



DOWNTOWN PLAN TOWN OF WESTPORT

Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.
June 2001

DOWNTOWN PLAN TOWN OF WESTPORT

Prepared for the
Town of Westport Planning and Zoning Commission
First Selectwoman

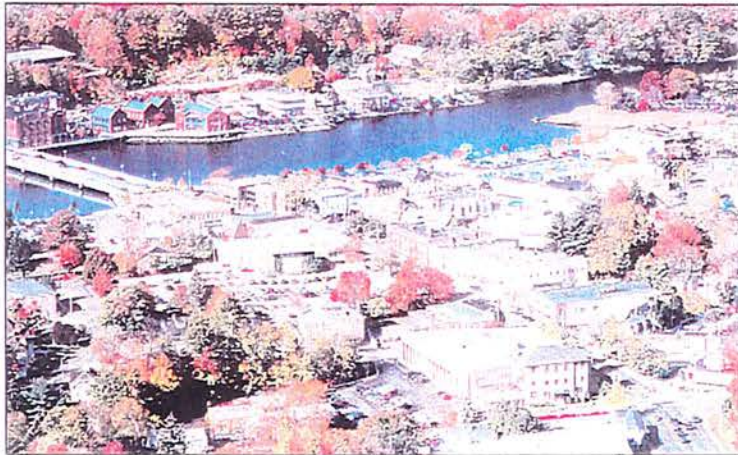
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June 2001

DOWNTOWN PLAN TOWN OF WESTPORT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following individuals have made significant contributions to this Downtown Plan.

First Selectwoman and Planning and Zoning Commission's Downtown Westport Study Committee

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Diane Goss Farrell, First Selectwoman

Co-Chairperson
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INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

This report summarizes the planning recommendations prepared for the Town of Westport's downtown area, prepared at the request of the Town's Planning and Zoning Commission. The downtown district includes a successful retail area centered on Main Street and Boston Post Road, as well as a number of important community institutions and public facilities. The Town recently purchased a 22 acre estate, Barons South, adjacent to the downtown area. This purchase, together with the intent of some of the major institutions to relocate or expand in the area, prompted the Town to prepare a study of the entire downtown area.

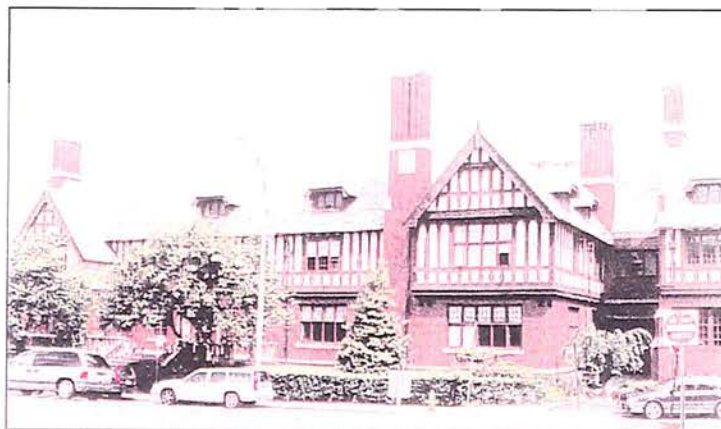
The study area extends approximately 0.5 miles north-south and 0.75 miles east-west. It is bordered by Compo Road to the east, Wilton Road/Riverside Avenue on the west, Kings Highway to the north and the Levitt Pavilion – Barons South boundary to the south. Apart from the retail center, this area includes many of the Town's major institutions such as the YMCA, the Public Library, the Levitt Pavilion, the Country Playhouse and the Historical Society. The Saugatuck River crosses the western portion of the study area. (Figure 1)

A number of planning needs were identified at the onset of the study that are addressed in this report. These needs include:

- Relocation of the Senior Center to the downtown area
- A new site for the YMCA, including recommendations for the re-use of the historic Bedford Building
- A site for the Westport Arts Center
- Identifying uses for Barons South Property and Winslow Park
- Possible relocation of the Levitt Pavilion
- Improvements to the Jesup Green area
- Improvements for pedestrian access including extension of the Riverwalk
- Public parking needs and improvements



View of Barons South's existing parklike setting.



The YMCA housed in this historic Bedford Building.

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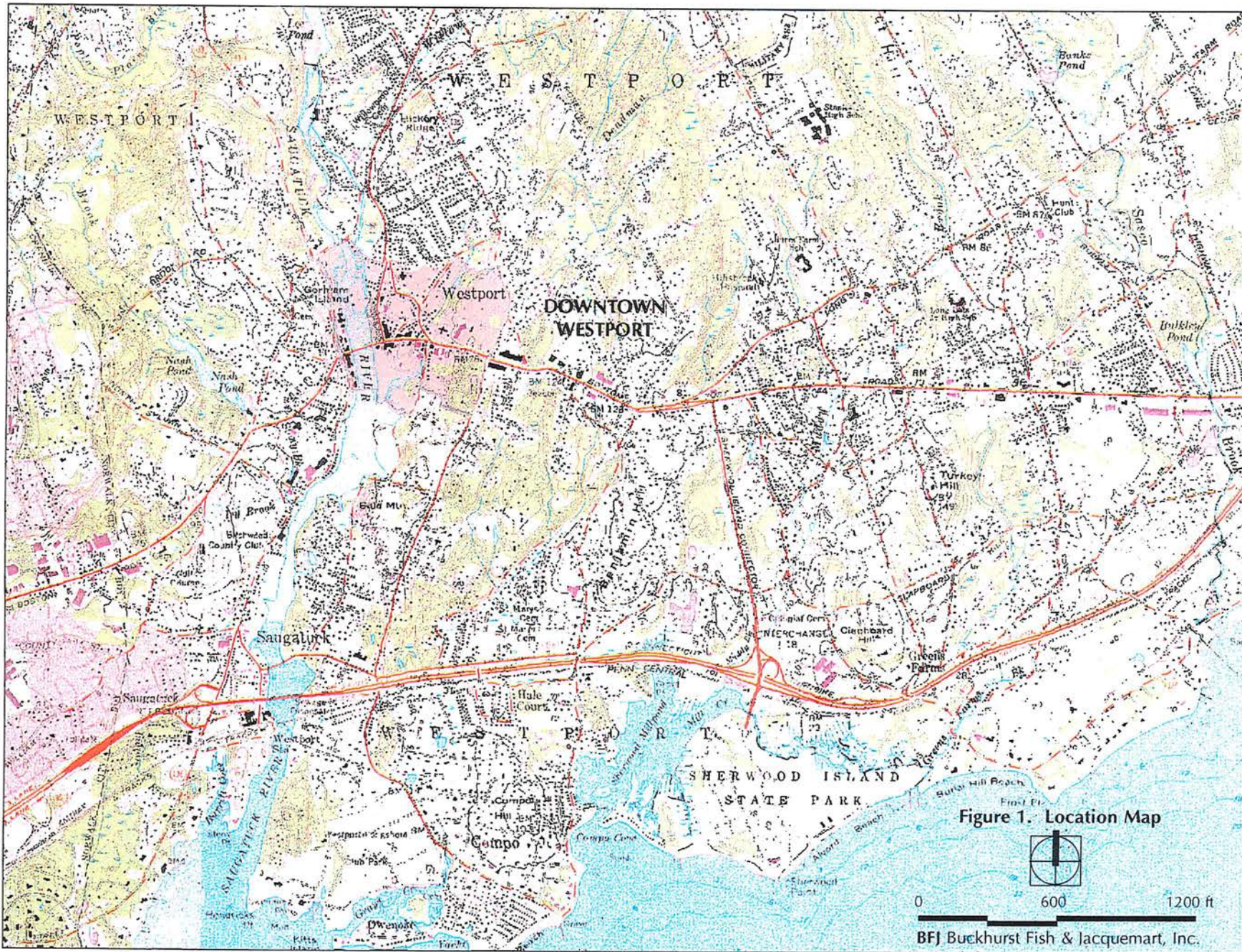
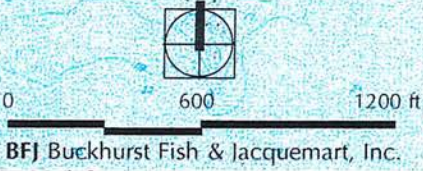


Figure 1. Location Map



Source: USGS Topographical Survey Map, Westport Quadrangle

1.2 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

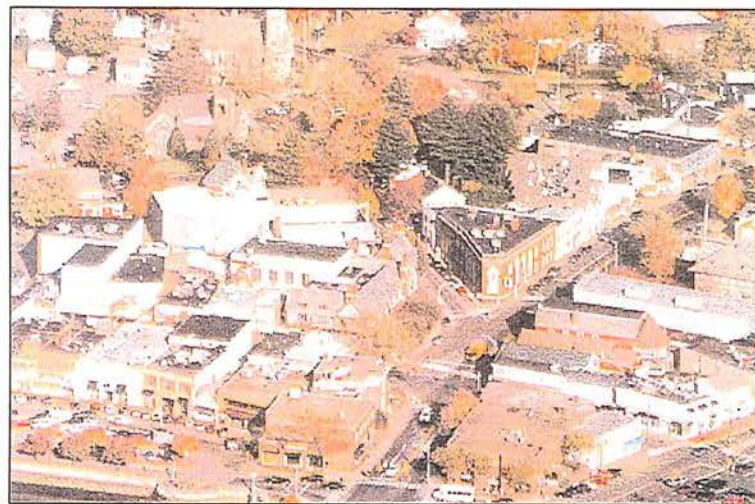
The eight-month process was designed to allow for significant community input. The initial phase of work included a comprehensive round of meetings with representatives of Town Commissions, downtown organizations and other interested parties. A total of 34 groups were interviewed, either by the consultant team or members of the Westport Planning and Zoning Commission. The list of groups is included in the Appendix A. Three formal public reviews were held during the course of the study. The first review was designed as a workshop session in which invited participants reviewed downtown planning issues and opportunities in a series of round table discussions. The results of these sessions are included in Appendix B.

A second public meeting was held to evaluate and comment on three alternative plans prepared by the consultant team. These alternatives explored alternative locations for key institutions such as the YMCA, the Senior Center and Westport Arts Center. The three plans also illustrated options for the future use and design of the major open space areas within downtown – Jesup Green, Winslow Park and Barons South. Issues raised from this meeting were supplemented by more than 100 written comments sent in by residents in the period immediately following this second public meeting. The final public meeting was held in May, 2001 at which the recommendations for the Plan were presented by the consultant team.

2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Downtown Westport functions as the focal point of the Town. It is the center of town government, major office and retail uses and of most of the Town's cultural activities. It has established itself as an important regional shopping center while maintaining its New England character in terms of building scale and the retention of many of its older buildings. Downtown's other major assets include the Saugatuck River and a number of large scale open spaces.

This section provides a brief description of the downtown area, focusing on land uses, the transportation network and visual quality.



View of Downtown Westport looking towards the east at the intersection of Boston Post Road and Church Lane.

2.1 LAND USE

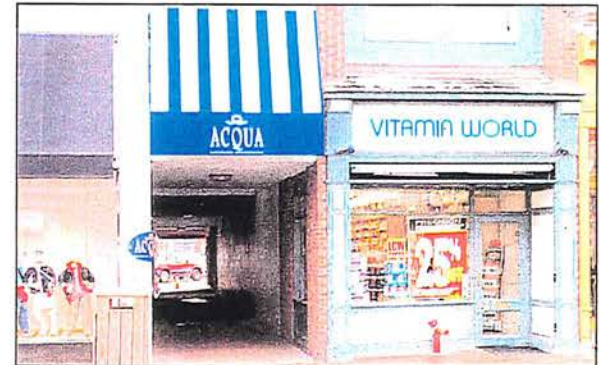
Retail uses are concentrated on Main Street and Post Road. The intersection of these two streets marks the heart of downtown. While retail is the focus of Main Street from Post Road to Avery Place, shops can also be found lining portions of Jesup Road, Myrtle Avenue, and Avery Place. Retail and office uses are also located along the west side of Saugatuck River, on Riverside/Wilton Road. The stores are generally upscale national retail chains, including J. Crew, Brooks Brothers, Williams-Sonoma and Talbots. Further away from Main Street, commercial uses are mixed more heavily with office space. North of Avery Place on Main Street, office space overlooks the Town Green. Across the river, offices form the main use on Wilton Road. The Post Road, east of Main Street becomes decidedly more suburban with more automobile oriented building design.

The Downtown is well served by public, institutional and cultural uses and buildings. Town Hall is located in the northern portion of the study area, with the Westport Library and Police Station forming an important nucleus to the south of Post Road. The Post Office is located nearby on the south side of Post Road. Cultural and institutional uses include the YMCA, The Westport Country Playhouse, The Levitt Pavilion, The Historical Society, The Women's Club and two prominent churches: the Saugatuck Congregational Church and Christ and Holy Trinity Church.

Residential uses within Downtown include single and two-family homes line Myrtle Avenue, Evergreen Avenue and Violet Lane. Multi-family dwellings can be found in the Playhouse Condominiums, behind the Playhouse Plaza and above The Limited store on Main Street.

A summary of building uses is illustrated in Figure 2 on the following page.

Open space constitutes a major land use within the downtown area. Although the Saugatuck River provides the most visible and significant open space element along the west side of the study area, significant park space also provides important recreational opportunities to the east of the commercial core, with Winslow Park and Barons South together providing over 50 acres of attractive parkland. Additional green spaces in downtown include Jesup Green, the Town Memorial Park, and the Levitt Pavilion site overlooking the river.



Retail is the dominant land use along Main Street, the heart of downtown.



Town Hall situated along Myrtle Avenue fronting Avery Commons.

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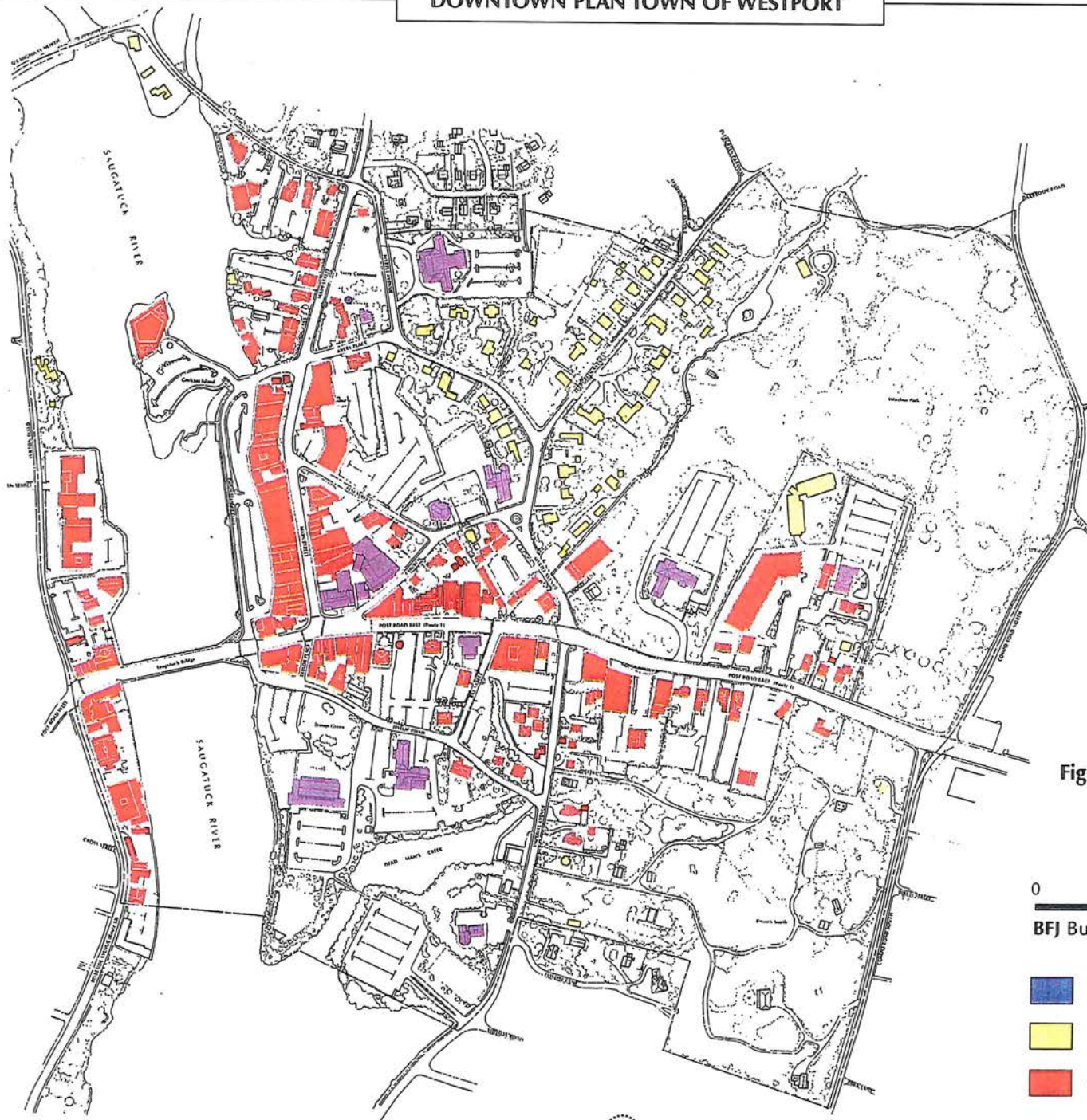





Figure 2. Existing Land Uses



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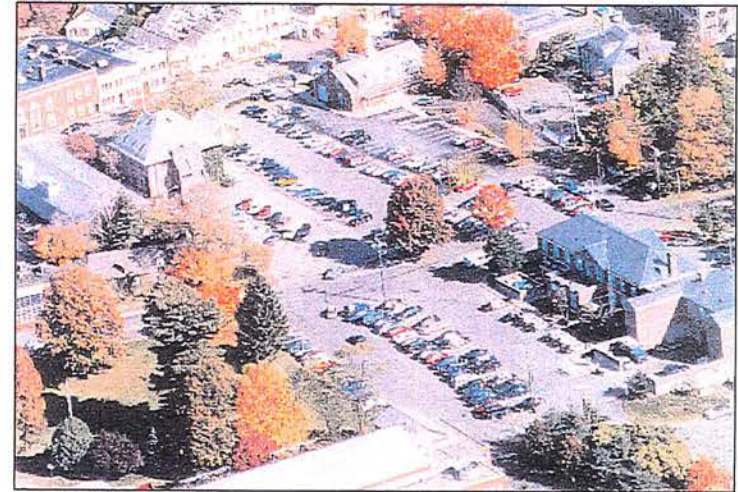
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-  Public, Institutional and Cultural
-  Residential
-  Commercial

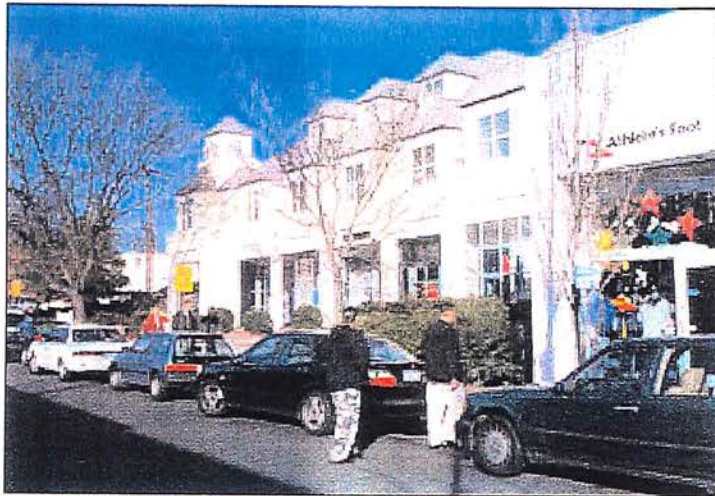
2.2 TRANSPORTATION

Downtown's major road connection to the regional highway system is via Route 1 (Boston Road), a major arterial that bisects the downtown area. Heavy through traffic on this road creates significant congestion at peak travel hours which in turn inhibits easy pedestrian access between the north and south segments of downtown. Other major roads serving downtown, and listed as minor arterials in the Conservation and Development Plan of 1997, include Route 33 (Wilton Road and Riverside Avenue); Compo Road North and South; Avery Place; Jesup Road; Main Street and Myrtle Avenue.

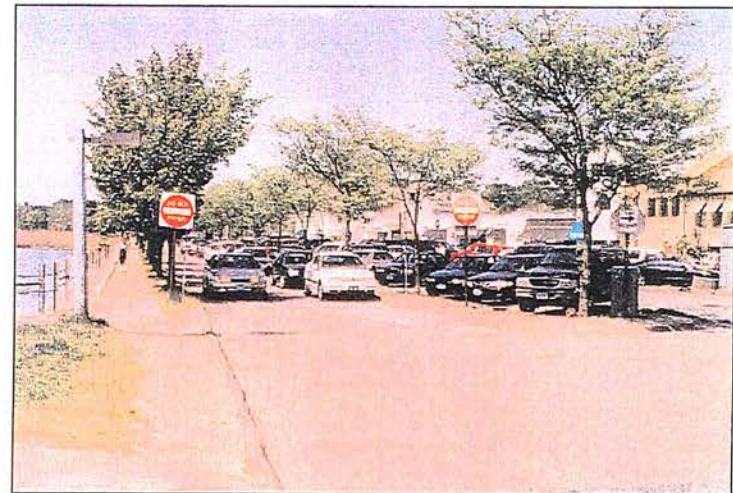
Municipal and private parking areas are dispersed throughout the downtown area. A study completed in 1988* identified over 2,260 spaces of which approximately 1,120 were located within municipal lots, 150 on local street and a further 185 at Town Hall. Private lots accounted for 812 spaces. The Major Municipal sites include the Parker Harding, Baldwin, Bay Street, Jesup Road, Library and Taylor Place Lots.



Parking areas surrounding the Police Department building on Jesup Road.



Parking along Main Street.



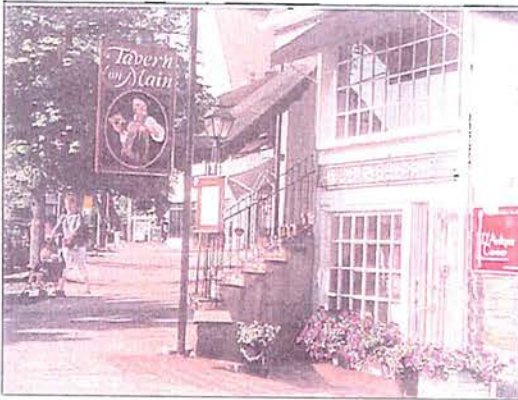
The Parker Harding Municipal Parking Lot

*Allan Davies Associates

2.3 VISUAL APPEARANCE

Downtown's small scale, New England character was cited as a major asset by the Town Organizations and interest groups participating in the downtown study. The architectural quality of older buildings was also seen as a major contributor to the generally attractive image presented by downtown.

At a more detailed scale, however, much of downtown presents an untidy appearance, lacking a cohesive urban design theme or style. Sidewalk materials street tree planting details and treatment of other streetscape elements vary from street to street or, along portions of Main Street, from building to building. In addition the design and placement of traffic and informational signage lacks a consistent approach, an issue documented in a study completed in 2000 by the Town Staff and representatives from Town Boards.



Some areas of downtown are attractively landscaped and encourage pedestrian activity.



Sidewalk finishes on Main Street vary in design treatment.



Signage lacks design coordination.

3.0 IDENTIFYING ISSUES

The analysis of the existing conditions, combined with the results of the initial round of interviews and the public workshop session, provided a firm basis for defining the key planning issues confronting the downtown area. The interviews were designed to solicit comment on downtown's strengths and weaknesses as a first step in identifying the main issues to be addressed in the future Master Plan.

The assets that were cited most frequently identified the small-scale character of development and the positive impact of the river as being among downtown's most important qualities. The assets listed most frequently were as follows:

- Small-scale, New England character
- Riverfront and water views
- Quality and variety of institutions
- Green spaces around downtown especially Jesup Green
- Historic character/architecture
- Land use mix
- Quality/strength of retail uses

In contrast, improved parking facilities and the need to increase the visibility and accessibility of the riverfront were noted most frequently in the discussions concerning downtown's future needs and deficiencies. The following was noted:

- Need for improved additional parking/structured parking
- Increased utilization of riverfront/river
- Improved pedestrian connections within downtown area
- Improvements to signage/wayfinding
- Traffic calming (esp. at Church Lane/Post Road)
- Jesup Green improvements
- Improvements to Parker-Harding Lot

These identified assets and needs were carefully considered in the development of three alternative plans prepared as part of the study process. The review of these alternatives led in turn to an agreed planning framework that defined the major elements of the Plan, discussed in the next section of this report.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommended plan for downtown encompasses elements from three alternative sets of proposals that were prepared as part of the planning process undertaken in this study. The recommendations also take account of many of the suggestions made by Westport citizens in the evaluation of the alternative plans. Although a number of conflicting objectives emerged in terms of overlapping goals of various downtown interest groups, general agreement was reached on an overriding framework for the downtown plan.

4.1 PLANNING GUIDELINES

The following key guidelines were identified for the downtown plan that were supported by the majority of the interest groups and participants involved in the study.

- **Encourage major community institutions to stay within the downtown area**

A new center for seniors, the YMCA, the Arts Center, other institutions and cultural and civic programs will help to maintain the dynamic mix of retail, commercial and institutional uses that currently enrich Westport's downtown.

- **Retain major open space areas**

Winslow Park, Barons South, Jesup Green and the Town Memorial Park together establish a unique setting for the downtown area. These areas should be largely preserved as permanent public open space.

- **Establish a Network of Pedestrian Pathways**

An improved network of pedestrian paths should be provided to link the retail core with other downtown uses such as the major institutions and parks.

- **Improve Connections to the Saugatuck River**

Attractive and convenient access should be established to connect downtown with its river edge, expanding on the river walkway system already constructed near the library.



Current YMCA building located downtown.



Pedestrian pathways near Levitt Pavilion.



Winslow Park.

- **Retain Scale and Architectural Character of Downtown**

New development must be carefully related to the generally modest scale and New England character that is prevalent in much of downtown.

- **Provide Additional Opportunities for Parking**

Improvements to public parking facilities should consider the provisions of modest parking deck construction to accommodate future parking needs.

4.2 THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

The recommended plan for downtown Westport is shown on the following page. It illustrates proposed new sites for a number of the major institutions and community facilities that should be retained within the downtown area. Recommendations are made concerning improvements and revisions to Winslow Park, Barons South and Jesup Green. The plan also sets out proposals for improvements for parking, road access and pedestrian connections.

The Downtown Plan is described under the following topic areas:

- (A) Community Facilities
- (B) Public Open Spaces
- (C) Pedestrian Connections
- (D) Streetscape Improvements
- (E) Traffic and Parking Recommendations

A. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The location and improvement of a number of important facilities and institutions was identified as a key goal for the downtown area. Significant support was voiced to establish new sites for the Senior Center and the Arts Center within downtown and to find an appropriate site for a relocated YMCA. In addition site or building improvements are required for the Levitt Pavilion, The Historical Society and the Westport Country Playhouse. The on-going needs for expanded teen facilities are also addressed in this section of the report.

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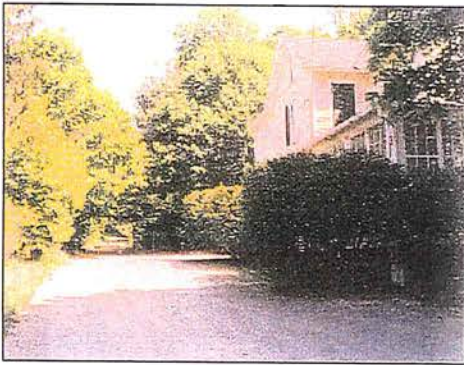


Figure 4.
Proposed Master Plan



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View of entry to Barons South.

access from Imperial Avenue. Two landscaped parking lots accommodate 75 cars and are carefully sited so that they are screened by existing tree stands within the park. The recommended footprint for the two-story Senior Center is designed to reflect the scale and form of the existing "Golden Shadows" mansion.



Site plan for proposed Senior Center.

Avenue parking lot, while child care, administrative and other community uses are located in an approximate 20,000 square foot building located between the library and the police department headquarters. This division of functions helps to address the issue of building scale and disperses the parking and traffic that will be generated by YMCA staff and members. The larg-

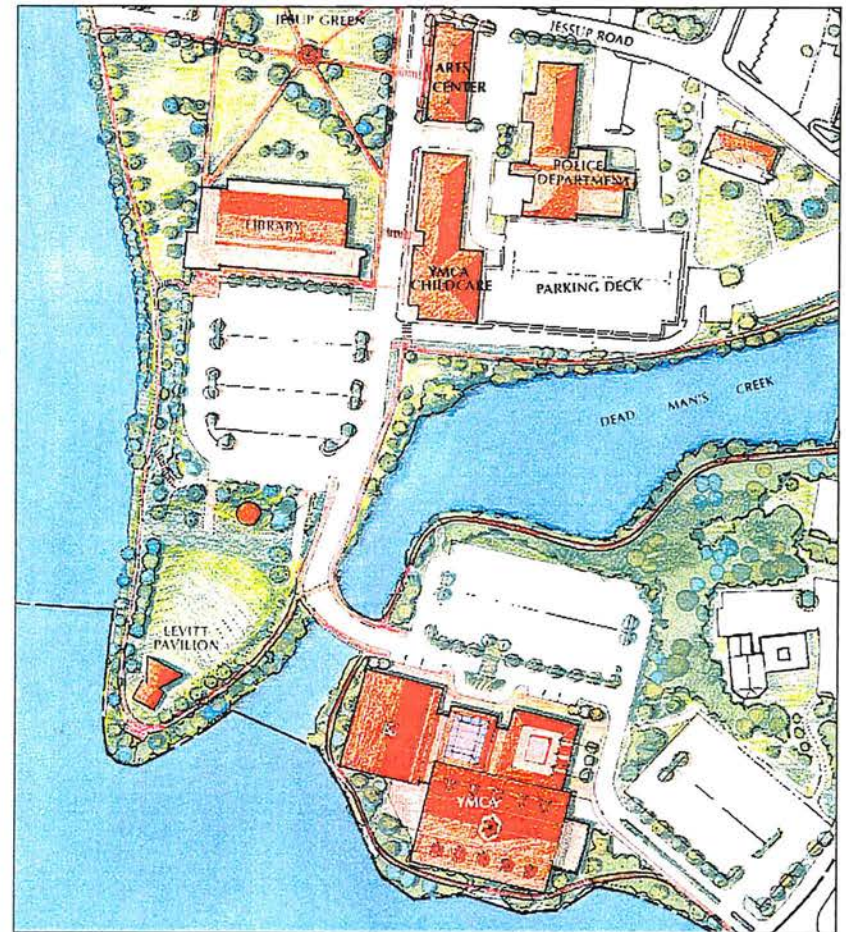
Senior Center

A new building to house seniors' activities is required prior to July, 2003 due to the expiration of its lease at Staples High School. The recommended site for the 10,000-12,000 square foot center is located within Barons South, set within a natural bowl in the north-west section of the park, near Imperial Avenue. The preliminary site plan provides road and pedestrian

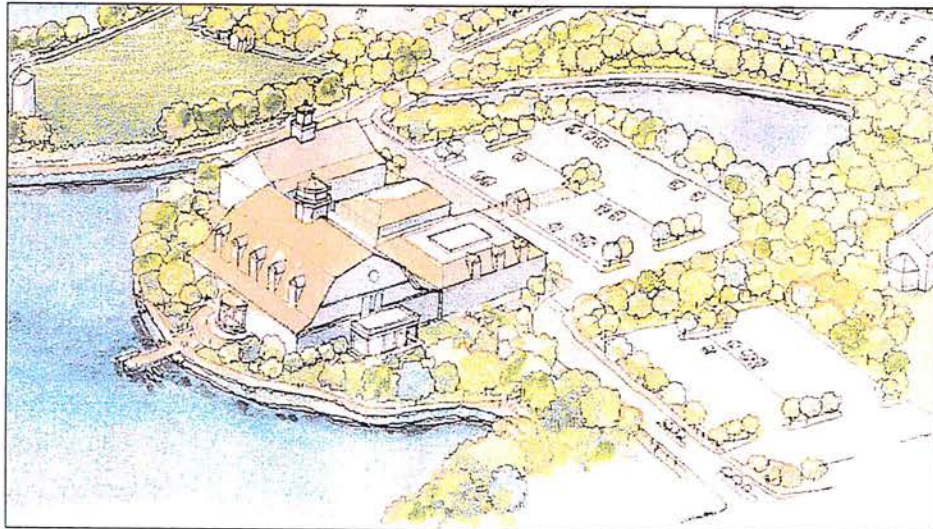
YMCA

Two separate buildings are proposed to accommodate YMCA's broad range of programs and activities. A 60,000 square foot building for swimming, gymnasium, locker space and support facilities is placed on the under-utilized Imperial

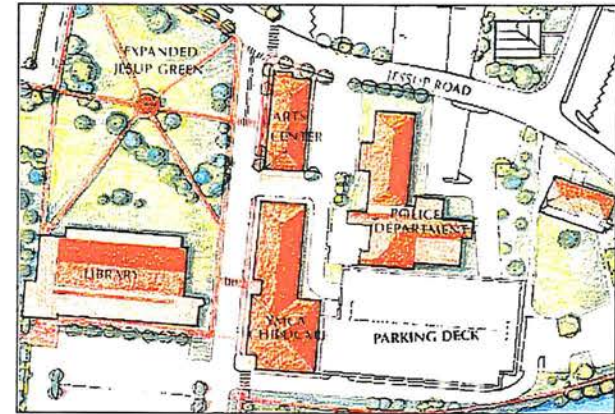
er building is designed primarily as a single story structure. Access is proposed via a new bridge crossing Dead Man's Creek, connecting eastward to the existing road access from Imperial Avenue. The site plan illustrates a parking lot for approximately 100 cars, located to the north of the building, with a drop-off at the main entry point. The site's location gives the new YMCA building commanding water views and will help to establish this underutilized area as an active and vital part of downtown.



The second building for the YMCA is proposed as a two-story structure located in close proximity to the library. A two-story parking structure, sited immediately to the south of the police building, provides parking at the upper level for YMCA use and an enclosed garage for police department use at the lower level.



Sketch showing YMCA concept.



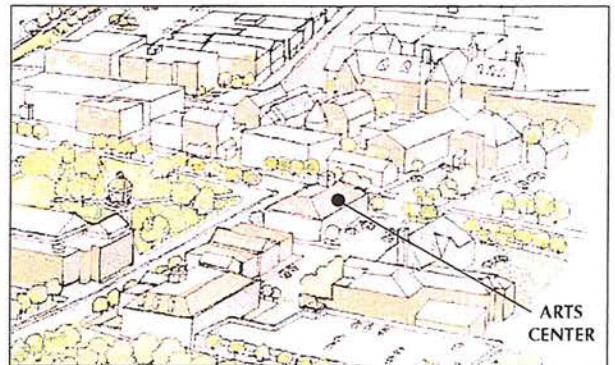
YMCA Childcare building and adjacent parking.



Aerial view of Arts Center site.

Westport Arts Center

A new arts center building is proposed at a site located on the east side of Jesup Green, fronting on Jesup Road. This location means that the building forms a “gateway” for the cluster of community facilities that form a new, additional focus for downtown. The proposed two story building, accommodates approximately 10,000 square feet of space, also helps to enclose the east side of Jesup Green. This adjacent open space may also provide convenient opportunities for outdoor art events sponsored by the Arts Center.



View of the Arts Center overlooking Jesup Green.

Levitt Pavilion

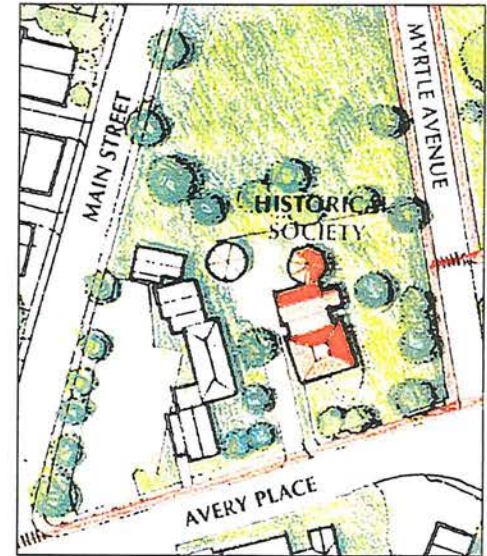
The Plan for downtown retains the Levitt Pavilion's existing dramatic location on the Saugatuck River. The pavilion building and grounds are in urgent need of upgrading and preliminary plans have already been prepared for new stage and backstage accommodation, as well as improved facilities for the grounds, including ticketing and toilet facilities. Consideration should be given to creating a distinctive shell structure, combined with new landscaping that capitalizes on the site's unique location.

Historical Society

The Society has proposed a modest expansion to its current buildings in order to provide a larger-scale exhibition space and additional office accommodation. The proposed new building has been carefully sited to the rear of the Society's historic home, creating an opportunity to physically and visually link the facility with the adjacent Memorial Town Park.

Westport Country Playhouse

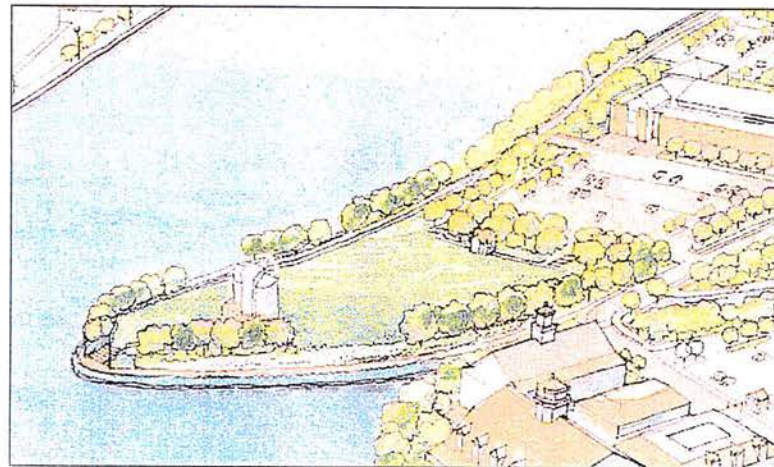
The Playhouse is planning a significant renovation program that will enable the theater to provide year-round programs. No major site plan changes are proposed but the issue of alleviating the traffic congestion at the theater entry point off Boston Post Road remains a key problem. Further study on expanding and improving the alternative access via Playhouse Square Plaza is needed to address this issue.



Historical Society expansion.



Site of Levitt Pavilion.



Sketch showing Levitt Pavilion overlooking the river.



Country Playhouse site.

The Existing YMCA Building

The YMCA has concluded that the existing premises are no longer suitable for their expanding athletic, social and other supporting programs. The appropriate re-use of the property is therefore a critical issue for the Town given the site's strategic location and the historic importance of the Tudor-styled Bedford Buildings. A set of planning guidelines should therefore be established for this site which identifies building preservation requirements, an appropriate mix of building uses and site specifications related to parking and landscape needs.

A mix of commercial, residential and cultural/institutional uses for the site would reinforce the existing variety of functions that now characterize Westport's downtown. Ground floor retail use should be encouraged given the site's location at the junction of Boston Post Road and Main Street.

Cultural/entertainment use such as a movie theater, which could be accommodated within the site, should be considered to replace the loss of a four screen theater that used to function in downtown. In addition, future building uses should allow for needed community-related functions including space for teen activities should the current Toquet Hall be unavailable in the future.

B. OPEN SPACE

Recommendations for downtown's open space areas focus on the following three objectives that were emphasized by Westport residents:

- to preserve existing major park areas as permanent open space
- to increase access and use of park areas for passive recreation
- to establish improved pedestrian links between parks, the downtown area and the riverfront.

The plan responds to these objectives through recommendations prepared for the four major open spaces in downtown: Winslow Park, Barons South, Jesup Green and the Memorial Town Park.

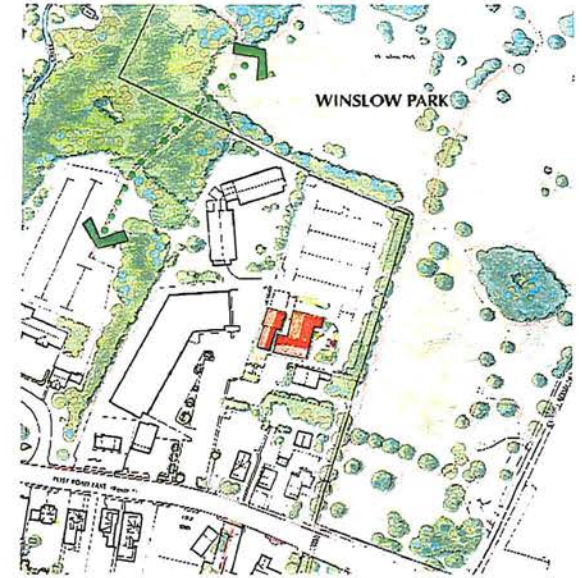
Winslow Park



View of Winslow Park.

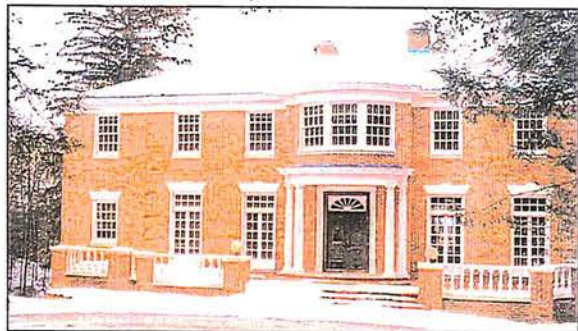
The recommendations for Winslow Park follow earlier preliminary proposals prepared by the Town. The park should be retained as downtown’s major passive open space area, with improvements being limited to improved pedestrian access and to the provision of small-scale amenities that would encourage greater use of the park. As noted in the 1995 Plan, the park should be designed to accommodate pursuits such as walking, roller blading, bicycling, lawn games and picnicking. Amenities such as public toilets and a drinking fountain should be considered.

An additional pedestrian link should be added to connect the park with the parking area behind the Congregational Church. A well-defined crosswalk on Boston Road is also proposed to provide a direct pedestrian link with Barons South.



Pedestrian connection to Winslow Park.

Barons South

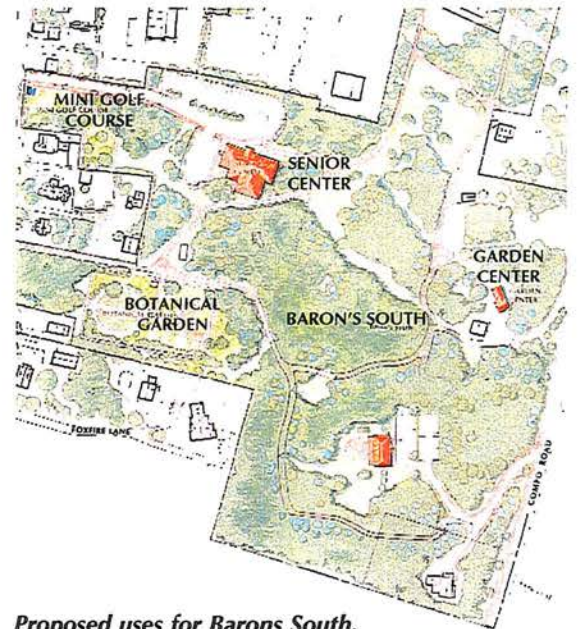


“Golden Shadows” mansion.

The proposals for Barons South include many of the suggestions advocated by downtown interest groups, such as the goal to preserve the bulk of the park for Community use. Including the proposal for the new Senior Center building (discussed earlier) the plan provides recommendations for the following existing structures and specific areas located within Barons South:

- Preservation of the “Golden Shadows” mansion as a “Town Club” that could function as a center for special functions such as private weddings, fund-raising events, etc.

Additional parking (for 30-40 cars) can be provided immediately to the east of the mansion with only minor disturbance to existing woodlands.



Proposed uses for Barons South.

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- Selling off the vacant house together with a lot of approximately 1.5 acres that is sited in the south-east corner of the park. This would allow the Town to recover a portion of its investment made in the purchase of Barons South.
- Siting of a mini-golf “garden” designed primarily for teen use. This use is proposed at the main road entry to the park off Imperial Avenue, using in part the town-owned lot (the vacant building should be demolished). An effort should be made to design the mini-golf course as an attractive outdoor sculpture park, involving the Town Arts Center as a major sponsor.
- Restoration of the garden area on the south side of the park, near Imperial Avenue, possibly as a Town Botanical Garden. The garden would act as a draw for park visitors as well as to members of the future senior center nearby, and may function in similar fashion through a club, such as the Waveny Garden in New Canaan.



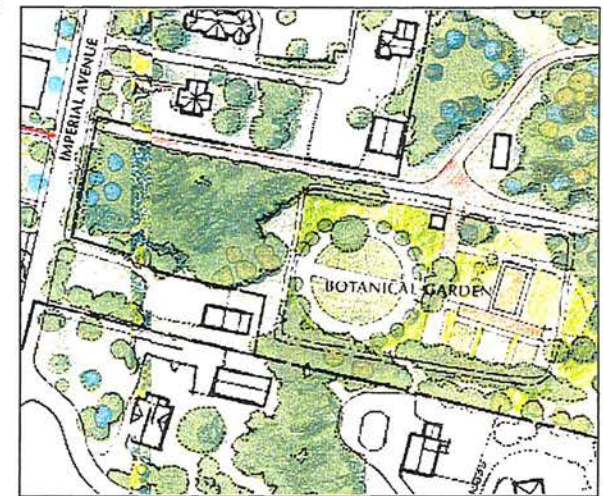
Views of Waveny Garden, New Canaan, CT.



Vacant property in Barons South could be sold for private residence use.



Location for teen's mini-golf “garden”.



Possible Botanical Garden, Barons South.

Jesup Green

The proposed development of new downtown facilities such as the YMCA, the Senior Center and the Arts Center to the south of Boston Post Road means that greater focus is given to Jesup Green and its potential role as a Town Green. The plan lines the Green on the east side with the proposed Arts Center building and the smaller "Y" Structure, and extends the park area westward to establish a stronger visual and physical link with the river and the existing river walkway. The existing attractive open space at Jesup Green should encourage additional events and activities, such as a bandstand area, children's play equipment, and space for outdoor art exhibits related to the nearby Arts Center building.

Memorial Town Park

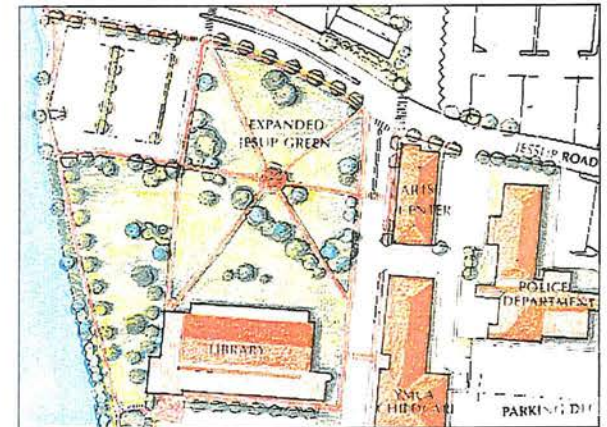
Relatively minor improvements are suggested for the Memorial Town Park. The recommendations focus on creating visible and more attractive pedestrian entrances into the park, thus encouraging increased connections between Main Street, the Historical Society and the Town Hall building.



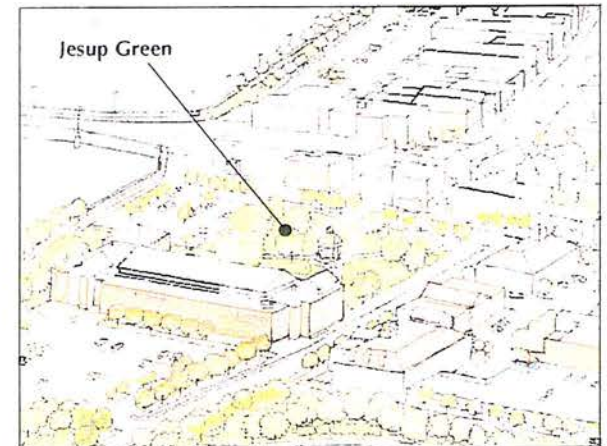
Views of entry to Memorial Town Park.

C. PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS

The success of the river walkway developed near the library and the Parker-Harding lot has encouraged planning for a broader network of pedestrian paths serving downtown. This network should connect the downtown's retail area with the riverfront, nearby parks and major existing and proposed community facilities, and eventually establish an identifiable "necklace" of open spaces and paths that would embrace Westport's downtown. The map on the next page shows the key pedes-

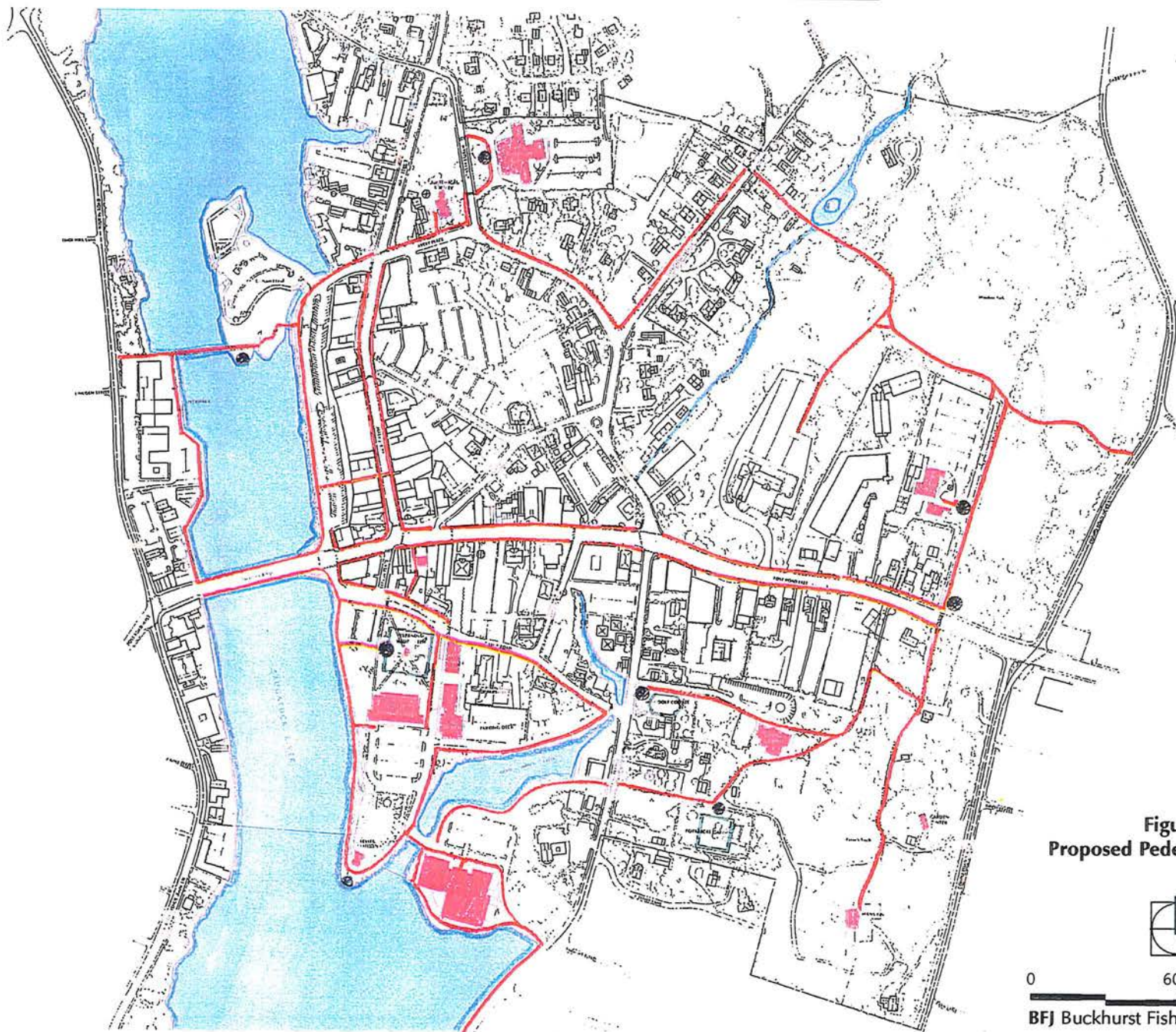


Jesup Green expansion to create a link to the river.



Sketch showing Jesup Green, library, and proposed Arts Center and YMCA buildings.

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**Figure 5.
Proposed Pedestrian Network**



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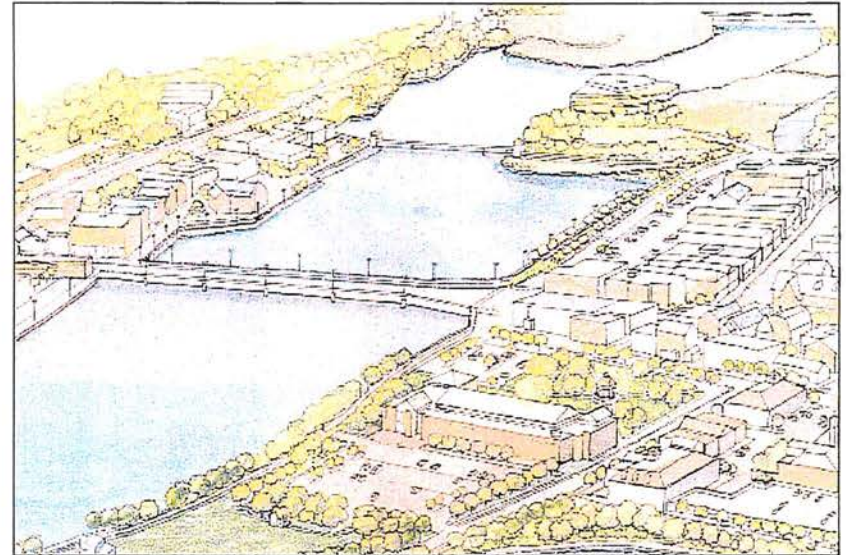
trian routes that combine existing pathways and sidewalks with additional proposed routes. A primary loop is shown that connects the downtown retail area with the Library, Jesup Green, the proposed YMCA and Arts Center buildings, Barons South (providing access to the proposed Senior Center, teen facilities and the Mansion), Winslow Park, the Country Playhouse, the Town Hall, the Historical Society and the Memorial Town Park.

Attractive signage lighting and information markers should be considered to identify this loop as a significant pedestrian route. In the long term, consideration should be given to the construction of a pedestrian foot bridge across the Saugatuck River, connecting to the existing walkway in Gorham Island. This additional connection creates a secondary pedestrian loop that will help tie commercial uses on the west side of the river with the main downtown area.

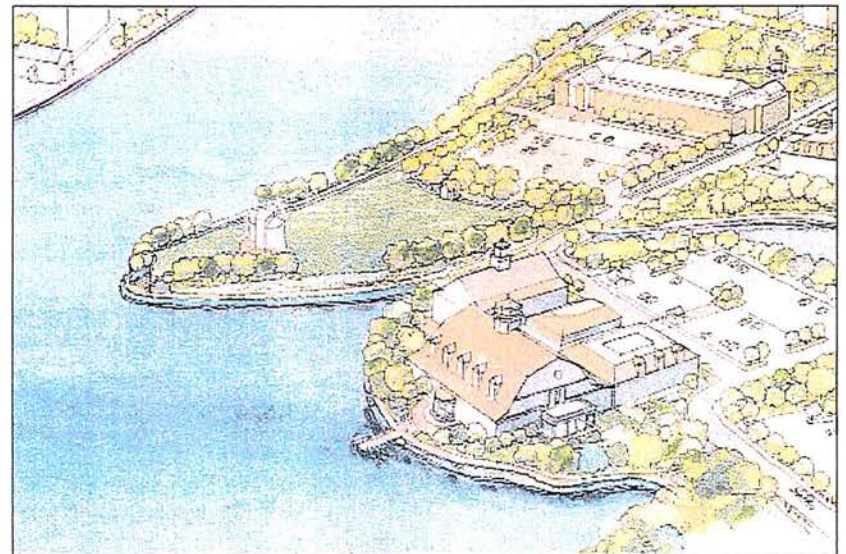
A focus of the pathway system should be on potential riverfront routes, expanding on the existing walkway to encircle the Levitt Pavilion and the proposed YMCA site. An additional priority for the pedestrian network involves the development of an attractive route between the library and the proposed senior center to be located in Barons South. This link could eventually connect with the Arts Center and the proposed YMCA buildings.

D. STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS

Many Town residents participating in the study expressed the need to improve the quality of pedestrian amenities and signage within the downtown area. Design guidelines should be established in order to achieve a more cohesive and attractive streetscape, focusing on such elements as sidewalk design, signage, street furniture and landscaping. This recommendation reinforces the proposal set forth in the 1997 Plan of Conservation and Development which advocated a coordinated design policy for Westport Center.



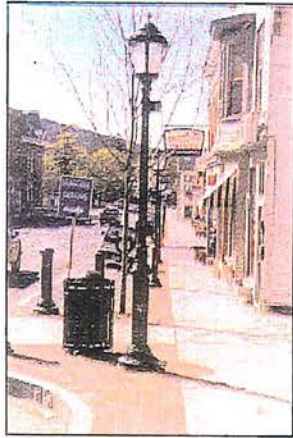
Proposed foot bridge over Saugatuck River.



Riverwalk expanded around Levitt Pavilion and proposed YMCA site.

Sidewalk Design

A more unified design treatment of sidewalks within downtown should be considered as a priority in the downtown improvement program. This should include agreement on pavement materials and treatment of sidewalk edge and curb, including design and placement of tree grates. Relevant examples of recent downtown sidewalk improvements are shown below.



North Adams, MA.



Bennington, VT.



Lee, MA.



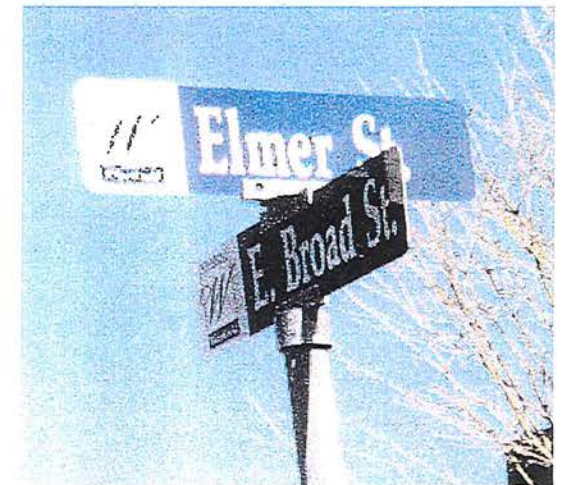
Main Street, Westport, CT.

Signage

Areas of the downtown suffer from a proliferation of regulatory and traffic-related signage that generally detracts from the streetscape appearance. A consistent design approach in terms of placement and treatment of this signage should be undertaken. New street signs within downtown should also be considered to give greater definition and identify to the downtown area.

Lighting and Street Furniture

Ornamental and pedestrian-scaled light poles should replace the tall, cobra-headed fixtures that tend to dominate the downtown streetscape. A replacement program should initially be considered for the Main, Elm and Church Street portion of downtown where more modest scaled light-



Street signage, Westfield, NJ.

ing would be particularly appropriate. Additional street furniture such as benches and trash bins should be carefully selected to achieve a consistent design vocabulary for this area.

Landscape Treatment

Additional street trees and improved landscaping of surface parking lots would help to create a more attractive environment for pedestrians. In particular, improved screening of service and parking areas that are located adjacent to pedestrian sidewalks should be undertaken as a priority action.

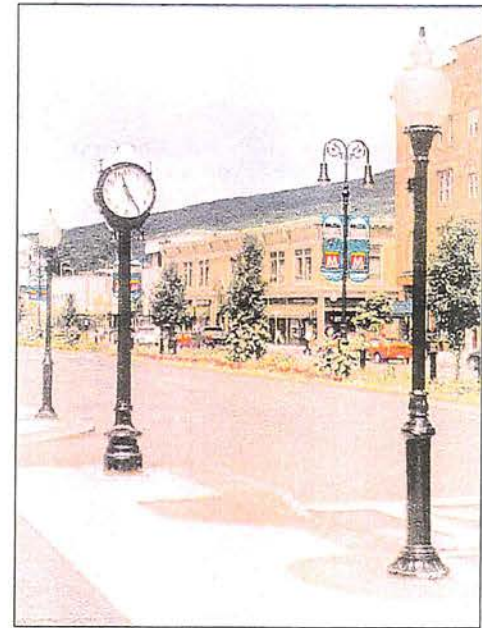
E. TRAFFIC AND PARKING

New Roads

Only one new road is proposed in the Downtown Plan. Following the policy direction of the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development, a new bridge connecting the Library parking lot and the Imperial Avenue parking lot would provide an additional traffic flow opportunity and greater flexibility for downtown circulation.

The Downtown Plan recommends several new building opportunities, including new YMCA facilities and Arts Center in close proximity to the Library, and a Seniors Center on a portion of the Barons South property. This plan does not attempt to address the traffic implications of the new developments. It is assumed, however, that additional traffic will be minimal since few new uses are proposed. To a large degree the new buildings and new uses will attract people that are already in the downtown area.

The relocation of the YMCA facilities could potentially benefit traffic flow at the Main Street and Post Road intersection. Traffic from YMCA patrons would be relocated to the underutilized areas in the southern portion of the downtown. The existing Bedford building would house a mix of residential/office/retail uses that, combined, would generate significantly less traffic than the YMCA. Further, should a movie theater be located within the former YMCA buildings, traffic would primarily be generated in the evening hours, and not affect peak demand times.



North Adams, MA.

The proposed location of the Senior's Center on a portion of the Baron's South property is not expected to impact the Jesup Road/Imperial Avenue intersection. Center users will most likely access the site during non-peak hours and in the evening. The intersection may benefit, however, from some traffic control to allow a pedestrian friendly atmosphere.

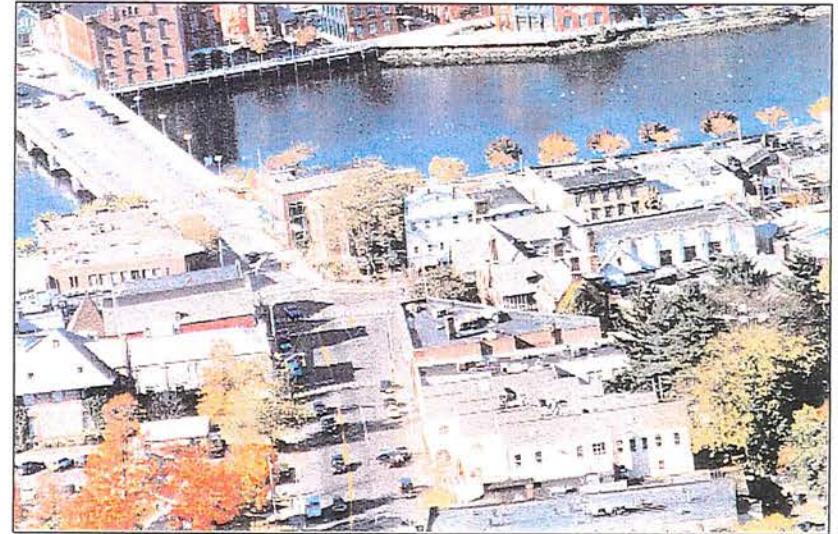
Traffic Calming

Traffic calming is intended to reduce vehicle speeds and to make a street more pedestrian friendly. One of the objectives of this plan is to reduce the barrier effect of the Boston Post Road on the downtown district. This road must become more retail friendly by making it easier to cross it and more pleasant to walk along it. Since Route 1 is a State road, it is understood that the Town has little control over the implementation of traffic calming measures. Nonetheless, the State should be made aware of the issues in order for mutual benefits to be achieved.

Vehicle speed reduction along Route 1 does not imply a capacity reduction for this arterial. At the same time, slower speeds will limit the spill-over from I-95. Longer-distance traffic should stay on I-95, and should not be attracted to the Boston Post Road.

The Post Road/Main Street intersection is the key area where pedestrians should be given more priority than exists today. The width of the Post Road is greater than sixty feet at the widest point, making pedestrian crossing during a routine signal change difficult. This intersection is a key location where the main commercial area of the Downtown is linked to the Library and future YMCA. Pedestrian bump-out areas at all four corners should be provided to reduce the pedestrian crossing distance. Additionally, on-street parking should be provided to help reduce motoring speeds and to create a buffer between traffic and pedestrians.

Additional bump-out and traffic calming should be provided in front of the Post Office and at the Imperial Avenue and Post Road intersection. Road striping and pedestrian signage should be provided at pedestrian crossing areas adjacent to Winslow Park and on Imperial Avenue.



Post Road and Main Street intersection near the Saugatuck Bridge.

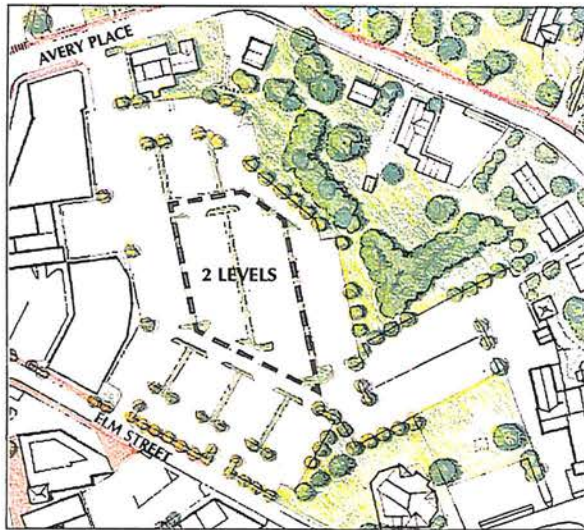


Proposed expansion of pedestrian areas at the Post Road / Main Street / Church Lane intersection.

Parking

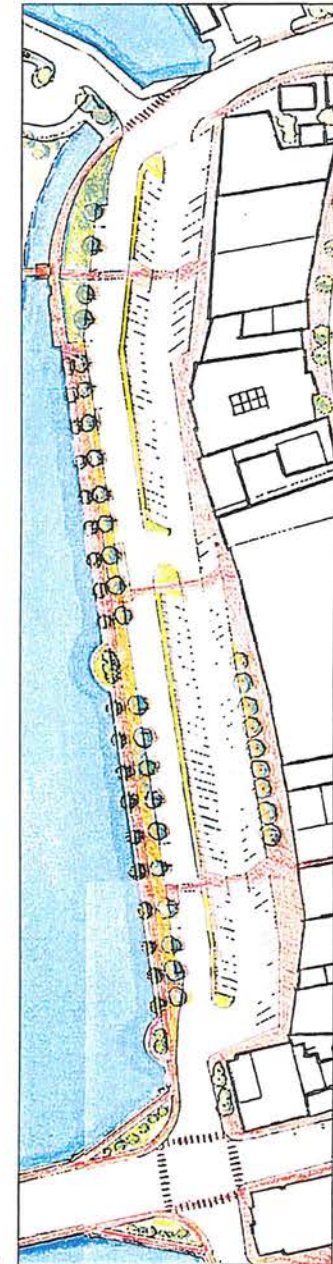
While parking may not necessarily be deficient, public perception, as evident through the meetings and workshops, suggests there is a problem. The Plan does not depict any new parking area, but rather extending, or in some case decking existing lots. In fact, the Plan recommends reducing parking along the waterfront parking lots in favor of pedestrian access and landscaped areas.

The most critical area where a parking reconfiguration would benefit the Downtown appearance is along the Parker Harding lot. The Plan suggests retaining the south-bound through lane, but relocates parked vehicles on the water side to reduce vehicle noise for pedestrian benefit. The landscaped walk along the waterfront has also been widened to accommodate more landscaping, park benches and pedestrian paths. This widening has been achieved by the reduction of an entire bay of parking, forty-two spaces removed, in the center of the parking lot. More aesthetically pleasing garbage enclosures are also recommended for the Parker Harding lot.



Possible two level parking at the Elm Street parking lot.

To achieve a balance for the lost Parker Harding spaces, additional parking is proposed for the Baldwin lot (Elm Street). The Plan suggests a reconfiguration of the Elm Street area private and public parking areas that would provide a more efficient surface layout. The entire lot should also be used for public purposes rather than restrictive private purposes. This can be achieved by affording the private owners certain zoning or other privileges in exchange for use of the land. The Town would in effect lease the parking areas from the property owners and take over the maintenance. This shared parking arrangement would be more efficient and attractive. Should even more parking be desired in this area, a parking deck can be constructed taking advantage of the land's topography. This deck would be at least thirty feet from residential property lines.



Revised layout for the Parker Harding lot.

The Jessup Road parking lot has also been reduced by twenty spaces. It was important to retain the spaces closest to the existing retail. Parking in this area for the Library is less important since the main entrance is to the rear. The Library is encouraged to relocate its video tape lending drop-off/pick-up to the main entrance area.

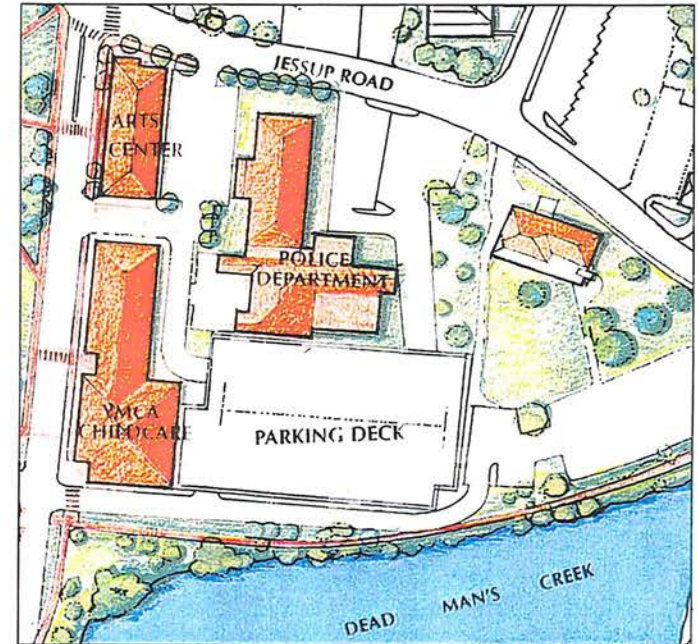
The parking adjacent to the Police Station has been reduced by sixty spaces to make way for the YMCA administrative and Arts buildings. This area is envisioned to have a more formal pedestrian and vehicle approach toward the Library, while allowing for buildings to face Jessup Green and the roads. To make up for lost parking, a deck is proposed that would accommodate police use in the lower level and public use on the top level.

Adjacent to the new YMCA building would be approximately one-hundred parking spaces. These spaces should be reserved for patrons, rather than staff members. The lost commuter parking, averaging 30 spaces during weekdays, could easily be accommodated on the lot adjacent to the Westport Women's Club or elsewhere within the Downtown.

Parking at the Senior's Center can accommodate up to seventy vehicles. The location has been set adjacent to existing parking to the north. This parking field should be of sufficient size to allow for the Teen's Golf Center as well.

A grade-sensitive parking area has also been recommended adjacent to the Barons South Mansion. Thirty to forty cars in two parking areas have been proposed, that would minimally detract from the site's beauty. The parking is required for any special functions that are planned at the mansion.

A Shuttle service linking the largest parking areas would be a significant benefit to alleviate parking concerns. Bike racks are also necessary at key public areas to encourage



Proposed parking deck adjacent to police station.

alternative transportation use.

4.3 SETTING PRIORITIES

Implementation of the total Master Plan discussed in the previous section will involve a concerted effort by Town officials and staff, special interest groups and others over a period of several years. Many of the proposals require further detailed study and analysis before final agreement can be reached and for implementation to begin.

A number of proposals should, however, receive priority where specific needs have been identified or where detailed plans have been considered in parallel to this Master Plan study. The following plan elements should therefore be considered as a first phase in the implementation program:

Senior Center

A new center is needed for the seniors prior to August 2003. Site planning, programming and building design studies for the proposed site at Barons South should take place during 2001.

Levitt Pavilion

Preliminary proposals to upgrade the pavilion and site have already been undertaken. Landscape design proposals should consider the needs of the proposed River Walk extension.

Historical Society

Implementation of the proposed new space will provide needed meeting and exhibition space, prior to the development of later phase facil-

ities such as the proposed Arts Center building.

Barons South

In conjunction with work on the Senior Center site, the proposals for other areas of Barons South should be planned in detail and priorities in funding and implementation established.

Pedestrian Access Improvements

Initial improvements for pedestrian access should include:

- Establishing a convenient, safe and attractive link between the library/Jesup Green area and the proposed Senior Center site.
- Expansion of the River Walk including improvements to the perimeter of the Levitt Pavilion site.

Traffic Studies

A follow-up transportation study should be undertaken to review the impacts resulting from the land use and road network revisions proposed in the Downtown Plan.

DOWNTOWN PLAN TOWN OF WESTPORT

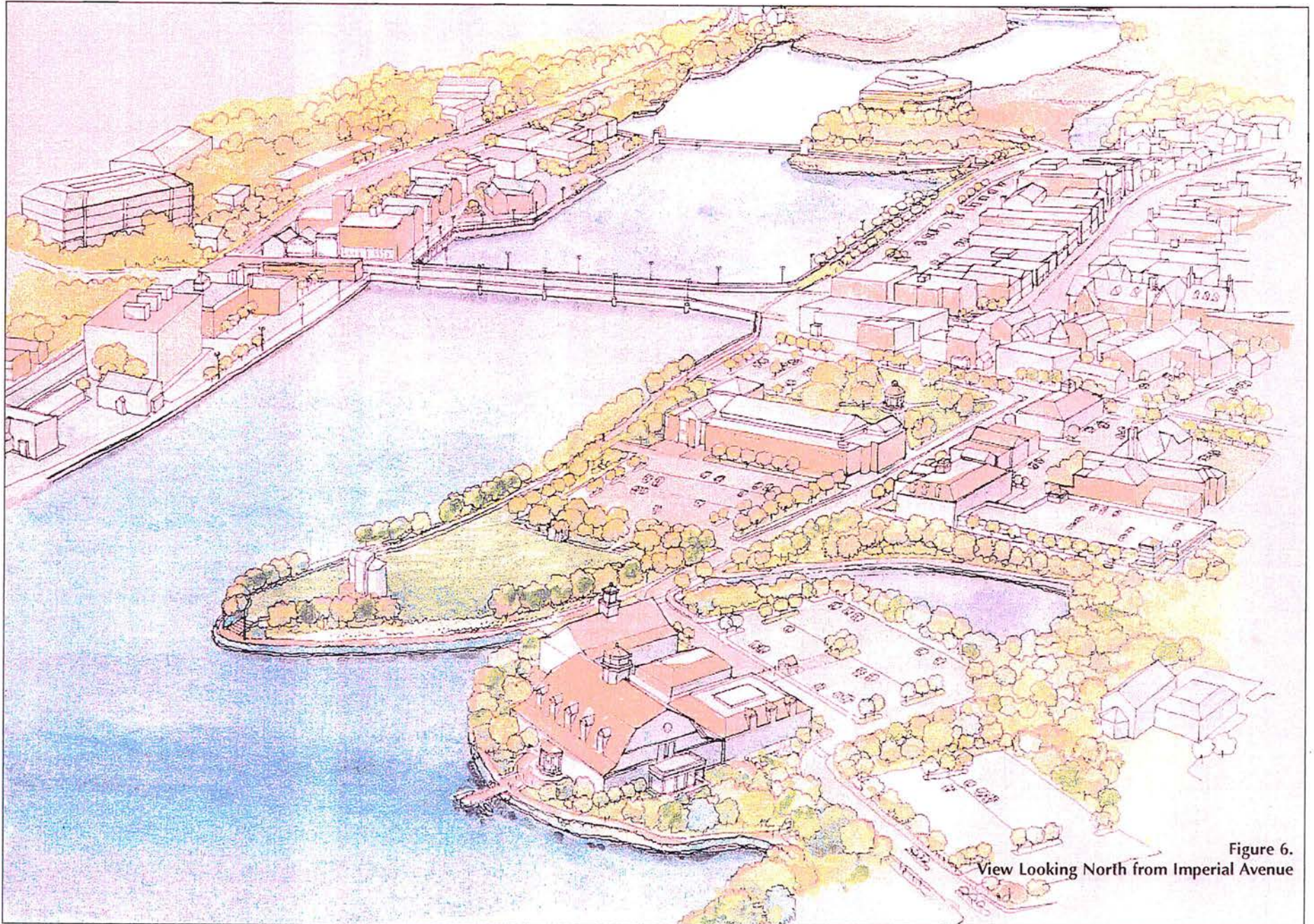


Figure 6.
View Looking North from Imperial Avenue

APPENDIX A: List of Interviewed Interested Parties

The interviews took place within a three-week period from November 20 to December 8, 2000, and were conducted as follows:

- **16 Interested Parties met with BFJ (November 20, November 27)**
- **18 groups/individuals were interviewed by members of the Planning and Zoning Commission between November 27 and December 8.**

In total over 110 people attended these series of discussions. The Interested Parties that met with BFJ were as follows:

- **Architectural Review Board**
- **Barons South Committee**
- **Chamber of Commerce Downtown Merchants**
- **Coalition to Save Baron's South & Winslow Park**
- **Friends of Winslow Park**
- **Historic Society**
- **League of Women Voters**
- **Land Acquisition Committee**
- **Levitt Pavilion**
- **Riverwalk Committee**
- **Parks & Recreation Commission**
- **Westport Arts Center**
- **Westport Country Playhouse**
- **Westport Senior Center**
- **Westport YMCA**
- **Youth Commission**

Meetings with members of the Planning and Zoning Commission involved the following:

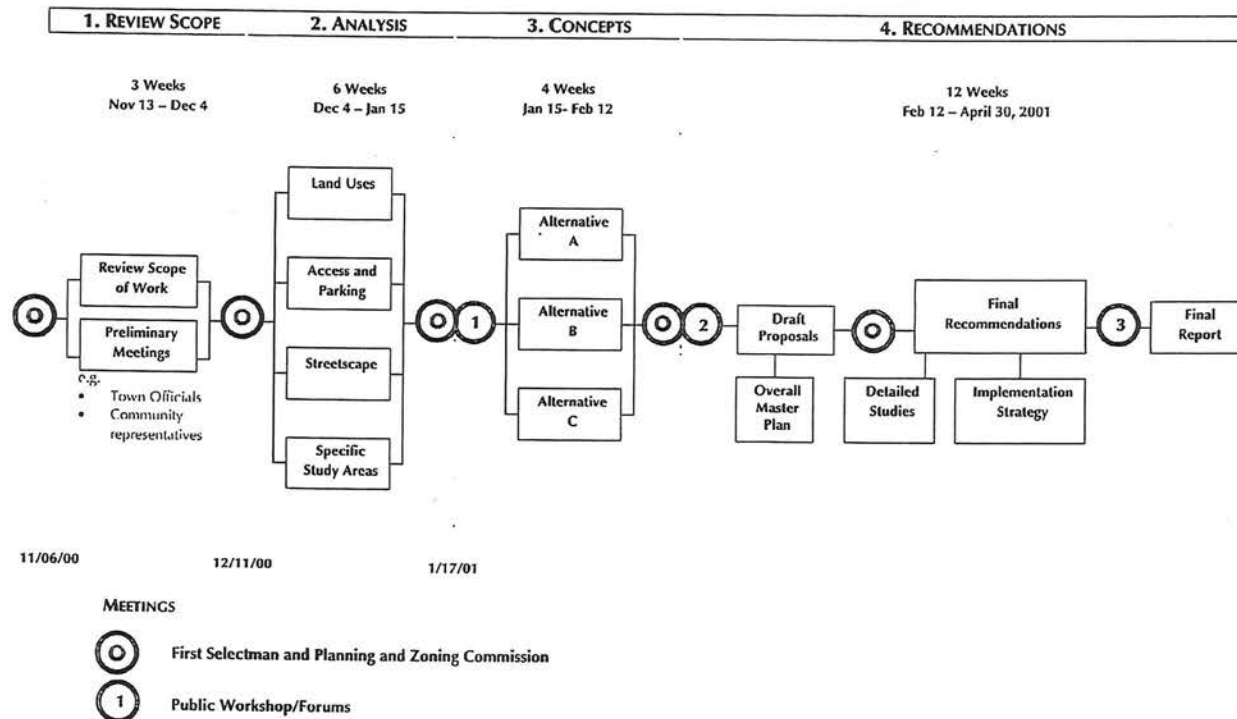
- **Beautification Committee**
 - **Christ and Holy Trinity Church**
 - **Interfaith Housing**
 - **New Neighbors of Westport**
 - **Norwalk Transit**
 - **Police Department**
 - **RTM Long Range Planning Committee**
 - **Saugatuck Congregational Church**
 - **Selectman's Maintenance Committee**
 - **School Bus Storage Facility**
 - **Westport Board of Finance**
 - **Westport Community Theater**
 - **Westport Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief**
 - **Westport Public Library**
 - **Westport Woman's Club**
 - **Westport Young Women's League**
 - **US Postal Service**
-

APPENDIX B. Downtown Westport Workshop Report

Introduction

The Town of Westport First Selectman and the Planning and Zoning Commission have undertaken a downtown study to determine community goals and needs for a vibrant and functional town core. Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc. (BFJ) was retained by the Town to assist the Commission and the First Selectman with the preparation of Downtown Plan.

This Workshop Report briefly summarizes the process and the results of the workshop session conducted on January 17, 2001. For a more complete understanding of the entire study process, this report also provides an overview of the entire process (see flowchart below). The study began in November 2000 with preliminary meetings with key interested groups. The Commission and First Selectman also met with a number of key factions and individuals. With a vast amount of knowledge gained from the meetings, a summary analysis of key issues was attained.



WORKSHOP PROCESS

The workshop was conducted at Bedford Middle School, utilizing the auditorium and other space within the building. The First Selectman, Diane Farrell and the Planning and Zoning Commission Chair Eleanor Lowenstein provided welcoming remarks to workshop participants. BFJ members provided an overview of the workshop process and a slide show highlighting the issues identified during the initial data-gathering phase. The visual presentation was intended to engage participants in a dialogue for each of the following issues:

- **Open Space**
- **Parking**
- **Traffic & Traffic Calming**
- **Land Use Mix**
- **Riverfront Uses**
- **Building Design**
- **Streetscape Design**

After a brief break, the attendants re-grouped at a table designated with one of the above noted topics. The members at each break-out group were asked to assign a recorder for notes and a spokesperson to present the groups' findings. After an hour of discussion of the assets of the downtown and the recommendation for improvement relative to the specific issue, the spokesperson presented findings to the all participants.

Summaries of each of the break-out tables follow in this report. The round table findings will assist in guiding the development of concepts for the next phase.

Open Space

The Open Space network includes a number of major park areas as well as smaller landscaped open space within downtown. Please review:

A. Future Role and Function of:

- 1) Winslow Park
 - **Left as open space**
 - **Include greater uses to help bring people to it i.e. Central Park meadows, play fields need more parking – small playground**
- 2) Barons South
 - **Sell off piece**
 - **Needs signage – access has been discouraged**
 - **Utilize buildings that already exist**
 - **No YMCA since it is not municipal use, it has private member ship, would be too big and the Y had the opportunity to buy the site.**
 - **YMCA could be sited on Barons if it is an advantage to the Town and the old building generates taxes**
 - **Senior center**
- 3) Jesup Green
 - **Connect with Levitt near Muddy Brook – connect to parking**
 - **More green**
- 4) Avery Commons
 - **Leave untouched**

Also: West side of River – should be considered into open space plan

B. Linkages: How can pedestrian linkages be improved to?

- **Connect the various open space areas.**
- **Provide better connections between open space areas and the riverfront.**

PARKING

Interested Parties involved in the Downtown Study cited the need for additional public parking as a major priority for the downtown.

Please review:

A. The key problems related to the existing provision of parking within downtown.

- **Perception of convenient parking**
- **Shoppers vs. Employee parking**
- **Mix uses cause parking conflicts**
- **More enforcement required**
- **Poor signage**
- **One-way streets needed**
- **More educated parkers**
- **Shuttle could help increase walking within the Downtown**
- **Lack of metered parking**
- **Lack of parking in parks**
- **Out of town – commuter parking**
- **Lack of designated parking**
- **Lack of handicapped parking**
- **Merchant preferred parking**
- **Poor parking / traffic design**

B. Ideas that should be considered in providing for additional parking (location, design, etc.)

- **Relocating the YMCA will offer more parking downtown**
- **Inform where parking is available – signs and maps**
- **Metered parking**
- **Compare to other towns**
- **Use police to move traffic**
- **Shuttle – workers and shopper**
- **Consolidated parking – decks/garages**
- **Main Street should be mainly pedestrian**
- **Parks must have more parking**
- **Retail employees should park outside immediate area**
- **Education and police control programs important**

C. What priority action(s) should be taken to address the problems identified in (A) above.

- **Consolidate parking in decks/garages**
- **Employees Park in outlying lots**
- **Education – Police Control, Signs, Maps, Ambassadors – walking cops**
- **Metered parking**

TRAFFIC AND TRAFFIC CALMING

Traffic flow problems in key areas of the Downtown have been mentioned by a number of people. Traffic flow can be controlled by a number of mechanisms, including management plans, speed humps/bumps, intersection bump-outs and varying road widths.

Discuss:

A. Locations of traffic problem areas in the Downtown.

- **Main Street – where 2 way becomes 1 way**
- **Jesup Green area – difficulty with accessing library**
- **Along Main Street – Parking conflicts – wipe chalk off tires – commercial loading areas**
- **Post Road at Church – light too slow to allow pedestrian crossing**
- **North Compo at Post Road – North Compo too narrow for flow**
- **Parker Harding – Confusing flow pattern – off center view with light**

B. Where in the Downtown traffic calming is required/necessary.

- **Circular flow of traffic up Main & Circle around to east and west**
- **Pedestrian Mall for main street – Configure access only for commercial vehicles**
- **Main Street a one way heading north up to Avery Place**
- **Link customer parking behind Main Street with the Elm Street parking lot.**
- **Mix road/parking linkage from Avery Place to Elm Street to help the Main Street one-way flow pattern**
- **Change lighting signal at Main and Post Road – synchro nize and more pedestrian friendly**
- **“Courtesy is contagious” signs throughout downtown**
- **Flash lights at drivers even when police are not around.**
- **Reconfigure Parker – Harding – Green space**
- **Trolley to link downtown areas**

C. What types of traffic calming measures are preferred.

- **Bump-outs along key pedestrian areas of the downtown**
- **Trolley linking parking areas**
- **Better/more pedestrian crossing areas**

LAND USE MIX

The dominant building uses in downtown include a mix of retail, office, institutional, government and park uses. Please discuss:

A. The qualities and benefits derived from the current building / land use mix.

- **The concentration of retail is desirable**
- **The riverfront is a benefit**
- **Zoning regulations important in order to retain the present commercial conditions**
- **Mixed uses encouraged**

B. What uses/activities are missing from downtown?

- **Theatre and arts center needed downtown**
 - **Town Green and Town hall should be center of Town, possibly a band shell**
 - **Common lighting, walkways and street furniture for downtown area**
 - **Lighting and walkway required for Barons South**
-

C. What actions should be taken to create a fuller, more attractive mix of uses?

- **Residential in the Downtown**
- **No parking decks**
- **Pedestrian bridge from Gorham to Save the Children property**
- **Road from Imperial Avenue and Library to parking lot**

D. What uses should be considered for the YMCA site in the event that the "Y" relocates to alternative site?

- **Art Center**
- **Housing on second floor**
- **Retail uses on first floor**

RIVERFRONT USES

Parking lots and the Riverwalk about the river on the east shoreline. Buildings, parking areas and a walkway are adjacent to the west shore. Please review:

A. The potential for a pedestrian bridge to link both sides of the river.

- **Link to West (near)**
- **Gorham Island – widen for bike**
- **Downstream - near Sunoco Station from small park on West**

B. Where a river walk could be expanded to further link to areas beyond the downtown and enhance the existing facilities.

- **More Bike paths – Baker Avenue to the western shore.**
- **Make 'Paths' Friendly so as to induce One- Stop parking**
- **Loop would provide no "dead end" parking – Saugatuck Loop**
- **Terraced Lots**
- **Bring riverwalk across Post Road along Parker Harding**
- **More fill behind Parker Harding for Park**
- **Create 'Paris' on the Saugatuck**
- **Dredge the river to bring boats to Downtown Area**
- **Extend walk to Canal Park area**
- **Extend walk to east to Imperial lot**

C. What types of facilities could be installed to encourage a more active use of the river in the Downtown area.

- **Increase water transportation**
 - **Do nothing - passive use**
 - **Dock or ramp at downtown**
 - **Need alternative to Post Road Bridge as thru traffic point**
 - **Bike and Pedestrian Bridge both above and below Post Road**
 - **More sculpture, art, fountains**
 - **Farmers Market**
-

BUILDING DESIGN

Predominantly in the Downtown, buildings are 1 ½ and 2 stories in height and many are exemplary of traditional New England design. As things change, new buildings will be erected and existing buildings will be threatened by renovation and demolition. Consider:

A. What buildings in the Downtown best exemplify Westport's historic character and quality?

- **YMCA is "Westport" signature building**
- **Shop in rear concept acceptable i.e. "Onion Alley"**
- **Tavern on Main – design, "up off street"**
- **Churches**
- **Westport Historical Society**
- **Town Hall**
- **Downtown Post Office – metal grill of envelopes**
- **"Westport Bank" – 20's look**
- **Village Square**

B. What actions should be considered to upgrade the visual appearance of the less-attractive structures in Downtown?

- **Improve area behind Inn at National Hall with landscaping/benches**
- **No access for people to congregate close to where they park**
- **Parking limit to downtown use**
- **Consider pedestrian area where Main Street is cut off to cars**
- **Main Street building mall**
- **Achorn Bank complex – lacking in character**
- **Gorham – "garden glow"**

C. What design standards or guidelines (i.e. window styles, façade treatments, roof design, etc.) could be implemented to preserve the existing appearance of the Downtown?

- **No flat roofs**
- **Height limit – no more than two stories**
- **Encourage Multi-use building with professional, commercial/retail, housing**
- **Affordable housing**
- **Signage: conformity of signs/retail, no "neon"**

STREETSCAPE DESIGN

Streetscape includes sidewalk design, landscape treatment, street furniture, etc. that helps to establish a particular character or quality to the street.

Please discuss:

A. Existing streetscape qualities that should be retained/enhanced.

- **New England character: cobblestone, brick materials, iron work, clapboard**
 - **Consistency of street design**
 - **Signs and advertising consistency**
 - **Examples: YMCA facades, Across from P.O., Village Square area, Old library corner, National Hall and west side of river**
 - **Variety of uses, architectural styles**
-

B. List particular problem areas and negative features that should be addressed.

- P & Z regulations that restrict change
- Inadequate pedestrian crosswalks
- Inadequate signage
- Traffic calming measures
- Increase times/events for pedestrian use of Main St.
- Parked cars: Parker-Harding/Jessup's Green e.g.
- Varied sidewalk treatment
- Inconsistent plantings
- Lack of consistent lighting
- Public / informational signage

C. Ideas and recommendations that should be considered in the Plan.

- Interface with state regarding signage, etc.
- Improved linkages: pathways, "Emerald Necklace", lighting
- Embrace river edge
- Improved garbage handling
- Consistent street furniture design
- Review town regulations regarding signage
- Examine options to provide incentives (zoning, grants, etc.)
- Improved pedestrian crossings with "bump-outs"
- Reduce continuous lengths of on-street parking

D. Identify one or two priority actions that the town should take as part of an early action plan.

- Avoid actions that inhibit long-term plans
- New street furniture e.g. garbage cans/plantings
- Cross walk design
- Study regulations that need revision: signage, incentives

"We Will Transmit This Town Greater, Better & More Beautiful Than Was Transmitted to Us"

