this facade is in need of repair, desperately so, for many buildings. Some stores with a rear entrance at the Lot have added signs and provided an attractive doorway. Others, however, give the Parking Lot a blighted appearance, with barbed wire and burnt-out walls, loose and missing wood clapboards and brick masonry. The repair and upgrading of these rear building facades should be a top priority for the City.

Recommendations for each building, reading from left-to-right (i.e., from Walnut Street to Montvale Avenue) as viewed on Main Street, are described on the following pages. See Appendix A for results of interviews with building owners and tenants, and Appendix C for facade and storefront renovation drawings.

A few generic comments about design recommendations apply to most buildings in the downtown. Each building has a unique character and historical style, and renovations should respect and accentuate the special identity of each building. Design styles, however, can also take their cues from the businesses within: both the nature and the character of the business. Wherever financially feasible, new storefront glass should be insulated rather than single-glazed; while more costly to install initially, a five-year payback in heating and cooling costs is typical for most buildings. Along with new signs and awnings, renovations should include upgrading of building facade materials, to extend the life of the building and protect the owner's investment in renovation; maintenance deferred always costs more in the long run, as structural and interior damage must be repaired as well.

The Massachusetts State Building Code requires that buildings be made accessible to people in wheelchairs IF the cost of renovations (excluding maintenance) exceed a proportion of the building's value over a period of time. The Code also requires that entrance alterations be compliant, and that new work meet current standards. For some buildings, these regulations will result in a new entranceway, with wider doors and new hardware, and elimination of steps from the sidewalk. Each building's value and renovation needs must be carefully reviewed at the time of renovation, to determine the requirements for access upgrades.

A. General Design Guidelines: The following general design guidelines were prepared by the Woburn Redevelopment Authority, and were distilled from current practice, and the discussions and specific façade recommendations described in this report.

Historically, most retail storefront façades incorporate certain traditional elements which over decades have served both an aesthetic and functional purpose. The most successful storefront designs are those which properly utilize and work within those elements, rather than defeat them. A good storefront will attract attention, provide effective display space, allow natural light into the retail space, and contribute to the overall appearance of the downtown. A well-designed façade will both work within the aesthetic unity of the building, and still reflect the individual character and personality of the business. The overall goal of these guidelines is to preserve the traditional character of Woburn Square, while respecting the variety of traditional architectural styles represented there, including Colonial, Victorian, and Art Deco.

The façade renovations proposed in the Busy Bend Design Study follow a simple set of guiding principals, which will also provide the basic guidelines for storefront façade renovations throughout Woburn Square:

1. Where the original historic façade remains largely intact, it should be repaired and restored, replacing only the missing features;
2. Where original historic elements have been covered by later, modern installations, the original façade should be uncovered and restored, if possible.
3. Where the original façade elements have been completely removed, or are beyond repair, the new storefront façade should be designed as much as possible to complement and blend with surrounding façade designs.
4. A façade design should employ a limited palette of complimentary colors, which if possible do not clash with the schemes of adjacent buildings. Extremely bold color schemes should be avoided.

B. Elements of the Storefront Façade: Most storefront façades constructed from

the mid 19th through the early 20th century shared certain typical components which worked both stylistically and functionally. These would generally include:

1. **The Structural Frame:** In the overall building design, each individual storefront is generally inserted within an encompassing frame, which provides the common structural and design element linking together each storefront façade. The frame includes dividing piers, columns or pilasters, the sign band, and a storefront cornice or parapet. These elements could be constructed of brick, stone, precast concrete, metal, or wood.
2. **The Storefront:** The storefront itself is inserted within the structural frame. The storefront includes a base panel, which could be brick, masonry, metal, wood panel, or structural glass, depending upon the style and period. Above the base panels are the display windows, flanking the entry. The entryway was generally recessed, which provided an area for the entry door to swing without interfering with the sidewalk, and also provided a small amount of lateral display area visible to pedestrians. Above the entryway, but below the signband, there would often be a space of sufficient height to provide an area for an awning. Retractable awnings were a typical feature of the traditional storefront.

The first step in planning façade improvements is the careful identification and inventory of the overall style and the individual components of the original storefront which have survived, whether visible or covered by later façade alterations. Those historical elements should be utilized and restored, if feasible.

C. Design Guidelines: In the discussion below, the applicable design principals for each component of a façade will be reviewed in detail. While not every building will include each possible component, overall the guidelines provide a basis for designing the restoration or reconstruction of virtually every storefront.

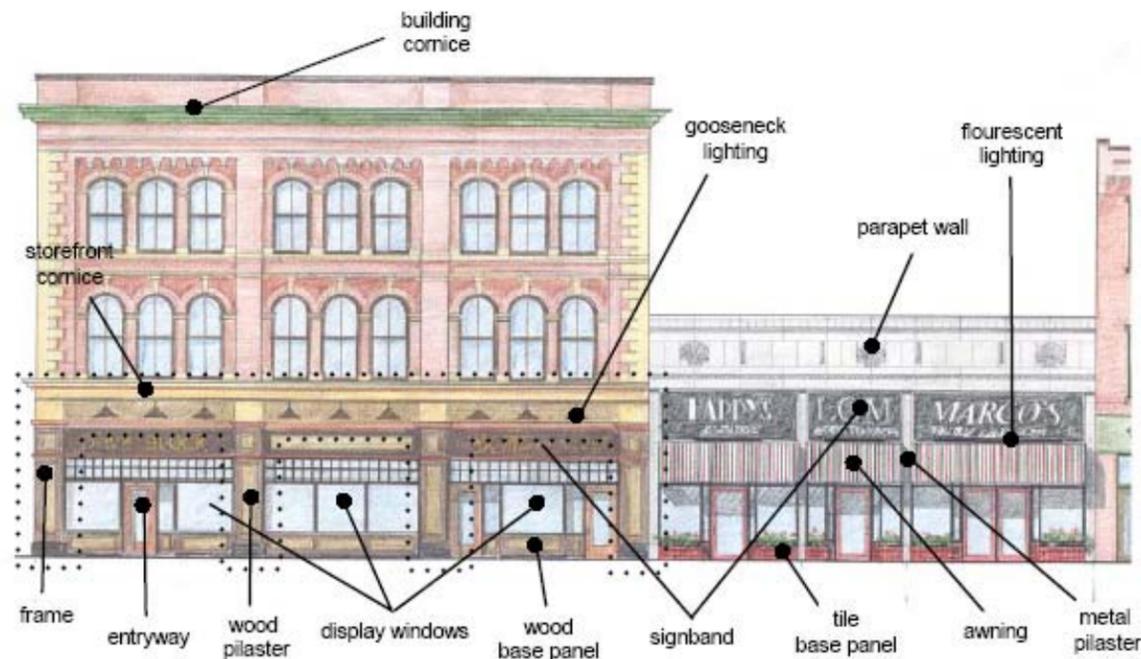
1. **The Basic Frame:** The basic structural frame of a façade provides the important visual basis for separating and distinguishing individual store-



fronts. It will usually include vertical piers, columns or pilasters, which often provide critical structural support as well as the aesthetic function, and a cornice or parapet.

- The frame elements should remain visible and not be obscured by other façade elements, such as signage, awnings, or other additions.
- The frame elements should be consistent throughout, although individual components of the frame may be of different materials. For example, the columns may be of brick, while the parapet could be of wood or masonry.
- A facade should be designed to emphasize the frame's vertical elements, to highlight the identity of individual stores. Horizontal emphasis, which obscures the divisions among storefronts, should be avoided, unless it is an original historic design element.

2. **The Parapet or Cornice:** Most storefront facades include a prominent architectural element, which boldly defines the top of the storefront, and clearly separates the first floor businesses from upper stories. One-story buildings tend to have parapet walls, which generally extend well above the roofline. In



the Busy Bend, there are four Art deco style facades, which date to the mid-thirties and early forties, which have decorative pre-cast concrete parapets typical of the period. One of those, at 405 Main Street, includes brick as an accenting element.



In a multi-story building, some type of cornice or other substantial architectural element would have been employed to set off the storefront from the upper floor façade. All of the multi-story buildings within the Busy Bend have long had their cornices removed, to allow for the installation of large-scale signage.

- The existing cast concrete parapets are an important historical feature, and should be preserved, if feasible.
- Cast concrete parapets can be cleaned and restored with the natural color, or sealed and stained with a palette of compatible colors.

3. **The Signband:** In most traditional storefronts, there is a signband located below the cornice or parapet.

- Each principal business sign should fit within the applicable signband, if one exists, and not protrude over or cover the basic frame elements.
- If possible, individual signs should be of similar construction, design, and color.
- All signs must meet the requirements of the City of Woburn Sign Review Ordinance, as described further, below.

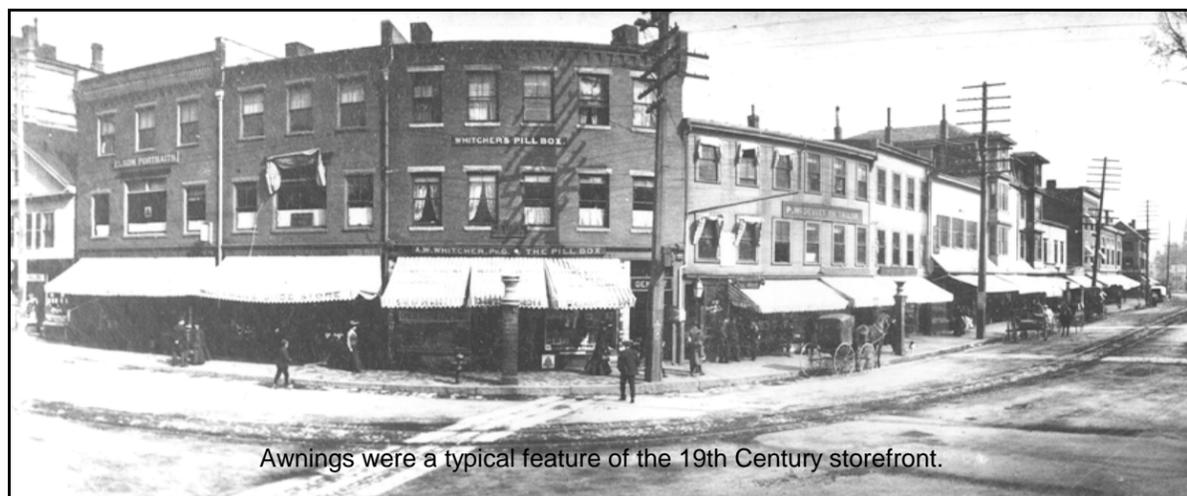
4. **Awnings:** The use of awnings as a storefront device was virtually universal in the 19th Century. Awnings shade the sidewalk and window display area, provide shelter from rain, and protect the interior of the business from the glare of direct sunlight when the sun is near the horizon.

- If possible, awnings should be located in the area between the

signband or cornice, and the top of the entryway door. Awnings should not cover elements of the building frame or other significant architectural features.

- Awnings should be of a substantial fabric, such as Sunbrella, resistant to fading, and should be uniform in color and pattern for each storefront within an individual building.
- Awnings must conform to the requirements of the Sign Review Ordinance. Under the Ordinance, an awning may include a commercial message in the valance, provided lettering does not exceed six (6) inches in height. A commercial logo is allowed in the face of an awning dormer.
- Awnings may be fixed or retractable.
- Interior lit awnings are not permitted; however, lighting beneath the awning, which solely illuminates the sidewalk, is permitted.
- A dormer, if employed on a fixed awning, should be located over the entryway, if possible.

5. *The Storefront Base:* Virtually all storefronts will contain a base panel below the display windows, which were constructed of a variety of materials, mentioned above. The base panel provides a strong anchor for the storefront, placing the display area at an effective viewing height, and also acts as a kickplate.



Awnings were a typical feature of the 19th Century storefront.

During the 19th Century, most storefronts in Woburn Square had bases of wood panel construction, regardless of whether the frame of the building was wood, brick, or masonry. While a wood panel restoration is often the most historically appropriate, wood construction is also relatively high maintenance compared to some other construction materials. Building owners or proprietors undertaking restoration should be cognizant of the ongoing maintenance requirement.



- Base panels should utilize a material which is historically and aesthetically compatible with the frame of the façade. Colonial and Victorian storefronts look best with brick or wood panel bases, while Art Deco and other classic contemporary designs will look best with pigmented structural glass (often used on the original), tile, granite, or similar material.
- When wood panel construction is employed, wood should be exterior grade, properly sealed, and primed and painted with a good quality exterior grade paint, one coat of primer, and two finish coats, or stained and sealed with multiple coats of an exterior grade clear finish of polyurethane or spar varnish.
- Trim moldings of soft pine, intended for interior use, should not be used in exterior façade applications, as the wood will not maintain a durable finish when exposed to weathering.
- The design, construction and color of the base panels should be uniform throughout a multi-unit façade.
- Base panels should be flush or slightly recessed (6" to 12") within the building frame, and should not be more than 30 inches in height.

6. *Display Windows:* The display windows are the most important feature of the storefront. An inviting display window encourages window-shopping, provides a view of the inside of the store, and allows day-

light to enter the store interior. The display window visually connects the business with the street.

- Display windows should not be reduced in size or blocked off. If it is important to restrict the view of the interior of the store, vertical blinds, screens or shades should be employed in the storefront interior.
- The windowsill should not be higher than 30 inches from the sidewalk, and the top of the window should be a minimum of 8 feet in height. Overall, glazing of windows and doors should represent at least 70 percent of the total storefront area.
- Small glass panes were historically used in 19th Century facades, as the technology for manufacturing large glass panes was not yet available. Small panes can obscure a retail window display, but are appropriate for some types of businesses, such as restaurants. In retail situations where smaller panes are historically appropriate, they can be employed as an accent at the top, sides and/or bottom of the window frame, so that the open view of the display area is still maintained.
- As with the base panels, display windows should be flush with the frame, or recessed no more than 6 to 12 inches.

7. **Entryways:** The storefront entry and door is the gateway into the business, and will make an important impression on the customer. Typically, entryways are recessed from the front of the façade through the construction of an alcove. This provides additional shelter from the elements, and an area for the doorway to swing out without interfering with sidewalk pedestrian traffic. The entryway also provides an area of additional window display along the sides, which is visible upon approach from the sidewalk. The floor of the entry was sometimes of decorative tile or terrazzo, as can still be seen in



A terrazzo entry, base panels are structural Carrara glass.

the storefront at 397 Main Street in the Busy Bend. Entryways generally taper from the front to the door, which can represent a problem for restoration design. Modern handicapped access codes require 18 inches of clearance on the pull side of the door, which is not always possible within the confines of the existing recess.

- All entryways and doors should comply with the Mass. Architectural Access Code and the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, where feasible. The entryway slope must be a minimum 1 in 12 grade, and thresholds must not exceed ½ inch in height. Doors must be a minimum of 36 inches in width, with a clearance of 18 inches on the pull side. Doors must pull out. Door hardware must be of a type approved by the Code.
 - A recessed entry should be maintained if possible. The floor of the entry should use a material compatible with the storefront design, which resists expansion and contraction, is impervious to water penetration, and offers adequate traction.
 - Avoid the installation of a solid entry door. Entry doors should have at least 50 percent of the surface glazed, and should be compatible in design with the overall façade.
8. **Signage:** In Woburn Square, signage is regulated by the City of Woburn's Sign Review Ordinance. Before a new storefront sign can be installed, or an existing sign altered, an application must be submitted to and approved by the Woburn Sign Review Board. All signs must be installed in accordance with the requirements of the Ordinance, and be aesthetically designed. Among the more important criteria of the Ordinance:
- Only one principal sign is allowed per business.
 - Signage must be installed in the façade signband, or other architecturally appropriate location, and must not cover important architectural features of the facade.
 - The total area of the storefront signage must not exceed one square foot for each linear foot of storefront. In situations where individual letters are being installed directly onto the signband, the Sign Review Board has calculated the area of

the sign to be the smallest rectangle which would encompass all of the lettering.

- No interior lit or neon signs are permitted.
- Overhanging signs are not permitted.
- Window signs must not exceed 20 percent of the total area of each display window.
- Window signs and awning lettering are not included in the calculation of total permitted sign area, above.
- In general, signs should be aesthetically pleasing in design.

9. *Lighting:* Exterior lighting is an important component of storefront design, in particular for the illumination of signage, especially when considering that interior lit signs, and exterior neon signs, are prohibited by the Sign Review Ordinance.

- A façade lighting design may employ either incandescent gooseneck fixtures or vertical fluorescent fixtures, or a combination of both. Fluorescent fixtures often work best, and are least obtrusive, when placed below the signage and light in an upward direction.
- Lighting which highlights the sign and display areas is generally

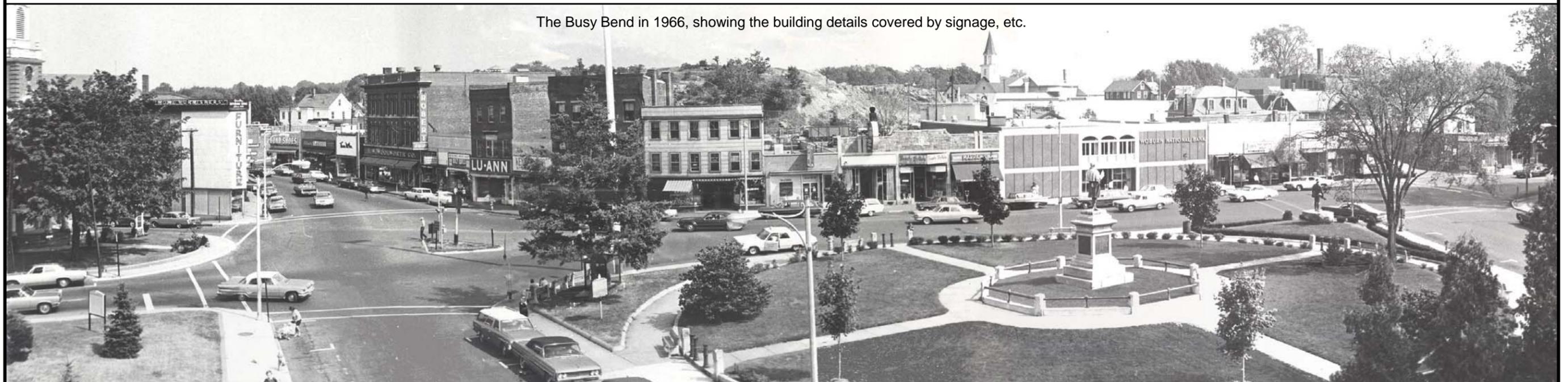


superior to lighting the entire storefront.

- In a multi-unit storefront, a uniform lighting scheme should be employed throughout.

D. Façade Recommendations: In the following pages, the architect's façade design recommendations are presented in detail. Some of the design schemes are low cost, others are more extensive. This reflects a pragmatic balancing of both the condition and needs of each structure, and the budget or interest of the individual property owner or merchant. The intent is to provide a sense of the range of possibilities, at different levels of investment.

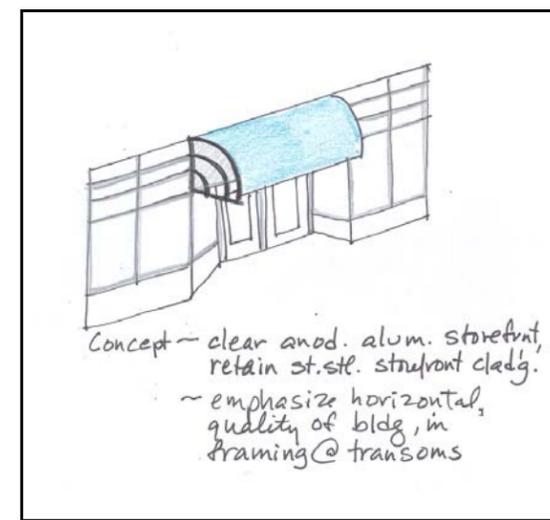
The Busy Bend in 1966, showing the building details covered by signage, etc.



347-353 Main Street: One of the several intact Art Deco style buildings downtown, this building has a prominent location, on Main Street, opposite the Woburn Common, with a corner exposure, and with access to the parking lot at the rear. Two of the three storefront spaces are currently occupied, both by restaurants—the *Café Amante*, and the *Oriental*. Although some recent renovations have concealed the handsome cast concrete and yellow brick facade, other renovations have exposed this unique and handsome facade. A contemporary design theme would be compatible with the original period and bring a stylish and unique character to the downtown.

Renovations consist of new storefront glass and framing utilizing a horizontal motif, compatible with the

horizontal striping at the cast concrete parapet above. The two narrow stores currently at the center bay should be combined into one larger store, for an accessible entrance with sufficient wheelchair maneuvering space, and a competitive larger retail interior. Store entrances should be set off with new awnings, which would also expose the handsome brickwork at the facade and direct customers to doorways. Painted and carved wood signs are recommended over each awning. Lighting consists of decorative incandescent fixtures focused on the signs, and horizontal strip fluorescent tubing concealed above the awnings and directed upwards to the parapet. A color scheme utilizing strong and pastel colors would be appropriate, and the concrete facade should be cleaned and refinished in compatible colors.



Busy Bend Design Study

347-353 Main Street

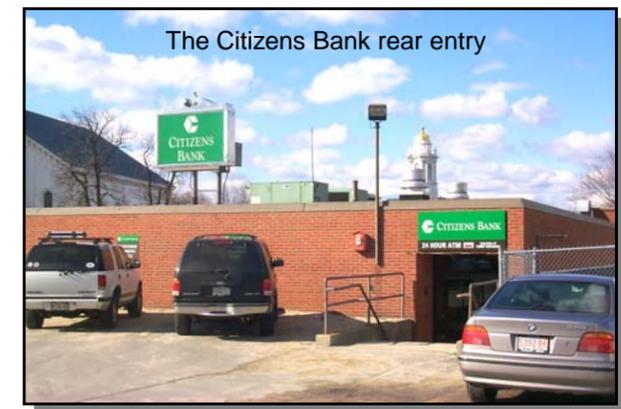
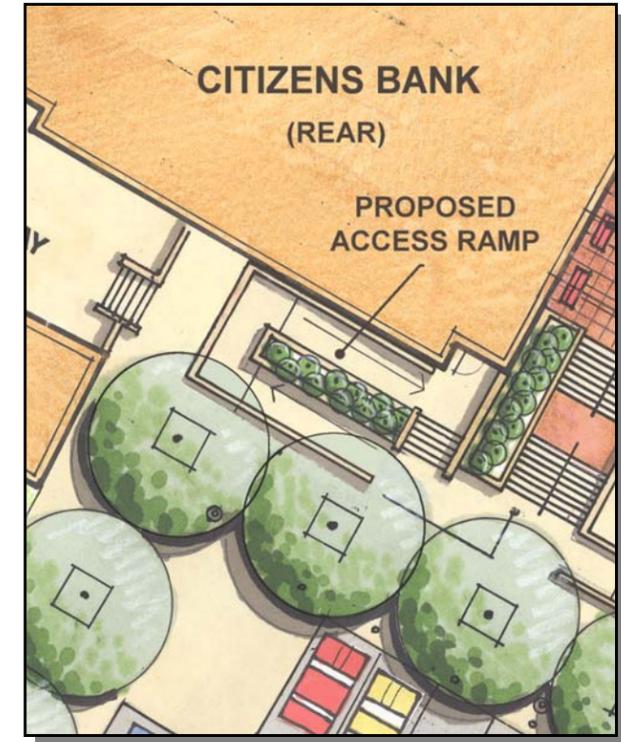
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 Pierce Lamb Associates, Architects
 Paul C.K. Lu and Associates, Landscape Architects



355 Main Street (Citizens Bank): No facade renovation is recommended for this building. As the only example of late-20th century commercial architecture in the downtown, with stone facade panels, strip windows, and a generous recessed entrance the building is generally in excellent condition and does not require exterior work, other than cleaning of the façade panels, which have been exposed to soiling typical of high traffic locations. However, a walk-up ATM facility would be a compatible use at the proposed public plaza adjacent to the building.

355 Main Street has a rear entrance onto the Walnut Street parking lot, which is currently not accessible to the handicapped. The rear entry is approximately 30 inches below the grade of the parking lot, and is reached through a set of five stairs (see photo), which gains access to the second floor of the bank. A handicapped access ramp would have to be approximately 30 feet in length, with a landing, to comply with access standards.

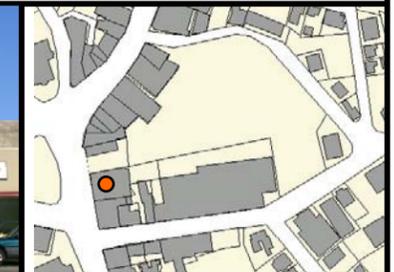
The roof sign at the rear of the building is a free standing, interior lit box sign, which is nonconforming in regard to the City of Woburn's sign regulation. This sign should be removed and replaced with a wall mounted sign composed of individual letters, to match the sign on the front façade.



Busy Bend Design Study

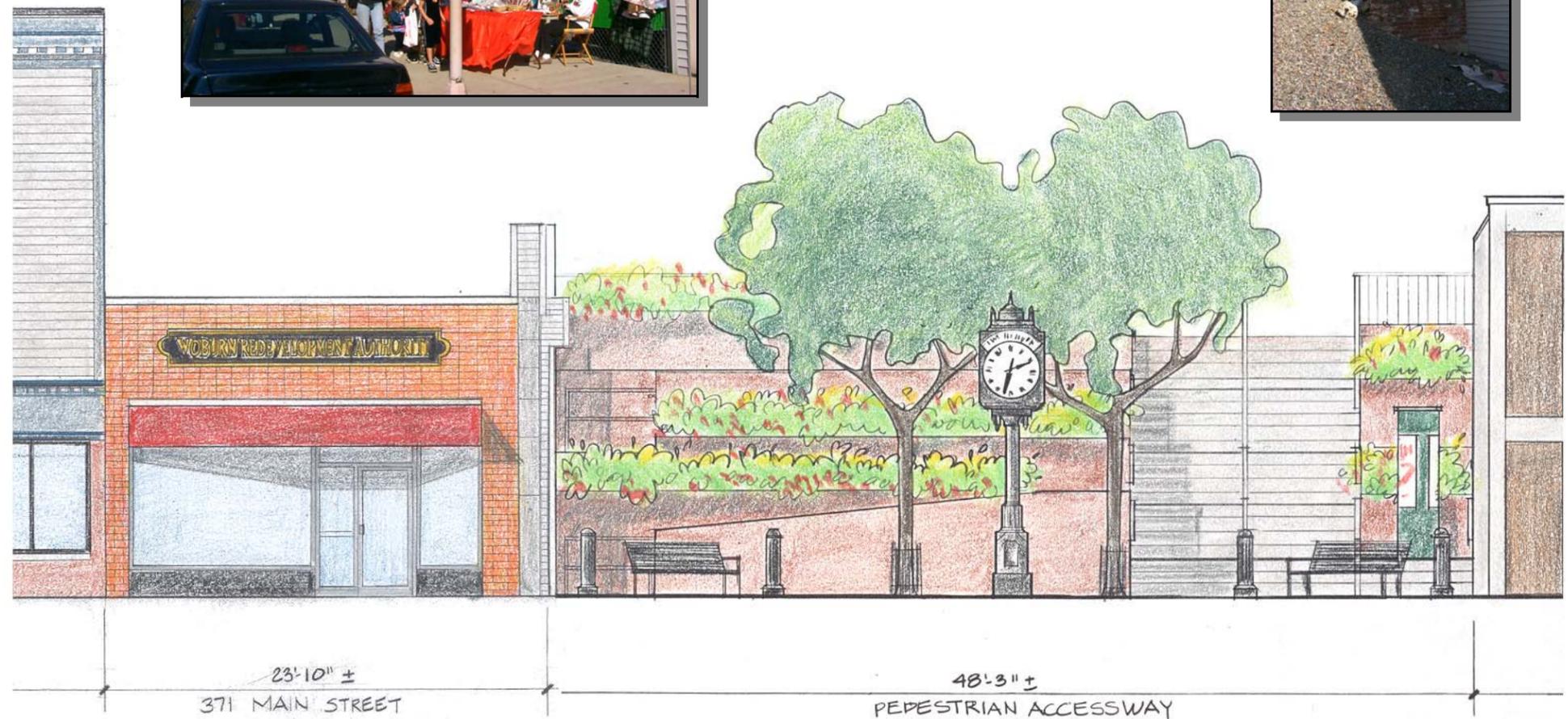
355 Main Street (Citizens Bank)

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371 Main Street (Plaza, Woburn Redevelopment Authority): The building covering approximately one-third of this lot is a handsome yet simple masonry retail building dating from the mid-20th century. With yellow brick and a marble base below the stainless steel storefront, either a classical or contemporary approach to renovation would be appropriate; the prospective tenants prefer the former, shown here. A new sign is needed, along with lighting to illuminate it at night. The damaged concrete base panel at the right side of the entrance should be replaced using black marble to match the original, to the left.

With the proposed pedestrian plaza to be constructed beside this building, and with direct access to the Parking Lot at the rear, this building stands to benefit greatly from public improvements in the Busy Bend. Subdividing the space to provide a retail facility facing the plaza will add pedestrian activity in the downtown and benefit the entire area.



Busy Bend Design Study

365, 371 Main Street (Plaza, WRA)

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375 Main Street (Moore & Parker), Architect's Notes: This is the only wooden Colonial-type building in the Busy Bend, and one of very few in the downtown. As such, it should be renovated in a style compatible with its unique character. A new decorative parapet cornice, wider window casings with extended crown moldings, and wide corner-boards are advised, as well as new clapboards and a wood sign-band above the first floor. A new sign, with individually-formed raised letters, would be appropriate in this owner-occupied building; fluorescent tube lighting can be installed within the molding lines, and directed towards the sign. The owner wishes to retain the existing brick facade and aluminum storefront framing and fixed glass at the first floor, due to the nature of the business; however, new doors are required to replace existing rusted and damaged doors at the far left. Hanging planters are shown at columns within the first floor wall.

Upper floors and the side and rear facades are in need of repair at this building. The site has access to the Walnut Street Parking Lot at the rear; however, a one-story masonry building separates the three-story commercial building from the Lot. Several possibilities exist to improve egress code compliance at this and adjacent buildings, including easements across the one-story portion and to the parking lot. To safeguard the investment in the storefront and retain a valuable chapter in the history of downtown Woburn, it is important that the owner consider these areas when budgeting and planning facade improvements.

379 Main Street (Meany Building, Sushi Cafe), Architect's Notes: This building has plenty of potential, with a simple historical style, a strong and centralized presence in the downtown, and a well-kept facade at the upper levels. The owners have showed care for the building by the addition of exterior mini-floodlights and preservation of wood windows, along with interior modifications and new brick columns at the first floor.

Recommendations consist of upgrading the first floor to a style more compatible with the historic character of the building. The retail doorway should be widened



Busy Bend Design Study

375, 379 Main Street

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and the brick sidewalls removed, for a more inviting entry with a view to the interior, and some visibility from within as people enter from the sidewalk. Windows and storefront should be wood-framed, with a recessed panel at the base and fluted columns; a wood sign-band with a flashed cornice molding is also advised. Painted wood signs are advised at the retail shop, with raised-letter signs for the building address at the entrance to second floor levels. Early photos show awnings were installed on this building originally; new awnings are advised over the storefront. The entrance to the upper floors, at the far-right, should be designed using compatible wood-frame detailing and materials.

Rear and side walls are wood framed with clapboard siding, with loose boards and open gaps at plumbing vents. Renovations for this building should include a plan for upgrading exterior surfaces concealed from view at the street, as they are critical in safeguarding the owner's investment in the building.



The parcels at 379, 383, and 385 Main Street are landlocked by 375 Main Street.



The business at 379 Main Street needs to be able to load surplus newspapers from the sidewalk.

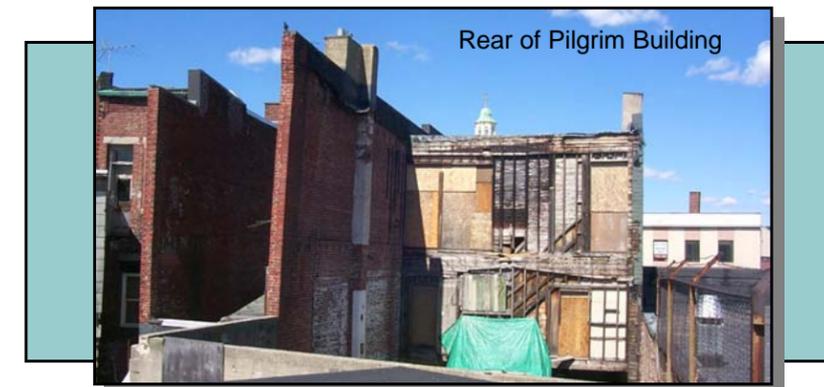
383 Main Street (Thai Hut), Architect's Notes: This charming little gem, nestled in the center of the Busy Bend, inspires a playful design, and the present paint scheme, in olive/yellow/orange, makes a good start in this direction. The Art Deco-era cast concrete facade is in good condition, with vertical fluted columns and a gridded seaming pattern. Large windows and a central double doorway complement the symmetry of the facade. The awning and sign band, however, are in need of repair, and the present sign design is almost too subtle to be legible.



Recommendations focus on a new sign and exterior lighting. An awning would be appropriate here, both for sunlight protection and to give this small building a stronger presence in the downtown. The proposed design centers a box-type awning over the entrance, utilizing the angled lines of the concrete facade while giving protection from the elements. Chili pepper graphics cut into the awning bring the logo from the present sign into the new work.

385 Main Street (Pilgrim Block), Architect's Notes: This building has been vacant for several years, and much of the rear and side walls have been demolished, leaving an unsightly skeleton of exposed framing when viewed from the parking lot. The Main Street facade, however, shows promise as a restored commercial and retail facility. The wood windows, doubled-up at the center bay, along with a corbelled brick parapet, give the building a pleasing and balanced scale. The simple and clean styling of this Victorian-era building suggest a contemporary character for the new work.

The structural brick piers at the corners are repaired and pointed, and a new storefront framing system is installed using anodized aluminum and insulated glass. Wide-stile doors are recommended. The framing and doors should be installed using manufacturer's special colors, such as greens or blues, to reflect the updated historical theme for the building. A new sign band in a stucco-look material is recommended, along with a classical lanterns and a carved sign. Colors for the sign and band should be compatible with the storefront paints.



Busy Bend Design Study

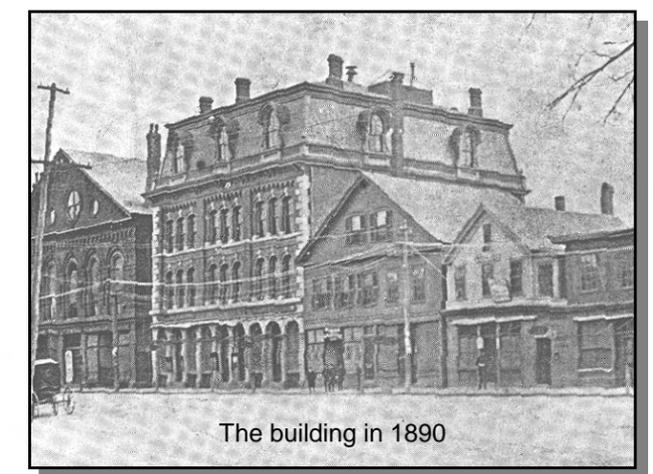
383, 385 Main Street

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56'-5" ±
395-397 MAIN STREET



The building in 1890



41'-4" ±
389-393 MAIN STREET



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389-393, 395-397 Main Street

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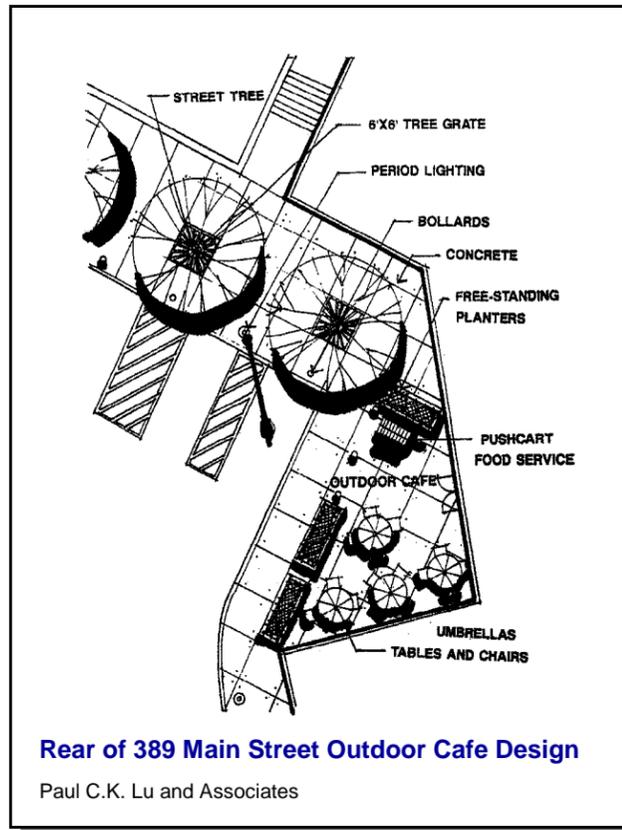
389-393 Main Street (Harry's Jewelers, LCM Copier, Marco's Cold Cuts):

This handsome cast-concrete building dates from the early 20th century, with many fine Art Deco-era details intact, including a decorative concrete pattern, stainless steel column cladding, and paneled entrance ceilings. Recent renovations have included installation of black plexiglas signs with applied white plexiglas lettering, at each of the three stores, and a new storefront framing system at the jewelry shop.

The owner wishes to retain these signs while renovating the facade to reflect the character of an Italian specialty food shop. The design solution includes a tiled storefront base and new insulated glass and black metal framing (to match the signs), with stationary vaulted awnings throughout. The concrete facade is cleaned, pointed, and finished with a pigmented penetrating sealer. The existing signs and facade are illuminated with a fluorescent tube directed upwards, mounted at the seam between awnings and facade. The color scheme should be carefully selected to coordinate the tile, awnings, and concrete finish.

A rear interior stair and doorway leads to the parking lot. The proposed public sidewalk ringing the Walnut Street Lot presents an excellent opportunity for an outdoor cafe at the mini-plaza adjacent to Marco's Cold Cuts. Some building improvements are recommended to create an attractive and functional link between the kitchen area and outdoor cafe, such as a more prominent doorway, elimination of the barbed wire fencing, and a low wall to conceal rooftop equipment.

395-397 Main Street (Woolworth Building): This building is the jewel of downtown Woburn! Although a top-floor mansard was removed after a fire many years ago, the upper two floors have been carefully maintained in original condition: decorative concrete corner quoins, brick arches, parapet cornices, and wood double-hung windows. The first floor, however, has been destroyed in recent retail "modernizations," with the addition of corrugated dark brown cladding and storefront, and the relocation of structural columns and bays; all that remains at the first floor are portions of inlaid "Woolworth's" terrazzo at entrance alcove floors. Since much of the first floor at this prominent building is vacant for most of the year, the building fails, in large measure, to contribute to the vitality of the commercial district and create an appealing downtown environment.



Rear of 389 Main Street Outdoor Cafe Design

Paul C.K. Lu and Associates

Recommendations consist of restoring the first floor retail facade to a period style, compatible with the design of the upper two levels, and adding details that bring the retail facade into scale with the rest of the building. The vertical structural bays, a strong part of the design at the upper levels, have been carried through the first floor, to give a sense of stability and balance to the facade. The design shows a wood storefront with a recessed panel at base and columns, and large windows with transom glazing. A new cornice and sign band above the first floor is constructed in a simulated masonry material such as fiberglass moldings or an EIFS (Exterior Insulation and Finish System). Signs consist of individually mounted letters on a solid backer board, to bring a strong shadow-line to the building; however, painted black-and-gold-leaf signs would be appropriate as well. Decorative exterior light fixtures carry the triptych pattern of upper windows throughout the building. Paint colors are selected from an historical palette using a minimum of four colors, and complementing the earth-tones of the brick and concrete facade above.

Two aspects of this building deserve special mention: accessibility, and the rear facade. A long stairway connects front and rear building entrances, while making the first floor businesses accessible; however, the building is still vulnerable to claims under the ADA. Facade renovations should consider ways to make each entrance accessible from the sidewalk. Upper levels are not accessible to disabled persons at all, and any renovation greater than 30% of the building's value will be required, under the state building codes, to include an elevator.

The rear facade fronts on, and has a primary entrance at, the Walnut Street Parking Lot. A tall stairway and long boardwalk leads from the Lot to the doorway. While the Owner has sought to make this rear entrance attractive by installing an awning and concealing rooftop mechanical equipment behind fences, it would be best to design this facade to correspond in some way with the Main Street facade.



403 Main Street (Performance Music Center): This store was renovated in the late 1980's, when the building was converted to retail condominiums, and is in excellent condition. Originally part of the adjacent building housing Adrian's and Beauty Stylists, the renovations have eliminated all traces of the decorative concrete and brick parapet and sign band. However, the facade has an appropriate simplicity that complements the adjacent storefronts. The existing sign and carefully-maintained window display give strong visual clues to the business within, and indicate the care given both to the design and to ongoing maintenance. No facade renovations are planned, and none are required.

405 Main Street (Adrians and Beauty Stylists): This building is a handsome example of the Art Deco style popular in the 1930's and 1940's for retail architecture. Recent renovations have, fortunately, kept the pre-cast concrete pyramid forms at the parapet and end columns, along with the brick and concrete bands above the sign panel. These same renovations, completed in the late 1980's, included new storefront glass and framing, with a tile band at the base. The building has a continuous awning with arches at each end, located under the brick band; the arches seem, however, to suggest building entrances, which are located under an undistinguished portion of straight awning material. The recommended design includes new signs at each store, located on the existing sign band and above the arches, while a decorative logo is placed over the store entrances. This treatment has the advantages of accentuating the change in materials across the origi-

nal facade, while also responding to the separate locations of archways and doorways. Two types of light fixtures are shown; one decorative set, on gooseneck conduit, are used as design elements, calling attention to the logos and building entrances, while a second set, of fluorescent tubes, cast light upwards towards the signs.

409 Main Street (Bond Shoes): Bond Shoes is a one-story stucco building on the corner of Walnut and Main Streets, with a large window and awning on adjacent street-facing facades. The simple detailing places this building in the mid-20th century, and makes it a prime candidate for a renovation utilizing contemporary forms and materials. The proposed design maintains the stucco facade, adding decorative horizontal trim moldings and cornice. The new sign is a sleek painted board with Art-Deco style lettering and decorative corner squares. Facade lighting utilizes both fluorescent tube fixtures to illuminate the sign, as well as decorative surface-mounted fixtures to add visual interest. A new awning has a contemporary form, without valence. Retaining the glass storefront and door keeps renovation costs low, although the owner should consider replacing the fixed glass with thermopane to reduce heating costs; in this case, it would be wise to reduce the amount of glass by increasing the height of the storefront panel to 2-feet. Color is a key component of this design; playful pastel colors are appropriate to the theme.



Busy Bend Design Study

403, 405, 409 Main Street

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