

2004

Downtown Attleboro, Massachusetts Urban Design Study

Scott McPartlin
University of Rhode Island

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/theses>

Terms of Use

All rights reserved under copyright.

Recommended Citation

McPartlin, Scott, "Downtown Attleboro, Massachusetts Urban Design Study" (2004). *Open Access Master's Theses*. Paper 647.

<https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/theses/647>

This Thesis is brought to you by the University of Rhode Island. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons-group@uri.edu. For permission to reuse copyrighted content, contact the author directly.

DOWNTOWN ATTLEBORO, MASSACHUSETTS

URBAN DESIGN STUDY



Park Street in Downtown Attleboro, Circa 1940

PREPARED BY

SCOTT MCPARTLIN

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF COMMUNITY PLANNING
UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

2004

**MASTER OF COMMUNITY PLANNING
RESEARCH PROJECT
SCOTT MCPARTLIN**

Approved:

Major Professor


Dr. Farhad Atash

Acknowledged:

Director

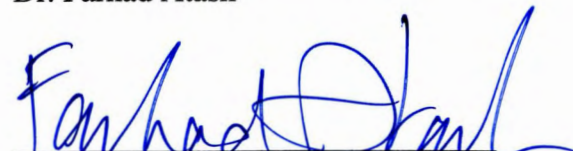

Dr. Farhad Atash

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	iii
List of Figures	v
Preface	ix
Chapter One:	
Introduction	1
Chapter Two:	
Community Profile	4
Chapter Three:	
Attleboro and Downtown Housing Profile	22
Chapter Four:	
Analysis of Existing Conditions	
4.1 Land Use and Zoning Regulations	38
4.2 Building Form and Massing	54
4.3 Public Spaces	68
4.4 Lost Spaces	81
4.5 Streetscape	89
4.6 Circulation	97
4.7 Parking	107

Chapter Four:

Recommendations

5.1 Land Use and Zoning Regulations	110
5.2 Building Form and Massing	113
5.3 Public Spaces	115
5.4 Lost Spaces	118
5.5 Streetscape	119
5.6 Circulation	120
5.7 Parking	121
Bibliography	122

LIST OF TABLES

No.	Title	
1	Comparative Demographic Trends of Attleboro, Surrounding Communities, Bristol County, and State: 1990–2000	8
2	Attleboro Population Change by Age, 1990–2000	9
3	Distribution of the Population by Race, By Census Tract, 2000	11
4	Distribution of the Hispanic or Latino Population, 2000	12
5	Distribution of the Black and Asian Population by census Tract, 2000	12
6	Population Density, 1910–1990	13
7	Population Distribution, By Census Tract, 1990–2000	14
8	Population Density, By Census Tract, 1990–2000	15
9	Percentage of High School Graduates, Attleboro, MA, and Bristol County 1980-2000	16
10	Percentage of Residents with a Bachelor’s Degree	17
11	Attleboro Area Dropout Rates, 2001	18
12	Median Family Income by Census Tract, 1989 and 1999	19
13	Residential Distribution of Existing and New Housing, By Census Tract 1990-2000	23
14	Changes in Housing Density, By Census Tract 1990–2000	27
15	Housing Occupancy Types, By Census Tract, 2000	28
16	Housing Age 1939, 1990, 2000	29

17	Housing Type – Single Family & Multi-Family 1980, 1990, 2000	31
18	Median Sales Price for a House in Attleboro, 1997-2001	35
19	Home Sales in Attleboro, 1997–2001	36
20	Percent of Housing Base that is Chapter 40B Subsidized, Attleboro Area	36
21	Land Uses in the CBD, 2001	41

LIST OF FIGURES

No.	Title	
1	Park Street Looking South	2
2	City of Attleboro, Central Business District	3
3	Historic Demographic Growth Trend	5
4	Modern Demographic Growth Trend 1910-2000	6
5	Total Population Growth, Attleboro and Bristol County 1910-2000	8
6	Census Tract Map: The Location of Attleboro's Eight Census Tracts	10
7	Percentage of Residents with a High School Diploma by Section of Attleboro, 2000	16
8	Percentage of Residents with a Bachelor's Degree by Section of Attleboro, 2000	18
9	Median Family Income Characteristics by Census Tract, 1999	20
10	Poverty Level by Census Tract, 1999	21
11	Building Permits Issued, 1990-2000	24
12	Building Permits Issued and Dwelling Units Constructed, 1990-2000	25
13	Percentage of Housing Constructed from 1995 to 2000	26
14	Housing Built Before 1940, 2000	30
15	Percent of Housing Units That Are One Unit, Detached: 2000	32
16	Housing with 10 or More Units, 2000	33

17	Percent of Units that are Mobile Homes	34
18	Actual and Projected Housing Stock, 1970-2050	35
19	Excessive Private Parking Area on County Street	41
20	Land Uses in the CBD 2001	42
21	One Story Buildings in the Heart of Downtown	49
22	One Story Buildings on Park Street	49
23	The First Special Permit Granted Under §17-10.10- Under Construction	51
24	Central Business District Zoning Map	53
25	The Corner at Park, County, North Main, and South Main Streets	56
26	An Ariel Photograph Displays the Building Form in the Heart of Downtown	56
27	The MBTA Right-of Way at Mill Street	57
28	The Ten Mile River and MBTA Right of Way	58
29	The Ten Mile River at Wall Street	58
30	A Suburban Style Convenience Store Located within the Periphery of the CBD	59
31	Looking Across a Private Parking Lot Toward Holman Street from Emory Street	60
32	Looking Toward the Red and Yellow Brick Buildings in the Heart of Downtown From County Street	61
33	Entering the Downtown from North Main Street	62
34	Storefronts on Bank Street	64
35	Storefronts on Park Street	64
36	Village Pizza on the Corner of Park and Bank Streets	65

37	A Façade on Bank Street	65
38	Open Space in Downtown	69
39	The Balfour Riverwalk Park from County Street	70
40	The Veterans Memorial Common	73
41	Attleboro Museum Open Space	76
42	Government Center Green Space	77
43	Gilbert Perry Square	78
44	Fiske Square	79
45	Johnson Morin Square	79
46	The Foster Building is an Example of an Underutilized Relic of Attleboro's Industrial Past	83
47	Surface Lots and Wide Streets that Separate Districts	84
48	Pleasant Streets Separates the Neighborhood on Holman Street from the Main Commercial Area	85
49	The Ten Mile River at Wall Street	86
50	Gee-Wiz, RR, Conrail ROW	87
51	One Proposal For the Union Street Block	88
52	Streetscape on Park Street	90
53	A Sidewalk on County Street	91
54	A Sidewalk on Wall Street	92
55	Cobra-Head Lighting in the Heart of Downtown	93
56	A Trash Receptacle in Downtown	94
57	A Perspective of Proposed Park Street Streetscape Improvements	96
58	Downtown Attleboro in Relation to the Regional Road Network	98

59	Truck Routes the Navigate through Downtown and the Surrounding Areas	100
60	Edges in Downtown	102
61	Park Street in front of the LeBlanc Building	103
62	Park Street in front of the City Hall	103
63	Attleboro Station in Relation to the MBTA Commuter Rail Network	105
64	Bus Routes that Run Through Downtown Attleboro	106
65	Major Parking Areas in Downtown	108
66	Proposed Changes to the Border of the CBD	112
67	Proposed Linear Building Areas	113
68	Proposed Tricentennial Park by Albert Veri & Associates	116
69	Area between the Municipal Parking Garage and Park Street	117
70	Signage Recommendations, CRJA, SIAC, City of Attleboro	120

PREFACE

The following paper is an urban design study of Downtown Attleboro, Massachusetts. The study includes community and housing profiles to provide the reader with an overall understanding of the City and Downtown, an analysis of existing Downtown conditions, and recommendations based on the analysis of existing conditions to improve the urban design of Downtown.

The condition of downtown has recently become an issue of growing concern. Research indicates that suburbanites are frustrated with the inconveniences and greater issues associated with low-density development. Traffic, parking, a poor pedestrian landscape, separated land uses, housing prices, and a lack of community have motivated many to reside, work, shop, and recreate in urban areas.

As this trend has been occurring in Massachusetts since the mid-1990s, and as Attleboro residents rate downtown improvement as a high-priority issue, there appears to be a crucial need for improvement in the City's downtown. This paper addresses the urban design issues in Downtown Attleboro.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Like the majority of Central Business Districts (CBDs) in small cities across the United States, Downtown Attleboro has gone through numerous development cycles. The most notable changes occurred from 1950 to the present. During this period, automobile use steadily increased allowing more people to shop, work, live and conduct business in sprawling areas that they otherwise would not have access to. The automobile made it no longer necessary to shop, work, live or conduct business in a centralized area or downtown. Land values of downtowns or CBDs decreased in relation to surrounding areas that were constructed under regulations that accommodated the automobile. As a result upkeep, including public investment in CBDs also steadily decreased and began to cater to the automobile.

Downtown's built environment was no exception. In Downtown Attleboro, highway “cobra-head”, auto-oriented lighting replaced pedestrian-oriented streetlights. Narrow, pedestrian scaled, tree-lined streets were replaced by widened arterials that accommodated a greater number of automobiles at faster speeds (see **Figure 48**) and a plethora of street signs were installed to direct the increasing number of motorists.

The purpose of this report is to submit recommendations and design strategies to improve Downtown Attleboro. It is the author's position that a design that delineates Downtown Attleboro as a well-maintained area of activity, where the City invests in and maintains the public realm, is necessary in order to transform Downtown into an area that generates activity in a safe, vibrant environment while providing areas of congregation for the community that its

residents can be proud of. **Figure 2** illustrates Attleboro's Central Business District, which contains the study area for this research.

Design Improvements are necessary in order to maintain a downtown that generates activity in a safe, vibrant environment while providing areas of congregation for the community that its residents can be proud of. Urban design improvements not only improve the appearance of a downtown, they can indicate that this is in fact an area of activity.

Figure 1: Park Street Looking South



Figure 2: City of Attleboro, Central Business District



Source: Southeastern Massachusetts Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD)

This study first provides the reader with an overview of the City's demographic characteristics in Chapter Two. Specific attention is presented for the downtown and its surrounding residential areas, which are contained within Census Tract (CT) #6314. Chapter Three is an analysis of housing characteristics within the downtown and its surrounding residential areas (CT#6314) compared with housing citywide. Chapter Four is an analysis of existing conditions in the downtown, and Chapter Five contains several recommendations based on the analysis conducted in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER TWO

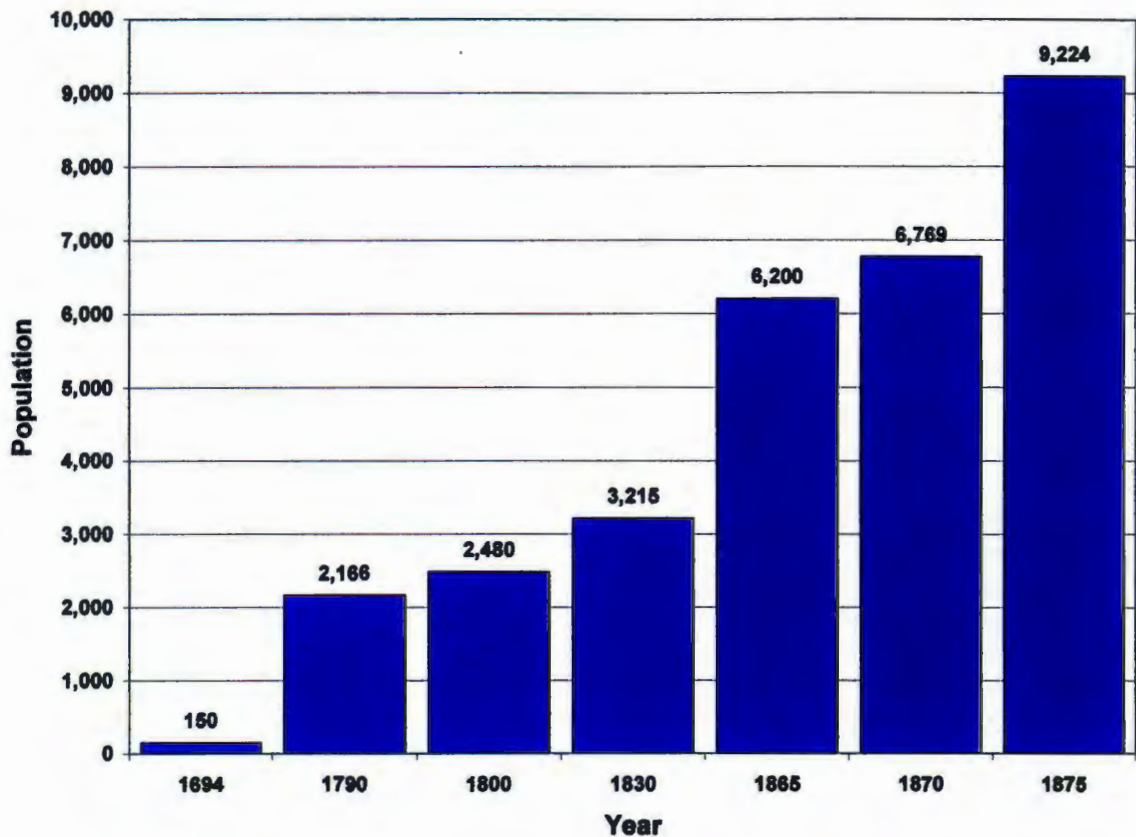
COMMUNITY PROFILE

Population Trends

According to available census statistics the City's population continually grew between its incorporation in 1694 and 1875. During this period the population grew at a rate of 336 percent or 9,074 persons (City of Attleboro Comprehensive Plan, 1990) (see Figure 3).

Several events may be attributed to population growth between 1694 and 1875. Between 1787 and 1801 a tannery and a textile mill were established in town. These industries fueled early population growth. The opening of the Boston-Providence Railroad line in 1836 created a tremendous incentive for industrial and commercial development. The manufacturing of jewelry, textiles, and other products thrived during this period triggering population growth (City of Attleboro Comprehensive Plan, 1990).

Figure 3: Historic Demographic Growth Trend

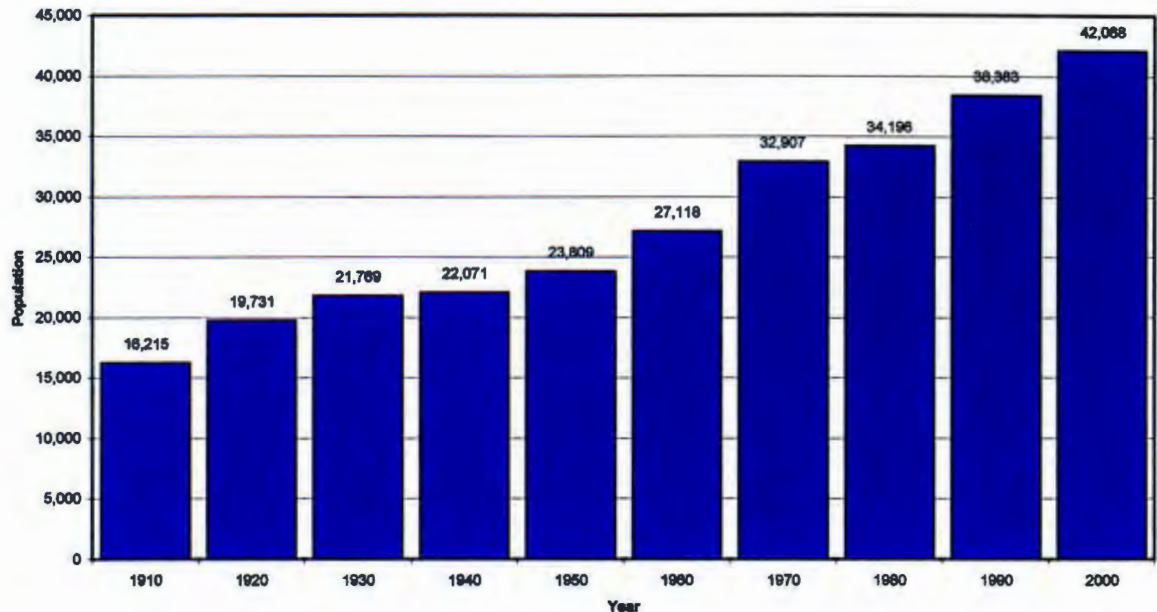


The largest percentage increases occurred between 1910–1920 and 1960–1970 when the population increased from 16,215 to 19,731 and 27,118 to 32,907, for increases of 3,516 and 5,789 persons, or 21.7 percent and 21.3 percent respectively. The smallest percentage gain occurred between 1930 and 1940 when the population increased from 21,769 to 22,071, for an increase of only 302 persons, or 1.4 percent.

Attleboro has grown over twenty-three percent from 1980 to 2000. In 1980, the total population of Attleboro was 34,196. By 1990, the population increased by 12.2 percent to 38,383. By 2000, the population increased by 9.6 percent from 1990 to 42,068. Since 1910, Attleboro has been continually

increasing in population. In each successive decade since 1910, the city has had an average increase of 2,873 persons per decade.

Figure 4: Modern Demographic Growth Trend 1910-2000



In order to analyze population changes in an area, it must be compared to the region in which it is located in as well as the communities that surround it. Referencing other areas is useful in determining how significant a shift in population is. For example, if a growing area is located within a region that is decreasing in population, the area's growth is most likely not attributed to regional in-migration. For the purposes of this study, the reference areas are Bristol County as well as the communities surrounding Attleboro.

The total populations of both Bristol County and Attleboro have increased rapidly from 1910 to 2000. During this period, the City of Attleboro with a gain of 159 percent has experienced a more significant increase than Bristol County, which grew in population by 68 percent. Therefore Attleboro uniquely has attracted and

retained a growing population, in addition to absorbing its relative proportion of regional in-migration.

As outlined in **Table 1**, the state, county, and region all gained population between 1990 and 2000. At 9.6%, Attleboro's population has grown more rapidly than the State's and Bristol County's. Nevertheless the City's rate of growth was less than the surrounding communities, which experienced a mean growth rate of 18.1%.

All five Massachusetts communities adjacent to the city grew in population between 1990 and 2000. Growth rates between area communities varied greatly during this period. Mansfield's population increased at 35.3%, while Seekonk grew at only 2.9%. Mansfield and Norton experienced the most rapid growth rates with 35.3% and 25.4% respectively. Mansfield, Norton, and Attleboro experienced the highest population increases from 1990 with 5,846, 3,771, and 3,685 respectively.

Figure 5: Total Population Growth, Attleboro and Bristol County 1910-2000

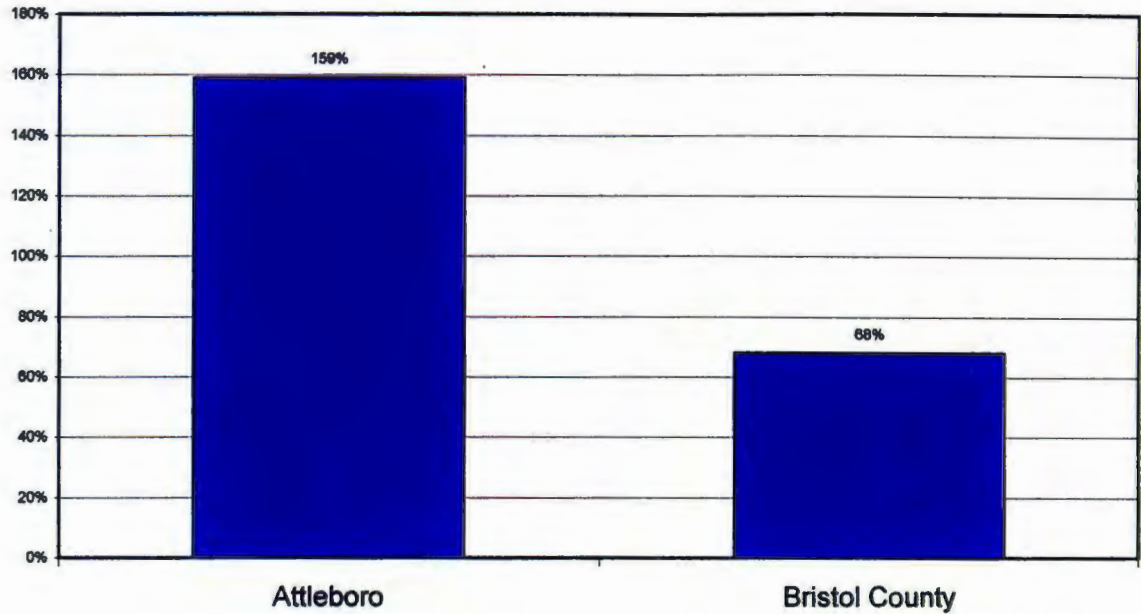


Table 1: Comparative Demographic Trends of Attleboro, Surrounding Communities, Bristol County, and State: 1990–2000

Community	1990 Population	2000 Population	# Change	% Change
Attleboro	38,383	42,068	3,685	9.6
Mansfield	16,568	22,414	5,846	35.3
North Attleborough	25,038	27,143	2,105	8.4
Norton	14,265	18,036	3,771	26.4
Rehoboth	8,656	10,172	1,516	17.5
Seekonk	13,046	13,425	379	2.9
Bristol County	506,325	534,678	28,353	5.6
State of Massachusetts	6,016,425	6,349,097	332,672	5.5

Source: US Census

Age Composition

Attleboro's total population grew by 9.6% from 1990 to 2000 for a total population of 42,068. A number of changes have taken place during this period within various age groups. **Table 2** compares the 1990 population to 2000, by age group. Several observations may be noted. People aged 45–54 and people over 75 experienced the largest percentage population gains, increasing by 44.7% and 42.7% respectively. People aged 20–24 and people aged 25–34 experienced the largest percentage population losses with losses of 30.2% and 16.1% respectively.

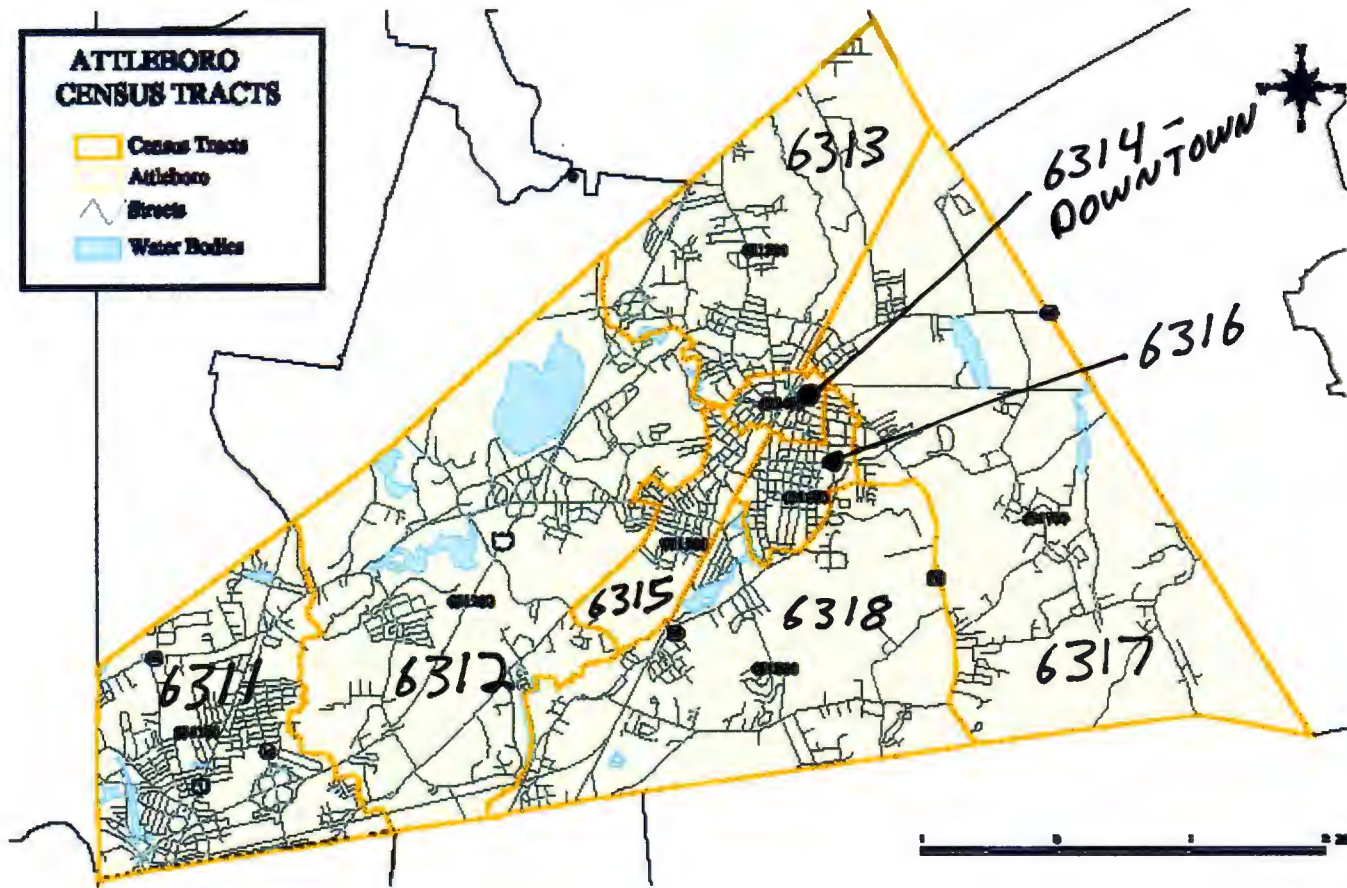
In 2000 11,564 persons or 27.5 percent of the population, were nineteen years of age or younger, 25,082 persons or 59.6 percent were between the ages of 20–64, and 5,422 persons, or 12.9 percent were 65 years of age or older.

Table 2: Attleboro Population Change by Age, 1990–2000

Age	1990	2000	Number Change	Percent Change
Under 5	3,327	2,942	-385	-11.6%
5–9	2,738	3,061	323	11.8%
10–14	2,287	3,078	791	34.6%
15–19	2,306	2,483	177	7.7%
20–24	2,837	1,979	-858	-30.2%
25–34	7,878	6,611	-1267	-16.1%
35–44	5,560	7,672	2112	38.0%
45–54	3,682	5,327	1645	44.7%
55–59	1,524	1,982	458	30.1%
60–64	1,615	1,511	-104	-6.4%
65–74	2,709	2,682	-27	-1.0%
75+	1,920	2,740	820	42.7%
Total	38,383	42,068	3685	9.6%

Source: US Census

Figure 6: Census Tract Map: The Location of Attleboro's Eight Census Tracts



Source: SRPEDD

Minority Population

In 2000, the minority population in Attleboro represented approximately 8.72 percent of the population with a total of 3,670. According to the 2000 US Census 1723 persons of Hispanic origin (of any race), 801 persons of African origin, and 1,210 Asian origin resided in Attleboro.

The Hispanic population accounted for 4.1 percent of the overall population of Attleboro. The greatest number of Hispanic persons resided in census tracts 6314, and 6316. Downtown is located within Census Tract 6314. They represented 16.1 percent, and 13.1 percent of the total population in census tracts 6314, and 6316 respectively.

In 2000, the total persons of African decent within the city represented 1.9 percent of the population. They comprised 5.3 percent of all persons living in census tract 6314 and 2.9 percent of all persons living in census tract 6318.

In 2000, the total persons of Asian decent represented 2.9 percent of the population. They comprised 11.7 percent of all persons living in census tract 6316 and 3.7 percent of all persons living in census tract 6317.

Table 3: Distribution of the Population by Race, By Census Tract, 2000

Census Tract	Total Population	White Population	Black Population	Asian Population	Other Race	Two or More Races
6311	7,817	7,470	90	78	79	100
6312	6,168	5,788	64	179	44	93
6313	4,846	4,560	126	63	17	80
6314	2,703	2,065	144	47	189	258
6315	2,843	2,663	12	6	35	127
6316	4,203	3,256	90	491	242	124
6317	6,261	5,876	62	234	18	71
6318	7,227	6,720	213	112	72	110
City of Attleboro	42,068	38,398	801	1210	696	963

Source: US Census

Table 4: Distribution of the Hispanic or Latino Population, 2000

Census Tract	Total Population	Hispanic or Latino Population
6311	7,817	153
6312	6,168	168
6313	4,846	133
6314	2,703	435
6315	2,843	97
6316	4,203	552
6317	6,261	55
6318	7,227	130
City	42,068	1,723

Source: US Census

Table 5: Distribution of the Black and Asian Population by census Tract, 2000

Census Tract	Total Population	# of Black Alone Residents	% of Total	# of Asian Alone Residents	% of Total
6311	7,817	90	1.15%	78	.99%
6312	6,168	64	1.04%	179	2.90%
6313	4,846	126	2.6%	63	1.30%
6314	2,703	144	5.3%	47	1.74%
6315	2,843	12	.42%	6	.21%
6316	4,203	90	2.14%	491	11.68%
6317	6,261	62	.99%	234	3.74%
6318	7,227	213	2.95%	112	1.55%
City of Attleboro	42,068	801	1.90%	1,210	2.88%
State of Massachusetts	6,349,097	343,454	5.4%	238,124	3.8%

Source: US Census

Population Distribution and Density

Table 6 displays the trend in the City's population density, the number of persons per square mile, between 1910 and 2000. In 2000, the population density was 1,529 persons per square mile, or 2.39 persons per acre.

Table 6: Population Density, 1910–1990

Year	Population	Area of City (Sq. Miles)	Density Per Square Mile	% Change From 1910	% Change From Preceding Decade
1910	16,215	27.51	589	–	–
1920	19,731	27.51	717	+21.7%	+21.7%
1930	21,769	27.51	791	+34.3%	+10.3%
1940	22,071	27.51	802	+36.2%	+1.4%
1950	23,809	27.51	865	+46.9%	+7.8%
1960	27,118	27.51	986	+67.4%	+13.9%
1970	32,907	27.51	1,196	+103.1%	+21.3%
1980	34,196	27.51	1,243	+111.0%	+3.9%
1990	38,383	27.51	1,395	+136.7%	+12.2%
2000	42,068	27.51	1,529	+159.4%	+9.6%

Source: US Census

When comparing census tracts it is important to determine how a census tract differs from the surrounding tracts. This includes comparing patterns in addition to current figures. If two census tracts have the same income level, however one rising and one declining different services may be required in each tract. Attleboro is comprised of eight census tracts, each unique in composition and character.

Every census tract (CT) in Attleboro with the exception of CT #6316 gained population from 1990 to 2000. Census Tracts 6312 and 6311 had the most significant increases with 18.8% and 15.8% respectively. Census Tracts 6313 and 6315 had the least notable increases with only .33% and 1.32% respectively. Census Tract 6316 actually lost –0.47% of its population.

The Census Tracts with the highest populations in 2000 were CT#6311 and CT#6318 with 7,817 and 7,227 people respectively. Census Tracts 6314 and 6315 had the least amount of people with 2,703 and 2,843 respectively.

Table 7: Population Distribution, By Census Tract, 1990–2000

Census Tract	1990 Number of Persons	% of Total Population	2000 Number of Persons	% of Total Population	# Change 1990–2000	% Change 1990–2000
6311	6,751	17.59%	7,817	18.58%	1066	15.79%
6312	5,193	13.53%	6,168	14.66%	975	18.78%
6313	4,830	12.58%	4,846	11.52%	16	.33%
6314	2,447	6.38%	2,703	6.43%	256	10.46%
6315	2,806	7.31%	2,843	6.76%	37	1.32%
6316	4,223	11.00%	4,203	9.99%	-20	-.47%
6317	5,577	14.53%	6,261	14.88%	684	12.26%
6318	6,556	17.08%	7,227	17.18%	671	10.23%
Totals	38,383	100%	42,068	100%	3,685	9.60%

Source: US Census

Every census tract (CT) in Attleboro with the exception of CT #6316 gained population density from 1990 to 2000. Census Tracts 6312 and 6311 experienced the highest population density increase during this period while tract 6316 decreased in density.

Census Tracts 6314 and 6316 are overwhelmingly the most densely populated census tracts in the city with 13.52 and 10.59 persons per acre respectively.

Table 8 shows the population density within the City's eight census tracts. Today, while census tract 6314 has the smallest land area as well as the smallest population, it has the highest population density with 13.52 persons per acre. Census tract 6317 has the lowest population density with 1.34 persons per acre. Overall, the City's population density increased from 2.17 persons per acre in 1990 to 2.38 persons per acre in 2000.

Table 8: Population Density, By Census Tract, 1990–2000

Census Tract	Total Number of Acres	1990 Number of Persons	2000 Number of Persons	1990 Persons Per Acre	2000 Persons Per Acre	Density Change
6311	2150.4	6,751	7,817	3.27	3.78	15.60%
6312	4537.6	5,193	6,168	1.17	1.39	18.80%
6313	2009.6	4,830	4,846	2.18	2.19	.46%
6314	198.4	2,447	2,703	12.24	13.52	10.46%
6315	569.6	2,806	2,843	4.62	4.67	1.08%
6316	390.4	4,223	4,203	10.64	10.59	-0.47%
6317	4710.4	5,577	6,261	1.20	1.34	11.67%
6318	3091.2	6,556	7,227	2.18	2.40	10.09%

* - these figures may slightly change as new data is analyzed

Source: US Census

Educational Attainment

In 2000, eighty-two percent of Attleboro residents older than 25 were high school graduates. This is high compared to Bristol County where only 73% of residents had a high school diploma. Nevertheless, the city remains below the state high school graduation rate of 85%.

The state, county and city all increased in percentage of high school graduates from 1990 to 2000. Bristol County and the City of Attleboro both experienced a higher increase in percentage of high school graduates between 1990 and 2000 than Massachusetts. The state increased by 6.3% from an 80% high school graduate rate in 1990 to 85% in 2000. The county increased by 12.3% from 65% in 1990 to 73% in 2000. The city increased by 9.3% from 75% to 82% between 1990 and 2000.

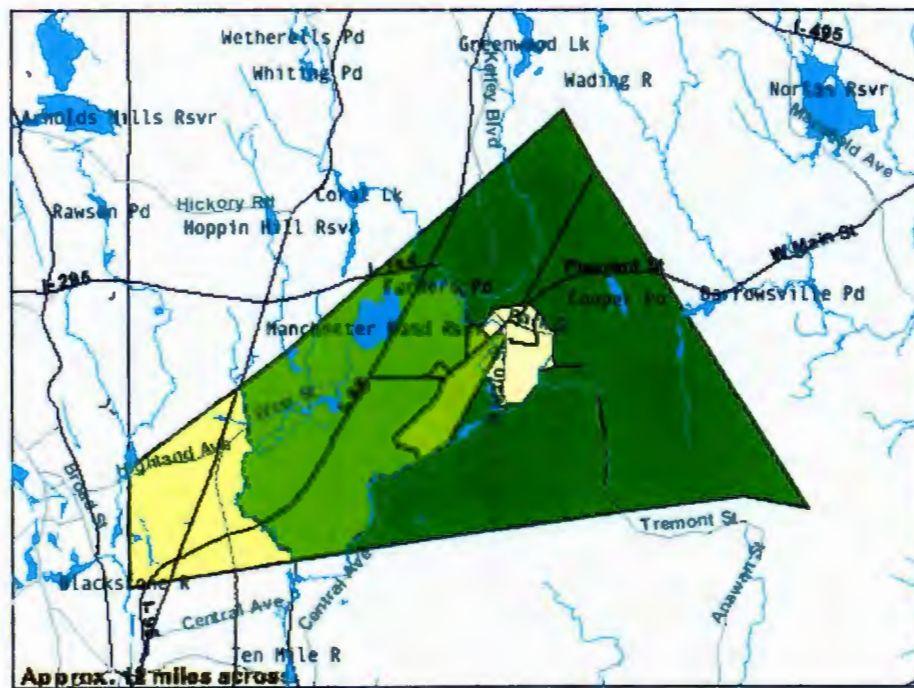
Table 9: Percentage of High School Graduates, Attleboro, MA, and Bristol County 1980-2000

Area	1980	1990	2000	Change 80-90	Change 90-00
Attleboro	64%	75%	82%	17.2%	9.3%
Bristol County	53%	65%	73%	22.6%	12.3%
Massachusetts	72%	80%	85%	11.1%	6.3%

Source: US Census

As displayed in **Figure 7**, Downtown and its surrounding areas had a significantly lower percentage of residents with a high school diploma in 2000 than the City's suburban areas.

Figure 7: Percentage of Residents with a High School Diploma by Section of Attleboro, 2000



Data Classes

- Percent
- 70.1 - 71.5
 - 78.6 - 78.6
 - 79.9 - 79.9
 - 83.1 - 83.1
 - 86.8 - 87.3

Features

- Major Road
- Street
- Stream/Waterbody
- Stream/Waterbody

Source: US Census

In 2000, 24 percent of Attleboro residents had a Bachelor's degree. This compares to 20 % in Bristol County and 33% in Massachusetts. Attleboro experienced a 20% increase in the percentage of residents over 25 years that attained a Bachelor's degree from 1990 to 2000. Comparatively, the state experienced a 22% increase and the county a 25% increase.

Table 10: Percentage of Residents with a Bachelor's Degree

Area	1980	1990	2000	Change 80-90	Change 90-00
Attleboro	13%	20%	24%	79.0%	20%
Bristol County	11%	16%	20%	36.2%	25%
Massachusetts	20%	27%	33%	48.1%	22%

As displayed in **Figure 8**, Downtown had a significantly lower percentage of residents with a bachelor's degree than the majority of the City.

Income Characteristics

As displayed in **Table 12**, there is a major disparity in income between median family income levels in the different census tracts. CT#6312 had the highest median family income in 1999 with \$67,319. Nevertheless this CT only had the 5th highest in 1989 with \$44,167. Therefore, this section of the City has undergone a significant change. CT#6317 had the second highest median family income in 1999 with \$65,662. This CT was had the highest in 1989 with \$49,680.

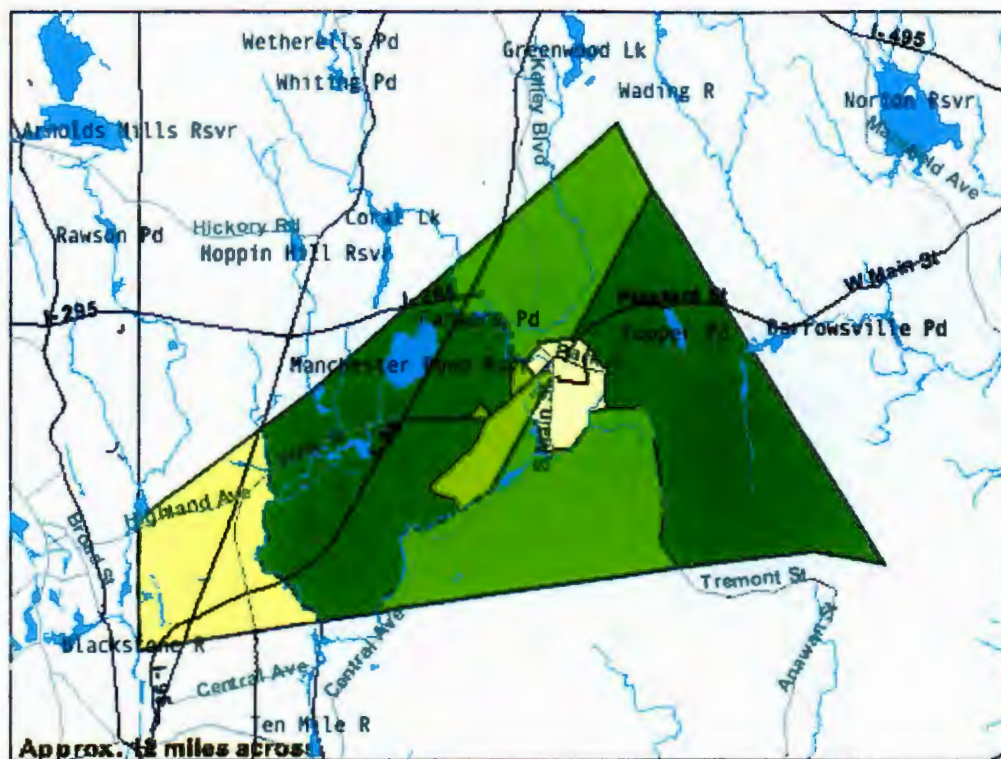
CT# 6316 had the lowest median family in 1999 with \$46,721, while in 1989 it had the second lowest with \$32,616. Downtown had the second lowest median family income in 1999 with \$47,361, while it had the lowest in 1989 with \$27,180.

Table 12: Median Family Income by Census Tract, 1989 and 1999

Census Tract	Median Family Income 1989	Median Family Income 1999	Percent Change
6311	\$40,300	\$52,342	29.9%
6312	\$44,167	\$67,319	52.4%
6313	\$47,346	\$63,468	34.1%
6314	\$27,180	\$47,361	74.2%
6315	\$46,411	\$54,679	17.8%
6316	\$32,616	\$46,721	43.2%
6317	\$49,680	\$65,662	32.2%
6318	\$47,816	\$64,052	34.0%
City Wide	\$43,248	\$59,112	36.7%

In 1999, Downtown and the surrounding areas had the highest poverty rate and the lowest median family income (see **Figure 9** and **Figure 10**).

Figure 9: Median Family Income Characteristics by Census Tract, 1999



Data Classes

Dollars

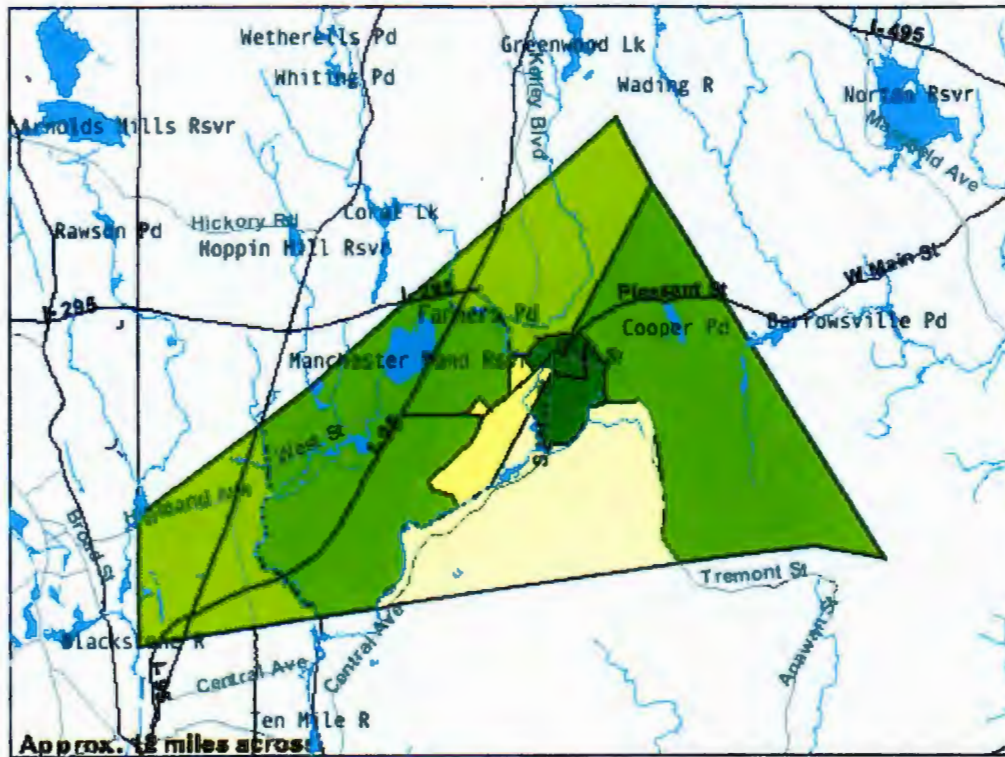
46721 - 47361
52342 - 52342
54679 - 54679
63468 - 64052
65662 - 67319

Features

- Major Road
- Street
- Stream/Waterbody
- Stream/Waterbody

Source: US Census

Figure 10: Poverty Level by Census Tract, 1999



Data Classes

Color	Percent
Lightest Yellow	4.0 - 4.0
Yellow	4.8 - 4.8
Light Green	5.6 - 5.6
Medium Green	6.3 - 6.9
Dark Green	8.7 - 10.1

Features

- Major Road
- Street
- Stream/Waterbody
- Stream/Waterbody

Source: US Census

Summary

With the City's lowest percentage of residents with a high school diploma, lowest percentage with a bachelor's degree, highest poverty rate, lowest household income, it appears that comprehensive improvement is needed within Downtown and the surrounding areas.

CHAPTER THREE

ATTLEBORO AND DOWNTOWN HOUSING PROFILE

Meeting the housing needs of a downtown is crucial to its overall health. The availability, type, location, suitability, habitability, and affordability of housing in a downtown greatly impact its character. Housing also impacts the transportation, land use, and economy of the area. Housing needs are dictated by factors such as the age, income, composition, and household size of the population.

Housing development has continued to increase in Attleboro for several reasons including its proximity between Boston and Providence, the surrounding transportation network, and lack of affordable housing in and around greater Boston.

Numerous communities across the country have used residential development as a catalyst for downtown improvement and there has been a trend toward locating housing in downtowns (<http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/stories/1997/05/19/newscolumn3.html>). This combined with the demand for housing in Attleboro appears to situate the downtown in an excellent position to absorb a portion of this housing to improve the area.

This housing profile discusses trends and projections of the City and Downtown's housing stock. Analyzing these trends and projections can assist with the planning for the housing needs of the City and Downtown's present and future residents. Downtown and the surrounding residential neighborhoods occupy Census Tract (CT) # 6314. Data relative to this area will be illustrated in yellow highlight throughout this section.

Housing Trends

Every section of the City besides Downtown and the surrounding areas experienced an increase in the number of housing units between 1990 and 2000 (see Table 13). Attleboro's more urban census tracts such as CT#6314, CT#6315, and CT#6316 either decreased in the number of housing units or experienced a small increase in units. However, suburban tracts including CT#6312 and CT#6317 both increased significantly with gains of 19.1% and 22% respectively.

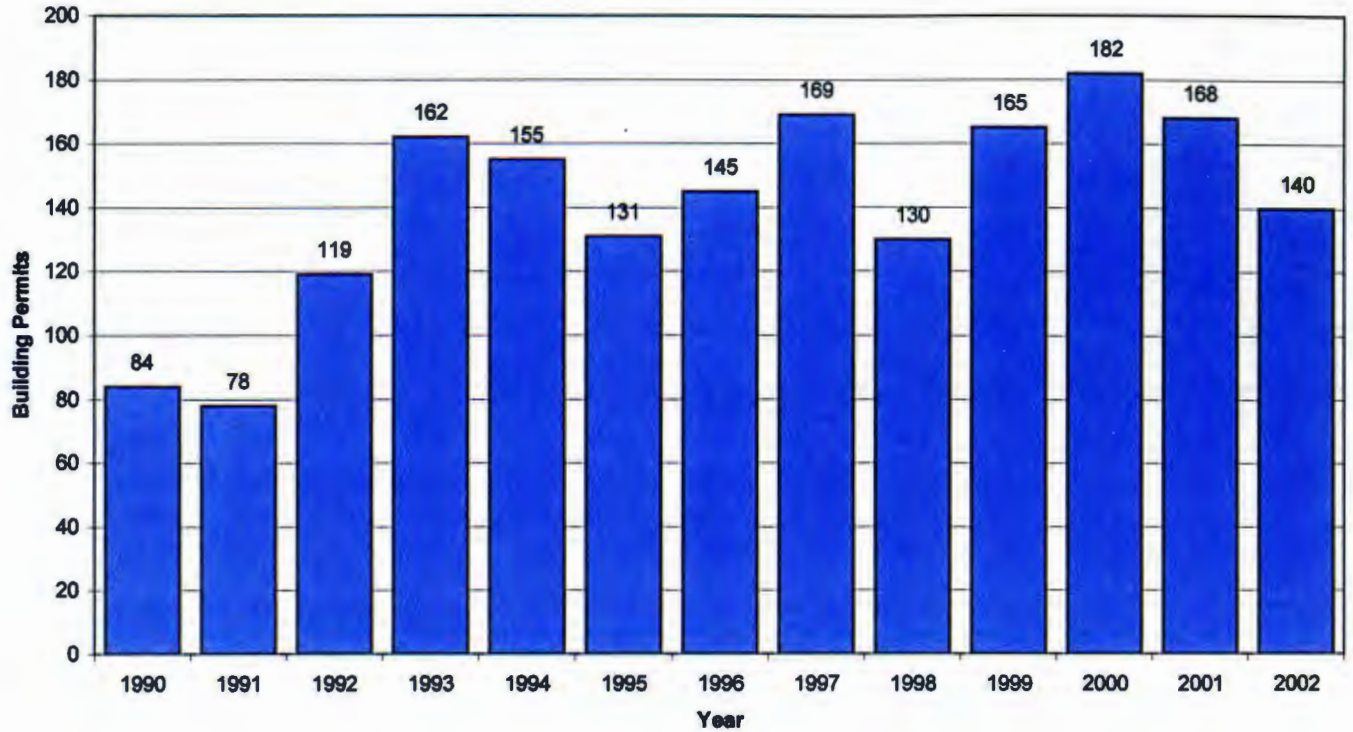
Table 13: Residential Distribution of Existing and New Housing, By Census Tract 1990-2000

Census Tract	# of Units 1990	% of Total 1990	Total # of Units 2000	% of Total 2000	% Change - 1990 # of Units & 2000 # of Units
6311	2,767	18.4%	3,162	19.1%	14.3%
6312	2,026	13.5%	2,413	14.6%	19.1%
6313	1,923	12.8%	1,964	11.9%	2.1%
6314	1,247	8.3%	1,245	7.5%	-.2%
6315	1,107	7.4%	1,152	7.0%	4.1%
6316	1,547	10.3%	1,596	9.6%	3.2%
6317	1,840	12.2%	2,244	13.6%	22.0%
6318	2,588	17.2%	2,778	16.8%	7.3%
City	15,045	100%	16,554	100%	10.0%

Source: US Census

Figure 11 shows the number of building permits issued each year between 1990 and 2002 in Attleboro. While a total of 1,828 building permits for residential structures were issued, the actual number of dwelling units permitted was 2,249. This reflects the mix of single-family, duplex and multi-family units constructed during this period.

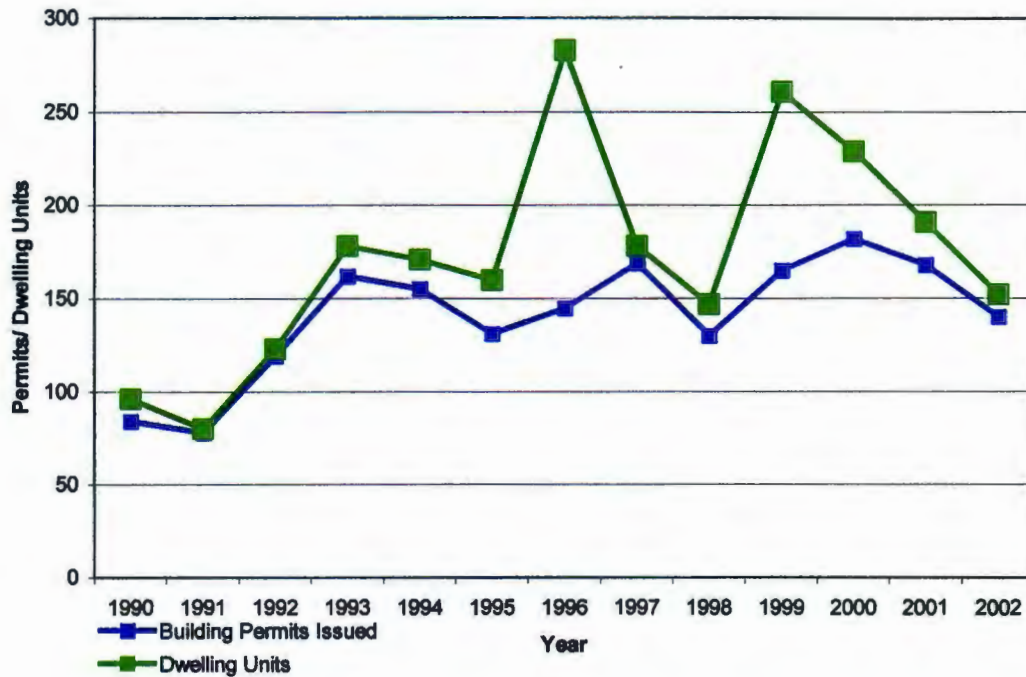
Figure 11: Building Permits Issued, 1990-2000



Source: Attleboro Department of Planning and Development – 2003

In 2000 there were a total of 16,554 housing units in Attleboro, which reflects an increase of 10 percent from the 1990 (see Table 13). Figure 12 compares the number of building permits that were issued and the resultant number of residential units from 1990–2002.

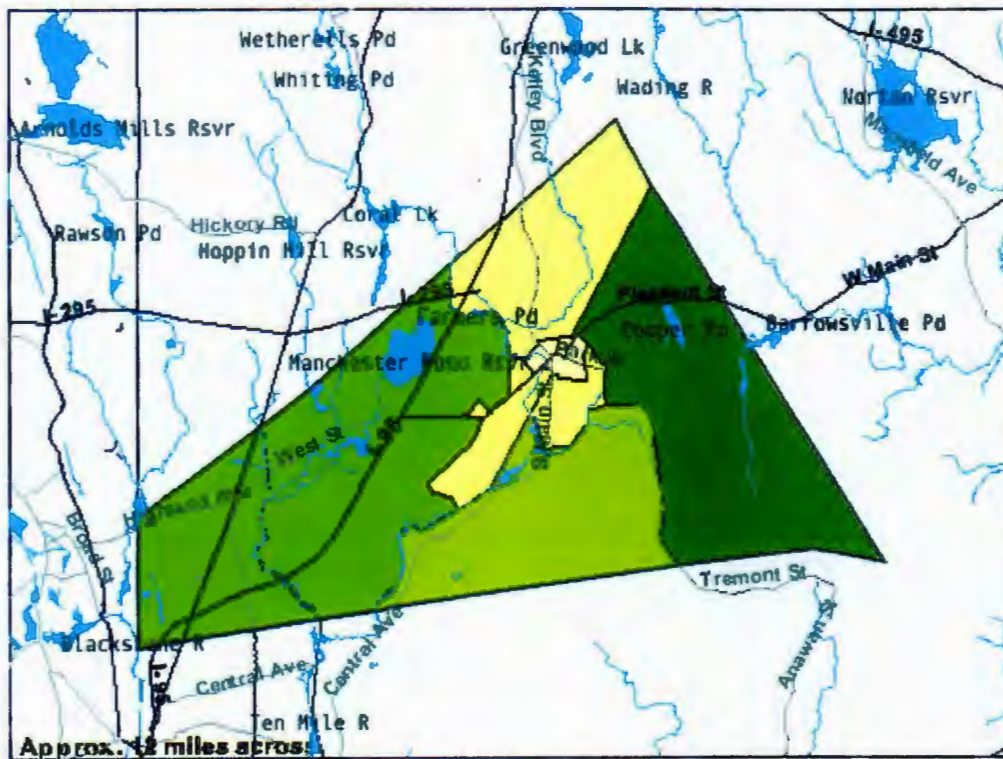
Figure 12: Building Permits Issued and Dwelling Units Constructed, 1990-2000



Source: Attleboro Building Inspection Department – 2003

Figure 13 displays the percentage of housing constructed between 1995 and 2000 for each census tract. The peripheral areas of the City have the highest percentage of new housing, while urban areas, especially the downtown have the lowest percentage.

Figure 13: Percentage of Housing Constructed from 1995 to 2000



Data Classes

Percent
0.4 - 0.4
2.1 - 3.2
6.2 - 6.2
9.6 - 10.3
13.9 - 13.9

Features

- Major Road
- Street
- Stream/Waterbody
- Stream/Waterbody

Source: US Census, 2000

Housing Density

As a result of the growth in the City's housing stock, every census tract but CT # 6314 had an increase in its housing density. **Table 14** shows these changes.

**Table 14: Change in Housing Density, By Census Tract
1990–2000**

Census Tract	Net Land Area (acres)	# of Total Dwelling Units/Acre - 1990	# of Total Dwelling Units/Acre - 2000	Number Change - # of Total Dwelling Units/Acre	Percent Change - # of Total Dwelling Units/Acre
6311	2,150.4	1.28	1.47	0.19	14.8%
6312	4,537.6	.45	.53	.08	17.8%
6313	2,009.6	.96	.98	.02	2.1%
6314	198.4	6.29	6.28	-.01	-.2%
6315	569.6	1.94	2.02	.08	4.1%
6316	390.4	3.96	4.09	.13	3.3%
6317	4,710.4	.39	.48	.09	23.1%
6318	3,091.2	.84	.90	.06	7.1%
City	17,657.6	.85	.94	.09	10.6%

Sources: SRPEDD, US Census 2000

Housing Characteristics

The total number of households in Attleboro in 1990 was 14,154. The total number of households in 2000 was 16,019, an increase of 1,865 households, or 13.16 percent. The average household size in 1990 was 2.66 and in 2000 it was 2.57.

Of Attleboro's 16,554 housing units, it is estimated that 16,019 were occupied in 2000. Of this total 10,224 were owner occupied units, and 5,795 were renter occupied units (see **Table 15**). In 2000, Attleboro had 8,678 single-family detached houses, 5,667 units were in structures of two to nine unit buildings, and 1453 residential dwellings are in structures of ten or more units. The remainder of the units were mobile homes or miscellaneous dwellings such as RVs, etc. The median number of rooms for a housing unit in the City in 2000 was 5.4. The 2000 vacancy rate in the City for housing units was 3.2 percent.

Table 15: Housing Occupancy Types, By Census Tract, 2000

Census Tract	Total Number of Housing Units	Occupied Units	# Owner Occupied	% of Occupied units Owner Occupied	# Renter Occupied	% of Occupied Units Renter Occupied
6311	3,162	3,082	2,371	76.9%	711	23.1%
6312	2,413	2,356	1,766	75.0%	590	25.0%
6313	1,964	1,920	1,213	63.2%	707	36.8%
6314	1,245	1,175	224	19.1%	951	80.9%
6315	1,152	1,113	602	54.1%	511	45.9%
6316	1,596	1,512	651	43.1%	861	56.9%
6317	2,244	2,145	1,690	78.8%	455	21.2%
6318	2,778	2,716	1,707	62.8%	1,009	37.2%
City	16,554	16,019	10,224	63.8%	5,795	36.2%

Source: US Census, 2000

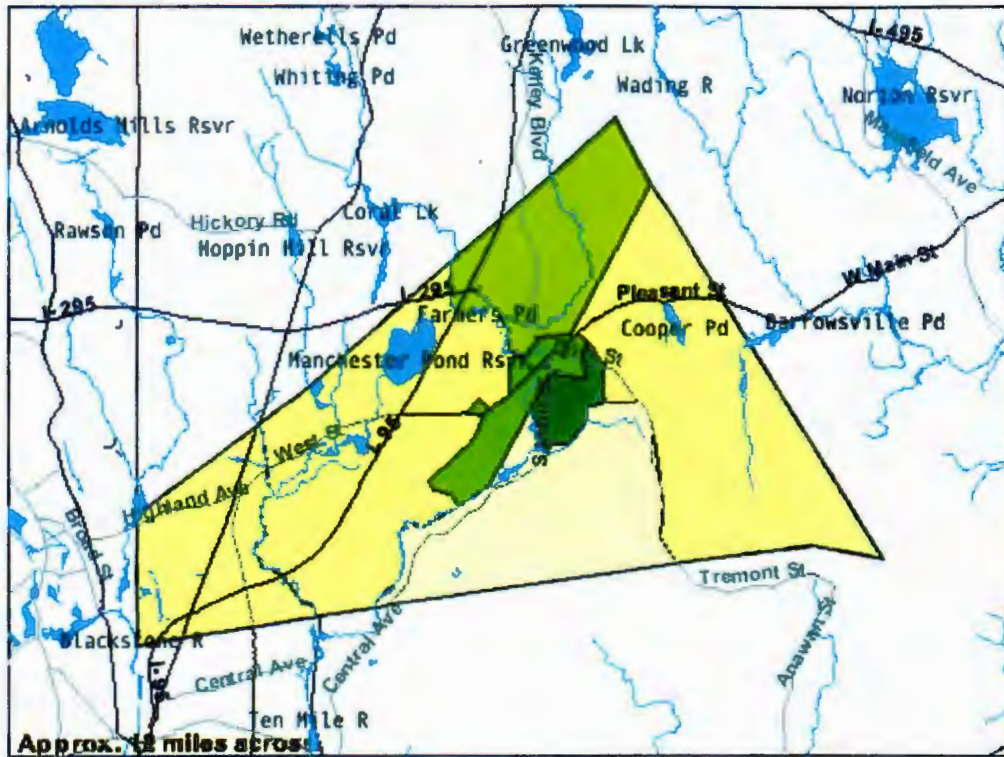
Research indicates that most housing units require significant repair at approximately 50–60 years old. For this reason, this study illustrates the number of residential units that were constructed on, or before, 1939. **Table 16** and **Figure 14** display the proportion of the City's housing stock in 1990 that was constructed in 1939 or earlier. This represented 34.4 percent of the total housing stock. By 2000, as a result of new housing construction, the proportion of the pre-1939 housing stock was 29.6 percent. In both 1990 and 2000, Census Tracts 6314 and 6316 had the highest proportion of City's older housing stock.

**Table 16: Housing Age
1939, 1990, 2000**

Census Tract	# of Units built in 1939 or Earlier in 2000	# of Units built in 1939 or Earlier in 1990	% of Total Housing Stock in 1990	% of Total Housing in Tract in 1990	% of Total Housing Stock in 2000	% of Total Housing in Tract in 2000
6311	639	530	3.5%	19.1%	3.9%	20.2%
6312	422	297	2.0%	14.6%	2.5%	17.5%
6313	673	791	5.3%	41.1%	4.1%	34.3%
6314	719	857	5.7%	68.7%	4.3%	57.8%
6315	597	695	4.6%	62.8%	3.6%	51.8%
6316	1,080	1,094	7.3%	70.7%	6.5%	67.7%
6317	397	541	3.6%	29.4%	2.4%	17.7%
6318	372	373	2.5%	14.4%	2.2%	13.4%
City	4,899	5,178	34.4%	—	29.6%	—

Source: US Census

Figure 14 Housing Built Before 1940, 2000



Data Classes

Color	Percent
Lightest Yellow	13.4 - 13.4
Yellow	17.5 - 20.2
Light Green	34.3 - 34.3
Medium Green	51.8 - 57.8
Dark Green	67.7 - 67.7

Features

- Major Road
- Street
- Stream/Waterbody
- Stream/Waterbody

Source: US Census, 2000

Table H5 shows the change in the distribution of single family and two-family, multi-family, and other housing. Between 1990–2000, the City's single family housing stock increased by 10.6% while its two-family, multi-family, and other housing stock increased by 33%. It is estimated that 56.1 percent of today's housing stock consists of single-family units and 43.9 % consists of two-family, multi-family and other units.

Table 17: Housing Type – Single Family & Multi-Family

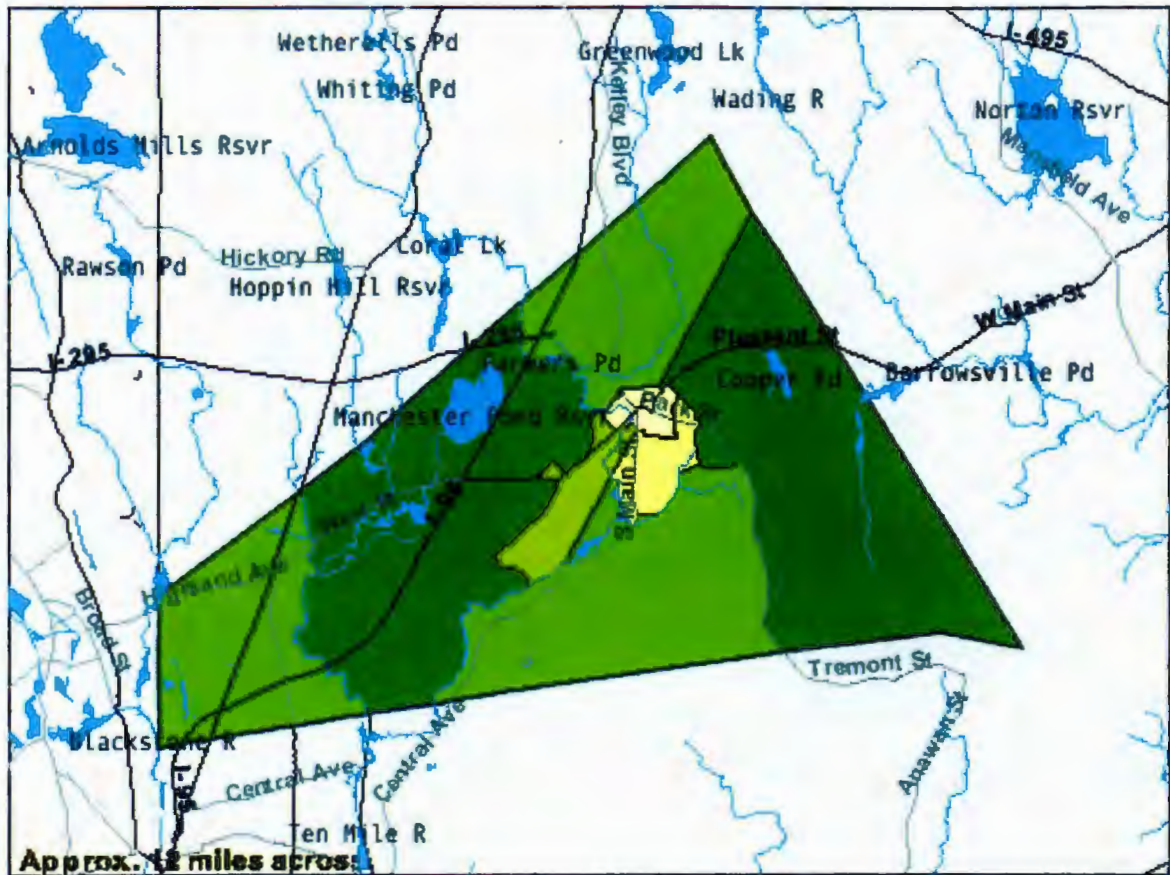
1980, 1990, 2000

	1980	1990	% Change 1980-1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000
# of Single-Family Units	7,068	7,816	10.6%	9,289	18.8%
# of Two-Family, Multi-Family and Other Units	5,435	7,229	33.0%	7,265	.5%

Source: US Census

The majority of one-unit detached housing dwellings are located in the suburban peripheral sections of the City (see Figure 15). Only eight percent of the downtown and surrounding residential areas contain one-unit detached structures.

Figure 15: Percent of Housing Units That Are One Unit, Detached: 2000



Data Classes

Percent	
8.0 - 8.0	8.0 - 8.0
27.0 - 27.0	27.0 - 27.0
41.5 - 41.5	41.5 - 41.5
53.2 - 57.7	53.2 - 57.7
69.3 - 74.3	69.3 - 74.3

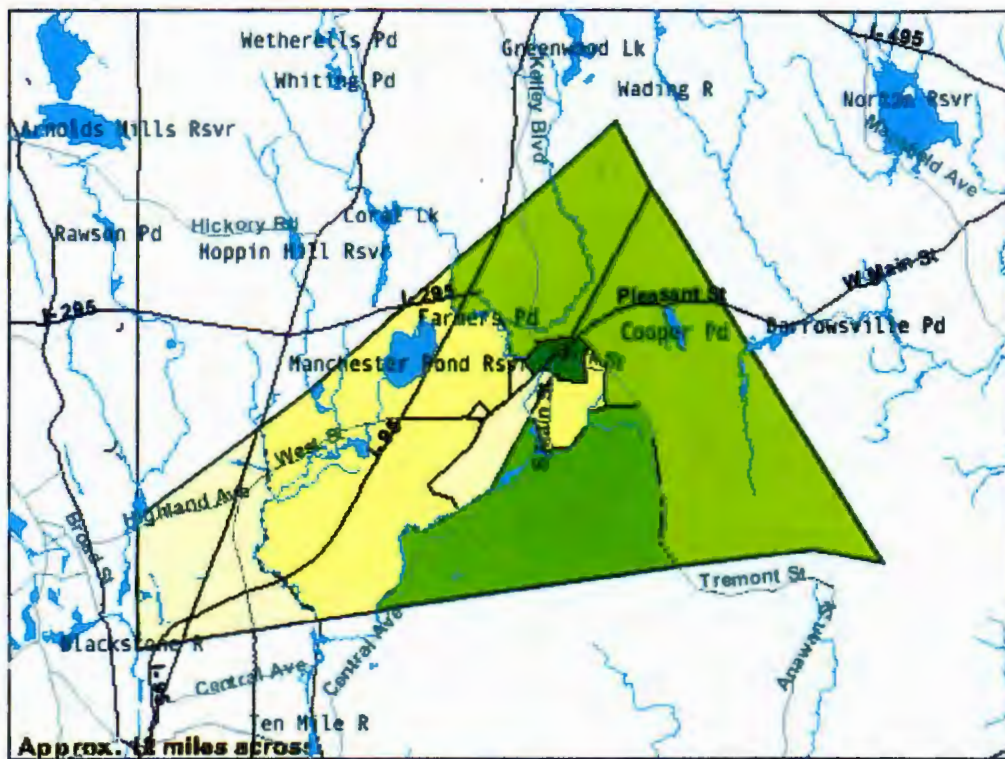
Features

- Major Road
- Street
- Stream/Waterbody
- Stream/Waterbody

Source: US Census, 2000

The downtown area had the highest percentage of housing structures with 10 or more units in 2000 (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Housing with 10 or More Units, 2000



Data Classes

Percent	
1.1 - 1.5	Light Yellow
2.4 - 3.4	Yellow
8.6 - 11.7	Light Green
16.6 - 16.6	Medium Green
31.6 - 31.6	Dark Green

Features

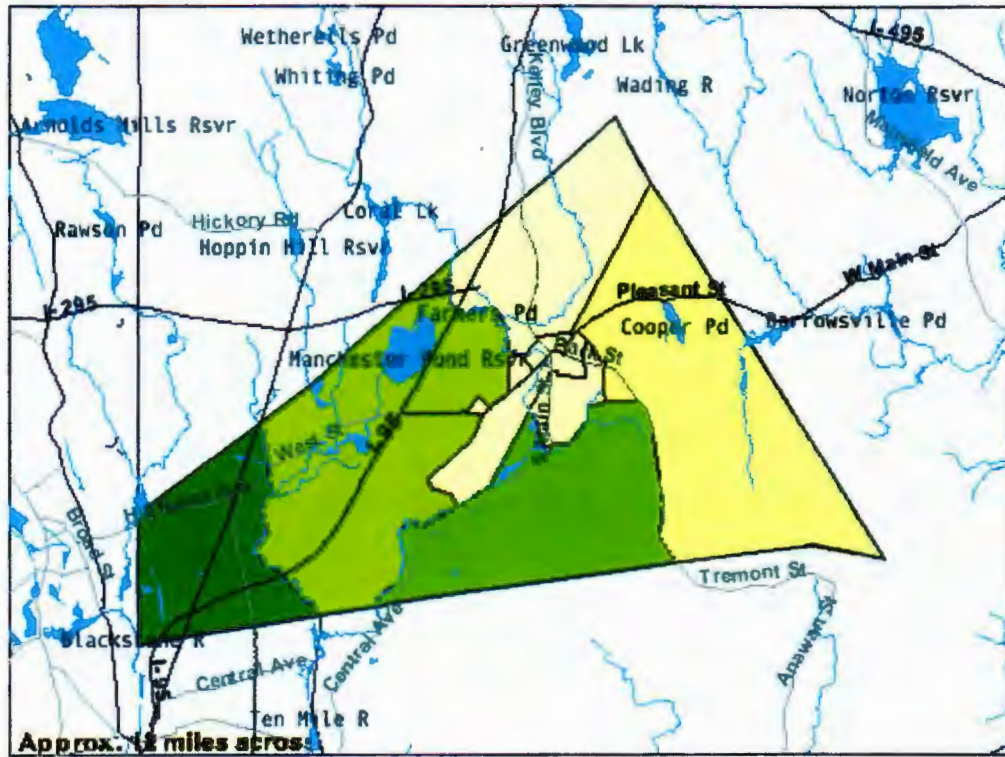
- Major Road
- Street
- Stream/Waterbody
- Stream/Waterbody

Source: US Census, 2000

Mobile Homes

The downtown and surrounding areas contain no mobile homes. The majority of this type of housing is located along the peripheral areas of the City (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Percent of Units that are Mobile Homes



Data Classes

Percent	
0.0 - 0.0	0.0 - 0.0
0.4 - 0.4	0.4 - 0.4
4.0 - 4.0	4.0 - 4.0
6.2 - 6.2	6.2 - 6.2
14.8 - 14.8	14.8 - 14.8

Features

- Major Road
- Street
- Stream/Waterbody
- Stream/Waterbody

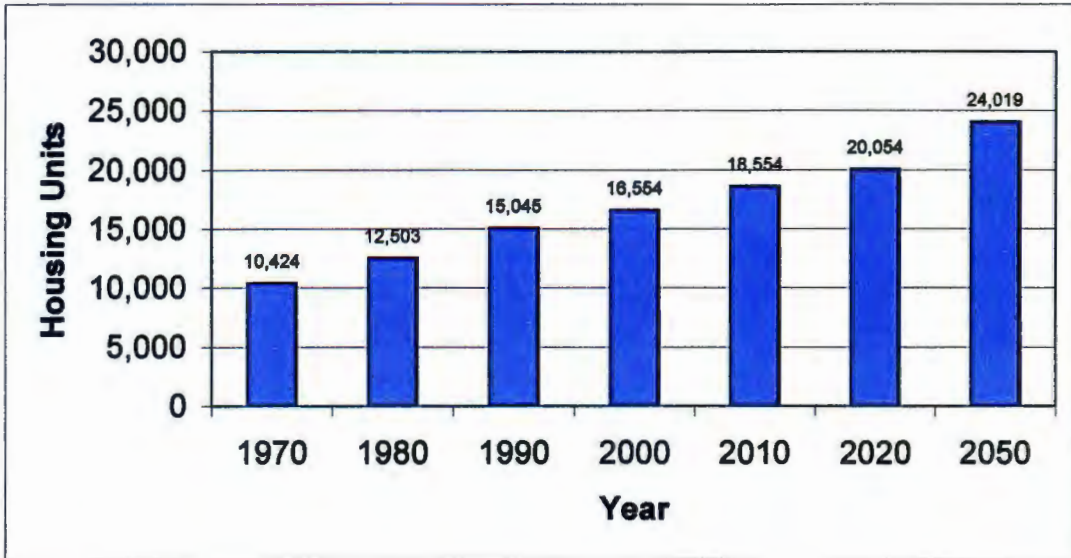
Source: US Census, 2000

Housing Projections

Community Opportunities Group, the consultant who conducted the City's Growth Management Study in 2000, also conducted a residential build-out analysis in the Study. The analysis determined the potential number of housing units that could be constructed under current zoning on residentially zoned private vacant

land. It has been projected that the City will likely reach 24,019 dwelling units by the year 2050; an annual average increase of 248.8 dwelling units. **Figure 18** illustrates the projected housing growth to the year 2050.

Figure 18: Actual and Projected Housing Stock, 1970-2050



Source: City of Attleboro Growth Management Study 2000

Home Sales

The cost of housing has steadily increased in the City from 1997-2001 (see **Table 18**).

Table 18: Median Sales Price for a House in Attleboro, 1997-2001

Year	Sales Price	% Change
1997	\$112,950	-
1998	\$126,000	+11.6%
1999	\$138,500	+9.9%
2000	\$150,000	+8.3%
2001	\$179,000	+19.3%

Source: Banker and Tradesman

Table 19: Home Sales in Attleboro, 1997–2001

Year	Number	% Change
1997	792	-
1998	934	+17.9%
1999	937	+ .003%
2000	934	-.003%
2001	915	-2.0%

Source: Banker and Tradesman

Subsidized Housing

Attleboro's housing base had a lower percentage of subsidized housing as defined by Chapter 40B of Massachusetts General Law than the State of Massachusetts in 2002. Nevertheless, the City's base of subsidized housing is higher than the majority of communities in the Greater Attleboro Area (see **Table 20**).

Table 20: Percent of Housing Base that is Chapter 40B Subsidized, Attleboro Area

Attleboro	6.70%
Foxboro	3.47%
Mansfield	7.14%
N. Attleborough	2.57%
Norton	5.42%
Seekonk	1.62%
Massachusetts	8.45%

Source: Massachusetts DHCD November 2003 - data set as of April 24, 2002

Housing Summary

The downtown and surrounding residential areas contain the housing structures with the highest number of units, the oldest housing, the highest percentage of renter-occupied units, and the lowest number of new units. Meanwhile, the City has seen steady growth in housing of 20 percent per decade since 1970 and the majority of new housing is being constructed outside of the downtown area. While Downtown's housing characteristics can add character and density to the area, several of the abovementioned indicators show the housing in the downtown area as being at risk for conditions such as obsolescence and deterioration.

CHAPTER FOUR EXISTING CONDITIONS

4.1 LAND USE AND ZONING

Overview

A downtown's land uses determine its character. Mixing uses within the district and its buildings encourages the Central Business District (CBD) to be a place to live, work, shop, and recreate. Mixed-use buildings combine more activities together in the same area and reduce the need to rely on an automobile (PAS, 1998 p. 30). If housing is located within a mixed-use building, neighborhood safety is increased as activity is maintained throughout the day. Equally, commercial uses can add convenience to residents (PAS, 1998 p. 30).

Commercial uses that generate activity such as shops, restaurants, convenience stores and other retail uses can help create a vibrant downtown. These types of land uses generate pedestrian traffic, and usually have windows and a welcoming entrance.

High-density housing within close proximity to the retail, services, recreation and workplaces of a downtown adds convenience as well as reduces dependency on the automobile. Locating certain types of housing in a downtown can increase activity in the area. Multi-family housing and senior housing are complementary to other land uses in a downtown.

Other uses such as office buildings, banks, and travel agencies may be more suitable for the upper floors of downtown buildings. Single-family, detached housing should not be allowed in a downtown. This type of housing would harm the vitality of a commercial area (PAS, 1998 p. 32).

Land Use in Downtown Attleboro

Downtown Attleboro contains a unique mix of land uses. Several pedestrian generating commercial uses including convenience stores, restaurants, and shops as well as pedestrian generating public or non-profit uses including the YMCA, Attleboro Public Library, and Government Center are located within the study area.

The area also includes land uses that do not generate substantial pedestrian traffic including office buildings, banks, and vacant storefronts (see **Figure 20 and Table 21**).

Zoning's Impact on Downtown's Land Uses

The ATTLEBORO ZONING ORDINANCE was adopted in 1942. The Ordinance determines the land uses allowed in the downtown. It also determines the density, dimensions, and characteristics of these uses.

The study area is located within the Central Business District (CBD). This zoning district was established in 1976. Between 1946 and 1976, the majority of the downtown was located within a business zone.

Land Uses constructed prior to 1942 were not subject to the Ordinance and no regulations were in place to govern the use, placement, spacing, and size of land and buildings. Land uses developed between 1942 and 1976 were developed under Hierarchical Zoning, where uses allowed in the residential and business districts could also be constructed in the downtown business district. This allowed uses such as housing to be constructed in the downtown until 1976 (Attleboro Zoning

Ordinance, Approved by the Mayor on February 10, 1942, Attleboro Zoning Ordinance, March 1, 1976).

The majority of existing structures in the downtown were constructed prior to Attleboro's adoption of Zoning (Attleboro Assessor's Office Records). Market forces and proximity to primary transportation routes were the major factors that determined the land uses and built environment prior to 1942.

After the adoption of zoning in Attleboro, land uses in the downtown were subject to use, dimensional, density and parking regulations. These policies influenced the overall appearance of the area, with more parking lots (see **Figure 19**) and fewer industrial uses. The character of the area changed again after 1976, as housing in the CBD was not permitted at the ground level after this date.

Table 21 displays the distribution of land uses in the downtown in 2001. These four land use categories were selected, as the author believes that this categorization provides the reader with a good understanding of the study area. The land use information was extracted from Massachusetts Department of Revenue codes assigned by the Attleboro Assessor's office. Parking lots and other accessory uses are labeled as the primary land use.

Figure 19: Excessive Private Parking Area on County Street

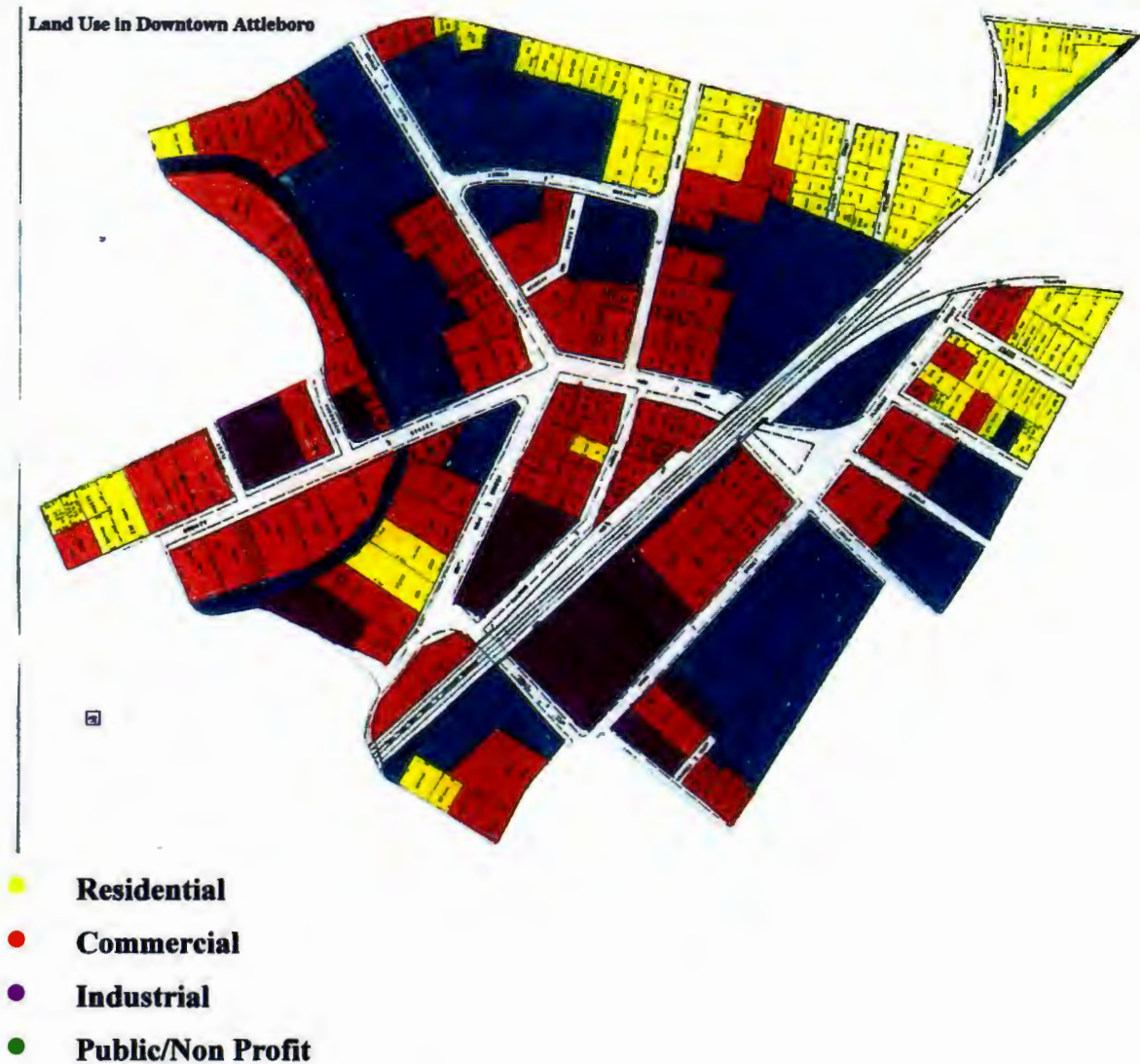


Table 21: Land Uses in the CBD, 2001

Land Use	Parcels	Acres
Industrial	21	5.92
Commercial	104	22.38
Public/Non-Profit	64	22.09
Residential	75	11.88
Total	264	62.27

* Acreage not precise as used from Assessor's records

Figure 20: Land Uses in the CBD 2001



Zoning Regulations within the Study Area

This section contains an analysis of the impact the existing zoning regulations have on the study area. The ATTLEBORO ZONING ORDINANCE determines what land uses are allowed in the Central Business District (CBD). Land Uses are permitted by right, evaluated through a special permit process, or not permitted. The Ordinance also determines where a structure may be placed on a lot

and how many floors it may contain. Parking requirements are also contained in the Ordinance.

The CBD contains 59.10 acres or .38 percent of the City's land area. It occupies slightly more than one-third of Census Tract (CT) #6314.

1942-Present: Zoning in Downtown

Zoning has strengthened and weakened the design of the downtown. Zoning has been an asset to the CBD by not permitting heavy industrial uses in the area. This helps to ensure that negative impacts associated with industrial development decrease as existing industry leaves the area. Such negative impacts include excessive truck traffic, air pollution, noise, and water pollution.

Zoning also gives the CBD an advantage for attracting high-density commercial land-uses, as it is the least restrictive commercial district for most parking, dimensional, and density requirements.

The ZONING ORDINANCE has also been a liability to the area. From 1976 to 2002, housing was not allowed at the ground level, discouraging a mix of complementary land uses as well as a 24-hour downtown. However, in 2002, the municipal council passed SECTION 17-10.10 DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL CLUSTER allowing housing at the ground level by special permit.

Analysis of the Sections of the ZONING ORDINANCE Relative to Downtown

The following analysis examines the sections of the Ordinance that have the greatest impact on Downtown. After a description of each policy, a brief statement describes the influence it has on the CBD.

Please note that a special permit or variance may be requested to reduce the requirements of the following.

Off-Street Parking and Loading Regulations

§17-5.1 OFF STREET PARKING REQUIREMENTS

Parking Spaces in the CBD are required to be at least ten feet in width and twenty feet in length as well as at least 300 square feet including access and maneuvering space.

This standard appears to put the CBD at a disadvantage as parking spaces in the Planned Highway Business zoning district are allowed to be 9'x18' with 283 square feet including access and maneuvering space by right. It also appears that the provisions under this section encourage sprawl development as a developer could locate in the PHB district using 9'x18' parking spaces without additional permitting, while if he proposed the same parking layout in the CBD, he would be subject to the *special permitting* process, which may entail a lengthy wait and uncertainty.

§17-5.5 COMBINED FACILITIES

This section allows parking for two or more land uses to be provided in combined facilities on the same or adjacent lots subject to approval by the Inspector of Buildings.

It appears that this section is beneficial to the development of the downtown as it may allow businesses to share a lot that would otherwise be too small to accommodate more than one company's parking needs. Many Downtown companies are within close proximity to each other and operate during different hours, therefore this provision may also assist with the area's overall parking issues.

SECTION 17-5.7 MUNICIPAL PARKING LOTS

This provision states that the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) may, by special permit allow substitution of space within municipal parking lots in lieu of the parking requirements in the Ordinance if the municipal lots are within 1,000 feet of the building that the lot is intended to serve.

It appears that this provision is beneficial to the CBD. There are numerous municipal lots in this area (see **Figure 65**), therefore developers can petition the ZBA to reduce the number of required parking spaces for a proposed project. This both reduces the amount of urban land consumed for parking and encourages more development in the area.

SECTION 17-5.9 (E) GENERAL PARKING AND LOADING SPACE STANDARDS

This section allows a 50% reduction, by special permit, in the number of parking spaces required where conditions unique to the use will justify the reduction.

It appears that this provision is beneficial to the CBD as it provides developers with greater flexibility in an area where not all lots have substantial off-street parking, and as not all uses require a substantial parking area.

SECTION 17-5.9 (F) GENERAL PARKING AND LOADING SPACE STANDARDS

This section allows the ZBA to grant a special permit to allow a reduction or elimination of the parking and loading requirements in the CBD where the requirements are unreasonable due to conditions unique to the size or shape of the lot, the location of the building on the lot, or the unavailability of land on the premises for parking and/or loading.

This provision appears excellent for downtown as many lots in downtown meet these criteria. Several buildings and lots in the CBD are over a hundred years old and were developed without concern for the automobile. This provision allows these unique lots to become economically feasible to occupy.

SECTION 5.10 TABLE OF OFF-STREET PARKING REGULATIONS

This section contains a list of land uses and a corresponding minimum number of off-street parking spaces that are required to accommodate that use.

This section appears to be accurate with auto needs for some land uses and inaccurate with others. The Ordinance does not include a maximum number of off-street spaces for each land use. As a result, several lots contain areas of excessive

parking (see **Figure 19**). In addition, no section of the Ordinance states where parking is required in relation to the buildings. This can create a sea of parking in front of buildings similar to suburban style developments (see **Figure 19**).

Dimensional and Density Regulations

The *areas of most concern to downtown* will be analyzed in this section. These are building height, and floor to area ratio.

SECTION 17-4.9 TABLE OF USE REGULATIONS

Building Height

The Zoning Ordinance states that the maximum building height in the district is six stories for all uses except the downtown residential cluster dwelling use, which has a maximum height of four stories.

It appears that this four and six story limit may prevent the core of Downtown from reaching its potential density.

There is no minimum height requirement. As a result, developers constructed several buildings that severed the continuity of the street (**see Figure 21 and Figure 22**). Industry literature agrees with the downfall of this standard. According to *Main Streets, Revitalizing Downtown, 2000* (p.51) “similarities in...building height give a strong sense of rhythm and continuity along the street, visually tying buildings together and creating a cohesive streetscape”.

Figure 21: One Story Buildings in the Heart of Downtown



Figure 22: One Story Buildings on Park Street



Floor to Area Ratio

The floor to area ratio (FAR) governs the relationship of the site area to building square footage, and determines the scale and bulk of the architectural envelope within an area. It is obtained by dividing the gross floor area of a building by the total area of the lot. In a downtown, the FAR regulation should

allow the lower floors to spread out at the base, giving human-scale definition to streets.

Two land uses are subject to a floor to area ratio regulation in the downtown under this section, mixed residential/businesses, and downtown residential cluster dwellings. The FAR for these uses is four.

It appears that the FAR of four is beneficial for the abovementioned uses as the maximum building height for the mixed residential/businesses is six stories and the downtown residential cluster dwellings is four stories. Each of these uses also has a maximum building area of 80%. These regulations combined ensure a development with a high density in the area.

There is no FAR for any other use in the Central Business District. Therefore other uses may be constructed at a lower density.

Use

SECTION 17-3.4 TABLE OF USE REGULATIONS

This section states whether a use is allowed, not allowed, or allowed by special permit in a district. It appears this section is overall beneficial to the CBD. It allows a wide range of commercial uses by right, while allowing many other commercial uses by special permit as they may have impacts on the area that need to be regulated. It also allows light industrial uses by special permit.

Special Regulations

SECTION 17-10.10 DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL CLUSTER DWELLINGS

This section allows the ZBA to grant a special permit to allow residential dwelling units on the first floor of a dwelling if it is in the best interests of the CBD as well as the City.

This section was recently adopted and appears to have been successful. Since adoption, two special permits have been granted under this section (see **Figure 23**).

Figure 23: The First Special Permit Granted Under §17–10.10- Under Construction



Analysis of the Boundary of the Central Business District

In order to analyze the borders of the CBD zoning district, the *location* of land uses in the study area must first be analyzed. Commercial and institutional

land uses predominate the center of the study area. Land uses near the intersection of Routes 152,123 and 118, the heart of downtown, include retail, banks, restaurants, and niche businesses. Institutional uses such as the Library, Literacy Center, and YMCA are located along North Main Street.

Non-CBD uses are located along the periphery of the District in several locations. For example, the triangular shaped section of the CBD on Peck Street primarily contains single and two family houses. Several other areas along the periphery of the district contain contiguous areas of residential land uses.

Two areas adjacent to the CBD contain downtown uses, however are not in the district: North Main Street from Hayward Street to Mechanic Street contains a courthouse; and the block on Union Street from Dunham Street to Pearl Street contains a theatre, restaurant, fire station, and social services agency, and the City's Recreation Department. These areas appear to contain land uses more suitable for the CBD.

Figure 24: Central Business District Zoning Map



Source: SRPEDD

CHAPTER 4.2 BUILDING FORM AND MASSING

Building form and massing has an enormous aesthetic impact on a downtown, as buildings are the most predominant component of most downtowns. Similar massing of buildings, orientation of buildings to the street, the presence of windows, doors, and other architectural elements, and effective use of landscaping all contribute to successful compatibility between buildings (PAS, 1998 p. 9). Nevertheless, if the height, width, and setback are relatively constant, buildings with architecturally different styles, grouped together can have excellent urban form (Main Streets, Revitalizing Downtown, 2000 p. 57), (PAS, 1998 p. 9).

Buildings should be grouped together in rhythm and proportion at the approximate scale to pedestrians. Industry leaders agree, The Main Street National Trust states "The way the patterns of storefronts, upper facades and cornices repeat from one building to the next along a street gives the whole streetscape visual cohesiveness and creates a physical rhythm that provides orientation to pedestrians and motorists. Through this repeated pattern, the streetscape itself takes on design characteristics as distinctive as those of individual buildings...(p. 56 Revitalizing Downtown, 2000 Main Streets)."

Architectural style, rhythm and facade widths, building heights at the sidewalk's edge, alignment of architectural features, preservation of primary facade materials and details, distinction between the upper and lower floors or continuity of street wall patterns all contribute to the urban form of a downtown.

Many buildings and groupings of buildings in downtowns have several challenges. Numerous business owners have changed the materials of their first-floor storefronts to modernize them. In addition, many storefronts are cluttered with signs. As a result, these modernizations have rendered the first floors

incompatible with the upper floors of the buildings. Some building owners have altered buildings so that the original façade materials and details can no longer be seen. Zoning regulations have forced some newer buildings to break the rhythm with the surrounding older buildings, and storage for automobiles has often broken the urban fabric of many downtowns by replacing buildings with surface parking lots.

Urban/Building Form and Massing in Downtown Attleboro

Overall the core of the downtown has good, traditional urban form (see **Figures 25 and 26**). As most structures were constructed prior to the widespread use of the automobile, they are oriented to the pedestrian. The core's buildings are grouped so that they have a relationship to each other without roadways and parking lots. In the heart, buildings create a “wall like” realm that caters to the pedestrian. As this is a radial downtown the "wall" does not continue in a linear row, but rather clusters in the center and becomes sparser toward the periphery.

Figure 25: The Corner at Park, County, North Main, and South Main Streets



Figure 26: An Ariel Photograph Displays the Building Form in the Heart of Downtown



The FAIR 94 Design Committee, a downtown design improvement group, found in 1993 that "downtown is a jewel waiting to be discovered" (Smyth Associates, 1993). Smyth Associates concluded in 1993 that "Downtown Attleboro

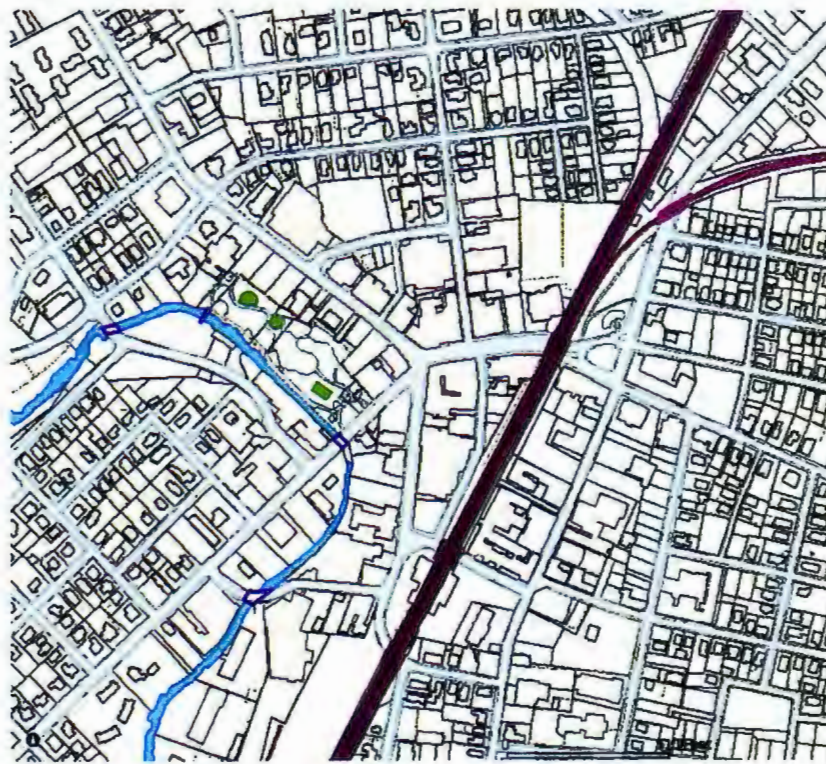
possesses strong and unique architectural features that should be preserved and used to enhance the viability of future development" (Smyth Associates, 1993).

Unfortunately, the urban fabric in the study area also has several shortcomings. Pedestrian links between important destinations are broken in several locations, most notably at the MBTA right-of-way (see **Figure 27 and 28**) and the Ten Mile River (see **Figure 28 and 29**). In addition, the urban form of the peripheral areas in the downtown reflects modern architecture rather than a traditional downtown. (see **Figure 30**)

Figure 27: The MBTA Right-of Way at Mill Street



Figure 28: The Ten Mile River and MBTA Right of Way



- **Railroad Right-of-Way**
- **Ten Mile River**

Figure 29: The Ten Mile River at Wall Street



Figure 30: A Suburban Style Convenience Store Located within the Periphery of the CBD



In most American cities the connection between the CBD and adjacent residential areas is severed by surface parking lots that ring the center's periphery (Trancik, 1986 p. 3). While the downtown does not have this ring, there are some lots that break the connection from neighborhoods to the center (see **Figure 31**). Some busy streets also sever this connection. This topic will be further discussed in Section 4.4 Existing Conditions, Lost Spaces.

**Figure 31: Looking Across a Private Parking Lot Toward Holman Street from
Emory Street**



Architectural Style

Yellow brick and red brick structures of numerous architectural styles dominate the downtown (see **Figure 32**). In the heart of the downtown, neoclassical architecture is the predominant style. Neoclassical architecture was the preferred style for public building between 1900 and 1940 (Massachusetts Historical Commission Inventory Form-A-20), when a number of structures were constructed in Downtown.

Nevertheless, many storeowners have tried to individually modernize their facades creating a mixture of architectural styles in the area, sometimes in one building (see **Figure 35**). Often the original facades of a downtown's buildings have architecturally significant features that are revealed once the existing covers are removed.

Figure 32: Looking Toward the Red and Yellow Brick Buildings in the Heart of Downtown From County Street



The *Massachusetts Historical Commission* considers several buildings in downtown as having historical significance. The Commission states that most notably is the Bates Building in the heart of downtown. This structure is listed as a “fine Romanesque revival brick structure”. The Commission listed several other buildings in downtown as significant. Some of these and their architectural styles are:

- 1) The Bronson Building – a neoclassical yellow brick office building,
- 2) The Telephone Building- neoclassical with a Palladian window in the façade,
- 3) Attleboro Area Industrial Museum- Industrial,
- 4) Chamber of Commerce- Industrial,
- 5) Old Post Office- Neoclassical,
- 6) Council on Aging- Neoclassical.

The Commission also stated that the most important grouping of buildings in the downtown is the neoclassical Courthouse, Library, YMCA, and Masonic Temple along with the colonial revival Literacy Center. The Commission states that “this classic enclave is at the entrance to the center” (see **Figure 33**) and that “it is an elegant introduction to the City of Attleboro” (Massachusetts Historical Commission Inventory Form-A-1).

Figure 33: Entering the Downtown from North Main Street



Facades/Storefronts

Like commercial districts across the country, the downtown includes examples of poor facades as well as attractive facades. The attractive facades in downtown have similar facade widths and elements (see **Figure 34**), while the poor facades have characteristics such as oversized signs, modern sign styles on old buildings, and un-maintained integrity of basic building elements (see **Figure 35**). **Figure 36** is an example of a first level of a building in Downtown that provides

visual interest to pedestrians, while **Figure 37** is an example of a first floor that provides no visual interest.

Figure 34: Storefronts on Bank Street



Figure 35: Storefronts on Park Street



Figure 36: Village Pizza on the Corner of Park and Bank Streets



Figure 37: A Façade on Bank Street



Facade Improvement Program

The Friends of Attleboro Interested in Revitalization (FAIR) has a facade improvement program in place to assist property owners with the enhancement of the downtown area. The program provides funds to property owners to restore and enhance their facades (Community Development for Attleboro, Inc, Design Guidelines, 1980s). The following are the characteristics of the program:

- 1) a 50% reimbursement match for rehabilitation and an upgrade to storefronts and signage,
- 2) architect fees are included,
- 3) funds are available only for exterior improvements,
- 4) Design Guidelines prepared by FAIR must be used,
- 5) the building must contain commercial or service oriented space or vacant space available for commercial use,
- 6) applications are reviewed by the FAIR Design Review Committee,
- 7) In order for a structure to be eligible for this program, spot blight needs to be demonstrated to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as it is funded through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

Building Heights at the Sidewalk's Edge

Similar building heights at the sidewalk's edge contribute to the rhythm and harmony of a downtown's physical form. In the core of the CBD, most buildings are between two and six stories at the sidewalks edge (see **Figure 25**). This variety

appears to contribute to the appearance of downtown as all structures are at the sidewalk's edge.

Nevertheless, as there is no minimum height standard or maximum front setback standard, several buildings in this area are one-story or set back from the sidewalk (see **Figure 22**). County Street and a section of North Main Street contain several buildings that are set back from the sidewalk characteristic of modern suburban development or highway development.

4.3 PUBLIC SPACES

Overview

Common public spaces include plazas, roads, town and city squares, parks, and playgrounds. Intelligently placed and well designed, public spaces can be vital places of congregation. In fact, according to the Brookings Institute, *Ten Steps to a Living Downtown*, 1999 for families to choose a downtown as home, open space must be of a quantity and design to provide adequate recreation facilities. However, urban open spaces are often poorly located or the type of space is not suitable for each location.

Location, size, connectivity, shape, access, function, characteristics of surrounding buildings and land uses, public amenities, and management are all essential when designing open space in a downtown.

Public space can be categorized into "hard" spaces and "soft" spaces. Hard spaces are "those principally bounded by architectural walls; often these are intended to function as major gathering places for social activity. Soft spaces are those dominated by the natural environment...(Trancik, 1986 p. 61)" Soft spaces include parks, gardens, and linear greenways.

Public spaces in Downtown Attleboro

Downtown Attleboro contains two major open spaces, the Veterans Memorial Common, and the Balfour Riverwalk Park as well as several minor open spaces including the small park area adjacent to the Attleboro Museum and memorial squares (see **Figure 38**). All of the downtown's public spaces are soft

spaces. Downtown does not contain any hard space, which serves as public open space as defined by Trancik.

Figure 38: Open Space in Downtown



- **Open Space**
- * **Memorial Square or Area**

Large Public Spaces

The Balfour Riverwalk Park

The Balfour Riverwalk is an ADA compliant recreational facility/park that serves people of all ages. Amenities of the park/facility include: a quarter mile meandering walking path, three access points, a 4,000 square foot skateboarding area that includes obstacles, a 15,000 square foot open-air ice skating rink, two separate playground facilities, a sand volleyball court, bocce ball area, benches, trash receptacles, water bubblers, fencing and gates, picnic tables, shrubs, trees, lawn areas, lighting, an irrigation system, a community gathering area, and a footbridge that spans the Ten-Mile River (<http://www.state.ma.us/envir/dcs/portraits>). (see Figure 39).

Figure 39: The Balfour Riverwalk Park from County Street



Use

The Park contains a quarter mile meandering walking path, a 4,000 square foot skateboarding area that includes obstacles, a 15,000 square foot open-air ice-skating rink, two separate playground facilities, a sand volleyball court, horseshoe pits, and a bocce ball area. Several events are held here, such as a portion of the Wednesday Night Market, an event held on Wednesday nights during the summer.

Location

The Park is located on County Street. It is situated between the Ten Mile River, the Attleboro Library, and Commercial uses on North Main Street and County Street.

Access

The Riverwalk has three access points: the Library, a footbridge across the Ten Mile River from Riverbank Road, and County Street.

Maintenance

The Riverwalk is maintained by the Attleboro Parks and Forestry Department.

Size

The Park occupies 3.1 acres. This is sufficient for the activities that take place throughout the year as well as the day-to-day function of the site as passive and active open space.

Shape

The Park is rectangular shaped and is well defined.

Landscaping

Green areas as well concrete walkways, mixed deciduous trees, and shrubs characterize this space.

Surrounding Land Uses

There are several land uses immediately adjacent to the Riverwalk that attract pedestrians: the businesses on South Main Street are to the east of the Park; a restaurant and barber shop are located across the street; adjacent to the Park is a diner and a jewelry shop; and to the north is the Attleboro Public Library.

Public Amenities

The Park contains wrought iron picnic benches, period lighting, and trash receptacles in addition to other amenities.

Veterans Memorial Common

The Veterans Memorial Common (The Common) is located at the junction of Routes 118 and 123 at Park and Pleasant Streets (see **Figure 40**). It abuts these roadways in the front and the MBTA right-of-way in the back. A veterans memorial surrounded by cement walkways, lawn areas, mature, mixed deciduous trees, and shrubs characterize this space.

The focal point of The Common is the veterans memorial area that contains bronze panels on five granite obelisks arranged in a semi-circle, etched with 7,300 names, one for World War I, two for World War II, one for Korea, and one for Vietnam. These obelisks are tied together by cement walkways that include stone benches and lighting. The names etched in the granite are of people that lived in Attleboro at the time they went off to active duty to serve in a war since 1900. This memorial was dedicated on Memorial Day, 1992. It replaced a similar memorial that was in disrepair (The Attleboro Sun Chronicle May 26, 1992, May 20, 1992, April 26, 1992, December 21, 1989, October 3, 1991).

The Common is an important space to the City's veterans and many events honoring the military are held here.

Figure 40: The Veterans Memorial Common



Brief History of the Common

According to historian Marjorie Dix, the Common was originally a spacious front yard to the Congregational Church. According to Flanagan, in 1881, the town of Attleborough paid the church \$1000 for the land. Since that time, the Common has been the site of public gatherings to salute achievement, as well as a site of social conflict during the early 1970s (The Sun Chronicle September 21, 1992, Flanagan).

Use

Recent uses include veterans events, the Wednesday Night Market, and other events. On a daily bases, the area is often used by an agglomeration of transitional individuals. In addition, there is often public drinking in this space.

Location

The Common is entirely surrounded by rights-of-way. There are structures immediately adjacent to this open space. In addition, it is not located in a zone of intense pedestrian activity. The surrounding wide roadways prevent pedestrians from entering this area due to fast, heavy traffic.

Access

It is open and has direct continuous access from Park and Pleasant Streets.

Maintenance

The Attleboro Parks and Forestry Department maintain the Common.

Size

The Common occupies 1.3 acres. This is sufficient for the activities that take place throughout the year as well as the day-to-day function of the site as passive open space.

Shape

The Common is an oval shape and is well defined.

Landscaping

Green areas as well concrete walkways, mature, mixed deciduous trees, and shrubs characterize this space.

Surrounding Land Uses

There are no land uses immediately adjacent to The Common that contribute to the success of this space.

Public Amenities

The Common contains aged concrete benches and trash receptacles.

Other Public Spaces

Green Space adjacent to the Attleboro Museum

In June of 1994, the Attleboro Museum Center for the Arts moved to its current location, bordering a neighborhood that is home to more than 65% of the city's growing disadvantaged population. This open space was originally intended as a large sculpture garden and a small meditation garden. However, it has become an inviting green space for the adjacent East-Side neighborhood residents (see **Figure 41**). There is a green berm where residents sometimes engage in activities such as playing ball. Also there are concrete and tile benches for residents to. According to the museum's website, <http://www.attleboromuseum.org/>, there have been discussions about enclosing the gardens and prohibiting ball playing, but the Board has opted for open access and the community has, by and large, responded by treating the grounds with respect (<http://www.attleboromuseum.org/>).

Figure 41: Attleboro Museum Open Space



Government Center Green Space

This public space includes a green, benches and tables, and Honey Locust Trees (see **Figure 42**). The trees are located adjacent to the benches and tables to provide shade.

Figure 42: Government Center Green Space



Memorial Squares

In addition to the abovementioned green spaces, the downtown contains four memorial squares and one memorial area.

Gilbert Perry Square

Gilbert Perry Square is located at the junction of Park, Pleasant, and Union Streets (please see **Figure 43**). The Department of Planning and Development, The Parks and Forestry Department, and the Attleboro garden Club have recently redesigned and improved this area (see **Figure 43**). This square was dedicated to

Jerome Gilbert and Joseph Perry who lost their lives in WWI. The square contains a memorial area and functions as a parking lot. As a result of the recent improvements, a green and vertical element has been added to the square with several zelcova trees and shrubbery.

Figure 43: Gilbert Perry Square



Fiske Square

This square, dedicated to Charles Fiske who died on foreign soil in 1917, is located at the intersection of South Main and County Streets (see **Figure 44**). It is a small green area that includes a bench, green area, trees, and a monument.

Figure 44: Fiske Square



The following Memorial Squares and Areas contain Monuments and Landscaping.

Peters Square

Johnson Morin Square (see Figure 45)

Wm. A. Streeter Post 145 GAR

Figure 45: Johnson Morin Square



Landscaping Areas

The downtown contains several public spaces that contain landscaping.

This topic is covered more thoroughly in the Lost Spaces Section.

4.4 LOST SPACES

Overview

Lost spaces are the undesirable urban areas that are in need of redesign. These areas make no positive contribution to the surroundings or users. They are ill-defined, without measurable boundaries, and fail to connect elements in a coherent way (Trancik, 1986 pp. 3, 4). Trancik provides some examples of lost space:

- surface parking lots that ring the core of almost all American cities,
- abandoned waterfronts, train yards, and industrial complexes,
- vacant blight clearance sites that were never redeveloped,
- residual areas between districts,
- loosely composed commercial strips,
- deteriorated parks;

Trancik sites the following five reasons for lost space:

- 1) an increased dependence on the automobile: Due to auto-oriented changes such as street widening and surface parking lots, neighborhoods and districts often no longer interact, but become isolated, homogenous enclaves,

- 2) the attitude of architects of the Modern Movement toward open space: This movement focused on the individual building and ignored the importance of street space, squares and gardens, and other important outdoor areas. Spaces between buildings are rarely designed today (Trancik, 1986 p. 8).
- 3) zoning and land use policies of the urban renewal period that divided the city: Zoning often separates functions that had often been integrated. Urban renewal projects often confuse pedestrian and vehicular systems. Scale is often ignored as well and undeveloped space often becomes parking lots (Trancik, 1986 p. 12).
- 4) an unwillingness on the part of contemporary institutions, public and private, to assume responsibility for the public urban environment,
- 5) an abandonment of industrial, military, or transportation sites in the inner core of the city.

Lost Space in Attleboro

Downtown contains several lost spaces: several surface parking lots separate the CBD from other districts (see **Figure 31 and 47**), the property adjacent to the Ten Mile is primarily un-maintained, the MBTA right-of-way and its associated parcels are primarily un-maintained and create a blighting effect on the area, some isolated open spaces are underutilized and are lost space, and, underutilized relics of Attleboro's industrial past scatter the downtown creating blighting lost space (see **46**).

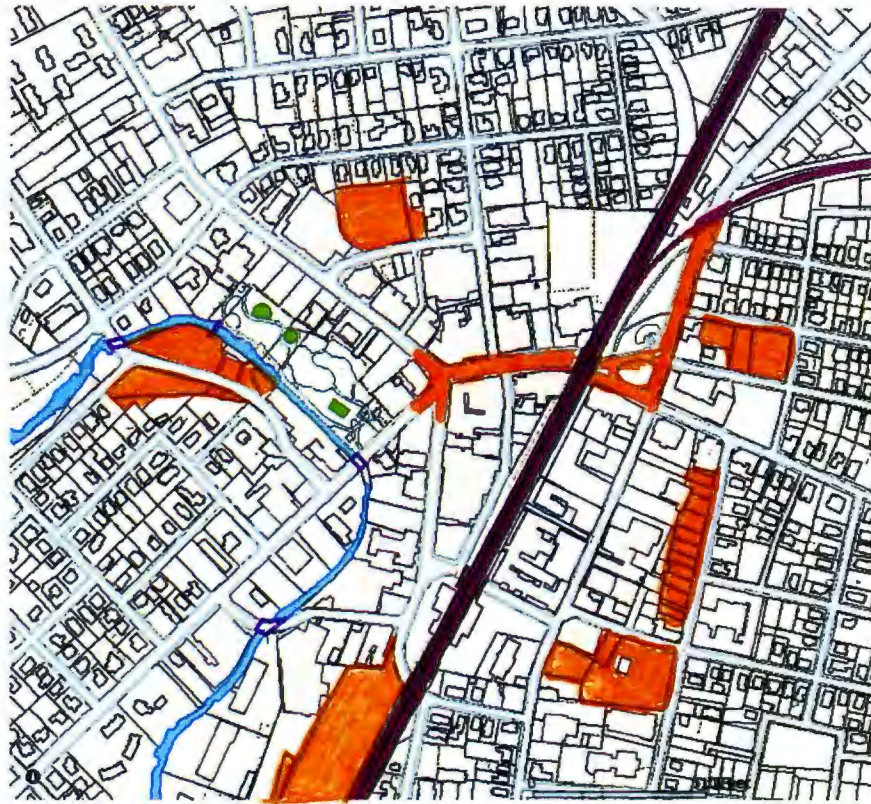
Figure 46: The Foster Building is an Example of an Underutilized Relic of Attleboro's Industrial Past



Lost Space due to Increased Dependence on the Automobile

As shown in **Figure 47**, several surface parking lots are distributed throughout the downtown. Their placement has both positive and negative impacts. The fact that no surface lots are located in the heart of downtown on Park Street between the intersection of Routes 152 and 123 and the Railroad overpass is a positive as no pedestrian links are severed. However, several lots are located between districts and neighborhoods. The lot located between Emory and Morey Streets separates the "East Side" residential section of Downtown from the primary commercial area; the municipal parking garage separates the residential sections of the Bank Street area from the commercial downtown, and the lot between Pine and Dunham Streets separates the "East Side" residential section of downtown from the primary commercial area (see **Figure 47**).

Figure 47: Surface Lots and Wide Streets that Separate Districts



● **Ring Lots and Wide Streets**

Streets carrying high traffic volumes also separate peripheral neighborhoods from the main commercial area as well as districts from each other. Pleasant Street, North Main Street, South Main Street, County Street, and Park Street carry large volumes of fast moving traffic. In addition, Park and Pleasant Streets carry four lanes of traffic. Pleasant Street separates the "East Side" residential areas from the main commercial area (see **Figure 48**). It is a difficult street to cross and appears to be both a physical and psychological barrier between these districts. North Main Street, South Main Street, County Street, and Park Street all carry large volumes of fast-moving traffic. They appear to hinder movement from one section of the downtown to the other.

**Figure 48: Pleasant Streets Separates the Neighborhood on Holman Street
from the Main Commercial Area**



The Ten Mile River

The Ten Mile River flows through Downtown Attleboro. With the exception of the Balfour Riverwalk Park, it is ignored and collects rubbish and other debris (see Figure 49). Land Uses along the River include parking lots for commercial and industrial uses, manufacturing sites, and the Riverwalk. The banks of the River are un-maintained and in most places there is no access to the River.

Figure 49: The Ten Mile River at Wall Street



The MBTA and Other Railroad Rights-of-Way

The MBTA right-of-way (ROW) as well as the areas surrounding it are lost spaces. The MBTA has the primary ROW in the downtown (see Figure 50). A CSX ROW branches off toward Taunton in the study area as well. In addition, the abandoned "Gee-Whiz" rail between Attleboro and North Attleboro is in this area.

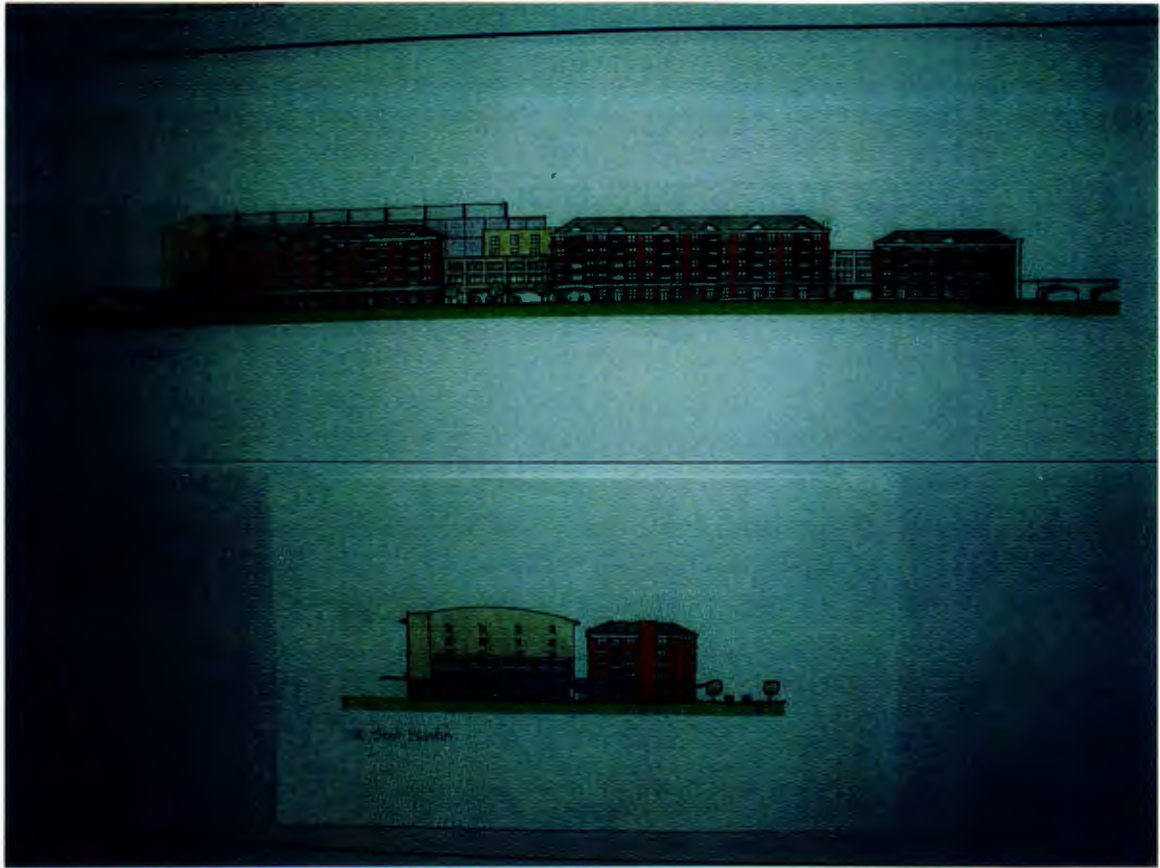
Figure 50: Gee-Wiz, RR, Conrail ROW



Union Street Redevelopment Block

The block bordered by Union, Park, and Mill Streets as well as the MBTA ROW is a lost space. Obsolete factories, littered surface parking lots, a littered alley, vacant commercial buildings, and a littered railroad ROW characterize this area. The Attleboro Redevelopment Authority, Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA), the City of Attleboro, and several consultants have been working toward redeveloping this area into an intermodal transportation center that includes residential, commercial, and recreational components. The author supports and has contributed to this project as staff member of the Attleboro Department of Planning and Development. **Figure 51** is one proposal for the Union Street Block. The top picture is looking east from Union Street, and the bottom picture is looking north from Mill Street.

Figure 51: One Proposal For the Union Street Block



4.5STREETSCAPE

The streetscape section of this study evaluates all characteristics within the public rights-of way. This includes sidewalks, crosswalks, street trees, lighting, banners, kiosks, signage, and street furniture.

The appearance of a streetscape has a tremendous impact on the design of a downtown. Successful streets are characterized by elements that reflect the character of the area, delineate it as a zone of activity, and demonstrate that is used frequently by pedestrians.

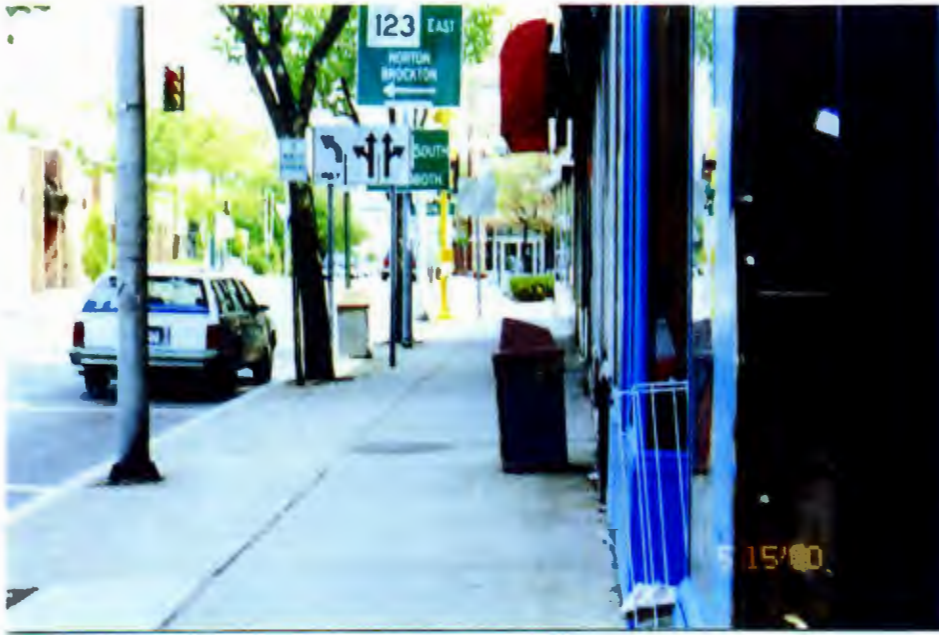
Streetscapes that contain traditional main street features have received positive ratings on visual preference surveys (Nelessen, 1994 p. 93).

Existing Streetscape in Attleboro

Character

The streetscape does not reflect the character of Downtown Attleboro. There is no streetscape "theme" in the CBD. Elements such as lighting, signage, and trash receptacles appear to have been haphazardly selected without reference to a plan (see **Figure 52**).

Figure 52: Streetscape on Park Street



Sidewalks

The existing sidewalks in the downtown are concrete and vary in width. Overall, they are in poor condition. In addition, poorly placed signs often block the sidewalk (see **Figure 53**). Furthermore, the majority of sidewalks in downtown do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Figure 53: A Sidewalk on County Street



Crosswalks

Crosswalks in Downtown are marked by parallel white stripes. They are often misplaced and hard to see.

Street Trees

Park Street, South Main Street, and North Main Street contain approximately 25 year-old Bradford Pear trees. They do not have tree grates, and the opening in the sidewalk for the majority of these trees is too small. Recently, Zelcova trees were planted at Gilbert Perry Square. Based on information from the City, they will have all the amenities needed to ensure their success.

Almost all other areas in the downtown do not contain street trees. This creates a barren hardscape characterized by concrete (see **Figure 54**).

Figure 54: A Sidewalk on Wall Street



Lighting

All street lighting in the area is cobra-head, auto-oriented highway lighting (**Figure 55**). These lights create a poor pedestrian environment. In addition, they may send a psychological signal to the motorist to travel at a higher rate of speed as they can create the sense of being on a high-speed highway (<http://www.marylandapa.org/mdplanner0402.pdf>). Cobra-head lighting may also illuminate the second story of nearby structures, creating a nuisance for residential units on this level (http://stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/planing/south_grand/phaseIII_smallscale.pdf). There are no bollards or decorative lighting within the rights of way.

Figure 55: Cobra-Head Lighting in the Heart of Downtown



Banners

The downtown contains few banners and they are in very poor condition.

Signage

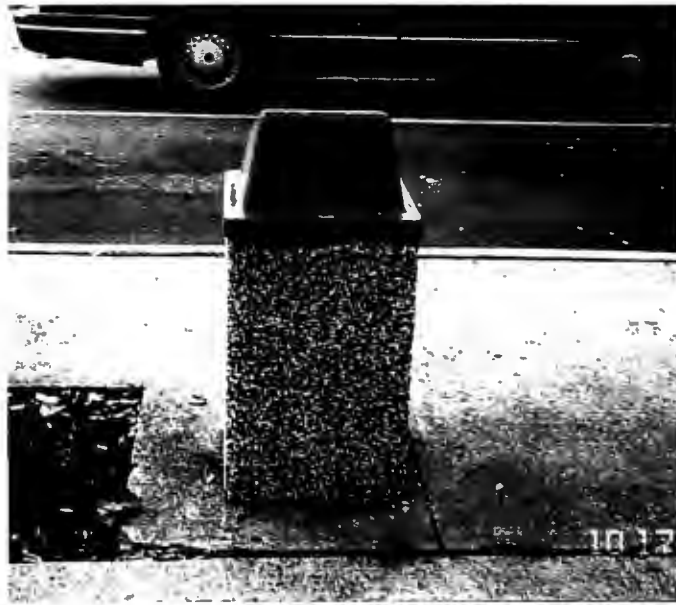
Signage in the downtown is excessive, confusing, and uncoordinated (see **Figure 52**).

Street Furniture

Street furniture in the downtown is limited and uncoordinated. There are no benches, kiosks, or bicycle racks in the rights of way.

There are many different styles of trash receptacles in the study area. However, none of which reflects the character of Downtown Attleboro. Furthermore, many are in poor condition. Some receptacles, such as the one illustrated in **Figure 56**, need to be forced open to use, creating a pile of trash in front of it.

Figure 56: A Trash Receptacle in Downtown



Streetscape Project

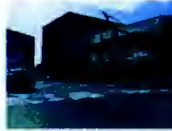
The City of Attleboro Department of Planning and Development, along with the Streetscape Initiative Advisory Committee (SIAC), a citizens advisory group, and Carol R. Johnson Associates have been working on plans to improve the streetscape in the downtown. The author is a staff member for the Attleboro Department of Planning and Development, has worked with all entities involved in this project, contributed to and agrees with all recommendations to this date. So that the author does not "reinvent the wheel", it was decided that the analysis of streetscape existing conditions and recommendations in this document would be

succinct and reference the Draft Streetscape Project Summary and other streetscape materials relative to streetscape features.

Figure 57: A Perspective of Proposed Park Street Streetscape Improvements



Perspective Sketch: Park Street and the Bates Building



Existing Park Street and Bates Building



Existing Park Street and Railroad Underpass



Perspective Sketch: Park Street and Railroad Underpass

Preferred Alternative Design Elements:

1. Stamped colored concrete band is located at curb edge of sidewalk
2. Crosswalks are white striped
3. Curb ramps are aligned with crosswalks, meeting ADA requirements
4. Pedestrian landings narrow street crossings without impeding traffic flow
5. Street furnishings and light fixture are as selected by SIAC.
6. Colorful banners are attached to light poles for local announcements
7. Benches with and without backs are located along streetscape, clustered in center of street blocks
8. Planters are placed along Park Street to add color to downtown center

ATTLEBORO STREETScape
 Architects, Massachusetts
 C R J A

Preferred Alternative
 October 21, 2001

Sources: City of Attleboro, SIAC, Carol R. Johnson and Associates

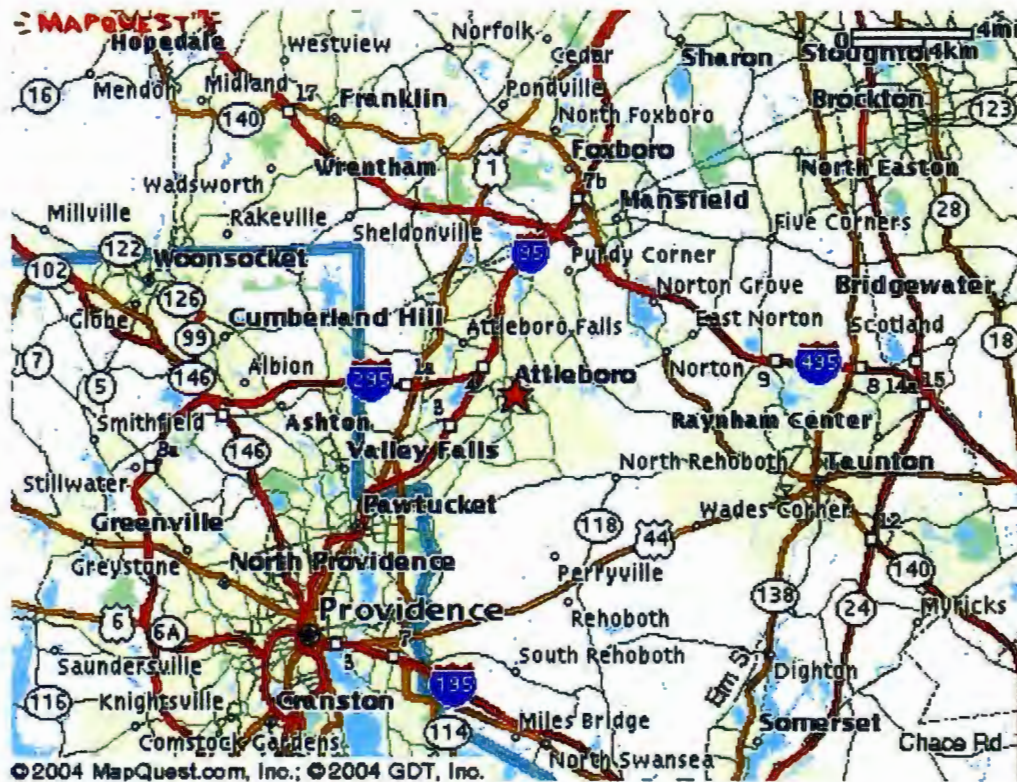
4.6 CIRCULATION

Access to Downtown

Assess is crucial to the success of a Central Business District (CBD) (http://www.city.urbana.il.us/urbana/community_development/planning/downtown_plan/image.html). Downtown Attleboro is fortunate as is located 12 miles to Providence, 35 miles to Boston and 45 miles to Worcester. Motorists and pedestrians from the immediate area as well as the region have excellent access to the downtown. Its location at the confluence of State Routes 123, 152, and 118, insure easy access from the remainder of the City and Greater Attleboro, while its “Attleboro” Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) station and its driving distance of 1.8 miles to Interstate 95, 2.5 miles to Interstate 295, and 6 miles to Interstate 495 insure excellent access to all of Greater Providence and Greater Boston (see **Figure 58**).

Downtown is located 22 miles from Green Airport in Warwick, RI and 40 miles from Logan Airport in Boston.

Figure 58: Downtown Attleboro in Relation to the Regional Road Network



★ - Downtown Attleboro

Auto Circulation

The motorist's perception of downtown is important as the majority of people working, shopping, recreating, and doing business in the downtown arrive by auto. Many factors shape this perception including traffic, safety, visibility of signage to parking, and streetscape.

Automobile movement must be efficient as well as safe. Auto users are more likely to utilize a downtown with excellent access and sufficient, visible parking. There should be sufficient signage to all routes, amenities and parking. Sufficient lighting also improves this perception.

Auto Circulation in Downtown

Automobile traffic flows efficiently through downtown. Major roadways were designed to move automobiles through the CBD as quickly as possible. The roadway width, signage, street lighting, and traffic signalization all accommodate major arterial traffic. State Routes 118, 123, and 152 all traverse the CBD carrying a sufficient volume of traffic rapidly through the area. While traffic flows efficiently through the downtown, intra-CBD auto circulation is often confusing and difficult. The MBTA right-of-way and Ten Mile River are both major edges that segment the downtown. In addition, several left hand turns are prohibited at the major intersections of Routes 118 and 123 and 123 and 152.

Signage is confusing and excessive, especially signage to parking areas, which is unclear and undecipherable (see **Figure 52**).

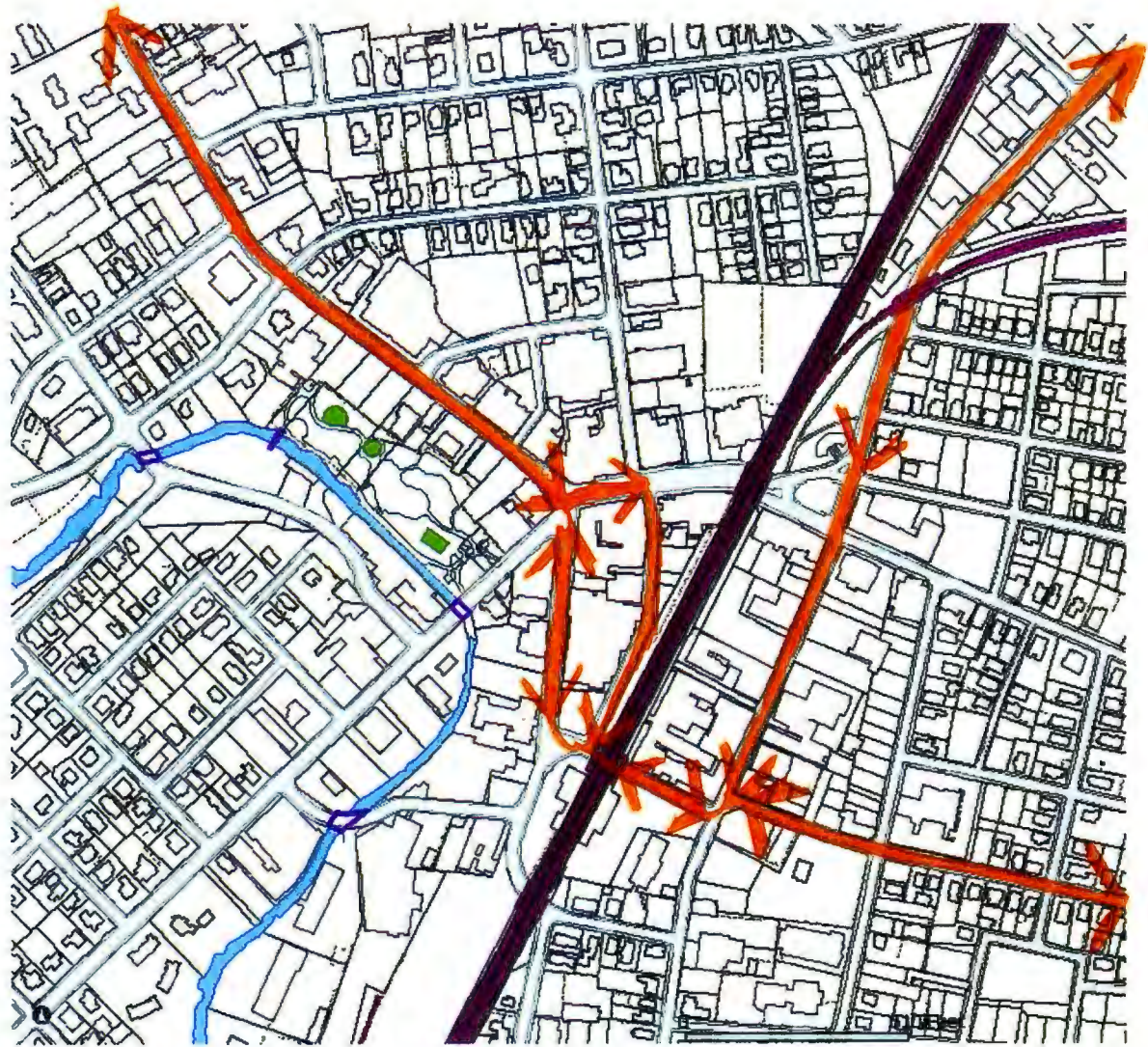
Lighting is also geared to the automobile. Cobra-head lighting provides motorists with highway style lighting that guides them through the area (see **Figure 25**).

Despite these challenges, almost all of the roadways in the study area allow two-way traffic. This is a major advantage for the auto over many downtowns in the region that have considerable one-way traffic.

Truck Routes

The main truck route from Attleboro's primary industrial area, the O'Neil Boulevard neighborhood, to the major highways runs through the downtown (see **Figure 59**). Frequently trucks create traffic congestion and air pollution in the area and exacerbate Downtown traffic issues.

Figure 59: Truck Routes the Navigate through Downtown and the Surrounding Areas



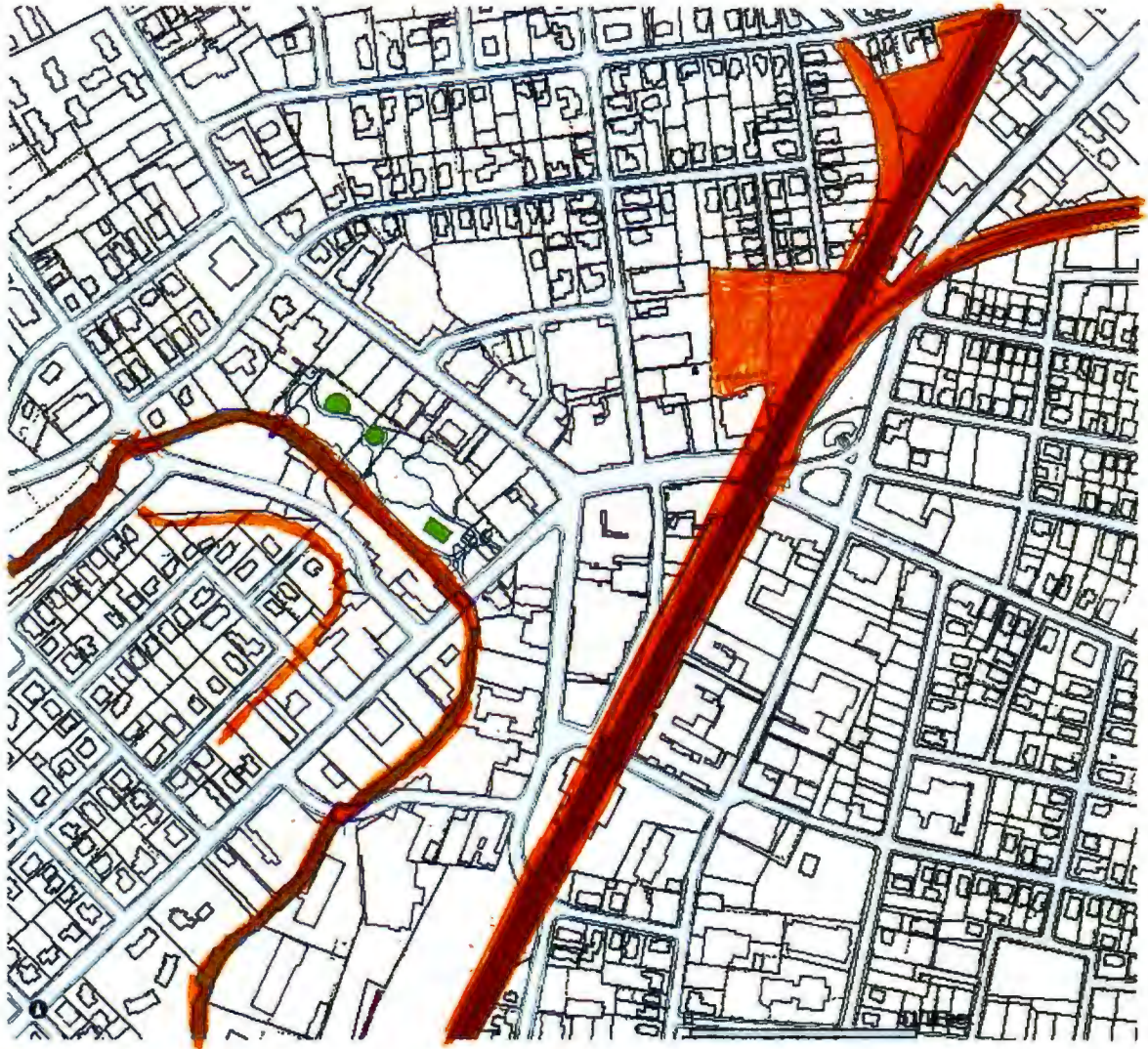
● **Truck Routes**

Pedestrian Circulation

As a primary goal of downtown improvement is to attract people into the area to work, shop, live, and recreate, it is essential that a downtown have an excellent pedestrian network. Excellent pedestrian circulation networks link important sites and have few edges preventing pedestrians from moving freely throughout the area (Trancik, 1986 p.2). They also have the width and surface quality to accommodate all kinds of pedestrians, buffer pedestrians from auto traffic, and provide shade from the elements. In addition pedestrians are more likely to utilize an area that is aesthetically pleasing.

The overall circulation system in the downtown is geared to the automobile rather than the pedestrian. Sidewalk activity is not buffered from auto traffic. Heavy, rapidly moving traffic creates an uncomfortable and unsafe environment for many pedestrians. Wide state highways, an MBTA right-of-way, a river, a steep hill adjacent to Riverbank Road and County Street, and parking lots frequently break pedestrian links between important destinations.

Figure 60: Edges in Downtown



● **Edges**

Park Street has sufficient width to accommodate most pedestrians (see **Figure 61**). However, many other streets in the CBD, such as County Street (see **Figure 53**) are very narrow and have obstructions that would not allow a handicapped person to utilize the sidewalk. The surface of most CBD sidewalks is poor. Some sidewalks are characterized by cracks and unwanted vegetation (see **Figure 62**).

Nevertheless, the heart of Downtown Attleboro is characterized by dense groupings of structures at the sidewalk with parking and loading areas in back. It

also has a radial street system, which makes it easy for the pedestrian to move throughout the area in almost all directions.

Figure 61: Park Street in front of the LeBlanc Building



Figure 62: Park Street in front of the City Hall



Public Transportation

Passenger Rail

MBTA commuter rail as well as Amtrak serves the Attleboro train station, located in Downtown (see **Figure 63**). The commuter rail provides service to most of greater Boston as well as Providence. The Amtrak line traverses the downtown, but does not stop here. Amtrak provides nationwide service as well as the new, 150 mph Acela trains that run from Boston to Washington DC.

Corridor of Attleboro and North Attleboro, The Emerald Square Mall in North Attleboro, Downtown North Attleboro, Plainville, and Seekonk (see Figure 64).

Figure 64: Bus Routes that Run Through Downtown Attleboro



★ **Downtown Attleboro**

Freight Service

CSX provides freight transportation services to the downtown. CSX is the parent company of a number of subsidiaries that provide freight transportation services across America and around the world (www.csx.com).

4.7 PARKING

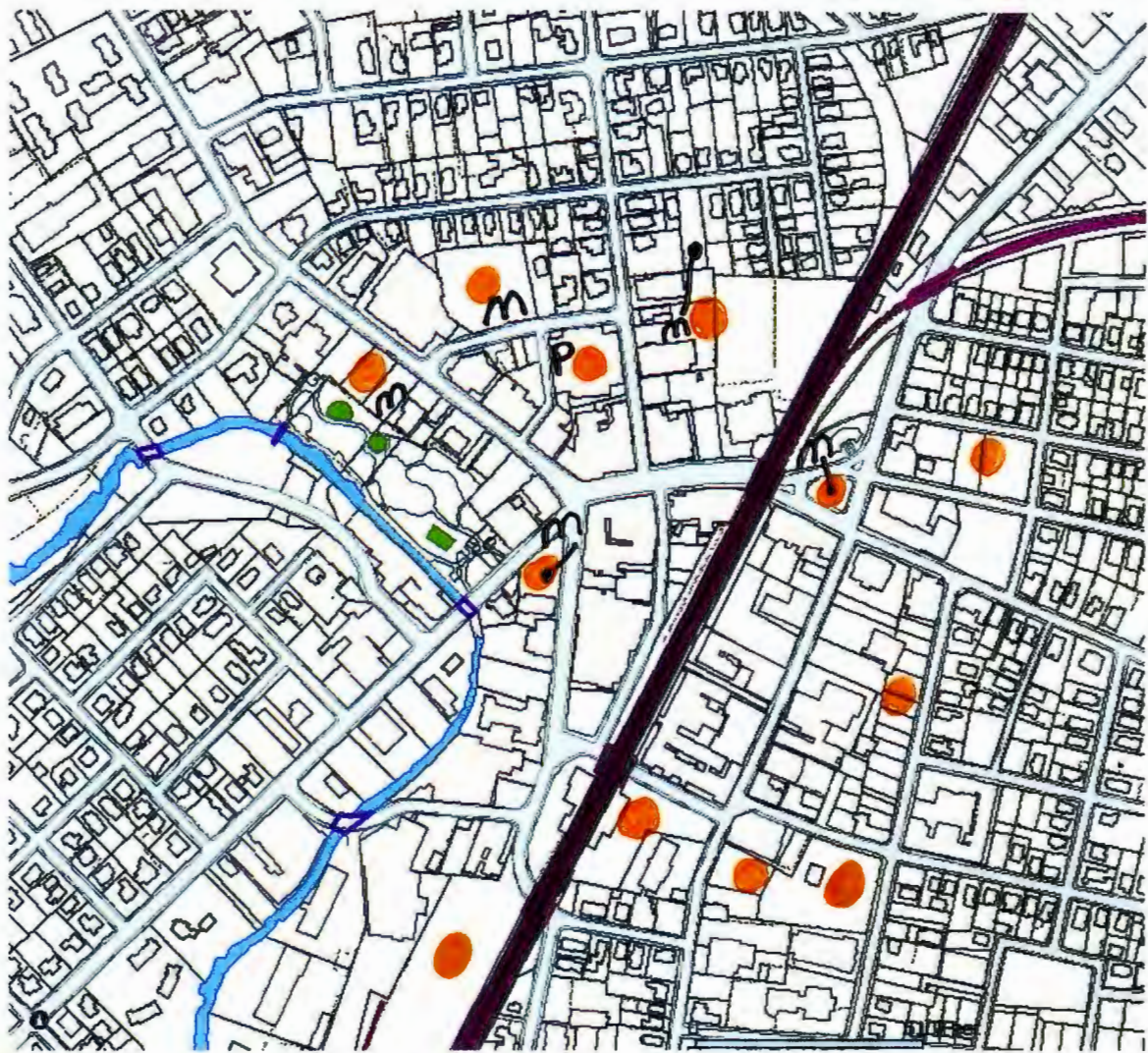
Desirable location for off-street parking is determined by locations and degrees of parking shortages, land availability and cost, walking distances, security, convenience of access, and street system elements (Berk 1981, 15-1). Wider streets should include on- street parking which reduces the amount of urban land used for the storage of autos as well as creates a buffer for pedestrians (http://www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm72.htm#_Increase_Curb_Parking).

Off-Street Public Parking in Downtown

As demonstrated in **Figure 65**, the downtown has several off-street public parking lots. The Attleboro Department of Planning and development conducted a draft downtown parking survey in circa 2000. According to this information, there were a total of 883 unrestricted parking spaces for public use in the Central Business District. During the author's observation times of approximately midday during the week, the majority of these lots were less than 75% occupied. The only lot that appeared over 75% of capacity was the Mullaney Twins Lot at the Larson Senior Center. Signage to and at these lots appeared poor and confusing.

Off-street public parking is available to all sections of the downtown. Some of the larger lots include the Sanford Street Municipal Lot, North Main Street Municipal Lot, and the Municipal Parking Garage on the corner of Sanford and Bank Streets. Public lots range in cost from free to \$1.00. Others cost \$.20 per hour. Compared to regional prices for parking, this appears very reasonable. Duration for parking in public lots ranges from two hours to 24 hours.

Figure 65: Major Parking Areas in Downtown



- Major Parking Area
- M Municipal Lots
- P Municipal Parking Garage

On Street Parking in Downtown

According to the draft downtown parking survey, nearly every street in the downtown contains on-street parking. In circa 2000, there were a total of 389 parking spaces for public use in the rights-of-way in the Central Business District. During the author's observation times at approximately midday during the week, the majority of these spaces were not occupied. The heart of the downtown

contained more autos parked in the rights-of-way than other areas in the CBD, however on-street parking was available. Signage for some streets was confusing. For other streets, it was non-existent. There is no metered parking and all off-street parking is free. Duration for parking on-street ranged from fifteen minutes to all day. Hours for parking varied.

Private Lots in the Downtown

The downtown has several private off-street parking lots. Some of the larger lots include the City Hall Lot, 19-21 Pak Street Lot, and the Union Plaza Lot.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the analysis of existing conditions contained in Chapter Four.

5.1 LAND USE AND ZONING

1. **Revise Section 17-5.1 Off Street Parking Requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.**

Write this section of the Ordinance so that parking stalls in the CBD may be 9'x18' with 283 square feet including access and maneuvering space.

2. **Adopt a Design Review Section to the Zoning Ordinance.**
3. **Review and Revise Section 17-4.9 Table of Dimensional and Density Regulations of the Zoning Ordinance to introduce a minimum building height in the CBD.**
4. **Review and Revise Section 17-4.9 Table of Dimensional and Density Regulations of the Zoning Ordinance to include Floor to Area Ratios for all land uses in the CBD.**

5. Review and Revise Section 17–3.4 Table of Use Regulations and Section 17–3.5 Table of Accessory Use Regulations of the Zoning Ordinance to accommodate more mixed uses in the CBD.

6. Amend Section 17–3.4 Table of Use Regulations, Residential (7) of the Zoning Ordinance to allow residential land uses above the first floor level of a business in the CBD by right.

Create a checklist for applicants to complete relative to the characteristics of their proposed residential units. The criteria on the list would address any safety, nuisance, and design issues. If an applicant meets all criteria, a special permit from the ZBA would not be required.

7. Change the Borders of the Central Business District (CBD) on the Zoning Map (see Figure 66).

Figure 66: Proposed Changes to the Border of the CBD

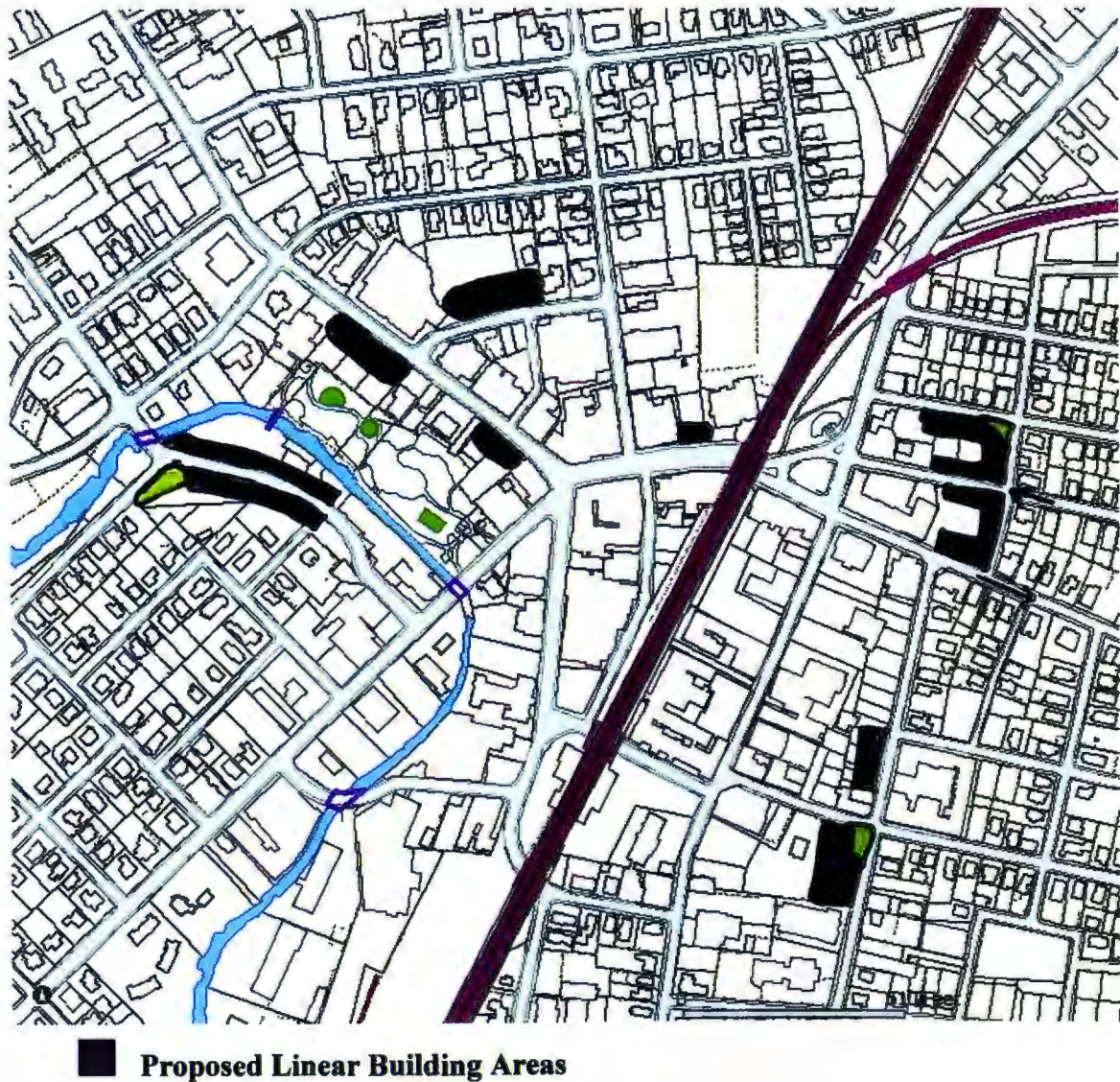


- Existing Central Business District
- Proposed Central Business District

5.2 BUILDING FORM AND MASSING

1. Establish an aggressive action plan to encourage building and business owners to participate in the City's existing Façade Improvement Plan.
2. Establish a master plan to allow and encourage the development of linear buildings on the frontage of surface parking lots in the downtown (see Figure 67).

Figure 67 : Proposed Linear Building Areas



- 3. Establish urban design guidelines to guide development.**

- 4. Establish an action plan to recruit building owners to undertake upper-floor conversion projects.**

5.3 PUBLIC SPACES

- 1. Endorse and implement the preliminary recommendations provided by the Streetscape Initiative Advisory Committee (SIAC), the Department of Planning and Development and Carol R. Johnson and Associates (CRJA) to improve the Veterans Memorial Common.**
- 2. Endorse and implement the preliminary recommendations provided by the SIAC, the Department of Planning and Development and CRJA to improve the four memorial squares and one memorial area.**
- 3. Establish a comprehensive, downtown-wide landscaping plan and allocate responsibility to several entities to maintain each area.**

Utilize the areas approved by the SIAC. These include existing and future public and private landscaping areas.

- 4. Establish an action plan to acquire all parcels needed to connect important buildings and spaces.**

FAIR along with the City and Albert Veri & Associates recommended Tricentennial Park, illustrated below to connect existing green and cultural areas. Although never constructed, this remains an excellent recommendation and should be pursued (see **Figure 68**).

Figure 68: Proposed Tricentennial Park by Albert Veri & Associates

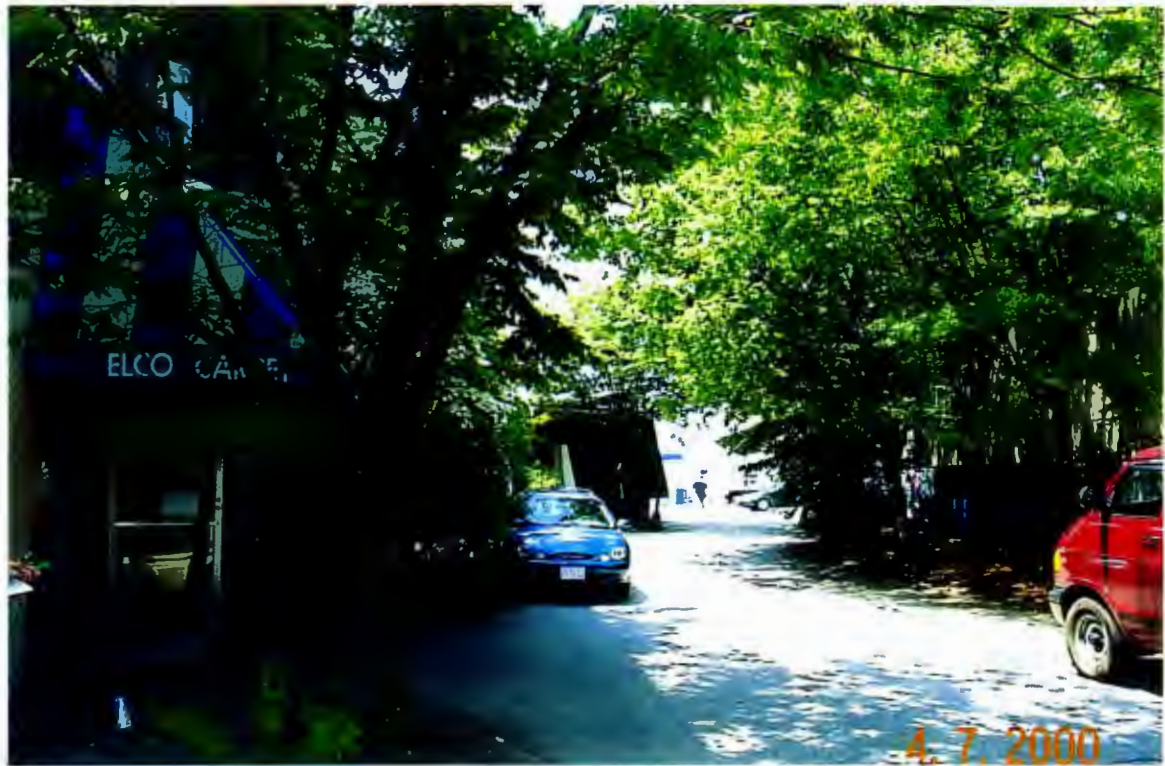


5. **Transform the public right-of-ways into public spaces.**

6. **Develop the "Hard Space" between the Parking Garage and the Businesses on Park Street (see Figure 69).**

Safety considerations should be a major priority during the design of this area.

Figure 69: Area between the Municipal Parking Garage and Park Street



5.4 LOST SPACES

- 1. Explore traffic calming techniques for Pleasant Street and Park Street in the downtown to create pedestrian connections across these auto-oriented streets.**
- 2. Endorse and implement the preliminary recommendations provided by the SIAC, the Department of Planning and Development and CRJA to improve the lighting, landscaping and cast-iron fence along the MBTA overpass on Park Street.**
- 3. Establish an action and maintenance plan to integrate the Ten Mile River into the downtown.**
- 4. Endorse the Attleboro Redevelopment Authority's (ARA's) proposal to create a mixed-use intermodal center on the Union Street Block.**
- 5. Supply free kits and info to help business owners remove graffiti.**

Social service providers hire homeless individuals to clean streets, maintain landscapes and pick up litter (Main Street Success Stories, 1997 p. 29).

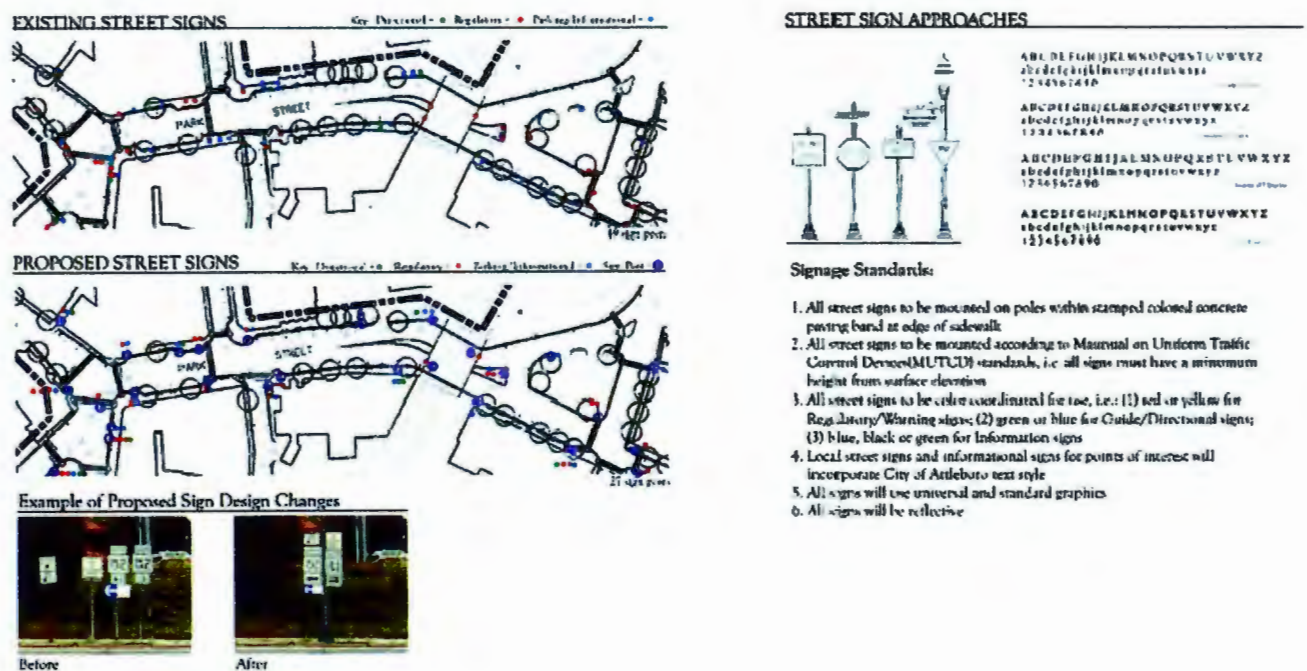
5.5 STREETScape

- 1. Establish streetscape standards for future development in the downtown.**
- 2. Endorse and implement the preliminary streetscape recommendations provided by the SIAC, the Department of Planning and Development and CRJA.**

5.6 CIRCULATION

1. Conduct a study to examine the alternatives for a through traffic bypass system.
2. Change truck routes to alleviate traffic congestion and pollution in the downtown.
3. Endorse and implement the preliminary recommendations provided by the SIAC, the Department of Planning and Development and CRJA to improve the signage in Downtown (see Figure 70).

Figure 70: Signage Recommendations, CRJA, SIAC, City of Attleboro



5.7 PARKING

1. Establish a comprehensive, downtown-wide parking management plan.

Require Employees, business owners, and residents to park in off-street lots during daytime hours.

2. Establish an action plan to encourage private entities to adopt shared parking strategies and policies.

3. Establish an action plan to discourage commuters from tying up off and on street parking spaces during business hours.

4. Establish free parking areas. Place a visible sign in front of these areas that contains the words "FREE PARKING".

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Katz, P. **The New Urbanism: Toward an Architecture of Community.** New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994.

Nelessen, Anton. **Visions for a New American Dream: Process, Principles, and an Ordinance to Plan and Design Small Communities,** Chicago: Planners Press, 1994.

Trancik, Roger. **Finding Lost Space: Theories of Urban Design,** New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1986.

Calthorpe, P. "Pedestrian Pockets" in **The Pedestrian Pocket Book: A New Suburban Design Strategy.**564

Nelson, Arthur. **Growth Management Principles & Practices,** Chicago: Planners Press, 1995.

Garvin, A. **The American City: What Works, What Doesn't,** New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1996.

Lynch, K. **Image of the City,** Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1960.

Smith, T. **The Aesthetics of Parking,** Washington, DC: PAS, Report 411, 1988.

Jarvis, Frederick D. **Site Planning and Community Design for Great Neighborhoods**, Home Builder Press, 1993.

The Principles of Smart Development. American Planning Association: PAS Report Number 479, 1998

Tedesco, Dr. Paul H. **1894 Attleborough–Attleboro 1978: Hub of the Jewelry World**, Attleboro: Attleboro Historical Commission, 1979.

Valley Vision: The Regional Land Use Plan for the Pioneer Valley, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. September 1997.

City of Attleboro Comprehensive Plan, Attleboro Planning Board, and Attleboro Department of Planning and Land Use. November 1990.

City of Attleboro Zoning Ordinances, City of Attleboro. 1942, Revised 1976.

Mass ReLeaf Information Sheet, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Environmental Management.

1994 Open Space and Recreation Plan, Open Space and Recreation Committee, City of Attleboro. 1994.

City of Attleboro Zoning Ordinances, City of Attleboro. 1998

A Study and Market Analysis of Downtown Attleboro, Prepared for FAIR 94 by Smyth Associates. 1993.

Design Guidelines, Commercial Area Revitalization District, Attleboro, Massachusetts, Community Development for Attleboro, Inc. 1980s

Redevelopment Strategy Handbook: Downtown Mill Buildings and Underutilized Sties, Attleboro, Massachusetts, Albert Veri and Associates, Inc. July, 1994

CRJA Preliminary Recommendations to the SIAC and City of Attleboro, 2004

JOURNALS, MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS

Revitalizing Downtown: The Professional's Guide to the Main Street Approach, Main Street National Trust for Historic Preservation. 2000.

Main Street Success Stories: How community leaders have used the Main Street Approach to turn their downtowns around, Suzanne G. Dane, National Main Street Center National Trust for Historic Preservation. 1997.

Enlow, Claire. "Seattle: Small Is Still Beautiful". American Planning Association Vol. 65, No. 3. March 1999.

Siembieda, William AICP. "Finally, a Livable City!" American Planning Association Vol. 64, No. 11. November 1998.

Ten Steps to a Living Downtown. The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy. October 1999.

The Attleboro Sun Chronicle May 26,1992, May 20, 1992, April 26, 1992, December 21, 1989, October 3, 1991.

The Attleboro Sun Chronicle September 21, 2002, Flanagan.

WEB SITES

www.planning.org

www.mainst.org

www.walkable.org

www.cr.nps.gov

www.ida-downtown.org

www.magnet.state.ma.us/dhcd/components/dcs/downtown/default.htm

<http://www.marylandapa.org/mdplanner0402.pdf>

http://stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/planing/southgrand/phaseIII_smallscale.pdf

http://www.city.urbana.il.us/urbana/community_development/planning/downtown_plan/image.html

www.csx.com

http://www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm72.htm#_Increase_Curb_Parking

<http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/stories/1997/05/19/newscolumn3.html>

<http://www.state.ma.us/envir/dcs/portraits>

INTERVIEWS

Poirer, Mary. Interview relative to the Characteristics of Downtown Attleboro from the 1940s to the Present. March 7, 2000.