

1998

## Urban Design Study for Downtown Taunton, Massachusetts

Kevin R. Scanlon  
*University of Rhode Island*

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**Urban Design  
Study  
for**

**Downtown Taunton,  
Massachusetts**

By:

Kevin R. Scanlon

A Research Project Submitted in Partial Fullfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Community Planning

University of Rhode Island  
1998

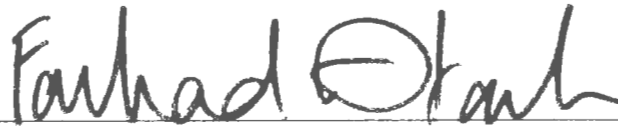
**Urban Design  
Study  
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Downtown Taunton,  
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Research Project  
Of

Kevin R. Scanlon

Approved:

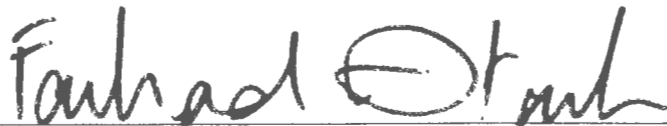
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Acknowledged:

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## ABSTRACT

This project is an urban design study that encompasses the Downtown area of Taunton, Massachusetts. The boundaries for the study area include the Mill River along the western boundary, Washington Street along the north, Pleasant Street, Leonard Street and Fruit Street along the east, and Church Green and Spring Street along the south boundary. Downtown Taunton is a very well defined and preserved city center that is centered on the Taunton Green and possesses a large number of historic structures. In recent years the downtown has suffered from increasing traffic congestion, the slow destruction of the area's historic character as modern buildings are constructed on the outskirts of the downtown and in some cases in the downtown itself, and empty storefronts due to a variety of factors. The challenge in completing this study is to develop a plan that will preserve the downtown's historic character, create a more viable business environment, and create a safer and more attractive environment for pedestrians and motorists. The study is composed of five parts. These include an introduction followed by a short history of the city and downtown area, the structure of city government and a brief profile of the city's economic and demographic makeup. Part three is an analysis of the downtown to determine assets and liabilities. Part four outlines recommendations to improve the downtown and the last part outlines an implementation strategy to improve the study area functionally and aesthetically.

In completing the study the built environment is analyzed to identify the assets and deficiencies of the built environment. In performing this analysis, techniques such as figure/ ground, lynch, and linkage analyses are being used in conjunction with windshield surveys, reviews of existing regulations and studies and interviews with city officials and business owners in the study area. This analysis is then used to develop recommendations to address aspects of the downtown such as zoning, traffic flow, parking, landscaping, street furniture and other amenities, aesthetics, facade treatments, signs and open spaces in an effort to improve the downtown. This study also takes the recommendations one step further by including an implementation strategy that identifies responsible persons, groups, or departments, possible funding sources and assigns a priority to each of the recommendations.

The analysis of the study area illustrated the strong base and potential that exists in the downtown in terms of the areas character, layout, architectural beauty, parks, and location. Many of the deficiencies identified are cosmetic in nature although some substantial changes such as traffic flow and the renovation of Court Street are needed. The goal is to provide a built environment that is uniquely and effectively designed, that possesses its own character, is attractive to behold, and convenient and safe to frequent. This creates a sense of place and economic vitality. Downtown Taunton already possesses many of these qualities and the implementation of this plan will move the Downtown closer to fully achieving the above stated goal.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank all the professors and teachers that I have studied under during the course of my schooling. Without their guidance and instruction I would not have been able to obtain a Masters Degree or any other degree for that matter. In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Farhad Atash for his persistence in getting me to return to school to complete my degree and for being my Major Professor for this project. I would also like to thank William Fitzgerald, DPW Commissioner and former Planning Director for Taunton, Ma. and Dr. Howard Foster for being readers for this project.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction



Figure 1: Taunton Green and Superior Courthouse as seen from Main Street

## **1. Background and Objectives of the Study**

In examining an area anywhere in the world, there are a multitude of variables that interact to create the social, cultural, and built environment that people live in, work in and visit on a daily basis. Therefore, in studying areas it is necessary to arrange these variables in a hierarchy of importance. Urban design focuses primarily on the physical elements of an area. This is not to say that other variables are ignored or unimportant but that analysis from an urban design standpoint perceives the physical elements of an area as the most important. The result of this importance on the physical elements of an area is that a land use analysis is the basis for examining existing conditions in the study area.

The City of Taunton is the largest city in area in the state of Massachusetts, encompassing 31,744 acres, or 49.6 square miles. Taunton is located in central southeastern Massachusetts and serves as the seat of Bristol County (as Map 1 shows). The city is located 18 miles north of Fall River, 22 miles northwest of New Bedford, 18 miles northeast of Providence, Rhode Island, and 16 miles south of Brockton. Boston to the north, Newport to the south, and Cape Cod to the east are all approximately 30 miles from Taunton. Taunton shares municipal boundary lines with Norton and Easton to the north, Raynham and Middleborough to the east, Lakeville to the southeast, Dighton and Berkley to the south and Rehoboth to the west (see Map #2). The major access routes to the city are Interstate 495, U.S. 44, and state routes 140, 138, 24, and 104. These routes also provide easy access to Interstates 93, 95, 195, and 295.

The downtown area of Taunton to be included in this study is located in the center of the City and is centered on the Taunton Green. The green is surrounded by a network of major arteries (Rt44, Rt140, and Rt138) that form a star shaped road network that converges on the Taunton Green. The green and roads are surrounded by a densely developed area of commercial and mixed use buildings and government buildings such as the court house and post office. Moving away from the green along the major thoroughfares such as Broadway (Rt138) and Main Street (Rt44 and Rt140) buildings are constructed with zero front setbacks and the vast majority of buildings are 100 + years old. At the end of Main Street is Church Green which is dominated by the First Parish Church and another fountain. Parking is provided on-street and in several parking areas located behind the buildings fronting on the major streets. This development pattern and the structures that compose it have not changed appreciably during the last century and will be the focus of this study.

In addressing the problems outlined above and achieving the desired outcomes, a detailed study of the downtown area examining several issues must be completed. The built environment will be examined to identify “lost spaces” and underutilized areas using techniques such as figure/ground analysis, lynch analysis and linkage analysis. The architecture of buildings and elements such as architectural styles, rhythm of facades, rooflines, materials, signs, and streetline continuance will be studied. Traffic patterns in the study area will be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the circulation system not only in terms of facilitating the movement of automobiles but also in terms of linking the area together, providing a positive impact on visual elements, and creating a road

system that does not act as a barrier to pedestrians. A review of zoning regulations such as allowed uses, intensity of use regulations, and parking and landscaping requirements to examine their effectiveness in preserving the study areas character will also be conducted. It is also essential to examine the location and accessibility of parking areas in the study area, the visual impacts and the management of those parking areas, studying open spaces and natural resources such as the Mill River to determine their level of utilization, their place in the urban environment and how to make them a more integral part of the urban landscape. Other areas of importance include evaluating street furniture and signs such as sitting areas, trash receptacles, lighting, traffic signals, bus shelters, fountains, planters, notice boards, and newspaper dispensers to determine whether adequate amounts are present, they are located correctly, are arranged properly and are of a type and design appropriate for the area.

## **2. Significance of the Study**

The study area for this project is downtown Taunton, Massachusetts. The downtown area is centered around the Taunton Green which serves as a focal point not only for the downtown but for the entire City. Downtown Taunton is a very well defined and preserved city center that possesses a city green and a large concentration of historic buildings. The boundaries of the downtown area are readily apparent as one moves away from the Taunton Green. Immediately abutting this historic area are more modern buildings used for a variety of commercial uses. The downtown has suffered from increasing traffic congestion, the slow destruction of its historic character as modern buildings are constructed on the outskirts and in some cases in the downtown itself, and empty storefronts due to a variety of factors. The challenge is to develop a plan that will preserve the downtown area's historic character, create a more viable business environment, and create a safer and more attractive environment for pedestrians and by balancing their needs with those who drive.

## **3. Method/ Approach of the Study**

In analyzing the study area it will be necessary to use the following techniques

**Figure/Ground analysis-** Figure/ground analysis is based on figure/ground theory. This theory examines the relationship between the built environment and remaining urban open spaces. Analyzing this pattern allows one to gain an understanding of, and establishing, a hierarchy of spaces which determine the character of the urban fabric. There are two elements to figure ground analysis. These are structures (figure) and open spaces (ground). The objective of a figure ground analysis is to develop a balance between the built environment and the resulting open spaces.

**Lynch analysis-** There are 5 components to the urban environment in a Lynch analysis. These are edges, landmarks, districts, nodes, and paths. The object of a Lynch analysis is to relate the urban fabric to the values, needs, and desires of the user population.

**Linkage analysis-** Linkage analysis examines the lines that connect elements (ie nodes, landmarks etc) of the urban fabric together. Elements that link parts of the urban

environment together are lines. The emphasis is placed on circulation patterns. The object of linkage analysis is to develop an efficient, convenient circulation system that connects the urban fabric rather than dividing it.

Other planning techniques that will be utilized include a windshield analysis of the study area, interviews and discussions with business owners, residents, and city officials, and a review of existing regulations and studies. The windshield analysis will consist of walking and driving the study area to get a feel for how the downtown functions and appears. The interviews and discussions will attempt to obtain a different perception on how the downtown does and does not meet the needs of residents, businesses, and users. The review of existing studies and regulations will identify where changes have been proposed and implemented in the past, how the changes affected the downtown and where regulations are contrary to preserving and enhancing the downtown's character.

City maps obtained from the City Engineering Department will be used as base maps for displaying information such as traffic patterns, building coverages, parking areas etc.

Once the analysis of the downtown area is complete, a set of recommendations will be presented to improve the area's appearance, to preserve the area's historic character and provide an environment that functions in a more efficient and convenient manner.

Recommendations will address a number of areas including;

1. Zoning revisions (such as uses allowed, setbacks, landscaping, signs)
2. Traffic pattern and flow (possible alternative traffic patterns and safety issues),
3. The allocation and accessibility of open spaces and landscaping (areas where additional open spaces are needed, where access to others needs to be improved, and a landscaping plan to beautify the downtown),
4. The visibility, quantity and appearance of parking areas (addressing signs, landscaping, cleaning, fees charged, availability),
5. Methods for preserving and enhancing architectural "harmony" between buildings in the area. (facade improvements, scale, setbacks, materials allowed), and
6. Reclaiming "lost spaces" (underutilized or unused areas), and creating a safer environment for pedestrians (crosswalks, pedestrian signals, signs)

#### **4. Project Area Boundary**

The downtown area of Taunton has been selected as the project area for this study. The project area boundaries are the Mill River along the western boundary, Washington Street along the north, Pleasant Street, Leonard Street and Fruit Street along the East, and Church Green and Spring Street along the Southern boundary (as shown on Map #3).

#### **5. Outline of the Study**

The study has been organized into five parts. Following this introduction, Chapter two provides a short history of the City and downtown area, the structure of the City's government and a brief profile of the City's economic and demographic makeup.

Chapter three will analyze the study area to determine the areas assets, potential, and liabilities. Chapter four outlines a plan in the form of recommendations and Chapter five outlines implementation strategies to improve the study area aesthetically and functionally.



Vermont

Maine

New  
Hampshire

# Map #1 Locus

Scale: 1 inch equals 47.25 miles

Massachusetts

Boston

Taunton, Ma

Connecticut

Rh



Map #2 Project Area Locus

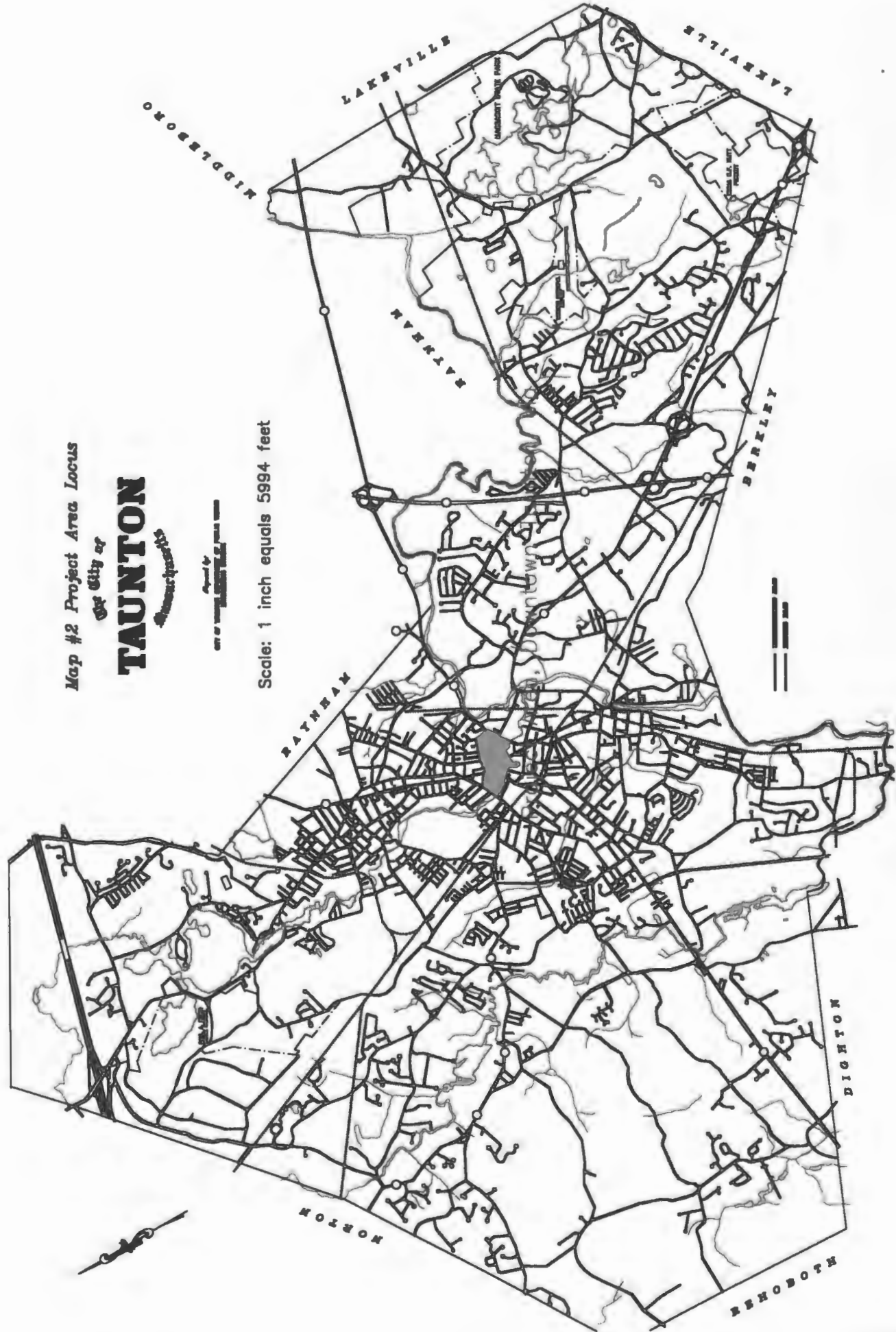
City of Taunton

# TAUNTON

Massachusetts

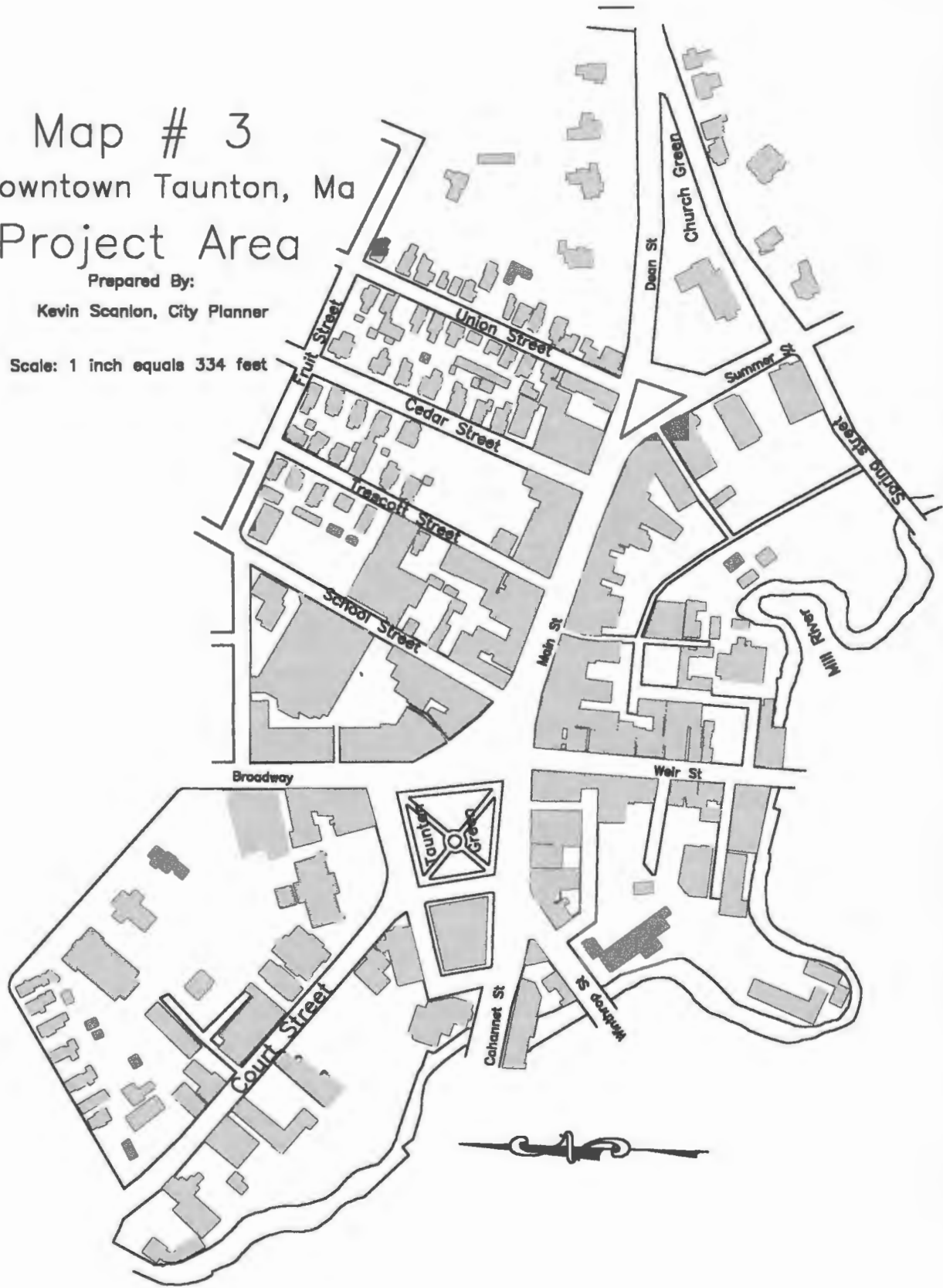
Prepared by  
City of Taunton Planning Department

Scale: 1 inch equals 5994 feet



Map # 3  
Downtown Taunton, Ma  
Project Area

Prepared By:  
Kevin Scanlon, City Planner  
Scale: 1 inch equals 334 feet



# Chapter 2

## Background



Figure 2: Taunton Green as seen from Superior Courthouse

## 1. History

Throughout the history of Taunton's development, the Taunton Green and the downtown area has always been the center of activity and growth. Historically, the downtown has not only been the geographic center of the City but the economic and social center of the City as well. It is therefore essential to have an understanding of how the downtown and Taunton developed.

Elizabeth Pole, Taunton's founder, was born in August of 1588 in Shute, England. She migrated to Dorchester, Massachusetts in the early 1630's where she lived for several years. In 1637, finding the Boston area too crowded, she left Dorchester and established a plantation at Tecticut which is now part of East Taunton. It is believed that she bought Tecticut from three local Native Americans in 1638 for a jack knife and a pot of beans. Taunton is the first and only city in the United States to be established by a woman. During the same year, Richard Williams and several other settlers purchased and settled an eight square mile area west of Tecticut known as Cohannet from Massasoit, the chief of the Wampanoag Indian tribe. This area included what is now downtown Taunton. On March 3, 1640, Tecticut and Cohannet merged and were renamed "Taunton," a Gaelic word meaning "town by the river," by the British settlers after Taunton, England. The settlement continued to grow rapidly, and in 1649 the Taunton Green was established. Many of the town's first houses had been located nearby and along Dean Street, paralleling the Taunton River which included what is now known as Church Green at the eastern most part of the study area.

Following this early period of growth, the residents soon found a need for more woodland and meadows. In 1662, the town made the "north purchase" which totaled 50 square miles and included what is now Norton, Easton, Mansfield, and North Taunton. In 1672, the "south purchase," which totaled an additional 12 square miles and included what is now Dighton, was made. This increased the size of the city to about 124 square miles in size. When Bristol County was created in 1685 Taunton's lands were confirmed by the Plymouth Government.

During the 1700's, Taunton began to split into numerous new towns. These included Norton in 1710, Dighton in 1712, Easton in 1725, Raynham in 1731, Berkley in 1735, and Mansfield in 1775. Taunton was made the County Seat in 1746 and the first court house was erected in the downtown the next year. After the divisions of land and the fixing of the town's territorial boundaries, Taunton's growth accelerated and large numbers of new settlers were attracted into the area.

The Taunton River was a great stimulus to farming and industry, spurring the development of a commercial center at the "Neck of Land," by the junction of the Taunton and Three-Mile Rivers which is now part of downtown Taunton. The river also became a convenient channel for the transport of produce from the neighboring towns of Somerset, Dighton, and Berkley via the Weir Seaport to Naragansett Bay. The town's early interest in shipping grew from its limited production of agricultural products. Taunton was a pioneer of fore and aft schooners, and at one time in its history was the

third leading seaport in New England. Taunton's farms raised livestock and depended on staples of wheat and corn that were imported from colonial ports. The State organized a lottery in 1760 for the purpose of raising funds for the removal of large rocks to improve the navigability of the river. Operations in iron production, pottery and brick making also developed in the 1700's. The iron production was centered on bog iron deposits around Scaddings Pond, forming the first permanent ironworks in America. The brick and pottery businesses developed near the Taunton River where rich clay deposits lie.

Robert Treat Paine settled in the city in 1761 and established a law practice in the downtown. He was a delegate to the First and Second Continental Congresses in 1774 and 1775 and signed the Declaration of Independence on July 2, 1776. A statue now stands in his honor in front of City Hall on Main Street. During the resulting American Revolution, 780 men from Taunton served in the fight against England.

The first Town Hall was built in 1816 and the third Court House in 1827. On September 23, 1838 the town records were destroyed in the Main Street Fire. The downtown was subsequently rebuilt and the second Town Hall, which is now the rear portion of the current City Hall, was built in 1848. Abraham Lincoln, then a Congressman, spoke in the city during the same year. Also during the early 1800's, Taunton experienced the beginnings of corporate industrialization and the first company villages were established. These villages would later develop into the city's middle and working class neighborhoods. These villages included Hopewell, Britanniaville, Whittenton, Oakland, and Westville. The mills were originally small scale operations with few employees but began to expand as small stock holding companies were formed for the production of nails, paper, wool, cotton, copper, and pewter.

Industrial syndicates began forming in the 1820's, the largest of which was the Taunton Manufacturing Company. These syndicates were designed to pool the business expertise and profits of shareholders and led to mill owners achieving almost aristocratic status as their wealth increased and the immigration boom began in the 1830's. This intense growth spurred a building boom between 1830 and 1860. The most concentrated area of development was Weir Village where streets were densely developed and the first multi-family housing appeared. This building boom was enhanced by the opening of the Taunton Branch Railroad in 1835 and the improvements of many of the city's streets (Bay Road, Bristol Path (Tremont Street), Somerset Avenue and Weir Street, Providence Turnpike (Winthrop Street), and Boston Turnpike (Broadway)). This star shaped road system converged on the Taunton Green and downtown area and served to link the city's center with the satellite villages.

The improving transportation system, the Civil War, and the continuing immigration boom continued to drive Taunton's economy in the mid to late 1800's. Locomotive manufacturing, cotton textiles, copper, iron, and silver products led the expansion. Whittenton Mills, Reed and Barton, and the Taunton Manufacturing Company were dominant businesses. Taunton was also home of Mason Locomotive, which pulled Lincoln's presidential train and helped to open up the American West. Additionally, the

first cotton flannel cloth was produced in Taunton mills. The Civil War's demand for materials drove the expansion and proliferation of all of the city's local industries. The shipping industry in Weir Village continued to develop due to the tremendous demand for coal, clay and bog iron for the rapidly expanding brick and stove making industries. The shipping fleet had more commercial value than any other single industry in the city during the late 1800's. After the Civil War, the construction of new municipal buildings in the downtown led to Taunton's designation as the 13<sup>th</sup> city in Massachusetts on June 6, 1864.

Yet another Main Street fire scorched Taunton in 1859. The central business district (which is now downtown) was partially rebuilt with semi-fireproof brick and stone commercial blocks. Other municipal buildings such as the 4<sup>th</sup> court house in 1895(which is the large dominating structure on the north side of the Taunton Green) and the first post office in 1897 (still currently open and operating on the west side of the Taunton green) were also built in the following years. The Taunton Green was circled with large estates of the city's prominent industrialists. Most development was still being attracted to the central city and industrial strongholds but villages in East Taunton began to develop along the rail lines between Boston, New Bedford, and Fall River.

Industrial and residential expansion continued through the beginning of the 1900's although not as strongly as the years immediately following the Civil War. Taunton's older industries began to decline and more diversified industries began to fill the void. The continued manufacturing of machinery, textiles, and silver, and the demand for labor required by many newer industries encouraged a slow but noticeable increase in population. The large land estates in central Taunton were subdivided for single family housing. As the land near the urban center was quickly used up in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, industrial, business, and residential settlement sought outlying locations, and a modern pattern of suburban decentralization began.

Taunton became known far and wide as "The Christmas City," a reputation which remained for many decades. Thousands of visitors would arrive nightly during the holiday season to see the lavishly decorated Taunton Green and downtown area.

The Great Depression which began in October of 1929 devastated much of the country economically through the 1930s. Yet Taunton was able to recover from its losses. Taunton's diverse economic base was able to withstand the loss of its textile mills. Iron products, particularly stoves and hot air furnaces continued to be manufactured throughout the period. The community drew closer together as churches, ethnic clubs and private charities provided relief to those in need. Soup kitchens and food distribution stations were located throughout the city, and hundreds of citizens participated in the public works projects that were central to FDR's New Deal. The presence of state and county agencies in the downtown continued to provide both jobs and stability throughout the depression. In addition, Taunton's reputation as a transportation center remained unaffected. Railroad traffic was still important but as the new networks of state and federal highways were constructed they too centered on Taunton.

The hurricane of 1938 lashed the city, causing floods which incapacitated the generating station of the Taunton Municipal Light Plant (TMLP) and crippled the nearby gas works. In 1939, Taunton celebrated its 300th year since being declared a town in 1639. The tercentenary celebration served as the pinnacle of a challenging decade in which Taunton had faced and then overcome economic hardship. Large industrial projects that had been left during the Depression began to revitalize, powered by a vigorous new economy.

On December 8, 1941 the United States entered WWII, its second world war in less than 25 years. Residents of Taunton faced the rationing of fuel, food and other necessities, while air raid drills and war bond campaigns took place on a regular basis. In 1942, Camp Myles Standish opened in northern Taunton as a debarkation station for GIs on their way to fight in Europe. The Camp, a 1,600 acre facility brought a little excitement, 1.5 million soldiers, and hundreds of jobs to wartime Taunton, helping the city to bounce back from the economic hardships of the Great Depression. Of the several thousand young men and women Taunton sent to serve in the European and Pacific, 163 lost their lives, and for more than three years the Taunton Daily Gazette published daily accounts of local men who had been killed, wounded or captured. When WWII finally ended, the local economy was booming after almost two decades of depression and world war. Taunton also lost soldiers in the Korean Conflict, including 19-year-old-Richard DeWert. Posthumously awarded a Medal of Honor for his “conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity,” DeWert became a local hero after being killed in action on April 5, 1951.

A break in Taunton’s main water supply line between Elder’s Pond and the city created a major disturbance in 1949. A 3-foot section of the pipe broke off, causing a 45- hour water famine which forced factories to close down, the lighting plant to draw water from the river, and the water pressure to drop to dangerously low levels. City officials searched for a solution which would prevent this type of emergency in the future; a solution which was eventually adopted was the construction of the reservoir on Prospect Hill.

In the thirty years after World War II, the “baby boom” generation came of age and the city financed a wave of school construction. Three elementary schools, two middle schools, a regional technical school and a new public high school were built during this period. In the twenty year period after 1973, Taunton finished most of the capital improvements required for its growth, including a waste water treatment facility, a water treatment plant, a Department of Public Works complex, an expansion of the city’s power plant, and the development of Myles Standish Industrial Park. The period after WWII also brought a great economic transition in Taunton. Older industries, such as textiles, tacks, stoves, bricks, and even silver (with the notable exception of Reed and Barton) began to disappear entirely. However, Taunton’s vast economic diversity allowed it to grow despite the decline in some of its industries. Throughout the five decades since the end of WWII, the only New England cities which have greater economic diversity than Taunton are Bridgeport, CT and Worcester, MA, both several times Taunton’s size in population.

Taunton owes much of its current economic competitiveness to the economic renaissance that began in the late 1970's. The fledgling Myles Standish Industrial Park was beginning to attract businesses and local officials boasted that the city would soon be linked to Interstate 495. When Interstate 495 finally opened in late 1982, space in the industrial park soon was at a premium and was nearly filled by the early 1990s. Along with industrial development, residential and commercial development was growing rapidly throughout the area, leaving Taunton at the beginning of 1990 with a population of approximately 50,000.

Through all of the growth and change leading up to the mid 1980's, the downtown remained the center of activity for the City and surrounding areas. However, the development of the Rt44 strip in Raynham and the development of the Silver City Galleria Mall at the junction of Routes 140 and 24 in Taunton in 1992 have had serious impacts on the downtowns viability as a commercial center.

The Galleria Mall, one of the largest in southern New England at 1.2 million square feet, was occupied at its opening with 160 tenants, providing hundreds of jobs for area residents. The presence of the Galleria has also spurred additional development nearby, with the upcoming construction of a 500,000 square foot shopping center known as Taunton Depot. This addition is likely to bring another one thousand jobs to the area and have additional impacts on the downtown.

In April, 1995 the Myles Standish Industrial Park added Phase II of its development, expanding to include an additional 218 acres. Residential development has grown quickly as well: over 1,000 acres of land were subdivided for development between 1985 and 1995. Taunton's school-aged population has swamped the city's elementary schools in recent years, spurring the construction of the East Taunton Elementary School opening in September of 1997.

While the downtown area from which Taunton and most of the region have developed from have grown and changed considerably, the downtown has always been the commercial and social center of activity for the City of Taunton and surrounding areas. While this has diminished somewhat in recent years, the efforts of local groups and City agencies to revitalize the downtown may reverse this trend and bring the downtown area back to the levels of social and economic significance that it experienced in the past.

## **2. Governmental Structure**

The City of Taunton, by charter, is governed by a Council- Mayor form of government. The Council has power of appointment as well as some approval authority over the final form of the financial budget. The Council has the capability to decrease but not increase budgetary spending. The Mayor prepares the budget and is the appropriating authority within the City.

There are 9 Council members, elected at large for 2 year terms. There are no term limits for councilors. The council determines the administrative policies for the city, appoints



most department heads, and alters or decreases the City's budget. The Mayor is elected every 2 years through popular election. No Mayor may hold office for more than 6 terms or 12 years. The Mayor chairs the City Council meetings and is an ex-officio and voting member of the School Committee. The Mayor appoints some department heads and many of the personnel that serve on various City boards and commissions with the Council's approval. Department Heads appointed by the Mayor include the City Solicitor, Conservation Director, Community Development Director, the Economic Development Director, Parks and Recreation Director, the Human Services Director, the Animal Control Officer and the mayors staff. The Animal Control Officer appointment does not require Council Approval. The Mayor prepares the financial budget which is submitted to the Council. The Mayor serves as the head of the City Government, focusing on policy and budget issues rather than administrative responsibilities in the every day management and operation of City departments.

There are many boards and commissions within the City some of which are appointed and others are elected to 2 year terms. Elected boards and Commissions include the Taunton Municipal Lighting Plant, the Planning Board, and the Zoning Board of Appeals. All other Boards and Commissions are appointed by either the Municipal Council or the Mayor.

Boards or Commissions appointed by the Council are:

Board of Assessors	Board of Health
Council on Arts	Library Trustees
Nursing Home Trustees	

Boards or Commissions appointed by the Mayor with Council approval are:

Airport Commission	Cable T.V. Commission
Cemetery Commission	Conservation Commission
Council on Aging	Employment Task Force
Historic District Commission	Taunton Housing Authority
Human Relations Commission	Industrial Development Commission
License Commission	Parks and Recreation Commission
Redevelopment Authority	Registrars of Voters

These boards and commissions are staffed with a large number of residents who make a substantial commitment of time, talent, and energy to serve. Some boards and commissions are relatively inactive and meet infrequently and others are very active and critical to the City. There are no limits on amount of time served for appointed boards and commissions, which can result in a board or commission having the same makeup for many years.

### **3. Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile**

In examining any area, it is essential to have a basic understanding of the demographic and economic composition of the area. The information provided below is based on the City as whole and not exclusively the downtown study area. However, the user population of this study area encompasses the entire City and therefore demographic and economic data on the entire City is germane to this study and has been included.

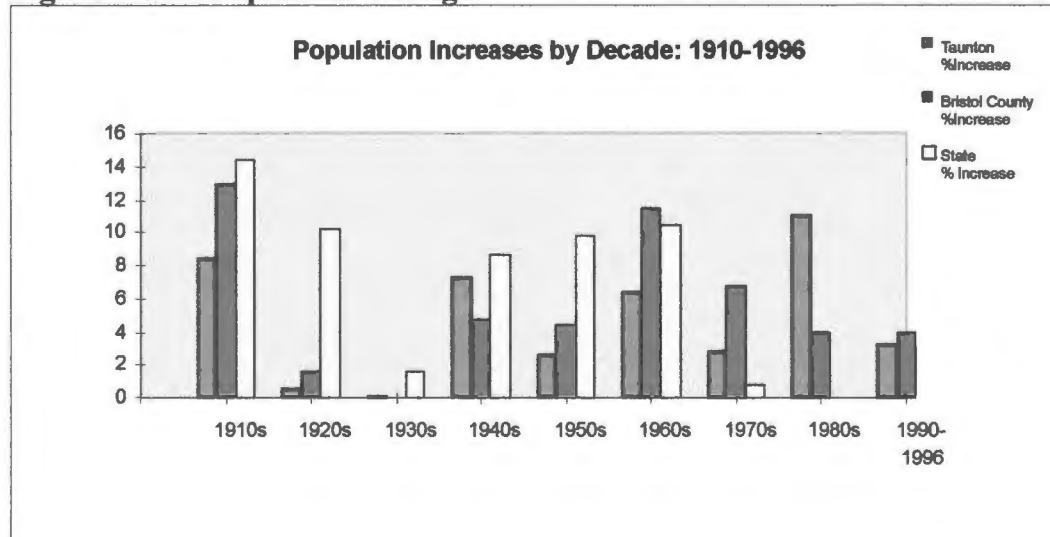
Population

**Table 1. Population of Taunton, Bristol County and the State of Massachusetts**

Year	Taunton	% Increase	Bristol County	% Increase	State % Increase
1910	34,259	---	318,573	---	---
1920	37,137	8.4	359,005	13.0	14.4
1930	37,355	0.6	364,590	1.6	10.3
1940	37,395	0.1	364,637	0.0	1.6
1950	40,109	7.3	381,569	4.7	8.7
1960	41,132	2.6	398,488	4.4	9.8
1970	43,756	6.4	444,301	11.5	10.5
1980	45,001	2.8	474,641	6.8	0.8
1990	49,832	11.0	493,389	4.0	---
1996	51,485	3.3	506,500	4.0	---

Taunton's population has increased with varying intensity throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The overall average rate of increase has been 4.0 percent for the past 85 years. The increase of 11 % the city experienced 1980 to 1990 is by far the largest single increase shown on the table. The 1990 to 1996 increase for the city is 3.3 %, resulting in an average growth for a whole decade of 7.45%. When the 1980 to 1990 increase is coupled with the 1990 through 1995 increase, we see indications of a trend toward an average growth rate in excess of the previous 4% average.

**Figure 3- Past Population Changes**



Population Projections

**Table 2- Population Projections**

1996	2000	2010	2020	% Increase (1996-2020)
51485	53544	56757	60162	17%

Source: Taunton City Planner

The population projections were derived by analyzing past population growth trends and current trends in the size of households from past census statistics, and the amount of anticipated growth in new homes which was compiled by the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD). A 4% increase was projected for 1996 through 2000 and a 6% per decade increase for the period 2000-2020. this results in an overall increase of 17% for the 24 year period.

Population by Sex

**Table 3-Population by Sex**

Sex	1980	1990	% Change
Male (M)	16,418	18,053	9.96
Female (F)	18,480	20,837	12.75
Under 16 (M&F)	10,530	10,942	3.91

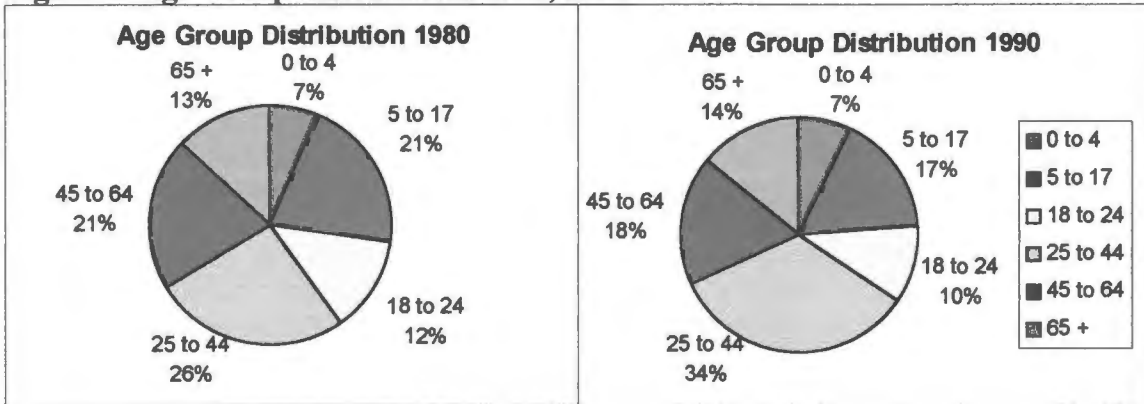
The distribution of the population by sex shifted slightly as the gap between the number of females and males widened from 13% to 15%. The number of children under 16 years of age remained relatively constant as the under 16 age groups share of the total population dropped from 23% to 22%.

Age Group Distributions

**Table 4- Age Group Distributions**

Age	1980	1990	# Change	% Change
0-4	3050	3665	615	20.2
5-17	9301	8280	-1,021	-11.0
18-24	5594	5225	- 369	-6.6
25-44	11878	16744	4,866	41.0
45-64	9316	8901	- 415	-4.5
65 +	5862	7017	1,155	19.7
Totals	45,001	49,832	4, 831	11.0

**Figure 4- Age Group Distributions 1980, 1990**



The distribution of the city's population across age groups shows an increase in children under the age of 4, an increase for those over age 65 and an increase in the 25 to 44 age categories. This reflects national trends towards an older average age for the population. In addition, the increase in single family housing (941 units) seems to be driven by those in the 25 to 44 age categories. The rise in the under 4 and 25 to 44 age groups also indicates that the families in the new single family units are young families which is driving the increase in young children.

*Population Distribution by Race*

**Table 5- Population Distribution by Race**

Race	1980	% of Total	1990	% of Total
White	43,380	96.4	47,484	95.3
Black	645	1.4	1,000	2.0
Asian, Indian & Other	976	2.2	1,348	2.7
Totals	45,001	100.0	49,832	100.0
Hispanic*	1,292	2.9	2,362	4.7

\* Hispanic population is included in other categories identified in the table above. The Hispanic population was broken out and shown separately because of its growing significance and importance in the City

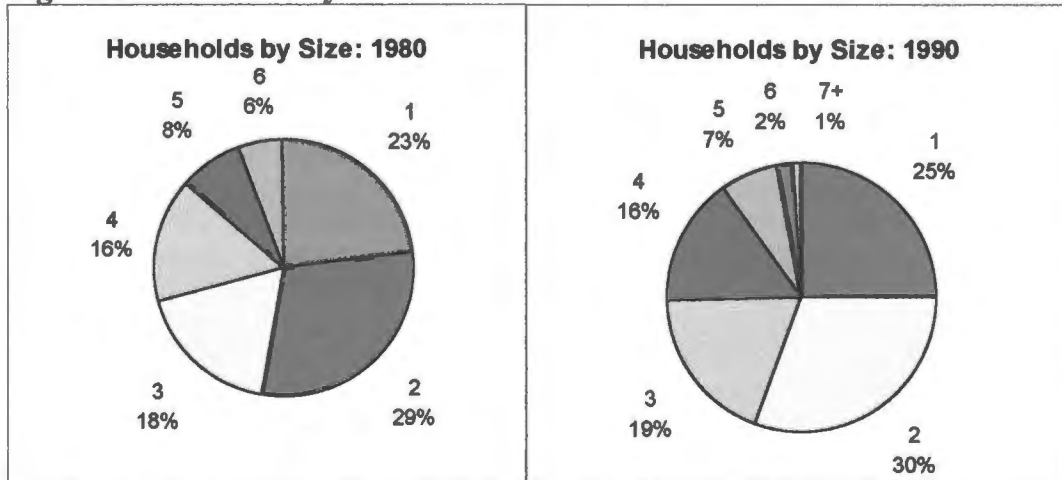
Approximately 4% of the City's population in 1980 indicated their race as Black, Indian, or Asian, while the total minority population (including Hispanics) was 5.7%. In 1990, almost 5% classified themselves as Black, Asian, or Indian, and the minority population reached 8.1% (including Hispanic residents). This information indicates a 63% increase in minorities and a 45% increase in non-Hispanic minorities. The trend indicates that the city is slowly becoming more diversified as minorities move into the City. The City's racial diversity is expected to increase steadily through the 1990's as the City continues to grow.

Households by Size

**Table 6- Number of Households by Size**

Persons	1980	1990	% Change
1	3,644	4,659	27.16
2	4,597	5,698	23.95
3	2,812	3,527	25.43
4	2,467	2,913	18.08
5	1,261	1,326	5.15
6	881	370	- 58.0
7 or more	N/A	156	----
Total	15,682	18,649	18.92

**Figure 5: Households by Size**



Large households (greater than 5) showed a marked decline through the 1980's. Single person households showed the largest increase with 2 and 3 person households close behind. This indicates a large increase in single parent households, and households with no children. The largest increase was in single individual households which are not family households. The distribution of family and non-family households is illustrated below.

*Household Type by Age*

**Table 7- Household Type by Age**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Family Household</b>	<b>Non-Family Households</b>
15-24	633	470
25-34	3,336	1,154
35-44	3,261	677
45-54	2,008	377
55-64	1,719	618
65-74	1,368	1,089
75 +	755	1,184

Source: 1990 Census

*Households by Type*

**Table -8 Households by Type**

<b>Total Households</b>	<b>Family Households</b>	<b>Female Headed Families</b>	<b>Persons Living in Households</b>	<b>Persons Per Household</b>	<b>Persons Living in Group Quarters</b>
18,849	13,182	1,261	48,892	2.59	940

Source: 1990 Census

These figures indicate a diversity of living arrangements found within the city. Over 5,000 households are non-family, and nearly 1,000 residents reside in group quarters. The number of female-headed families indicates that these types of households are also common in Taunton.

*Educational Attainment*

**Table -9 Educational Attainment**

<b>Area</b>	<b>High School Degree</b>		<b>4 plus Years College</b>	
	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>
Taunton	51.4%	66.8%	8.0%	12.1%
Bristol County	52.6%	65.0%	10.8%	15.9%
Massachusetts	72.1%	80.0%	20.0%	27.2%

Taunton made a substantial effort in the last 10 years to improve the overall education of its residents. This improvement has slightly narrowed the gap in high school degrees earned between Taunton and the state. However, Taunton has not been able to keep pace with the state's improvements in establishing a college educated population. These lower education levels can be attributed to a combination of factors. The large number of blue collar workers working in the manufacturing industries within the city have traditionally not needed high levels of education to perform their jobs. Socio-economic conditions such as single-parent households and low income have been shown to promote high rates of school dropout and inhibit the ability to earn a college degree. The demand for higher levels of education in all sectors indicate a need for higher levels of education for residents.

The correlation between the educational attainment of residents and income is supported by the following table which shows per capita income and how it has changed over the past 17 years. Current data is not available but it is estimated that per capita income is now between \$16,000 and \$18,000.

*Income*

**Table -10 Per Capita Income (Dollars per year)**

<b>Area</b>	<b>1979</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1989</b>
Taunton	6,161	9,742	13,613
Bristol County	6,252	9,961	13,853
Massachusetts	7,458	12,510	17,224

**Table -11 Median Household and Family Income (Dollars per year)**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Household</b>		<b>Family</b>	
	<b>1979</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1979</b>	<b>1989</b>
Taunton	15,701	32,315	18,675	38,534
Bristol County	15,473	31,520	18,334	38,003
Massachusetts	17,575	36,952	21,166	44,367

Taunton has consistently lagged behind the rest of the state in income levels, although the city's income rates are comparable to the rest of Bristol County. This disparity is due primarily to the traditional reliance on low skill manufacturing and textiles, retail trade, agriculture, and fishing in Taunton and Bristol County. Other regions, such as the Boston metro area, have a higher concentration and percentage of their job base in the white collar sectors which require higher education levels and pay significantly more. The gap between Taunton's per capita income and the state average has been widening, from 21% of Taunton's per capita income in 1979 to 27% in 1989. Average wage per worker in Taunton was \$22,225 during that year.

Taunton fares much better, however, when comparing Median Family and Median Household incomes to the state medians. In addition, median incomes in Taunton actually exceed the average for Bristol County. There are two possible explanations for the differences between per capita incomes and median incomes. The first is that Taunton could have more dual income families and households than the state and county averages. The second is that Taunton could have larger families than the county or state average. After reviewing the persons per households table earlier in this section, the indication would seem to be that Taunton has more dual income families than the state or county average.

# Chapter 3

## Analysis of Existing Conditions



Figure 6: Main Street looking towards Church Green



## 1. Land Use

A substantial portion of Taunton's urban areas were developed prior to the enactment of zoning laws. Therefore, the location of commercial and residential areas, as well as the density of development, reflect various trends in city and neighborhood design and growth patterns that have evolved over the past three centuries.

Taunton was founded as two separate villages which merged to become a single town in 1639. The village of Cohannet became what is now downtown Taunton, while the plantation colony at Tectitcut originated at what we now know as East Taunton. Settlement along the Taunton River and its tributaries shaped Taunton's development in the early parts of its history. The pattern of growth began to decentralize in the 1700's as agriculture and large stores of natural resources led to the development of many small outlying settlements. The downtown area continued to develop during this time period as stage lines and a court house were built in the downtown.

In the 1800's the patterns of growth began to shift again as industrialization began to occur in Taunton. Company villages began developing around the new mills, concentrated along the Taunton, Mill, and Three Mile Rivers. These later would become the core of the middle and working class neighborhoods, concentrated in the Weir and Whittenton areas.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the division of many of the large 19<sup>th</sup> century estates and undeveloped land in central Taunton for the construction of single family housing. As this land was used up, development pressures shifted to outlying areas and the modern pattern of suburban decentralization began to develop.

Since the 1950's there has been continuous new development into almost all areas of the city, concentrated along radial highways. There has been a major change in the distribution of its population and in the patterns of land use. Few areas have escaped the pressures of new single family, duplex, and apartment construction. This pattern has left large areas of vacant land surrounded by a network of development. Commercial development has been concentrated along major traffic routes and industrial development has been concentrated in the industrial park and Weir areas. East and West Taunton have not escaped the pressures of residential development but they have largely escaped the pressures of commercial and industrial development. This appears to be ending as development slowly creeps down Rt. 140 and along Rt. 44, though lack of sewer service will limit this expansion. Commercial development pressures along both of these corridors are bringing commercial uses closer and closer to the once isolated residential areas in East and West Taunton. These trends are expected to continue in the near future. The percentage of the city's area comprised of forests, wetland and open space has been shrinking as residential, commercial, and industrial development expand. Taunton's growth will have certain positive and negative impacts on many aspects of the city, yet careful planning and decision-making can help to mitigate negative impacts to Taunton, while maximizing benefit (see Map #4).

**Table 12- Past Land Use Estimates (acres)**

<b>Land Use Estimates</b>	<b>1951</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1997</b>
Agriculture	4,331	2,986	2,781	2,082	1,882
Forest, wetland, and open space	19,802	20,075	19,123	17,472	16,920
Recreation	109	263	373	454	476
Urban	5,462	6,904	7,960	10,040	10,802
Water	735	735	735	928	928
<b>Total Acres**</b>	<b>30,439</b>	<b>30,963</b>	<b>30,972</b>	<b>30,976</b>	<b>31,108</b>

\*Estimates only; source: University of Massachusetts, Department of Forestry and Wildlife Mgt. Remote Sensing

\*\*Advances in remote sensing accuracy increased total acreage

**Table 13- Urban Land Use Estimates in Acres**

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>1951</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1997</b>
Residential	3637	4352	5391	6855	7,205
Commercial	267	289	429	446	640
Industrial	328	449	448	750	968
Urban Open/Public	1115	647	867	1025	1,025
Transportation	65	382	533	535	535
Waste Disp./ Mining	50	285	292	429	429
<b>Total</b>	<b>5462</b>	<b>6404</b>	<b>7960</b>	<b>10,040</b>	<b>10,802</b>

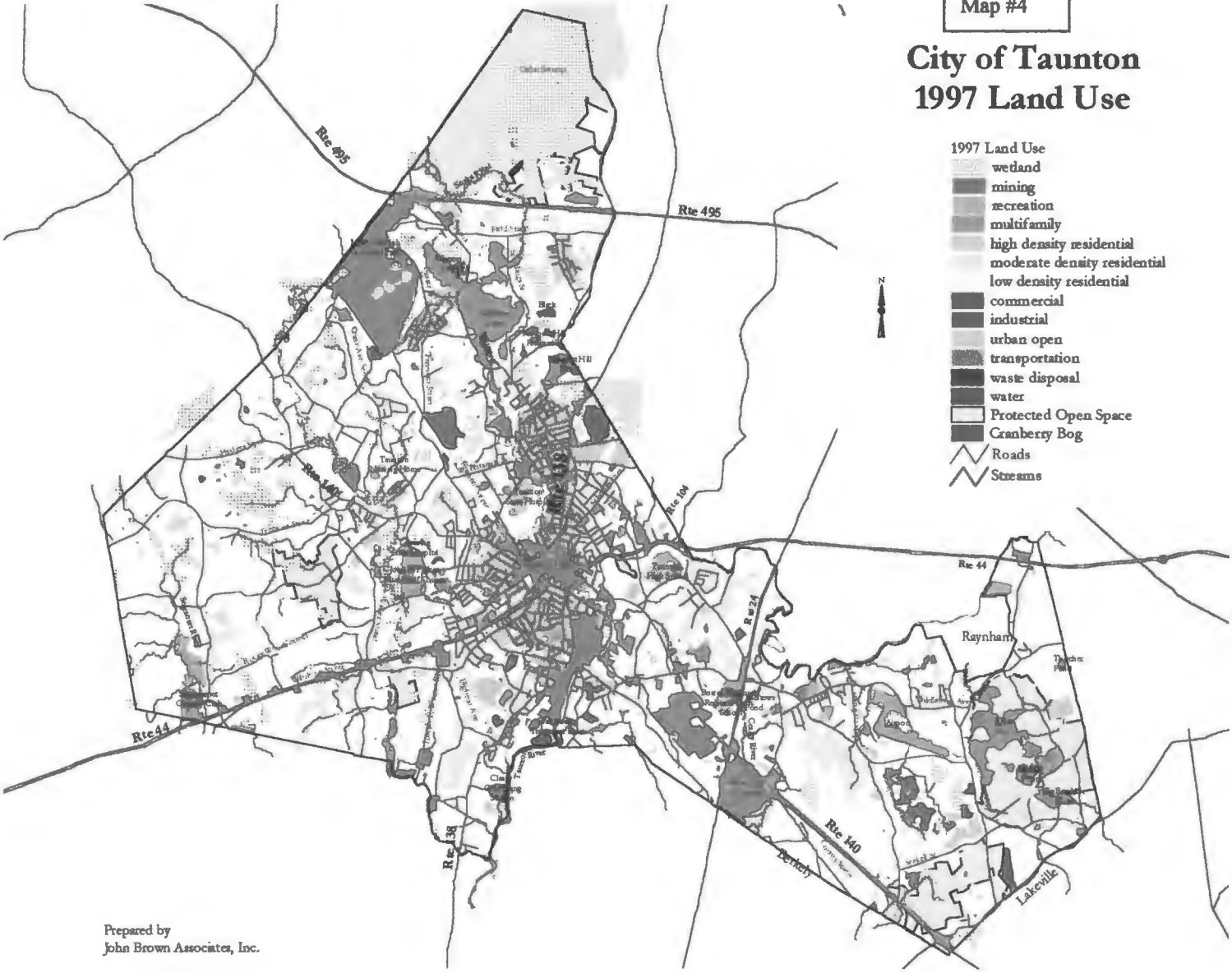
\*Estimates

These figures have originated from aerial photography analysis performed by the University of Massachusetts Department of Forestry and Wildlife Management. 1991 figures were produced using similar procedures, resulting in what are known as McConnell Land Use Survey maps. The information was also digitized by Mass GIS of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs for ease of analysis. The 1997 figures were estimated by the City Planner's Office through review of additional development since 1991.

The downtown study area consists of a mixture of residential, mixed use and business premises. However, businesses dominate the area as the predominate use of properties. Historically, this has also been the case. Residential uses are confined to the northeastern portion of the study area. Mixed use premises are located in groups along Main Street and the Taunton Green and businesses occupy the remainder of the properties. There are a number of government offices in the study area including City Hall, the Post Office, Superior Court, District Court and the Registry of Deeds. The open space that is present in the study area are landscaped urban parks with the exception of the Mill River which forms the southern boundary of the study area (see Map #5).

Map #4

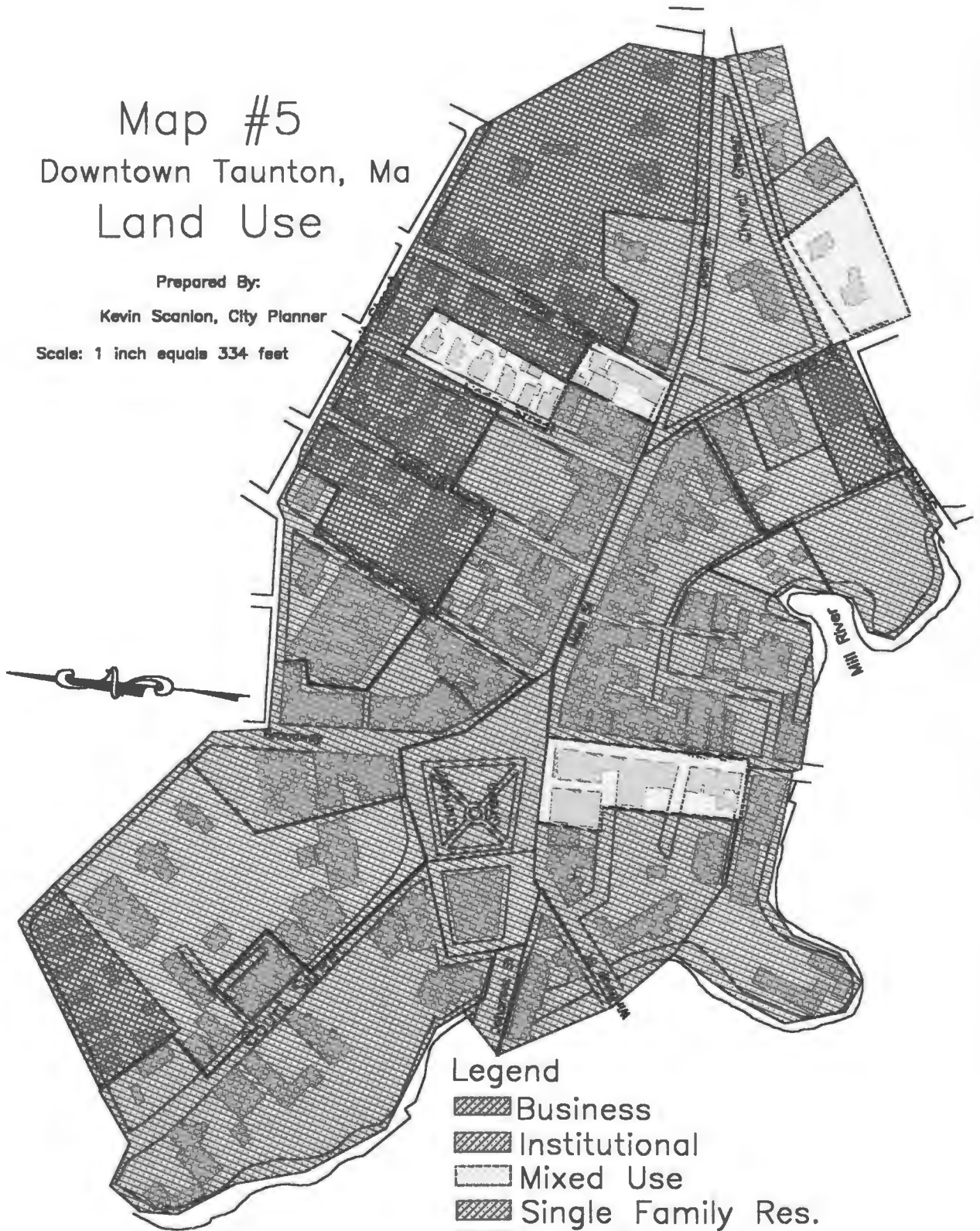
# City of Taunton 1997 Land Use



Prepared by  
John Brown Associates, Inc.

# Map #5 Downtown Taunton, Ma Land Use

Prepared By:  
Kevin Scanlon, City Planner  
Scale: 1 inch equals 334 feet



## Legend

-  Business
-  Institutional
-  Mixed Use
-  Single Family Res.
-  Multi Family Res.
-  Open Space

## **2. Zoning**

Taunton's current zoning policies are typical of other zoning ordinances throughout the country. Residential, commercial, and industrial uses have been segregated from each other over the course of the past 32 years. The areas where mixed uses still exist are largely the result of pre-zoning development. The downtown area of Taunton and much of the densely developed core of the city is still very diverse in the uses of properties due to the many pre-existing non-conforming uses that are still present. However, the effects of zoning can be seen in many areas. Residential development is being restricted to larger lots in an effort to control growth. Commercial development is being guided toward strips along major traffic routes and industrial growth is occurring in the Myles Standish Industrial Park. The patterns of commercial and residential growth that are being at least partially imposed by current zoning policy are creating suburban sprawl, inefficient land utilization, and a loss of cohesive neighborhoods. While grounded in the intention to reduce conflicting uses and control growth, current zoning is forcing development to spread out and is promoting separation of land uses. This spreading out and segregation of development is separating neighbors by greater distances, removing congregating areas (such as corner stores) from neighborhoods, and creating an increased need for infrastructure per dwelling unit and businesses. This results in greater costs to the city's taxpayers.

Current zoning has about 80% of the city zoned for open space and residential development. The remaining 20% is zoned for industrial, office and business uses. Since a city's financial stability and health is dependent on its commercial and industrial tax base and residential development tends to be a drain on city resources, zoning policies are encouraging development patterns that increase the demand and financial drain of the city's resources and services. This drain is even more pronounced in Taunton due to the differential tax rates that place a higher tax burden on commercial and industrial developments.

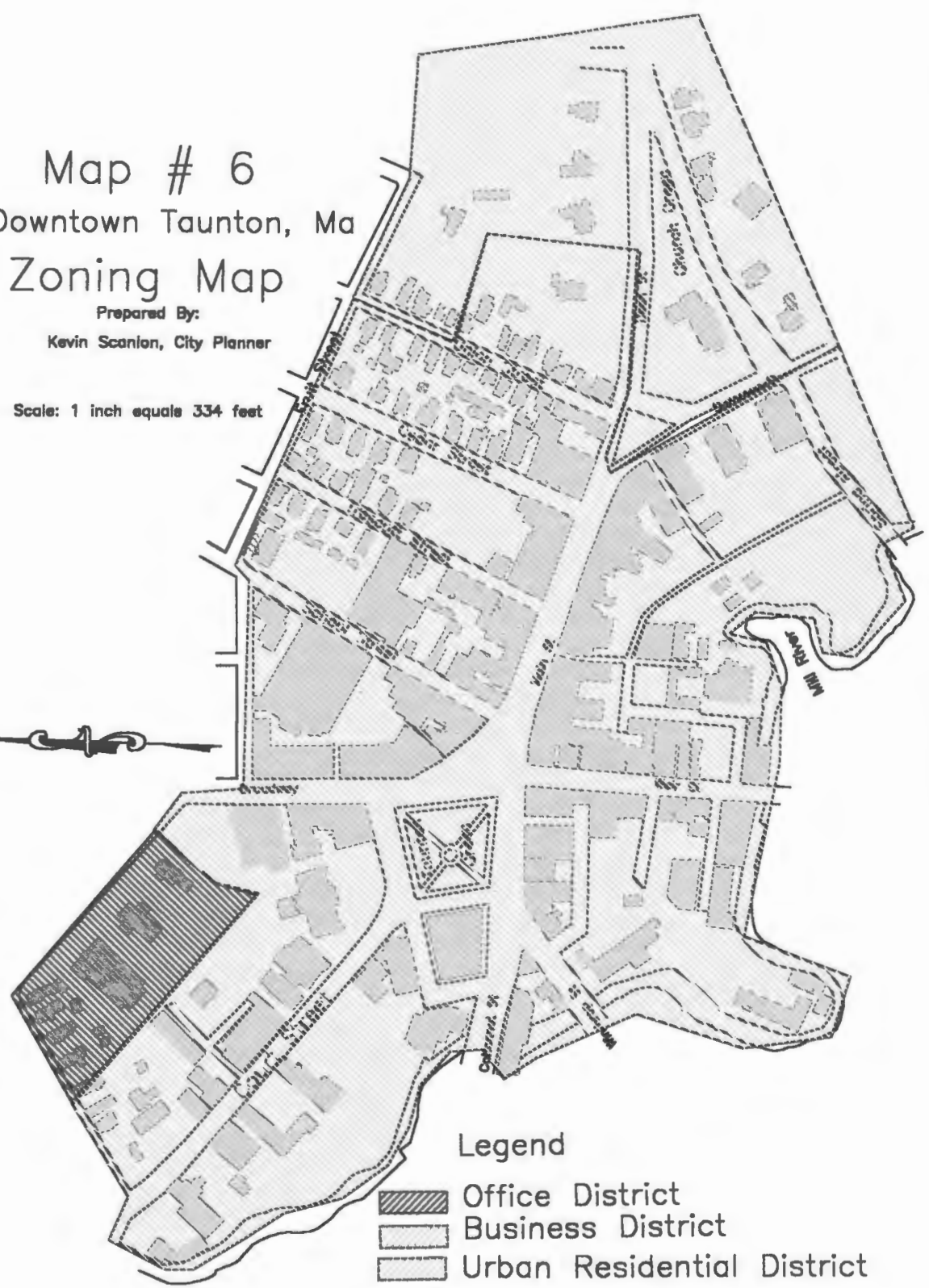
The result of the current trends in land use throughout the City is less reliance on the downtown both socially and economically. As commercial growth has occurred along Taunton's major thoroughfares and large commercial centers such as the Silver City Galleria and the Rt 44 commercial strip in Raynham, the economic importance of the downtown has steadily decreased. Also, the decentralization of the city's population due to the rapid growth of both East and West Taunton has added to the economic decline as well as contributed to a decline in the social status of the downtown as the cultural center of the City.

The majority of the study area is zoned as a business district use. The church green and the portion of the study area to the south of that is zoned urban residential. The portion of the study area in the northern most portion of the study area is zoned office district. (see Map #6)




# Map # 6 Downtown Taunton, Ma Zoning Map

Prepared By:  
Kevin Scanlon, City Planner

Scale: 1 inch equals 334 feet



## Legend

-  Office District
-  Business District
-  Urban Residential District

### 3. Circulation

One of the most critical issues to be addressed in the downtown is circulation. These days, the ability to reach a destination, park safely and conveniently and then to move around within that area easily and safely is essential in maintaining or creating a viable economic and social center. The ability to accomplish this without adversely affecting the aesthetic appeal and character of the area creates an even more daunting task. Each of the three components of the circulation system in the study area is examined in this section.

#### Pedestrian

Downtown Taunton is the center of a densely developed urban core and a clearly defined business center. This development pattern is ideally suited to the pedestrian. However, the amount of traffic that is concentrated on the major thoroughfares in the downtown and the types, amounts, and placements of pedestrian traffic control measures create an environment where pedestrian activities are secondary to continuous vehicular movement. The sidewalks in the downtown area are generally in good repair (with the exception of Court Street) and of adequate width but some areas are missing wheelchair ramps and the placement and visibility of some crosswalks could be improved.



Figure 7: Pedestrian Crossing Taunton Green at intersection of Taunton Green and Main Street

The crosswalk that the pedestrian in the picture above is using is located at a point where traffic is merging from Taunton Green and Main Street. The crosswalk that the van is about to cross over is located at the merging point of traffic from Broadway and Taunton Green. The need for a crosswalk is apparent but one of these two crosswalks should be eliminated and one clearly defined path of travel established. This path would still be in

a dangerous location but having one dangerous path of travel instead of two will give motorists one less traffic conflict to observe and avoid.



Figure 8: Pedestrian Crossing Taunton Green in Front of Post Office

The crosswalk with the pedestrian shown in the above picture is in a location of high traffic volume and a large number of traffic conflicts. The crosswalk could also be better defined. The crosswalk shown in the bottom of the picture crosses the street at a point where traffic is attempting to merge from three directions at once and the roadway is extremely wide (in excess of 40 feet).



Figure 9: Pedestrian Dodging Traffic Crossing Broadway at Taunton Green/ Broadway Intersection



The crosswalk pictured above is located in about as good a spot as you can find in this area but is a victim of heavy traffic and a large number of motorists that do not stop for pedestrians. Notice the pedestrian running to quickly cross the street.

The sidewalks in the study area are generally good with the exception of some needed wheelchair ramps. The problem with pedestrian paths of travel lie in the areas of traffic conflicts between pedestrians and motorists (crosswalks). The poor design, location and designation of some crosswalks coupled with the poor traffic flow patterns in the area of the Taunton Green create a dangerous environment for pedestrians seeking to cross the downtown's roadways.

### Automobile

Due to its long history as a commercial center for the area and its designation as the County Seat, several roads and highways of regional significance converge on Taunton's Central Business District. The downtown area is easily accessible from almost anywhere in the region, due to the convergence of three major highways, Routes 138, 44, and 140.

Traffic in the Downtown flows around the Taunton Green and acts as a rotary. Due to the historic development of the City, the major traffic routes converge on the Taunton Green (see Map #7). Traffic congestion is a serious problem and a lack of education on the part of some motorists on how to utilize a roadway that acts as a rotary correctly exacerbate the problem. The pictures below illustrate some of the traffic flow problems and congestion in the downtown area.



Figure 10: Traffic on Taunton Green at Intersection of Routes 44, 140, 138 and Cohannet Street

Figure 10 illustrates the large backup of vehicles that occurs on a regular basis on the Taunton Green. The intersection above handles all of the traffic from Rt 140 south, Rt44 east, Rt 44 west and Rt 138 south and part of the traffic for Rts 140 north, and 138 north. In addition, the intersection is the confluence of Cohannet street, Rt 44 and the Taunton Green. The sheer volume of the traffic at this intersection coupled with the traffic conflicts resulting from the convergence of the roads creates a dangerous and challenging intersection for pedestrians and motorists.



**Figure 11: Traffic on Taunton Green at Intersection of Winthrop Street, Taunton Green and Cohannet Street**

Figure 11 shows a second view of the intersection discussed in Figure 10. It is important to note the merging vehicles and the long line of vehicles waiting to enter the Taunton Green.



**Figure 12: Traffic at intersection of Court Street and Taunton Green**

Figure 12 shows a view of the Taunton Green and its intersection with Court Street (Rt 140) and Post Office Square which travels around the Post Office which is shown above. This intersection is also a dangerous and challenging intersection. Traffic merging onto the Taunton Green does not pay much attention to incoming traffic from Post Office Square in many cases and traffic on the Taunton Green seeking to enter Post Office Square must delicately navigate the incoming traffic from Court Street. There is a yield sign for incoming traffic onto the Green and a stop sign for Post Office Square.



**Figure 13: Traffic at intersection of Main Street,  
Weir Street and Taunton Green**

In some areas the pavement is just too wide and inadequate lining of lanes creates confusion for motorists attempting to merge with other traffic. This intersection is also an example of a large amount of traffic conflicts between vehicles already on the Taunton green, vehicles entering the Green from Main Street (Rt44 and Rt140), and vehicles entering from Weir Street (Rt138).



Figure 14: Intersection of Main Street, Weir Street, Broadway and Taunton Green

Figure 14 shows a second view of the wide expanse of asphalt at the Taunton Green, Weir Street, and Main Street intersections. The jeep shown in the picture is entering the Green from Main Street.



**Figure 15: Traffic at intersection of Main Street and Summer Street in front of City Hall**

The Rt 140/ Rt 44 intersection at Church Green in front of City Hall is also a very busy intersection. Traffic conflicts at this intersection are not as prevalent as those that exist on the Taunton Green. However, the sheer volumes of traffic competing with on-street parking and pedestrians halts traffic from time to time.



**Figure 16: Traffic on Main Street Looking Towards Church Green**

Motorists attempting to enter onto Main Street generally find the experience long and frustrating as the constant flows of traffic make the process unpleasant and even dangerous at times.



Figure 17: Truck Double Parked on Main Street Heading Towards Taunton Green

The traffic congestion problem is further compounded by deliveries made in the front of stores where trucks double park and partially block traffic.



Figure 18: Traffic on Main Street

The heavy traffic that flows through the downtown area is both an asset and a liability for businesses around the Taunton Green and Main Street. A situation exists where storefronts are readily visible to passing traffic but traffic congestion deters many potential customers and clients. Pedestrians avoid the area due to the dangers created from the inefficient traffic flow patterns. Motorists develop an unpleasant mental attitude towards the downtown due to their repeated unpleasant experiences attempting to traverse the area. As a result, storefronts in the downtown are avoided because potential customers do not want to deal with the unpleasant experience (real and perceived) that is associated with the downtown.

Parking

The topic of parking inevitably generates a great deal of controversy. In order to provide the vast parking lots that consumers seem to demand, large spaces that could otherwise allow additional buildings at the location or even be conserved are consumed by paved lots which are sporadically utilized, increase and contaminate runoff, and provide an incentive for driving.

In small historic cities such as Taunton, the urban layout has not been designed for much parking. Attempts to remedy this can be detrimental to the city’s historic character. Additionally, downtown businesses in recent decades have struggled to compete with the shopping centers and super-stores where parking is close and abundant.

Much of Taunton’s municipal parking, especially in densely developed areas, occurs on streets. Both marked and unmarked spaces exist, and some are regulated by parking meters. The Taunton Police Department manages the city’s 520 metered spaces.

**Table 14: Metered spaces are located in the following areas:**

Broadway	11	Cedar Street	11
Church Green	14	Cohannet Street	17
Court Street	11	Leonord Street	4
Main Street	53	Post Office Square	13
School Street	7	Summer Street	14
Taunton Green	26	Trescott Street	6
Weir Street	44	Winthrop Street	44

Off-street parking areas provide the remainder of vehicle spaces. The downtown public parking deck provides 243 spaces on two floors. Charges are assessed at \$0.25 per hour to a maximum of \$2.50 per day. Monthly rates are \$20.00 (\$10 for seniors); evening , weekend, night, and holiday parking is free. Another public lot is located between Cedar and Trescott Streets, containing 95 free spaces. 150 free spaces and 28 off-street metered spaces are located in the Merchants Lane Parking Area behind City Hall. The Galligan’s Court area between Weir Street and the Taunton Municipal Light Plant(TMLP) provides 61 metered and permit parking spaces. Behind the Bristol County Superior Courthouse are 152 metered and free spaces (see Map # 8).



**Figure 19: Municipal Parking Deck as Seen From Street**



**Figure 20: Municipal Parking Deck as Seen From Broadway Arcade**





Figure 21: Parking Lot abutting the Municipal Parking Deck

The parking decks major liability is its lack of visibility from the main thoroughfares in the downtown. The first time visitor to the area will not find the deck in many cases. Landscaping on the deck itself is a difficult if not impossible endeavor. However, additional landscaping around the deck would create a more attractive area. The parking lot adjacent to the parking deck is the most heavily landscaped lot in the downtown and is generally very attractive.

On-street metered parking is provided along many of the downtown's streets (see Table 14 ). Motorists are charged \$0.25 for one hour of parking and there is no time limit for spaces.



Figure 22: On-Street Metered Parking on Broadway

The main problem with on-street parking is the traffic conflicts that are created between through traffic and vehicles seeking to park or enter traffic. The most dangerous portion of the downtown as far as on-street parking is concerned is the stretch of Broadway just after the Taunton Green which is shown above. Vehicles using these on-street parking spaces deal with traffic merging from Main Street and the Taunton Green and have to stay aware of any pedestrians in the two crosswalks located in this area.



Figure 23: Metered On-Street Parking on Trescott Street

Parking on side streets is much safer but less convenient to motorists.



**Figure 24: On-Street Metered Parking on Main Street**

The Municipal Parking lots are located behind the buildings fronting on Main Street, Broadway, and Weir Streets. These lots are unattractive expanses on pavement with no aesthetic appeal and little if any landscaping. The lots are also inefficiently designed and laid out with problems such as unlined parking lots, extra wide lane widths, and poor location. Finding these lots is also a challenge for the unexperienced downtown motorist largely due to poor signage on the main roads and lack of identification of the lots as municipal parking areas (see Map #8).



**Figure 25: Municipal Parking Lot Behind City Hall**



**Figure 26: Merchants Lane Municipal Parking Lot**

Figures 26 and 27 show the Merchants Lane parking area which is located behind City Hall and Main Street. This is a large parking area which is unattractive and undelineated. There is no definition between the public parking area and the private parking for neighboring businesses. There is no landscaping or other breaks in the expanse of asphalt and the lot is continually dirty.



**Figure 27: Trescott Street Municipal Parking Lot**

The Trescott Street lot is a well defined lot serving many businesses in the downtown. The lot is not well maintained as can be seen from the bent and leaning chainlink fence. There is no landscaping in this parking area and the lot is very unattractive.



Figure 28: Galligan's Court Municipal Parking Lot



Figure 29: Galligan's Court Municipal Parking Lot

The Galligan's Court parking area shown in Figures 29 and 30 show a lot that is in poor condition. Many of the spaces were at one time metered parking spaces but some are missing or inoperative. The pavement is cracked and in poor condition and lined parking

spaces are virtually non-existent. There is a little landscaping in the parking area which is shown in Figure 30 but the parking area is virtually devoid of landscaping and is very unattractive. Lighting is also inadequate in the parking area.



**Figure 30: Parking for District Courthouse**

The parking for the district courthouse is linked to the parking areas for the Police Station and the Library. There is some landscaping in this lot but additional landscaping would make this large open area much more attractive to users and passersby.



**Figure 31: Parking for Public Library and Police Station**

The economic vitality of Downtown businesses is directly impacted and dependent upon the availability and convenience of parking for customers and employees. An attractive, well designed, lighted, and signed parking lot is desirable because of aesthetic appeal, functionality, and a perceived feeling of safety by users.

# Map # 7 Downtown Taunton, Ma Traffic Flow

Prepared By:  
Kevin Scanlon, City Planner

Scale: 1 inch equals 334 feet



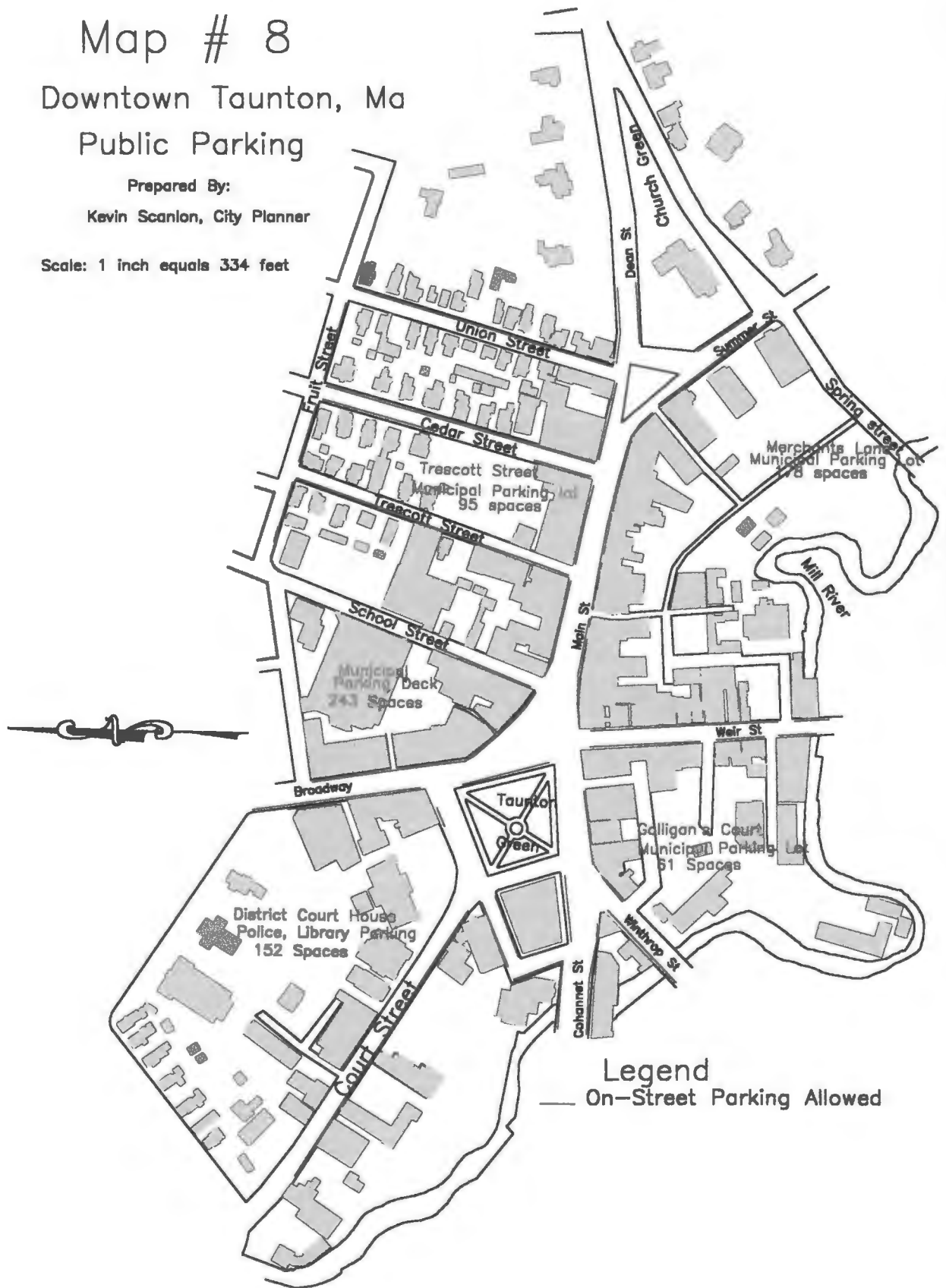


# Map # 8

## Downtown Taunton, Ma Public Parking

Prepared By:  
Kevin Scanlon, City Planner

Scale: 1 inch equals 334 feet



#### **4. Building Facades**

The downtown has a variety of building styles and types of architecture within its confines. Many of the buildings were constructed in the 1800's. However, some urban renewal did occur on Court Street in the 1960's and 70's and some new buildings such as Walgreens, and the parking deck have been added in recent years which do detract from the areas historic character.

A review of the areas more dominating and historic structures is necessary to provide a sense of the areas assets and additional potential. These structures include;



Figure 32: District Court House

The most dominate structure in the downtown and probably the entire City is the District Court House (1894). This is the tallest structure in the study area and the majesty of the building provides an architectural focal point for the Taunton Green.



**Figure 33: First Parish Church on Church Green.**

The other dominating structure in the downtown is the First Parish Church located on Church Green. The church was founded in 1637 and the current church was built in 1829. The church provides an attractive vista for motorists and pedestrians approaching Church Green from Main Street and Summer Street. It also provides a backdrop for the church green fountain which is on the other side of the building shown above.

Other buildings of architectural significance are City Hall (1848, 1896), the Crocker Building (1900), Tallman Insurance (early 1900's), and the Post Office (1932)



**Figure 34: City Hall**



**Figure 35: Crocker Building, 4 Court Street**



**Figure 36: Tallman Insurance, Court Street**

Many of the buildings within the study area were constructed with zero setbacks and most are two or three stories in height. The majority of buildings were constructed in the 1860's out of brick and stone in response to the Main Street fire of 1859. This generally uniform height and building material provides a complementary and pleasant streetscape to view. The scale and massing of the buildings provides a good sense of enclosure

along Main Street, Broadway, and Weir Street. (see Figure 37 - 40 for a view of the streetscapes)



Figure 37: Main Street as seen from Taunton Green

Main Street is generally very attractive and the Church Green seen in the background provides a sense of enclosure for street.



Figure 38: South side of Main Street looking towards Church Green

The south side of Main Street near Church Green is composed of a variety of different building forms and massings. The building at the end of Main Street is three stories in height and the building next to it is a single story building that detracts from the sense of enclosure that the other buildings create along Main Street. This single story building also lacks the architectural style and massing that other buildings on the street possess. The next building is the three story red building shown in the picture above which matches well with the building shown in the picture below. The next building is adequate in height but does not have a similar architectural style or provide any continuity in the architectural features of the abutting buildings.



Figure 39: South side of Main Street

Continuing along Main Street, the remainder of the block is very attractive and epitomizes the historic architecture typical in the downtown.



Figure 40: Buildings at Broadway/ Taunton Green intersection

The one area of the downtown that does not possess the historic character and charm that the rest of the downtown does is the west side of Court Street (shown below) This area is located between the Mill River and Court Street. The area is home to an auto repair shop, hair salon, plumbing supply company, and a karate school to name a few. The buildings were built in the 1960's and 70's as part of an urban renewal project. The area is generally unattractive when compared to the rest of the downtown. However, this area has been selected as the site for the new 21 million dollar district courthouse which has the potential to revitalize this stretch of the downtown and complement the historic character of the downtown.



Figure 41: Sullivan Tire on Court Street

Sullivan Tire is part of the selected site for the new Court house which at the very least will revitalize the entire west side of Court Street and open up some access to the Mill River which runs along the rear property line of the lot.



Figure 42: View of Court Street

The east side of the street is in need of renovation. The removal of the auto repair shop (red building in above picture) as part of the Court House project for parking will open up a hole in the streetscape but will remove an architecturally unattractive building that



detracts from the downtown's character. Provided that the parking area is created in an attractive manner and landscaped appropriately, this can be an asset to the downtown and complete the revitalization of this portion of the downtown.

### **5. Open Space/ Recreation**

Downtown Taunton is a diverse area in terms of the variety of land uses that exist within its confines. One of these uses is open space/ recreation areas. The dominate and defining feature of the downtown is the Taunton Green which is a landscaped square in the center of the downtown. The Green consists of extensive landscaping, walkways, benches and a fountain in the center which acts as the focal point for the Green. The Green is a beautiful but isolated park for the City. There are large expanses of asphalt around the Green and a lack of any significant landscaping in the vicinity surrounding the Taunton Green. Landscaped areas in the islands surrounding the Taunton Green would act to beautify the downtown further and act as a transition to link the Green to the commercial areas.



Figure 43: Taunton Green as seen from south side



Figure 44: Taunton Green as seen from east side



Figure 45: Taunton Green as seen from west side

While the Taunton Green is the focal point of the downtown, Church Green is another dominant feature in the downtown area and an entrance to the downtown area for both Rt140 north and Rt44 west. Church Green is home to a second fountain which displays a variety of colors when lit at night. The First Parish Church is the dominant structure on Church Green (see Figures 46 and 47).



Figure 46: Church Green fountain and First Parish Church as seen from Dean Street



Figure 47: First Parish Church as seen from Summer Street

Liberty Union Mini Park on Main Street is located across from City Hall. The park is an urban park that is enclosed on three sides and is largely composed of concrete and brick. There are a number of benches and tables located in the park. The park is very attractive but is underutilized. Pedestrians use the benches close to the street but very little activity occurs on the interior portions of the park. Businesses in the buildings to either side such as cafe's and restaurants would act as a catalyst to a more intensive use of this attractive but underutilized park.



**Figure 48: Liberty and Union Mini Park on Main Street**

**The Robert Treat Paine Memorial is situated in front of City Hall at the convergence of Rt 140 and Rt44. The park is comprised of a statue of the signer of the Declaration of Independence, two flag poles which fly the United States flag, the Liberty and Union Flag, and a flag for Vietnam POW's and MIA's, flower beds and a grassed area.**



**Figure 49: Robert Treat Paine Memorial in front of City Hall**

The Mill River runs through the downtown and is an underutilized resource that has the potential to provide a myriad of activities if access was increased through open space areas along its banks. Activities such as picnics, fishing, walking along the river and cultural events would add to the attractiveness and cultural and economic health of the downtown.



Figure 50: Pedestrian bridge over the Mill River

The pedestrian bridge shown in the above picture is located on Court Street behind where the new court house is slated to be built. The bridge has been closed for more than 15 years due to vandalism of buildings along Court Street. Opening up visual access to this area would enable the bridge to be reopened and provide more access to the river.



**Figure 51: Mill River near pedestrian bridge on Court Street**

Passive recreational opportunities and open space areas have a good base in the downtown due to the Taunton Green and Church Green. The Mill River has the potential to add to this base if access to the river can be increased.

Outdoor recreational opportunities in the downtown are limited at best. Outdoor activities are limited to passive activities such as walking on the Green. Indoor activities are more plentiful and varied and are available at the Boys Club on Court Street and at Lady's Choice which is a women's only gym on Main Street. The YMCA is also located on Cohannet Street just outside of the study area. These indoor activities include basketball, swimming, gyms, and aerobics to name just a few.

Street landscaping is present in the downtown in varying amounts depending upon where you are located. Main Street, Broadway and portions of the Taunton Green have small trees and flower pots as shown below in Figures 52 and 53. The existing vegetation needs to be enhance somewhat and the areas of the downtown that do not have street landscaping should be included in a streetscaping plan. The presence of landscaping on all the major streets in the downtown will serve to link the downtown together in a common theme of historic character and beauty and serve to beautify the downtown.



Figure 52: Landscaping in front of Post Office



Figure 53: Landscaping on Main Street

There are also several asphalt islands in the downtown that could be converted into additional landscaped areas to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the Taunton Green and the downtown as a whole. Landscaping these areas would also serve as a transition from the Taunton Green to the rest of the downtown which now is surrounded by a sea of asphalt



**Figure 54: Court Street and Taunton Green**



**Figure 55: Broadway and Taunton Green**





Figure 56: Main Street and Taunton Green

The challenge in landscaping these is areas is to create an attractive vegetated island that does not overshadow the Taunton Green but serves to enhance it while at the same time not impeding traffic flow or totally eliminating areas for snow piles.

## **6. Built Environment**

### **Figure/ Ground Analysis**

Figure/ground analysis is based on figure/ground theory. This theory examines the relationship between the built environment and remaining urban open spaces. Analyzing this pattern allows one to gain an understanding of, and establishing, a hierarchy of spaces which determine the character of the urban fabric. There are two elements to figure/ground analysis. These are structures (figure) and open spaces (ground). The object of a figure ground analysis is to develop a balance between the built environment and the resulting open spaces.

In examining Map # 9, the downtown generally has a very good balance between the built environment and open spaces. The pattern of solids and voids is primarily composed of a radial concentric pattern. The radial concentric pattern is present with two major nodes connected by one of the major paths of voids. The first major node has five major paths of voids radiating from the large open void in the center of the map and the second has four major paths radiating from the smaller open void in the south eastern portion of the map.

The streetscape is continuous and unbroken on Main Street, Broadway and Weir Streets with the exception of the Liberty and Union Mini Park on Main Street. This streetscape acts to contain the active public life of the downtown. The park is surrounded on three sides by structures. This provides the park with a good feeling of enclosure and is a

positive void. The large open area in the middle of the map is the Taunton Green which is a beautiful park surrounded by roadways and edge defining buildings fronting on this area which form a well defined border to the City center. Court Street has a well defined and continuous line of building facades on the east side but much of the west side is broken and open. This will be corrected with the construction of the new District Court House on the west side of Court Street. The areas on the east side of the map are generally two and three family houses. Although there are gaps in the houses, the houses are of similar scale and mass and provide an appropriate spatial structure to the environment and would be considered inner block voids. The extreme southeastern portion of the map is in a National Historic District and the structures are composed of large estate homes that are all generally 100 + years in age. There is extensive landscaping around these structures that contrast with the architectural urban forms in this area.

The west side of Court street is the only area that does not have a satisfactory solid/ void relationship and this deficiency is in the process of being corrected with the construction of the new courthouse facility. The remainder of the downtown has several different types of urban solids as characterized by the above description. However, these differences give the downtown its unique character and flavor. The emphasis should be on enhancing the relationship between solids and voids and not on any dramatic alterations in the spatial distribution of the built environment with the exception of the west side of Court Street.

# Map # 9

## Downtown Taunton, Ma

### Figure Ground Analysis

Prepared By:  
Kevin Scanlon, City Planner

Scale: 1 inch equals 334 feet



## Lynch Analysis

There are 5 components to the urban environment in a Lynch analysis. These are edges, landmarks, districts, nodes and paths. The object of a Lynch analysis is to relate the urban fabric to the values, needs, and desires of the user population. In addition to these five components, entrances are sometimes added to give an additional object of analysis due to the importance of entrances in how individuals perceive the entrances to the area of study.

### Edges:

There are two edges defined in the study area. The first is the Mill River which forms the south and west boundaries of the study area. The second edge is the uniform building facades that front on the Taunton Green thereby defining the Taunton Green as the center of the downtown.

### Entrances:

There are six major entrances to the downtown area. These entrances coincide with the major vehicular entrances into the downtown. The Dean Street approach greets visitors with a view of the fountain and beautiful landscaping on church green. The surrounding historic homes and the First Parish Church complete a historic landscape at this entrance to the downtown. The Summer Street approach is dominated by the views generated by the Robert Treat Paine Memorial and the First Parish Church. Broadway and Weir Street both are densely developed roadways with a nice sense of enclosure generated by the buildings along the roadway. The Winthrop and Cohannet Street entrances provide a view of the Taunton Green and portions of the Court House and Main Street. The Court Street entrance provides visitors with a view of dirty lots, cracked pavement and generally unattractive buildings. The construction of the new court house has the potential to correct this one deficient entrance into the downtown.

### Nodes:

The major activity nodes in the study area include City Hall, the Taunton Green, the Post Office, and the District Court House. Three of these nodes are clustered together and include the Taunton Green, the Post Office, and the District Court House.

### Landmarks:

The study area has an abundance of landmarks, some of which are also nodes. These include the Registry of Deeds, District Court House, Post Office, City Hall, the Taunton Green, the Foster Building, the Robert Treat Paine Memorial, the First Parish Church, the Crocker Building, the Union Block, and the Taylor Building (see Map #11)

### Districts:

*District 1- Historic district, residential, office uses*

This area is part of the National Historic District and is characterized by large, old homes with beautifully landscaped yards and offices in some converted estate homes from the 1800's that are also beautifully landscaped.

*District 2- General commercial*

This area is composed primarily of commercial properties with a few multifamily homes on the extreme northern portion of the district. This area is separate from the remainder of the downtown's commercial area due to the dramatically different architecture of the buildings, the lack of multiple uses on the same properties, and a noticeably different scale and massing of buildings.

*District 3- Open Space*

This district is composed of the Taunton Green which is the dominating and central feature of the downtown.

*District 4- Multi- Family Residential*

This district is composed of two and three family dwellings on small lots (less than 15,000 square feet).

*District 5- Mixed uses (includes residential, commercial, office, institutional uses)*

This district comprises the bulk of the downtown. The district is characterized by a dense grouping of structures. These structures are home to a large variety of uses. It is not unusual to find a building with residential units, offices, retail and restaurant uses all under one roof. Institutional uses such as courts, post office, and city offices are also mixed in throughout the study area.

Paths:

Major paths of travel within the study area generally follow the major streets. The two exceptions to this are the paths utilized by pedestrians using the court, police, and library facilities between Court Street and Broadway and the paths located behind the buildings fronting on Main Street which are used by both vehicles and pedestrians. There are a large number of minor paths which crisscross the area since every street has sidewalks and there are a large number of mid-block access points and cut through paths for pedestrians.

The downtown is a clearly defined place with significant defining characteristics from the surrounding areas. The downtown is clearly legible to visitors and residents alike. The pattern of development provides an obvious pattern of buildings and public spaces. The downtown also has a definite impression on individuals using or passing through the area. Access to areas beyond the major paths of travel could be enhanced and the edges of the downtown area more clearly defined. This could be accomplished with a rehabilitation of the Court Street area, more landscaping in the downtown as a whole, and providing a noticeable and attractive entrance at each of the seven major entrances.

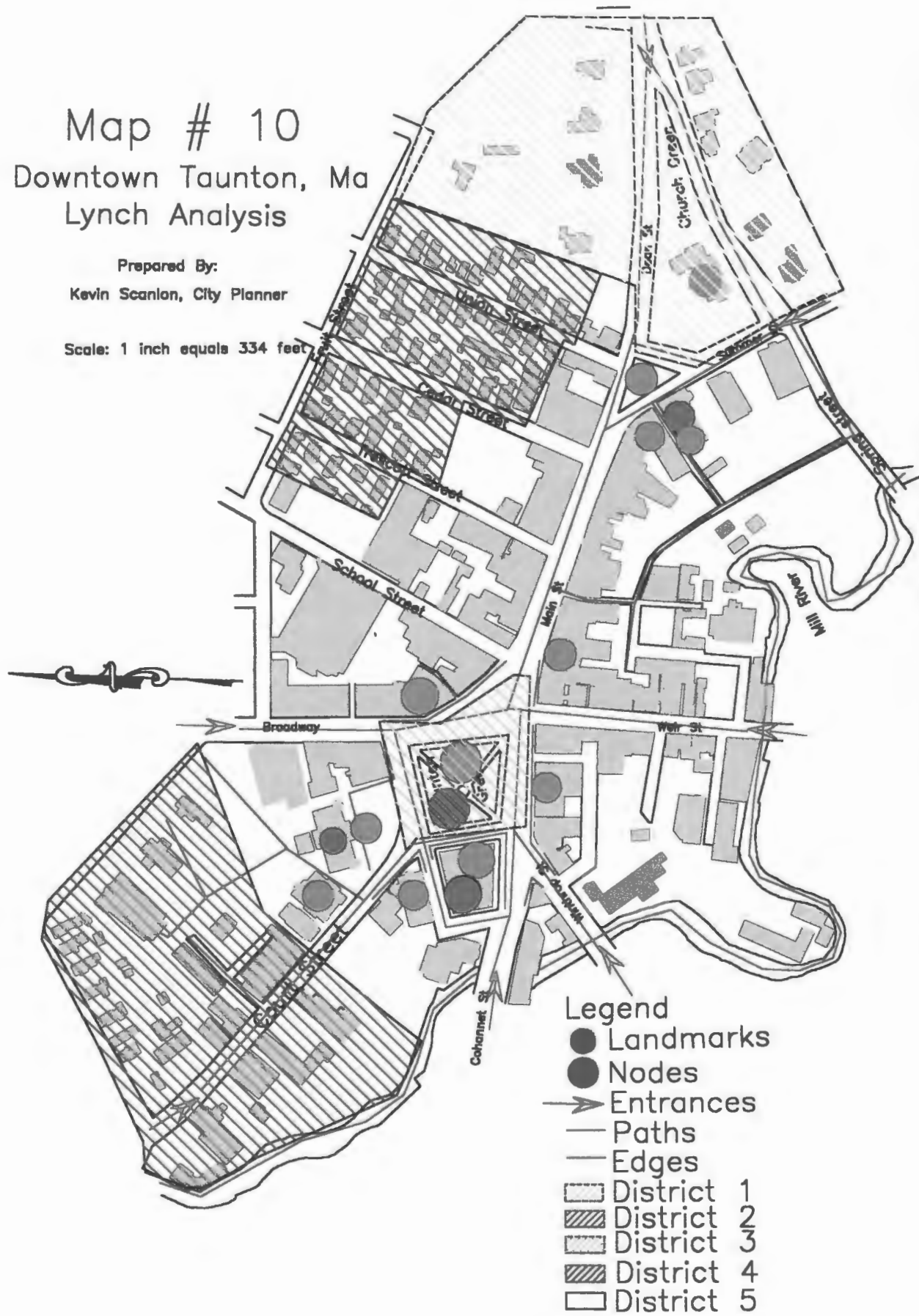
# Map # 10

## Downtown Taunton, Ma

### Lynch Analysis

Prepared By:  
Kevin Scanlon, City Planner

Scale: 1 inch equals 334 feet



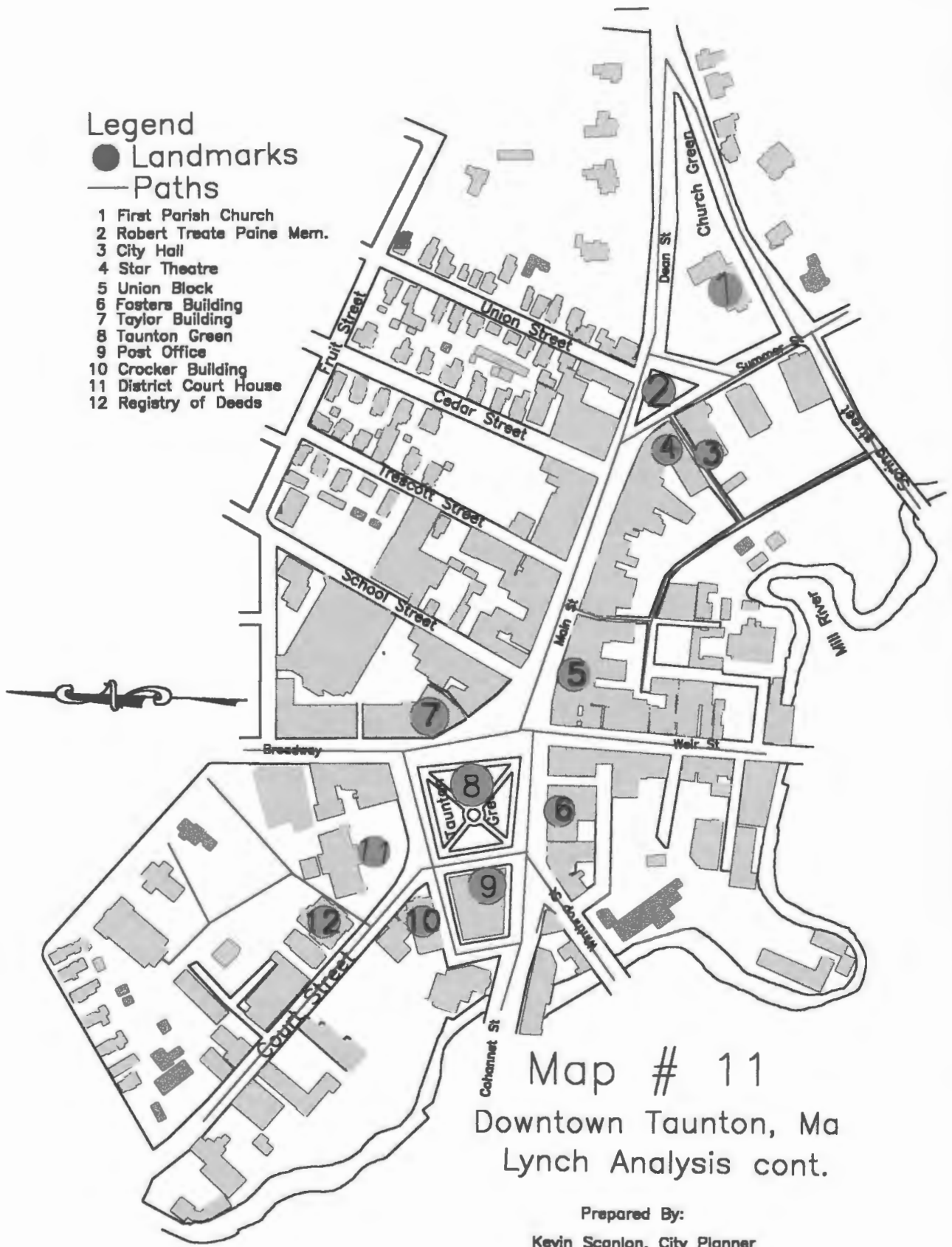
#### Legend

- Landmarks
- Nodes
- Entrances
- Paths
- Edges
- ▨ District 1
- ▩ District 2
- ▤ District 3
- ▥ District 4
- District 5

Legend

- Landmarks
- Paths

- 1 First Parish Church
- 2 Robert Treat Paine Mem.
- 3 City Hall
- 4 Star Theatre
- 5 Union Block
- 6 Fosters Building
- 7 Taylor Building
- 8 Taunton Green
- 9 Post Office
- 10 Crocker Building
- 11 District Court House
- 12 Registry of Deeds



Map # 11  
Downtown Taunton, Ma  
Lynch Analysis cont.

Prepared By:  
Kevin Scanlon, City Planner  
Scale: 1 inch equals 334 feet

## Linkage Analysis

Linkage analysis examines the lines that connect elements of the urban fabric together. Elements that link parts of the urban environment together are lines. The emphasis is placed on circulation patterns. The object of linkage analysis is to develop an efficient, convenient circulation system that connects the urban fabric rather than dividing it up.

The lines in the downtown converge at the Taunton Green (see Map 11). This creates a problem of a large amount of traffic converging in one spot. There is also only one major path of travel through the study area in an east/ west direction. There are no major paths of travel opening up access to the interiors of blocks in the downtown. Unfortunately, the basic layout of the paths of travel cannot be dramatically altered without destroying the character of the downtown. However, the minor paths of travel that provide access to the interiors of the blocks could be made more visible and clearly defined. This would not correct the problems generated by the limited east west access but would alleviate confusion and move some traffic off the major paths of travel.

The linear framework of the major roadways and Taunton Green provide the structure for the downtown. The rear portions off of the major backbone are connected by minor links.

## **7. Street Furniture and Signs**

Street furniture and signs are elements that are often overlooked when studying an area. These elements have the ability to unify an area and provide an overall theme. Choosing similar styles, design, materials, and colors for street lighting, street furniture, and signs can accent an area significantly. In examining the downtown's street furniture, signs, and lighting several things quickly became apparent.

Street lighting has been installed throughout the downtown that has a historic look and feel to it. This is an attempt to provide a common theme throughout the Downtown by accenting and highlighting the historic character of the Downtown area. This is further enhanced by the "Welcome" banners and snowflake banners that are attached to the majority of the light poles in the downtown (see Figure 61 and Figure 62)





Figure 57: Street lighting on Taunton Green

The street lights already attempt to unify the downtown in a historic theme and look. However, this doesn't completely succeed because street furniture such as waste receptacles, mail boxes, meters, and benches have not been done in a similar style or design that complement and accent the street lighting.



Figure 58: Mailbox and Newspaper Dispenser

Trash receptacles are concrete and are essentially the same color as the sidewalks. A different type of waste receptacle (maybe metal or plastic, see example below) with some

color (maybe dark green) would add some color to the downtown infrastructure, and accent the street lighting.



Figure 59: Trash Receptacle

Signs throughout the area do not have a distinctive flavor to them. Standard green state directional street signs are used on the state roads and there is no uniform design and color for other signs such as off-street parking signs, street name signs, and other traffic control and informational signs. A uniform design and color system for signs should be adopted that accents the historic theme of the downtown. This should include both directional signs and state highway signs. Off-street parking signs should be designed and situated in a manner that provides easy and clearly understood access to off-street parking facilities.



Figure 60: Roadway Directional Signs



Figure 61: Parking and street signs on Main Street

Park benches in the downtown area are made of wood and are generally confined to the park side of the Taunton Green. However, pedestrians can regularly be seen attempting to sit on the edges of buildings or standing around uncomfortably waiting for someone or something. The inclusion of park benches along the street in areas where the width of the sidewalk permits would provide a more pedestrian friendly environment.



Figure 62: Pedestrian sitting on edge of building on Taunton Green

Park benches provided on the Taunton Green are in a state of disrepair. Benches are missing pieces and are need of painting. (see Figure 63)



Figure 63: Park Bench on Taunton Green

A well designed and thought out theme for the downtown that resulted in a common design and efficient placement of landscaping, benches, signs, lighting, waste receptacles, mailboxes, newspaper dispensers and other items such as sidewalk designs

would act to create an area effectively linked together by its infrastructure. It would also create an environment that is more pedestrian friendly and more attractive to passersby.

# Chapter 4

## Recommendations



Figure 64: Main Street Looking Towards Church Green

The first three chapters discussed the historical development of the Taunton's downtown, inventoried the existing conditions, and then analyzed the built environment to identify the downtown's strengths and weaknesses. In this chapter, a list of recommendations has been developed to create a more cohesive, attractive and efficient environment to live in, work in and visit. The recommendations have been grouped into 5 sections that follow the order in which they were analyzed in Chapter 3. These groupings are Land Use and Zoning, Building Use and Facades, Pedestrian and Vehicular Circulation, Street Furniture and Signs, and Landscaping. A short explanation of the rationale behind each recommendation is included.

### **1. Land Use and Zoning**

It is essential to preserve the built environment as much as possible while correcting the few deficiency that exist in the study area. In order to accomplish this, regulations must accurately reflect the desired result. As a result, a number of zoning changes should be instituted to more accurately and effectively guide development towards preserving building massing, scale, and placement and the uses within those buildings.

Create a Central Business District solely for the purpose of the unique qualities, needs and design of the Downtown Area. The CBD should encompass all of the Business and Office Districts shown on Map # 6 Zoning Map (see Map #12)

Allow more by-right businesses such as sit down restaurants, ice cream shops, and colleges such as Fisher College which is currently operating in the Downtown.

Prohibit single-family homes in the Central Business District

Allow mixed use establishments that utilize the bottom floors solely for business purposes and some or all of the upper floors for apartments as a by-right use.

Allow the gross square footage of buildings to be less than or equal to a maximum FAR of 2.0.

Institute a minimum height requirement of 25 feet for all structures to preserve the architectural integrity of the streetscape.

Increase the maximum height requirement from 35 feet to 40 feet for all structures.

Reduce the minimum front setback requirements from 10 feet to zero feet.

Require all structures to be setback no more than a maximum of 5 feet.

Eliminate front landscaped buffer requirement.

Require parking lots and parking in the rear and sides of buildings only.



**Figure:65 Typical Building Desired under Zoning Requirements**

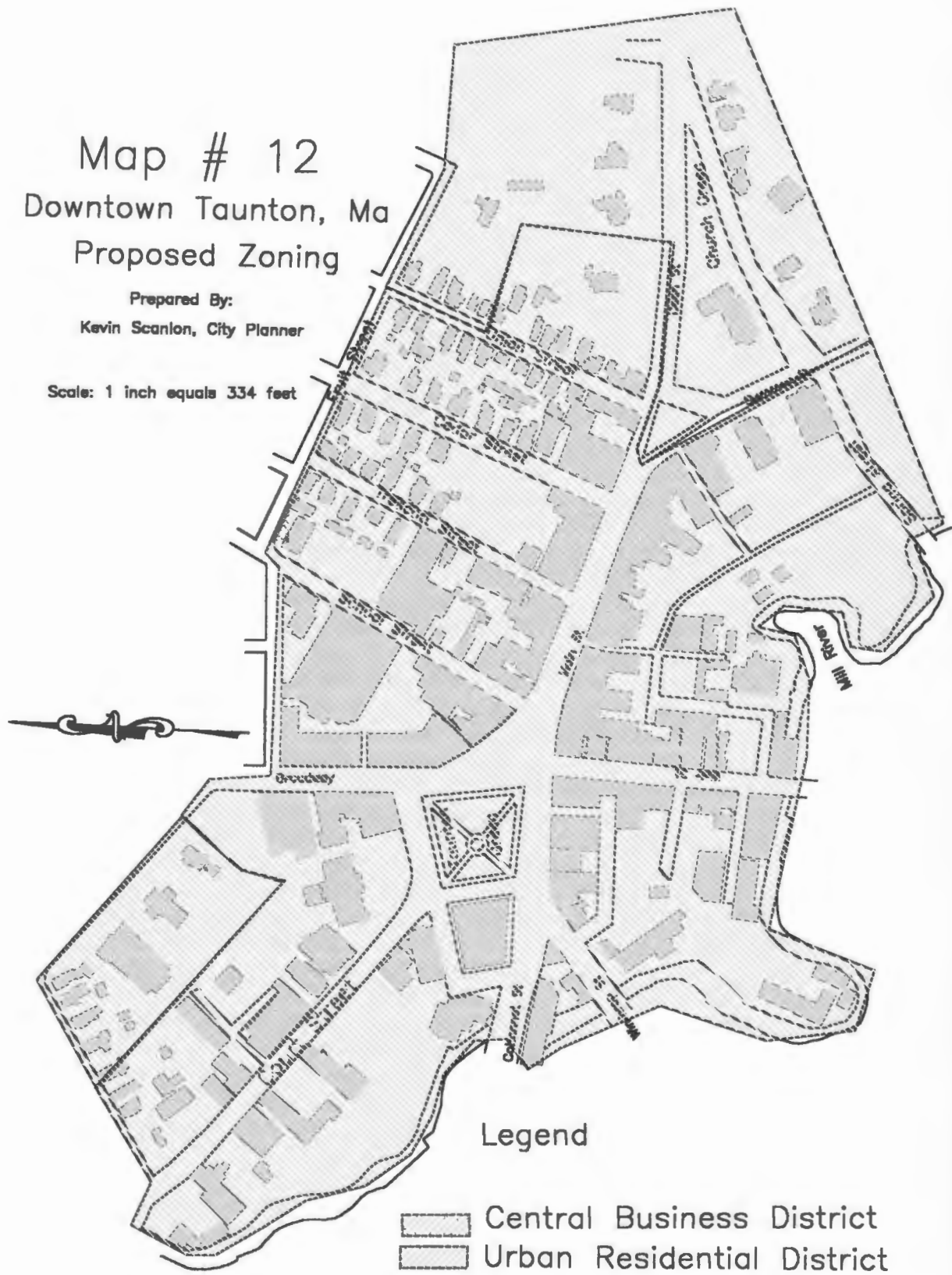
Figure 65 illustrates the type of building form, scale and siting that are desired in the downtown. The zoning changes recommended seek to provide a regulatory framework to encourage buildings that reflect this desired type of building. The changes recommended for allowable uses of these buildings are designed to make it easier for businesses to locate in the downtown and for the upper floors to be utilized by businesses or residences.



# Map # 12 Downtown Taunton, Ma Proposed Zoning

Prepared By:  
Kevin Scanlon, City Planner

Scale: 1 inch equals 334 feet



## **2. Building Use and Facades**

Have a restaurant or similar use situated abutting the Mini Park on Main Street. The minipark is an underutilized resource in the downtown. A use in the immediate proximity that encourages patrons to sit and hang around would increase the usage of the park.

Promote programs that encourage better general maintenance, upkeep, and cleanliness of buildings. While the architectural beauty of many of the downtown's buildings is unquestionable, the upkeep and maintenance of many of these buildings and their lots leaves a lot to be desired. The details such as windows that are not peeling, faded signs, cracks in the facades, dirt are what is generally missing.

Expand and promote the Heart of Taunton's Facade Improvement Program to finance facade improvements to Downtown buildings. Providing a larger, more visible and easier to obtain fund for facade improvements will encourage and provide the means to creating a more attractive and better maintained downtown.

Include rear and side facades in the Heart of Taunton's Facade Improvement Program. Much of the downtown's parking is located to the rear of buildings fronting on the main streets. By providing an attractive rear and side facade, customers will be more likely to use these parking areas.

Provide tax incentives for owners that rehabilitate and renovate downtown buildings in a manner that preserves the historic character of the downtown and preserves the architectural integrity of the buildings. This would encourage property owners to keep their buildings in good shape and to invest in downtown properties.

Establish a volunteer graffiti and litter cleanup program for the downtown area. This would assist the City and business owners in removing vandalism and debris. A cleaner downtown is a more attractive and inviting downtown. By accomplishing this through a city/ community partnership, an air of cooperation and pride in the downtown could be developed.

Redevelop Court Street in a manner that reflects and complements the building designs in the rest of the downtown. This means supporting the development and construction of the new District Court Facility in a manner that reflects and complements the rest of the downtown. By revitalizing this area, the whole downtown would benefit. An increase in professional jobs and services would create more business and foot traffic in the downtown and a more attractive Court Street area would make the whole downtown more attractive.

## **3. Pedestrian, Vehicular Circulation and Parking**

In order to improve the circulation of traffic in the study area and provide for a safer environment for pedestrians and motorists the following changes should be instituted;

### Pedestrian

More defined paths of travel for cars and pedestrians. With the exception of the major routes through the City and a few side streets, paths of travel are poorly defined or nonexistent. The easier it is for a motorist or pedestrian to find and follow a sidewalk, sidestreet, or access drive, the more likely the path will be used regularly. This can be accomplished through proper signs, lining the paths, and installing curbing and landscaping in some cases to demarcate the path. (see Map # 13)

Paint crosswalks and use colored textured concrete. Replace crosswalks that are simply painted on the roadway with crosswalks that are outlined by a reflective white paint and are constructed with colored (maroon) concrete in a brick like texture to reflect the historic character of the downtown while better identifying crosswalks for motorists. This would tie into the historic character of the downtown, extend the theme of street furniture and signs to the roadways themselves, and provide a more visible path of travel for pedestrians. All of this would be accomplished without having to deal with the maintenance problems of bricks and concrete pavers.

Install pedestrian signals where appropriate. Pedestrian signals are already present at some intersections but the ability to safely cross the street may warrant the placement of pedestrian signals at the Broadway, Taunton Green intersection and the Winthrop Street/ Taunton Green intersection. This would reduce the dangers facing pedestrians at some crossings in the downtown and create a higher level of safety for both pedestrians and motorists.

Remove one of the two crosswalks that provide access to the Taunton Green at the Broadway/ Taunton Green intersection. This would reduce the dangers facing pedestrians at this crossing in the downtown and create a higher level of safety for both pedestrians and motorists by removing one of the traffic conflicts that currently exists at this intersection.

Repair Court Street sidewalks. This will provide a more attractive streetscape and a safer path of travel for pedestrians.

Install wheelchair ramps at all required locations. This will enhance the ability of physically challenged individuals and pedestrians such as mothers with strollers to move around the downtown.

Redesign the crosswalks at the Winthrop/ Taunton Green intersection to provide a narrower roadway crossing for pedestrians (see Map #13).



Figure 66 Crosswalks at Taunton Green/ Cohannet Street/ Winthrop Street intersection

#### Vehicular

Explore and institute circulation pattern changes to Taunton Green (see Map #13). Map 13 provides a recommendation of one change in traffic flow that would have a number of benefits to the downtown area. By eliminating the traffic lanes in front of the Post Office and requiring traffic to travel around the Post Office, the traffic conflicts that currently arise at the Cohannet/ Winthrop/ Taunton Green intersection would be largely eliminated. Currently, you have three sets of traffic merging and crossing each other at one point. This is chaotic and dangerous. By increasing the size of the circular pattern of traffic on the Green you also create a larger cue for traffic which would reduce backups onto feeder streets such as Court street, Main Street etc. Narrowing the width of pavement at the Main Street, Weir Street Taunton Green Intersection would more effectively channel traffic in a manner that is safer than the free for all that currently occurs due to the inadequately defined travel lanes and large width at these locations.

Explore the possibility of providing traffic routes that circumvent the downtown in the east/ west direction. The only major east/ west traffic route is Main Street. The funneling of traffic from many streets onto one creates a bottleneck that can only be relieved by providing and encouraging the use of alternate traffic routes in an east/ west direction.

#### Parking

Allow Deliveries to businesses in the rear only and have the police vigorously enforce this provision. This will eliminate the additional bottlenecks that result from double parked cars and trucks.

Institute a maximum time limit for metered parking on street. A limit of 2 hours is more than adequate for the vast majority of business conducted in the downtown. This will reduce the number of employees of business that park on street instead of using the rear parking lots and provide more immediate parking for the handicapped and general customers.

Eliminate parking on one side of Main Street and install a designated turning lane. This would reduce visible parking but it would reduce and possibly eliminate bottlenecks and backups that occur with traffic turning onto and off of Main Street.

More visible rear parking signs. This would help make up for the loss of on-street parking by educating motorists as to the location of reasonably convenient and close parking.

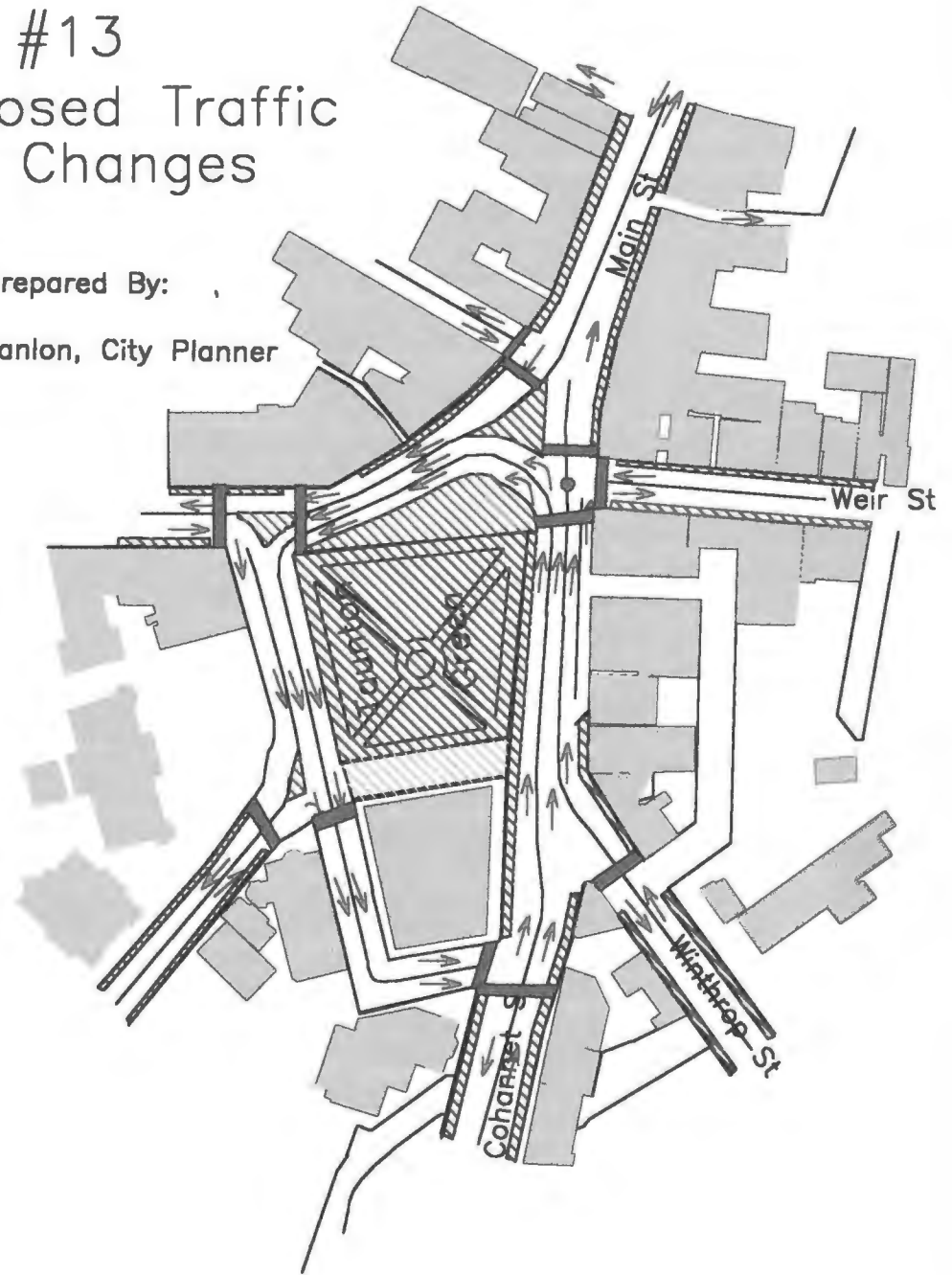
Construct a third level on the parking deck. This would add additional off-street parking to offset the increase in traffic from the new District Court House and the loss of on-street parking.

Redesign existing parking areas for more efficient and attractive layout. By redesigning the parking areas, more parking spaces can be provided. Making the lots more attractive and instituting a safer traffic flow will encourage motorists to use the lots.

Increase the lighting and landscaping within parking areas. This will increase the perceived sense of safety by lot users and will make the lots much more attractive.

# Map #13 Proposed Traffic Flow Changes

Prepared By: ,  
Kevin Scanlon, City Planner



## Legend

-  Landscaping
-  Traffic Light
-  Parking
-  on-street parking
-  Crosswalks
-  Traffic Direction



Scale: 1 inch equals 160 feet

#### **4. Street Furniture and Signs**

Promote a uniform design with uniform colors for all street furniture that reflects the historic character of the area. Street furniture includes bus shelters, benches, trash receptacles, signs, newspaper dispensers, light posts and mailboxes. For example, concrete trash receptacles in a gray color are drab and have no character whatsoever. However, receptacles as shown in Figure 67 do have a character of their own and do add to the downtown visually and functionally.



**Figure 67 Attractive Trash Receptacle**



**Figure 68 Example of a Sign that would complement the trash receptacle in Figure 67**

Add bus shelters in the downtown at bus stop locations. By providing areas that are clearly designated and located out of the weather, individuals are encouraged to use the bus system.

Add street benches throughout the downtown. Right now there are benches on the Taunton Green (none in winter) but are conspicuously absent from the rest of the downtown year round. By providing a more pedestrian-friendly environment, pedestrians will be more likely to visit the downtown more often and to stay longer.



Figure 69 Example of a park bench that would fit with the theme establish in Figures 67 & 68

Other park benches that would be suitable are traditional wood seat and metal frame park benches such as the ones that are currently in use on the Taunton Green. However, these are easy to vandalize and require a higher degree of maintenance than newer designs and materials. The idea is to provide an environment that will work in the 1990's but to preserve the historic character of the area at the same time.

Redo downtown traffic and parking signs in a uniform design and locate the signs in a manner and frequency that provides an environment that is easy to comprehend and navigate for pedestrians and motorists.

Continue to enforce the City's sign regulations in the downtown including the aesthetic review of proposed signs for placement, color, materials, and content.



### **5. Landscaping**

Add landscaped areas to link the green with the streetscape. The areas shown in the photos below are asphalt islands that are present between the Taunton Green and the built environment surrounding the green. By landscaping these areas appropriately, the green will be an element that does not appear so isolated from the downtown surrounded by the sea of asphalt.



**Figure 70 Court Street/ Taunton Green Intersection**



**Figure 71 Main Street and Taunton Green Intersection**



**Figure 72 Broadway/ Taunton Green Intersection**

**Add landscaping along the streets within the study area. In keeping with the idea of creating a unifying theme for the downtown, more trees and flowers should be added on all downtown streets to beautify and link the area together.**

**Add a landscaped island in front of City Hall.**

**Open up access to the river through strips of landscaped paths along the rivers banks.**

# Chapter 5

## Conclusion and Implementation Strategies



Figure 73 Main Street

## **1. Implementation Strategies**

While a list of recommendations has been produced, no one has been charged with the responsibility of implementing the changes. In an effort to implement the recommendations outlined in Chapter 4, individuals, organizations and departments that are best suited to being the lead in instituting the recommended changes have been identified. Possible funding sources have also been identified for each recommendation. In addition, a priority level has been assigned to each recommendation in the following order; short term (less than 2 years), medium term (2 to 5 years), long term (5 years +).

### **Land Use and Zoning Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation**

1. Create a Central Business District.
2. Institute a minimum height requirement.
3. Increase the maximum height requirement.
4. Reduce the minimum front setback requirements.
5. Require all structures to be setback no more than a maximum of 5 feet.
6. Eliminate front landscaped buffer requirement.
7. Require parking lots and parking in the rear and sides of buildings only.
8. Allow more By-right businesses such as sit down restaurants, ice cream shops, colleges and universities.
9. Prohibit single family homes in the Central Business District.
10. Allow the gross square footage of buildings to be less than or equal to a maximum FAR of 2.0.
11. Allow mixed use establishments that utilize the bottom floors solely for business purposes and some or all of the upper floors for apartments as a By-Right business.

Responsibility: All of the recommendations outlined in the Land Use portion of the recommendations should be pursued by the City Planner in an effort to adopt the proposed zoning changes through the Municipal Council.

Funding Source and Priority: No finding needed and this is a short term recommendation.

### **Building Use and Facades**

#### **Recommendation**

Have a restaurant or similar recreational use situated abutting the Mini Park on Main Street.

Responsibility: City Planner, Economic Development Director, Heart of Taunton and property owner.

Funding Source and Priority: Business owner, medium term recommendation.

#### **Recommendation**

Promote programs that encourage better general maintenance, upkeep, and cleanliness of buildings.

Responsibility: Heart of Taunton and Business Owners.

Funding Source and Priority: Heart of Taunton, business owners, short term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Expand and promote the Heart of Taunton’s Facade Improvement Program to finance facade improvements to Downtown buildings.

Responsibility: Heart of Taunton.

Funding Source and Priority: City/ Business owner cooperative effort, medium term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Include rear and side facades in the Heart of Taunton’s Facade Improvement Program.

Responsibility: Heart of Taunton.

Funding Source and Priority: City/ Business owner cooperative effort, medium term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Provide tax incentives for owners that rehabilitate and renovate downtown buildings in a manner that preserves the historic character of the downtown and preserves the architectural integrity of the buildings.

Responsibility: City.

Funding Source and Priority: City, medium/ long term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Establish a volunteer graffiti and litter cleanup program for the downtown area.

Responsibility: Heart of Taunton/ Park and Recreation Department.

Funding Source and Priority: Contributions, medium term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Redevelop Court Street in a manner that reflects and complements the building designs in the rest of the downtown.

Responsibility: City Court House Task Force, State DCPO.

Funding Source and Priority: DCPO for Court House, City for other improvements, medium term recommendation.

**Pedestrian, Vehicular Circulation and Parking**

**Pedestrian**

**Recommendation**

More defined paths of travel for cars and pedestrians.

Responsibility: Department of Public Works, City Engineer.

Funding Source and Priority: Chapter 90 Roadway funds, long term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Paint crosswalks and use colored textured concrete.

Responsibility: Department of Public Works, City Engineer.

Funding Source and Priority Chapter 90 Roadway funds, City Funds, medium term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Install pedestrian signals where appropriate.

Responsibility: Department of Public Works, City Engineer.

Funding Source and Priority Chapter 90 Roadway funds, City Funds, medium term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Remove one of the two crosswalks that provide access to the Taunton Green at the Broadway/ Taunton Green intersection.

Responsibility: Department of Public Works, City Engineer.

Funding Source and Priority Chapter 90 Roadway funds, City funds, medium term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Repair Court Street sidewalks.

Responsibility: Department of Public Works, DCPO.

Funding Source and Priority Court House Bond Issue, Chapter 90 Roadway funds, City funds, medium term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Install wheelchair ramps at all required locations.

Responsibility: ADA Coordinator and DPW Department.

Funding Source and Priority: City Roadway Improvement funds, short term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Redesign the crosswalks at the Winthrop/ Taunton Green intersection.

Responsibility: Department of Public Works, City Engineer, and Mass Highway Department.

Funding Source and Priority City Roadway Improvement funds, short term recommendation.

## **Vehicular**

### **Recommendation**

Possible circulation pattern changes to Taunton Green (see Maps 7 & 13).

Responsibility: Department of Public Works, City Engineer, and Mass Highway Department.

Funding Source and Priority: Chapter 90 Roadway funds, City funds, long term recommendation.

### **Recommendation**

Explore the possibility of providing traffic routes that circumvent the downtown in the east/ west direction.

Responsibility: Department of Public Works, City Engineer.

Funding Source and Priority: Chapter 90 Roadway funds, City funds, long term recommendation.

## **Parking**

### **Recommendation**

Allow Deliveries to businesses in the rear only.

Responsibility: Adopted by Municipal Council and enforced by the Police Department.

Funding Source and Priority: No funding necessary, short term recommendation.

### **Recommendation**

Institute a maximum time limits for metered parking on street.

Responsibility: Adopted by Municipal Council and enforced by the Police Department.

Funding Source and Priority: No funding necessary, short term recommendation.

### **Recommendation**

Eliminate parking on one side of Main Street and install a designated turning lane.

Responsibility: Department of Public Works, City Engineer.

Funding Source and Priority: City funds, long term recommendation.

### **Recommendation**

More visible rear parking signs.

Responsibility: DPW Sign Division, Heart of Taunton, City Planner and City Engineer.

Funding Source and Priority: City funds, short term recommendation.

### **Recommendation**

Construct a third level on the parking deck.

Responsibility: Area Legislators to obtain state funding, City Engineer, DPW.

Funding Source and Priority: State Bond Issues, medium term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Redesign existing parking areas.

Responsibility: Department of Public Works, City Engineer, Heart of Taunton.

Funding Source and Priority: City funds, short/ medium term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Increase the lighting and landscaping within parking areas.

Responsibility: City Planner, Parks and Recreation Department, City Engineer, DPW Department, Heart of Taunton.

Funding Source and Priority: City funds, medium term recommendation.

**Street Furniture and Signs**

**Recommendation**

Promote a uniform design with uniform colors for all street furniture that reflects the historic character of the area.

Responsibility: Historic District Commission, Heart of Taunton, Park and Recreation, City Planner.

Funding Source and Priority: City funds, medium term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Add bus shelters in the downtown at bus stop locations.

Responsibility: Department of Public Works, Heart of Taunton, GATRA.

Funding Source and Priority: City funds, ISTE, GATRA, medium term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Add street benches throughout the downtown.

Responsibility: Park and Recreation, Heart of Taunton, City Planner.

Funding Source and Priority: City funds, Heart of Taunton, medium term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Redo downtown traffic and parking signs in a uniform design and locate the signs in a manner and frequency that provides an environment that is easy to comprehend and navigate for pedestrians and motorists.

Responsibility: DPW Sign Division, Heart of Taunton, City Engineer.

Funding Source and Priority: City funds, State, Heart of Taunton, short term recommendation.

**Recommendation**

Continue to enforce the Cities sign regulations in the downtown including the aesthetic review of proposed signs for placement, color, materials, and content.

Responsibility: City Planner.

Funding Source and Priority: No funding necessary, short term recommendation.



## **Landscaping**

### **Recommendation**

Add landscaped areas to link the green with the streetscape.

Responsibility: Park and Recreation, City Planner, DPW Street Division.

Funding Source and Priority: City funds, medium term recommendation.

### **Recommendation**

Add landscaping along the streets within the study area.

Responsibility: Heart of Taunton, Park and Recreation.

Funding Source and Priority: City funds, Heart of Taunton, medium term recommendation.

### **Recommendation**

Add a landscaped island in front of City Hall.

Responsibility: Park and Recreation, DPW Street Division.

Funding Source and Priority: City funds, medium term recommendation.

### **Recommendation**

Open up access to the river through strips of landscaped paths along the rivers banks.

Responsibility: Court House Task Force, Conservation Commission, Park and Recreation.

Funding Source and Priority: Court House Bond Issue, medium term recommendation.

## **2. Conclusion**

The analysis of Downtown Taunton illustrated the strong base and potential that the area possesses in terms of the area's character, layout, architectural beauty, parks and location. The analysis also highlighted the deficiencies that do exist within Downtown. Many of these deficiencies are cosmetic in nature although some substantial changes in areas such as traffic flow and the renovation of Court Street are needed. By providing a built environment that is uniquely and effectively designed, that possesses its own character, is attractive to behold, and convenient and safe to frequent, a foundation for the establishment of a sense of place and economic vitality is established. The analysis and recommendations in chapters 3 and 4 outline areas where Downtown Taunton can be improved through a number of changes. The implementation of this plan will move the Downtown closer to creating a built environment that is uniquely and effectively designed, that possesses its own character, is attractive to behold, and convenient and safe to frequent.

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