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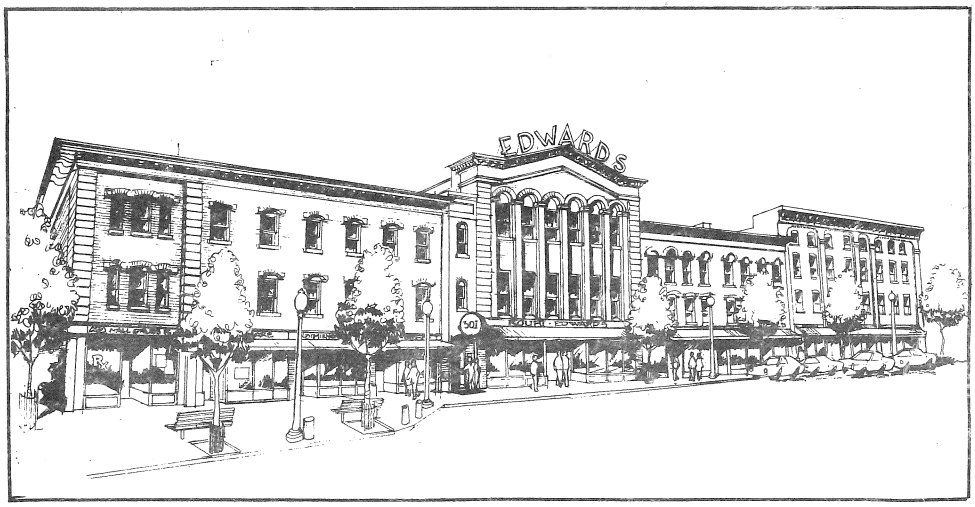
DOWNTOWN SOUTHBRIDGE



Phase II Revitalization Plan

Town of Southbridge, Massachusetts
Tri-Community Chamber of Commerce

Anderson Notter Finegold Inc.
Architects & Preservation Planners

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Change and development often are disruptive and painful, but stagnation is worse. Planning for the future of downtown Southbridge requires the efforts of many people. I am hopeful that this report will focus our attention on the questions of that future.

Peter Boyer
Town Manager
Southbrige, Massachusetts

Phase II, as this report will clearly show, is a second lease on life for a small New England mill town with a heart. Imperceptibly at first, there is a movement, a spark, life again returning to the commercial district. A cultural center, public improvements, theater, music, the hammers of growing industries echo the proud voices of Southbridge's Victorian heyday.

This report represents our highest aspirations and hopes for the future . . . and a means to realize them.

With your help we will build again the dreams of yesterday for the promise of tommorow.

John S. Frykenberg
Executive Vice President
Tri-Community Chamber of Commerce

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Downtown Southbridge

Phase II Revitalization Plan

Town of Southbridge, Massachusetts

Peter Boyer, Town Manager

Tri-Community Chamber of Commerce

John Frykenberg, Executive Director

Prepared by:

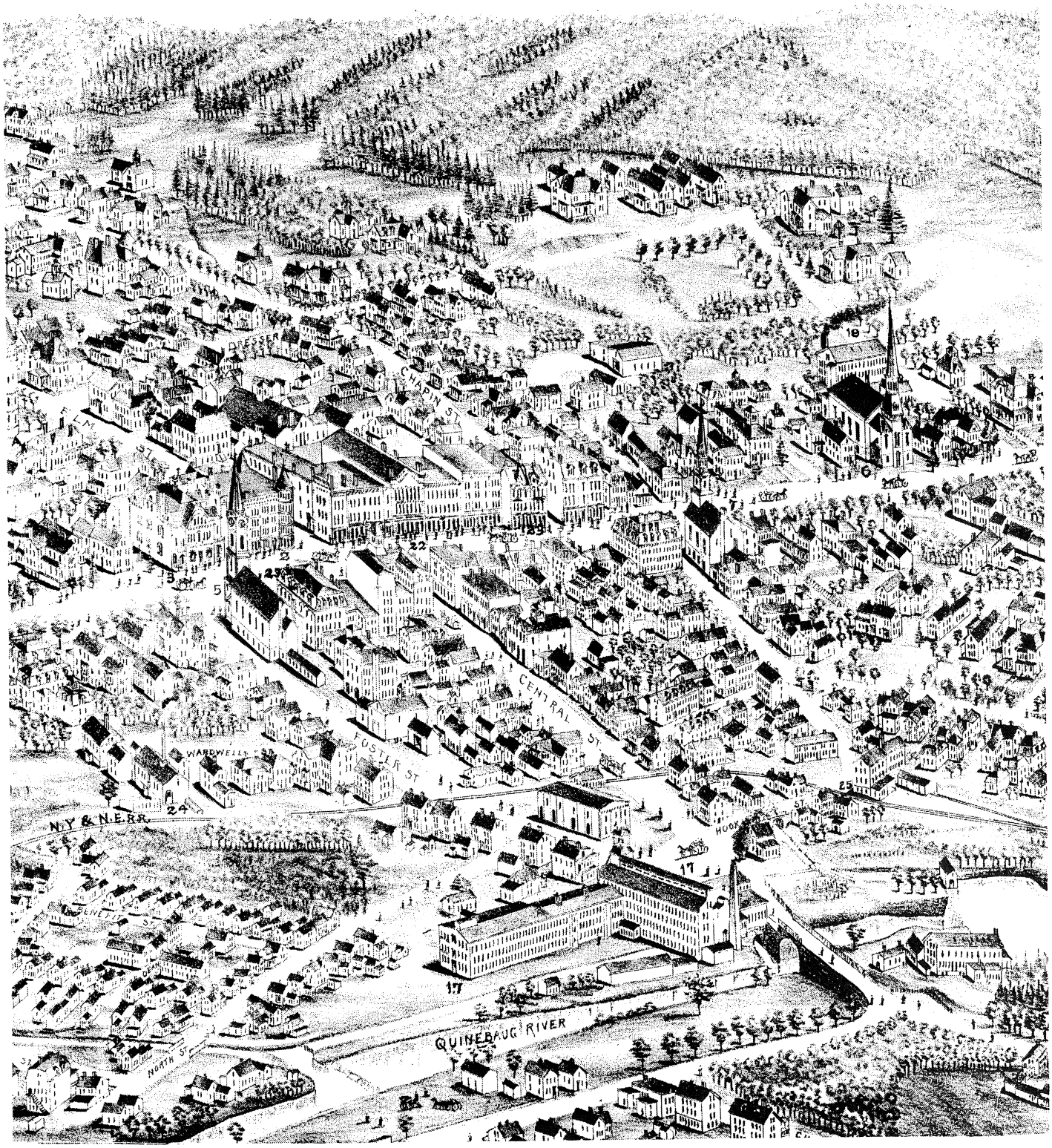
Anderson Notter Finegold Inc.

Architects and Preservation Planners

Preparation of this report was made possible through a section 701 grant from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development administered by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Communities and Development.

July 1980

Jacob Edwards Library
236 Main Street
Southbridge, MA 01550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CENTRAL ST
FOSTER ST
WARDWELL ST
N.Y & N.E.R.R.
HOOK ST
QUINEBAUG RIVER
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A panoramic view of Centre Village, (now Southbridge) circa 1892

Introduction



Main Street's north side.



The Corner of Main and Central Streets.

Downtown Southbridge is an excellent example of a well-preserved New England town of the 19th century. Stately clusters of older, richly-detailed brick buildings frame the edges of Main Street, reflecting the quieter pace and more intimate scale of an earlier era. As in many older downtowns across the country, Main Street has seen more prosperous days. The advent of the automobile, the suburban exodus of people who once lived and worked downtown and competition from new shopping malls have each had their effect. Today many of the buildings on Main Street are vacant or underutilized above the first floor, and while many stores are still active, there is little doubt that business could be better.

Despite these problems Downtown Southbridge enjoys a number of unique advantages over other towns with similar plights. The public improvements now in place from Phase I of the Downtown Program are a major asset. New paving, trees, and lights have helped to make Main Street a very attractive place in which to work, shop, visit and live. Although two major buildings have been lost over the years and another damaged by fire, almost all of the original historic buildings remain. They are in relatively good condition and together present a cohesive streetscape of 19th century commercial and residential architecture. The recent National Register Historic District designation is another important asset. It qualifies building owners along Main Street for special funding and tax advantages for rehabilitating their properties.

Phase II of the Downtown Program provides a master plan for the continuing revitalization of Downtown Southbridge. The major goals of the Phase II Plan are as follows:

- To improve and refurbish the downtown retail area by providing a comprehensive plan for increased parking and improvements to existing parking areas.

- To reinforce and revitalize the historic downtown area of Southbridge by creating a plan for new housing, office and retail uses in existing underutilized or vacant buildings.

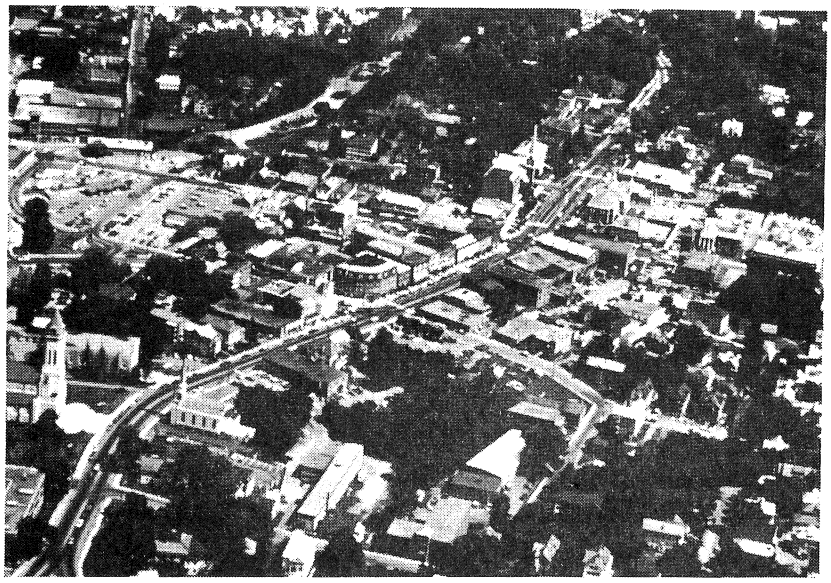


The Edwards Block, 301-3 Main Street.

- To develop recommendations and an effective approach to implement and finance the revitalization of Downtown Southbridge.

The project area for the Phase II effort was carefully established to include the core area of the Historic District and the major parking facilities serving this area. While Phase I focused directly on Main Street, Phase II concentrates behind Main Street on the parking areas and the buildings themselves.

By upgrading, refurbishing and developing an effective strategy for parking, the downtown retail area can achieve a more competitive position with nearby shopping malls. An overall building revitalization plan combined with specific design recommendations for key buildings provides a foundation for redeveloping the older underutilized buildings and bringing people downtown again.



Aerial view of Southbridge from the southwest.



SOUTHBRIDGE DOWNTOWN PHASE II

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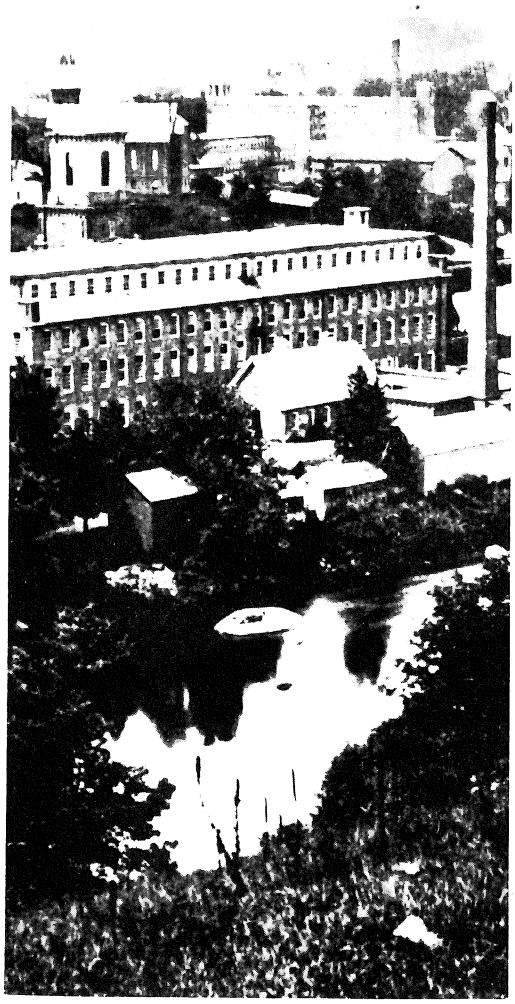
Downtown Southbridge



Textile mills on the Quinebaug River, about 1880.

Map at left indicates the study area's boundaries.

HISTORY

The potential for revitalization in Downtown Southbridge is deeply entwined with the history of the area and is reflected in the quality and charm of its visual and architectural character.

Southbridge was settled in the 1730's as an agricultural community, and for 80 years, farming remained the mainstay of its economy. By 1816, the year the town was incorporated and textile manufacturing had begun at three sites along the Quinebaug River. Readily available water power triggered construction of several dams along the river, and the town's development as a bustling nineteenth century manufacturing community was well on its way to being realized. Textile mills were soon supplemented by the optical and cutlery industries, later to become the town's two major industries with the formation of the American Optical Company and the Harrington Cutlery Company.

As industry expanded, so did the need for manpower to work in the mills. The Irish were the first to arrive in the 1840's and '50's, followed after the Civil War by French Canadians. In 1860 the population was 4,131, of whom 510 were French. By 1900 the town had grown to 10,000, with over 6,000 French-Canadians. A subsequent influx of Italian, Polish, Greek and Albanian workers in the early 1900's enabled the factories to continue expansion and increase production capacities.

Coinciding with the town's development as a manufacturing center was the transformation of the Centre Village area into the town's main business district. In the early years, Main Street was lined with houses and wood-frame commercial buildings. As the town prospered, many of the older buildigns were replaced by the prominent brick commercial blocks of the 1880's and '90's which today comprise the central business district. The growing population and economic prosperity could support an expanded range of stores, shops and services which were fulfilled by the new commercial blocks.

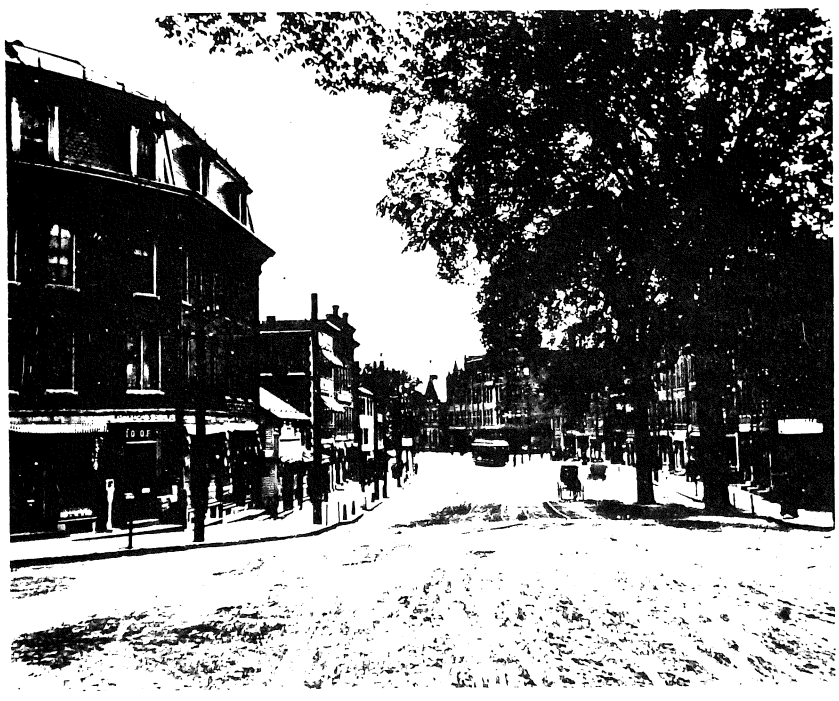
Ground-floor spaces were used for retail activities or banking. The second floors frequently housed

offices for lawyers, doctors, dentists, insurance companies and other businesses. Third and fourth floors might contain meeting halls or theaters but were generally occupied as apartments or rooms to let. Trolley cars were inaugurated in 1897 and ran up and down Main Street until the late 1920's, first on their run from Sandersdale to Fiskdale and later to Worcester and Springfield.

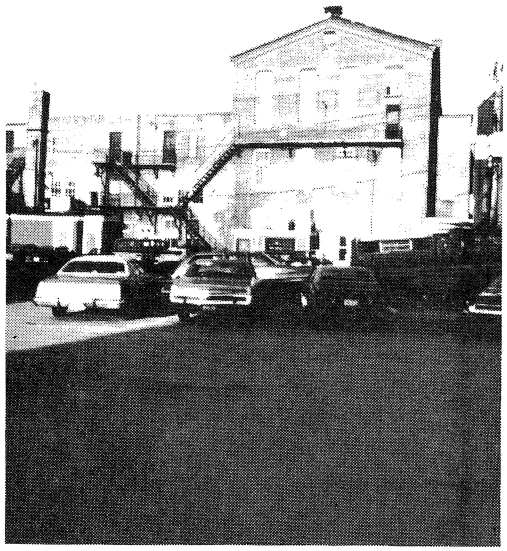
Downtown became the center of activity and its physical character reflected the vitality of the town's industries and its people. Substantial brick blocks in the latest architectural styles featured elaborate rooflines, cornices and window details. Each stood out as a unique element in the cohesive, rhythmically balanced streetscape of Main Street as a whole. The area served as the town's mercantile center where local merchants and businessmen constructed impressive buildings to reflect their sense of confidence in the future of Southbridge and in themselves.

In 1979 the Centre Village Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Looking east on Main Street, 1910.



The district includes all the properties fronting on Main Street from 372 Main Street east to Walnut Street and Coombs Street. This designation enables private property owners to apply for federal grants-in-aid for historic preservation through the state preservation program and to obtain substantial fedderal income tax benefits for rehabilitation of certified historic buildings in accordance with certain federal procedures and standards. Register listing also increases opportunities to obtain other federal grants since many federal agencies have developed funding priorities which favor proposals that encourage downtown revitalization and preservation of historic properties.



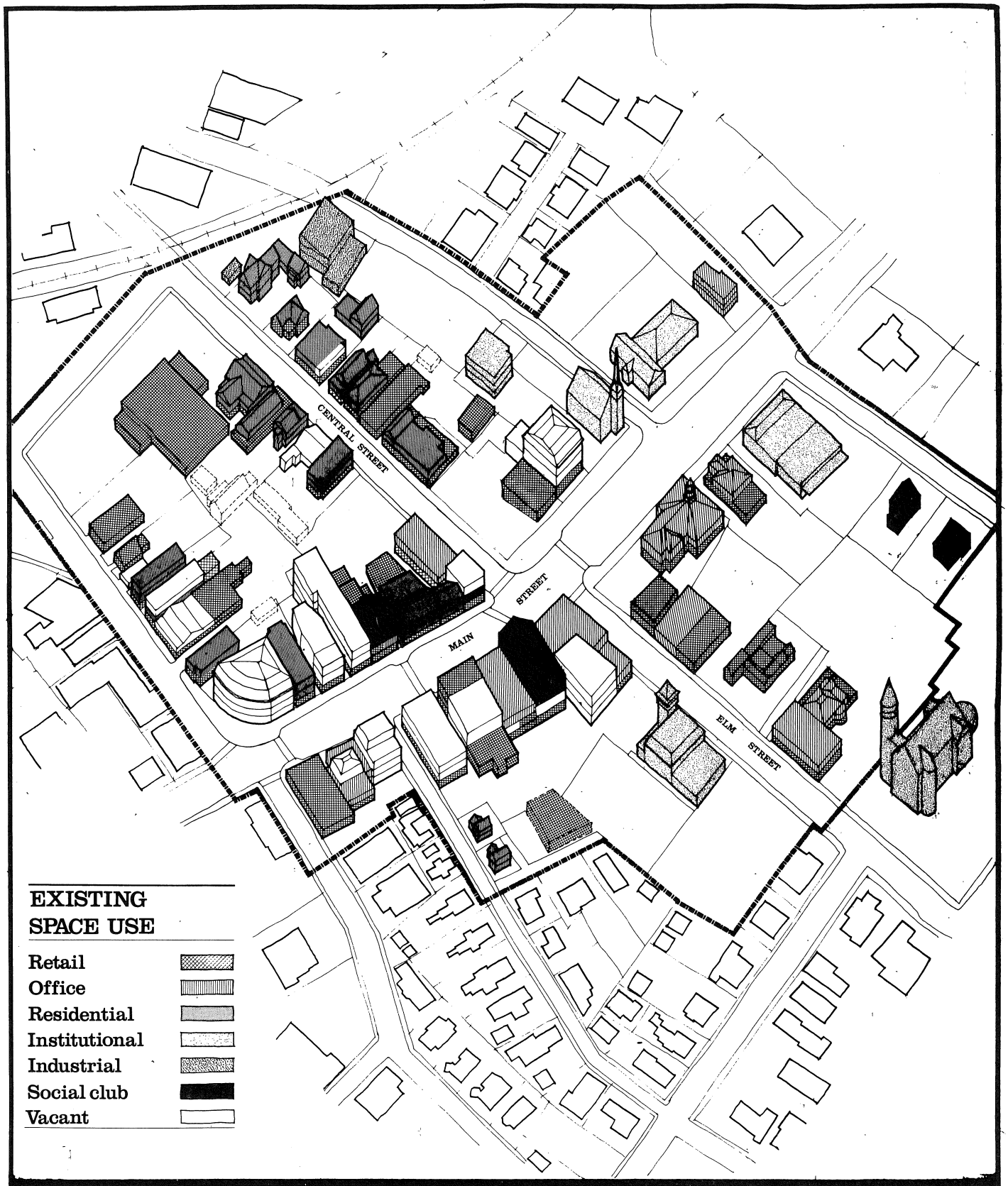
Existing conditions behind the Edwards block, Main Street.

DOWNTOWN TODAY

National Register listing, the generally well-preserved condition of the downtown buildings and the recent public improvements on Main Street have been a major first step in revitalizing the downtown. The second step is to establish specific urban design and development goals which address the issues of off-street parking, re-establishing important links, and edges, land use, building vacancy and zoning.

Parking and Pedestrian Areas. Main Street is a very attractive shopping and working environment, in spite of the fact that off-street parking areas and rear building entrances present a less than pleasing appearance. By comparison, shopping malls provide a more inviting atmosphere with good lighting and attractive landscaping that makes the experience of parking, walking, and shopping a pleasant encounter. If Downtown Southbridge is to compete with nearby shopping malls, the arrival experience must be brought up to and beyond competition levels. This will require new trees, paving, lights, and off-street parking behind the Main Street buildings, combined with an effective parking and maintenance management plan for these areas. A program for upgrading rear building facades and entrances should be developed concurrently to complement the new parking improvements.

Links & Edges. New improvements along Main Street have emphasized the need to strengthen the links between Central and Hamilton Streets and the downtown core area. Currently the edge of the downtown area



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TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE, MASS.
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OF COMMERCE January 1980

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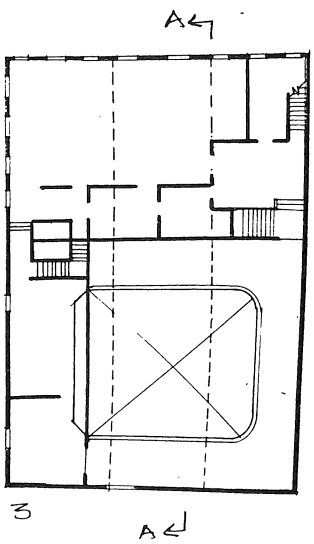
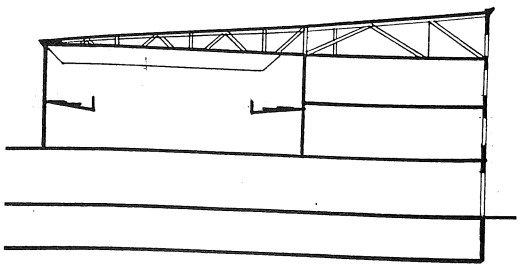
Left: Existing space use of study area buildings. Below: Photo, third floor plan, and section of 309 Main Street.





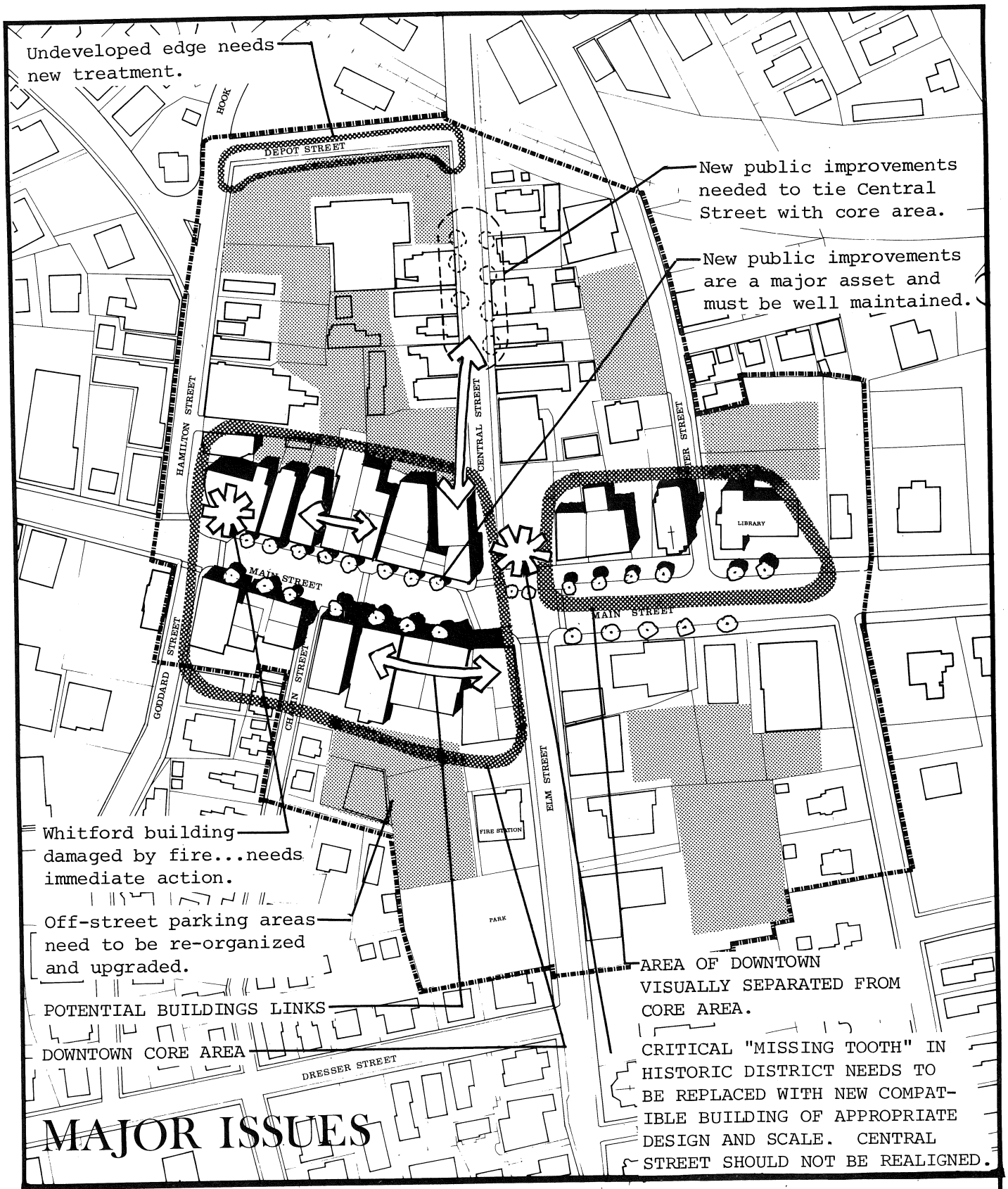


rapidly loses definition as Central Street approaches Depot Street. Street improvements in these areas would visually link business on Central and Hamilton Streets with downtown and would enhance and define the edge of the block along Depot Street.

The Ammidown Building, Central Baptist Church and Edwards Library have been cut off from the visual core of Downtown Southbridge by the removal of the Masonic Building at the corner of Main and Central Streets. A new visual link is needed as an anchor for this major corner site in order to maintain the historic rhythm and continuity of the streetscape. New construction(preferably a three-story structure) should front directly on the sidewalk like its historic neighbors and be compatible with their scale, massing and choice of materials. Central Street should not be realigned with Elm Street as the traditional street pattern along Main Street and the building mass are integral elements of the National Register Historic District.

Table 1
Land Use and Building Vacancy

	Sq.Ft.	Percent
Total Built Area	493,215	100%
Vacant Ground Floor	15,350	3%
Vacant Upper Floor	92,400	20%
Residential Units:58 Rooms:51	72,335	15%
Retail	175,188	35%
Office	50,117	10%
Industrial	14,450	3%
Institutional	61,100	12%
Miscellaneous	12,275	2%



MAJOR ISSUES

SOUTHBRIDGE DOWNTOWN PHASE II

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At left: Major issues in the downtown revitalization plan.

Land Use and Building Vacancy. The most pressing problem facing Downtown Southbridge is the high rate of building vacancy. Although most ground floor space in the business district is fully occupied, many of the upper floors of the Main Street buildings are either vacant or underutilized. This is reflected in the fact that retailing, almost exclusively a ground floor use, dominates building use in Downtown Southbridge. Retailing occupies 35% of total usable floor area. A building survey carried out as part of this study revealed that over 23% of the downtown floor area is currently vacant. Almost 85% of this vacant space is in the upper floors of buildings along Main Street. Including currently underutilized spaces as virtually unoccupied, the total vacancy rate for the downtown study area approaches 30%.

Although the vacancy rate is high, all of the buildings surveyed (with the exception of the Whitford Building) appear to be in very good physical condition. Additionally, many of the vacant or underutilized buildings contain spaces which are unique and present good potential for reuse. Four former theater and meeting hall spaces are currently vacant or underutilized. The former Dresser Opera House is a case in point. Located directly above the Centre Pharmacy, the Opera House remains virtually intact although a social club currently occupies the stage and proscenium. Existing double height spaces such as these and the numerous timber-framed attic spaces present dynamic reuse opportunities for residential, cinema, theater, recreational facilities or other uses.

MARKET POTENTIAL

While the reuse potentials are excellent from a physical design perspective, market conditions appear to be relatively weak. A series of brainstorming sessions held with local merchants, property owners, bankers and real estate brokers indicated that generally low rental rates could be expected for rental apartments in the downtown area, in the range of $350-400 per month maximum. Condominium prices might be as high as $40,000. In either case, development costs are hard to justify on the basis of this ini-



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At left: Zoning map of study area.

tial information. One factor affecting the market is the ready availability of low-priced homes in the surrounding area. The market for office space was also evaluated. Office space in the downtown is not in great demand and rents at $3/square foot. Many of the professionals who previously had offices downtown have since established practices in their own homes.

Although current conditions do not at first appear favorable, many intangible assets exist which can only be verified in terms of their marketability through an actual market test. With gasoline prices continually rising, the convenience of downtown locations for working and shopping are increasingly attractive. Furthermore, the synergistic effect that can occur through public improvements and a reasonably large scale development effort can often be extremely important. Experience elsewhere has shown that a reversal of image can create entirely new market conditions. In Newburyport, Massachusetts the development of office space downtown discovered a market where none was thought to exist. New air-conditioned and nicely-furnished office space in the recycled brick warehouse buildings created a surge of competition between local professionals for impressive "new" recycled offices. This resulted in an exodus from their home-offices. Because of experiences such as this, the importance of a tangible market test cannot be overlooked.

ZONING

The majority of Downtown Southbridge within the Phase II study area is currently designated as a General Business District. A small portion of light industrial zoning in the extreme northeast corner of the study area does not have any significant bearing on proposals for the downtown. The current general business designation appears to be compatible with Phase II proposals for revitalization in Downtown Southbridge. Certain special allowances or changes should be considered regarding: mixed use complexes in existing buildings, set-back requirements for redeveloping existing non-conforming buildings, and revision of parking requirements.



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The Phase II Plan

The Phase II Plan provides an overall strategy for ultimate revitalization in Southbridge and is based on the full redevelopment of vacant space in the downtown core area. Contained within this Plan is an early action or Stage 1 Plan for implementation in the near future which would provide the needed market test in response to limited public improvements. Stage 1 would be planned to accommodate future growth and reuse opportunities with additional off-street parking to be added during critical phases of the revitalization process.

BUILDING REVITALIZATION AND NEW DEVELOPMENT

Three alternative concepts were developed for building revitalization in Downtown Southbridge. Each concept represents a variation in the ratio of office space to housing and retail uses in existing vacant space. Based on a series of brainstorming sessions conducted with key community groups in Southbridge, a preferred alternative was chosen which offers the highest ratio of housing to office space. This choice was felt to be desirable in view of the currently less favorable office market. More housing in the downtown also means that there will be more people and more activity downtown around the clock. A summary of proposed uses in the Phase II Plan incorporates recycling of vacant and underutilized space for residential, retail and limited office uses and appears in Table 2.

Housing is proposed for the upper floors of buildings where the existing physical dimensions of the building permit conversion to apartment use. In certain instances apartments are simply not feasible because of building code requirements. The former Columbia Hotel is a case in point due to its length and the close proximity of neighboring buildings. Here, upper levels are better suited to office uses, reflecting the historical space use pattern.

A key component of the building reuse strategy is the grouping of buildings to share elevator access, circulation and egress. The two logical places for this to occur are in the Edwards Block and the former Columbia Hotel. The existing shaftway in the Columbia Hotel could also be used to serve Goodwin's and the Mathieu Building. A new elevator in the

At left, the Phase II Plan showing public improvements and parking redevelopment schemes.

Edwards Block could be linked by shared circulation to both the Blanchard Building and the Centre Pharmacy block. Development of this group of buildings would provide a critical mass of sufficient impact to put the full-scale revitalization program in action. In this light, development of the Edwards Block is critical to the Phase II Plan and should be carried out as a major part of the Stage I effort.

Another key feature of building reuse in Southbridge is the design potential of existing double-height spaces and closed-in attic areas. These spaces could become dramatic multi-level dwelling units. The heavy timber trusses common to the attic areas can be imaginatively used to create very special interior treatments which could command good market rents.

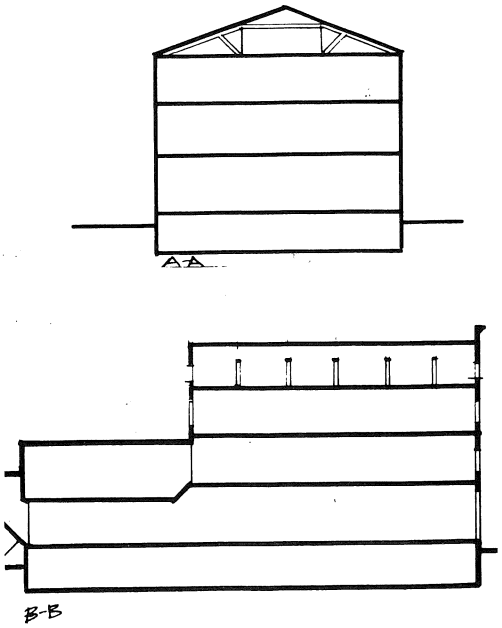
Finally a new three-story commercial, residential and parking complex is proposed to replace the de-

Table 2
Proposed Use Profile for Downtown Southbridge

	Sq.Ft.	Percent
Total Area	500,655	100%
Vacant Upper Floor	-	0%
Vacant Lower Floor	-	0%
Residential Units: 152 Rooms: 51	160,000	32%
Retail	187,338	37%
Office	72,567	15%
Industrial	14,400	3%
Institutional	61,100	12%
Miscellaneous	5,250	1%
Office to Housing Ratio	3:5	

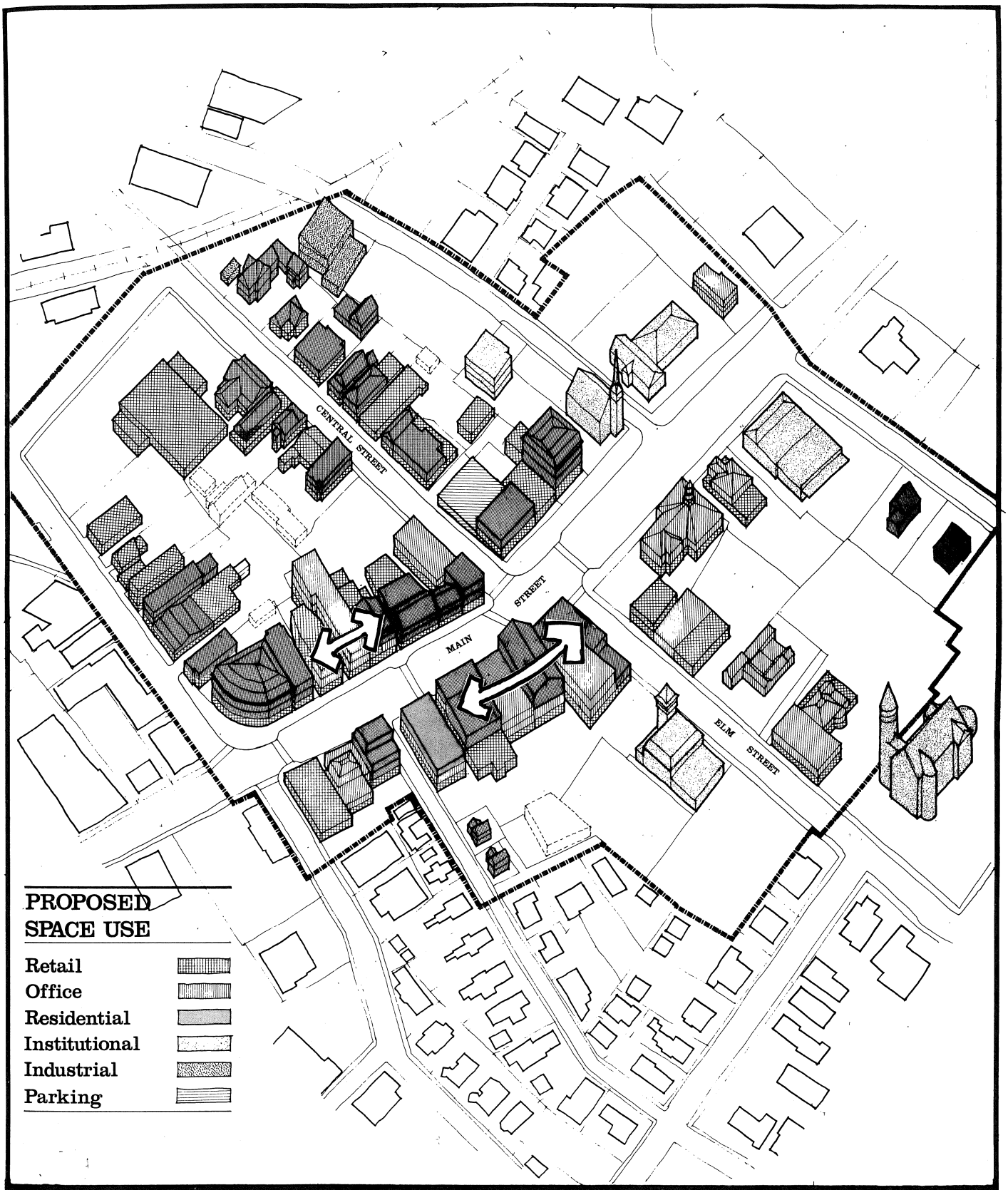


A typical attic space imaginatively reused as an apartment.



Sections of the Goodwin's building show attic spaces ideal for the type of reuse seen in photo at top.

Map at right shows proposed reuses of study area buildings.



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molished building at the corner of Main and Central Streets. This complex would replace a critical missing tooth in the downtown building fabric and is vital to the rhythm and continuity of the Historic District.

PARKING & PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

Increased off-street parking and pedestrian area improvements are as essential to the Phase II Plan as building revitalization and private development. Parking projections for Downtown Southbridge show an increase in demand of over 200 spaces, assuming that all vacant and underutilized space is recycled for new uses. Tables 3 and 4 summarize existing parking supply and proposed demand.

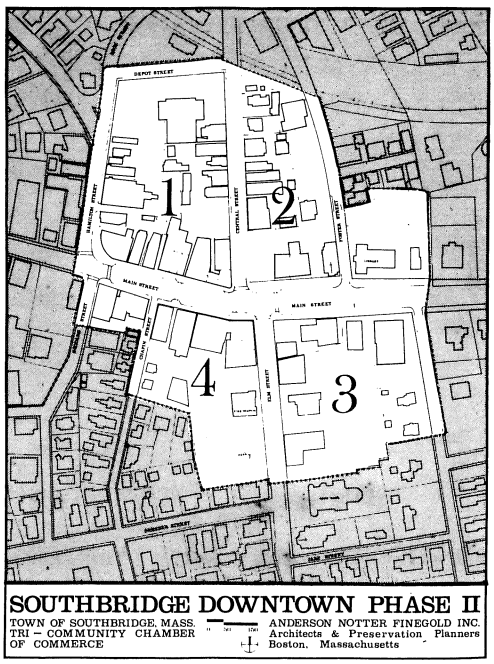
Table 3 Existing Parking & Demand

	Off-Street	On-Street	Total Supply	Total Demand
Block 1	160	67	227	233
Block 2	101	59	160	190
Block 3	196	48	244	216
Block 4	82	32	124	130
Total	539	206	745	769

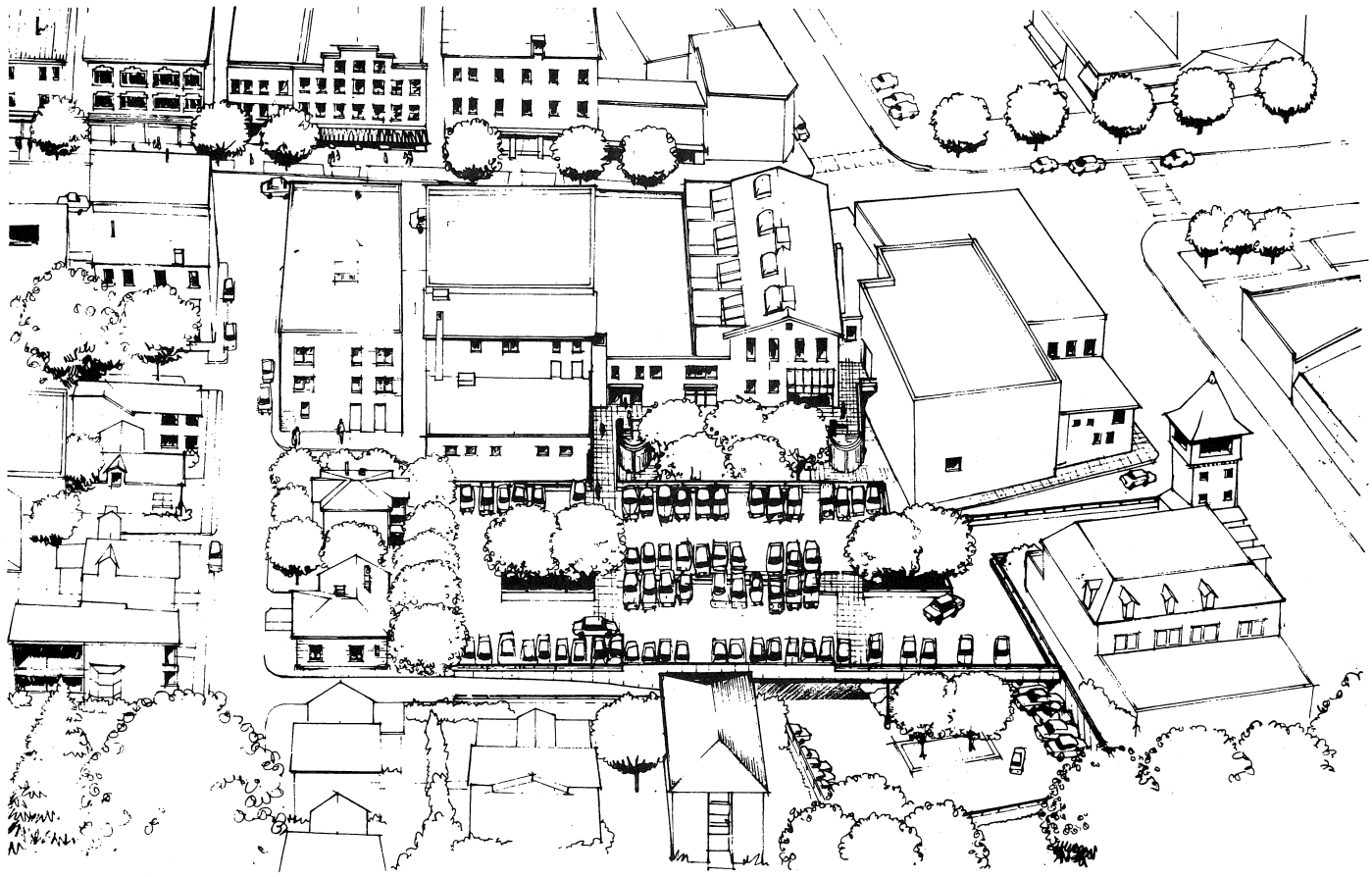
Table 4 Proposed Parking & Demand

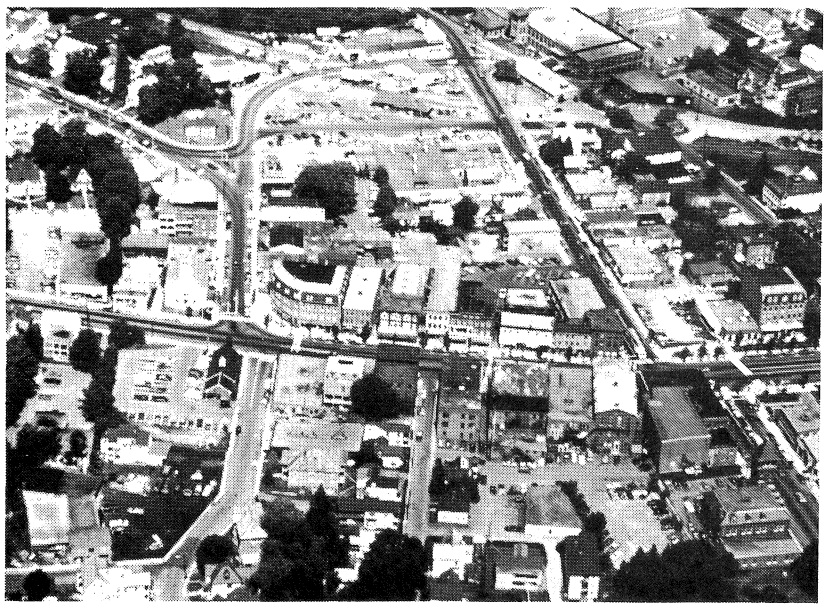
	Off-Street	On-Street	Total Supply	Total Demand
Block 1	265	65	330	326
Block 2	175	52	227	221
Block 3	240	48	288	216
Block 4	173	32	205	222
Total	853	197	1,050	985

At right: Current air photo of Southbridge from the south, and a sketch of the possible re-development of the area behind the Edwards Block.



Numbered blocks in map above correspond with data in tables 3-6 and text.



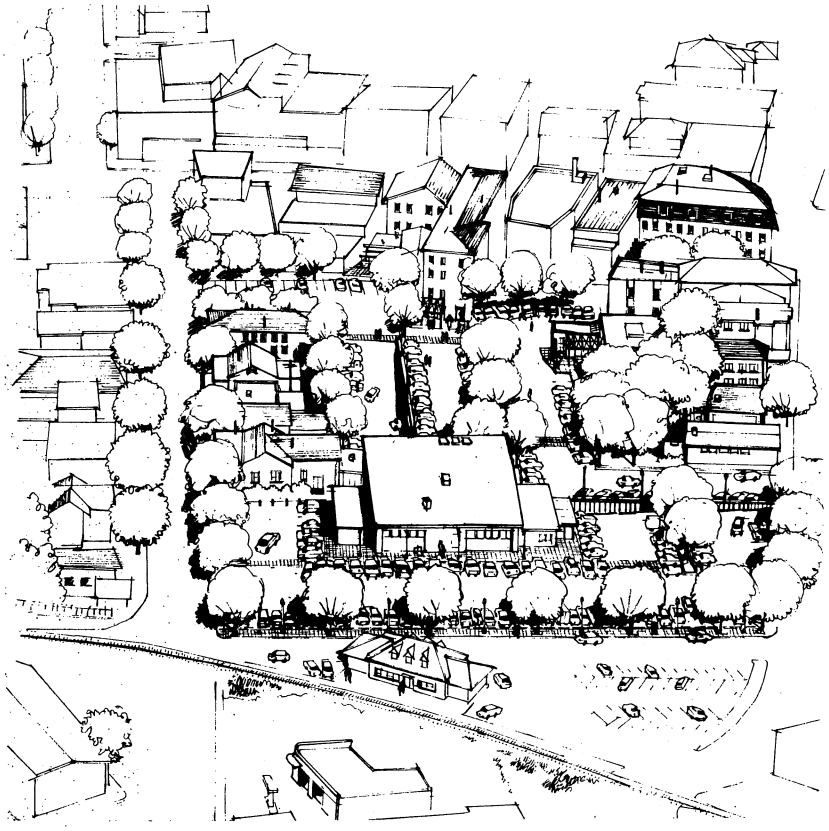


The proposed Parking Plan for Stage 2 of the Phase II Plan recommends the general reorganization of off-street parking throughout the downtown, with the exception of Block 3 where the current plan functions quite well. Two parking decks are recommended to serve the north and south sides of Main Street respectively. The North Main Deck will require the demolition of an existing abandoned house and minimal excavation to take advantage of the existing grade change. Long-term parking including employees and area residents would use the lower deck with short term parking planned for the upper deck. The lower deck could be secured by means of a roll-down grille with magnetic card admission.

Public improvements in this area would include new lighting to provide a high level of security. New trees, walkways and a major new pedestrian area immediately behind the Main Street buildings would also be included in the design. A program for upgrading and enhancing the rear entrances of the Main



Southbridge from the north across Depot Street.



Sketch looking south across Depot Street with possible parking schemes and public improvements.

Street buildings is another important component of the overall Plan. A corridor of new lighting, paving and tree planting should be completed along Depot Street to re-establish the edge of this block.

The new deck in Block 4 behind the buildings on the south side of Main Street will take advantage of the existing grade change created by the basement of the former Strand Theater. Again, the basic strategy is to reserve part or all of the lower deck for long-term parking, to be secured in a manner similar to the North Main Deck. An additional feature of the South Main Deck is to create an elevated walkway system connecting the upper level of the deck directly to the Edwards Block. Improvements would also include a new brick-paved pedestrian area behind the Edwards Block with a connection through to Main Street between the Robbins Building and Centre Pharmacy.

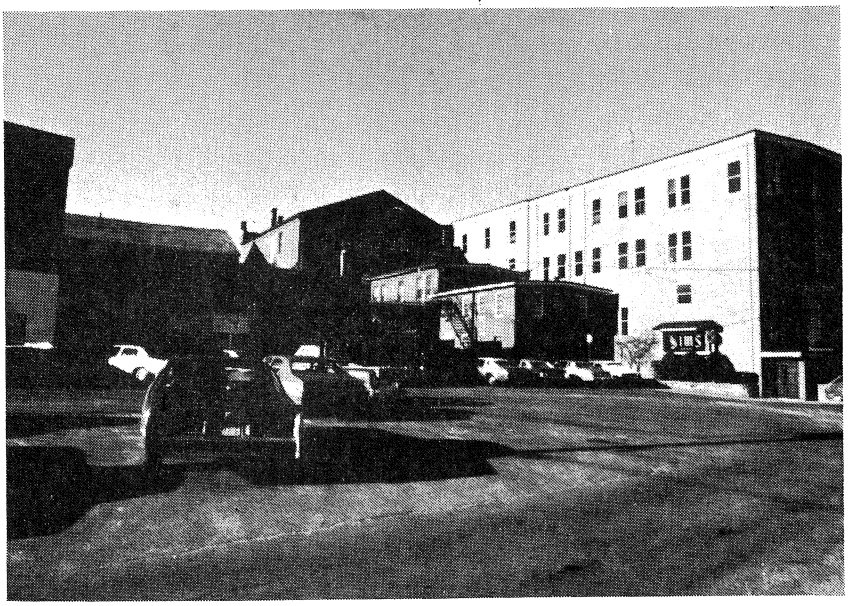
No major redesign is planned for Block 3 bounded by Elm, Main and Everett Streets. Existing off-street parking already exceeds demand in this area. Reorganization of existing parking will result in an additional 40-44 spaces which could accommodate overflow parking from adjoining areas. Excess space in this block is a result of the underutilized lower deck behind the medical building. Secured access to the lower deck for long-term parking would help to solve this problem. New trees and lighting should be planned for all existing parking areas within Block 3.

A new parking facility along Foster Street in the existing vacant lot will provide long and short term parking for the east side of Central Street. Additional parking could also be provided directly behind the Edwards Library with new fill to accommodate the steep grade change in this area. Costs for parking and public improvements for Phase II are outlined in Table 5. Two cost figures are shown as upper and lower limits based on varying planting treatments and paving types.

Table 5

Parking and Public Improvements Costs For Phase II (Stages 1 & 2)

	Upper Limit	Lower Limit
Block 1 (Main, Central, Depot and Hamilton Streets)		
Parking Deck	$408,000	$408,000
Paving	340,000	180,000
Lighting	90,000	90,000
Trees	50,000	25,000
Miscellaneous (benches, trash receptacles, bollards)	7,000	4,000
Contingency (15%)	135,000	106,000
Total	$1,030,000	$813,000
Block 2 (Main, Foster and Central Streets)		
Paving	$155,000	$ 85,000
Lighting	90,000	90,000
Trees	21,000	11,000
Miscellaneous (benches, trash receptacles, bollards)	5,000	3,000
Fill	11,000	11,000
Contingency (15%)	42,000	30,000
Total	$324,000	$230,000



Left: Behind Goodwin's, and the former Columbia Hotel.

	Upper Limit	Lower Limit
Block 3 (Elm, Main and Everett Streets)		
Paving	$ 45,600	$ 22,800
Lighting	46,500	46,500
Trees	10,500	5,000
Miscellaneous (benches, trash receptacles, bollards)	4,400	3,200
Contingency (15%)	16,000	11,160
Total	$123,000	$ 89,000
Block 4 (Chapin, Main and Elm Streets)		
Parking Deck	$708,000	$708,000
Paving	135,200	71,800
Lighting	42,000	42,000
Trees	19,600	10,000
Miscellaneous (benches, trash receptacles, bollards)	6,200	4,200
Contingency (15%)	136,700	125,400
Total	$1,047,700	$961,400

GRAND TOTAL - PHASE II (Stages 1 & 2)

	Upper	Lower
Block 1	$1,030,000	$ 813,000
Block 2	324,000	230,000
Block 3	123,000	89,100
Block 4	1,047,700	961,400
	$2,524,700	$2,093,500

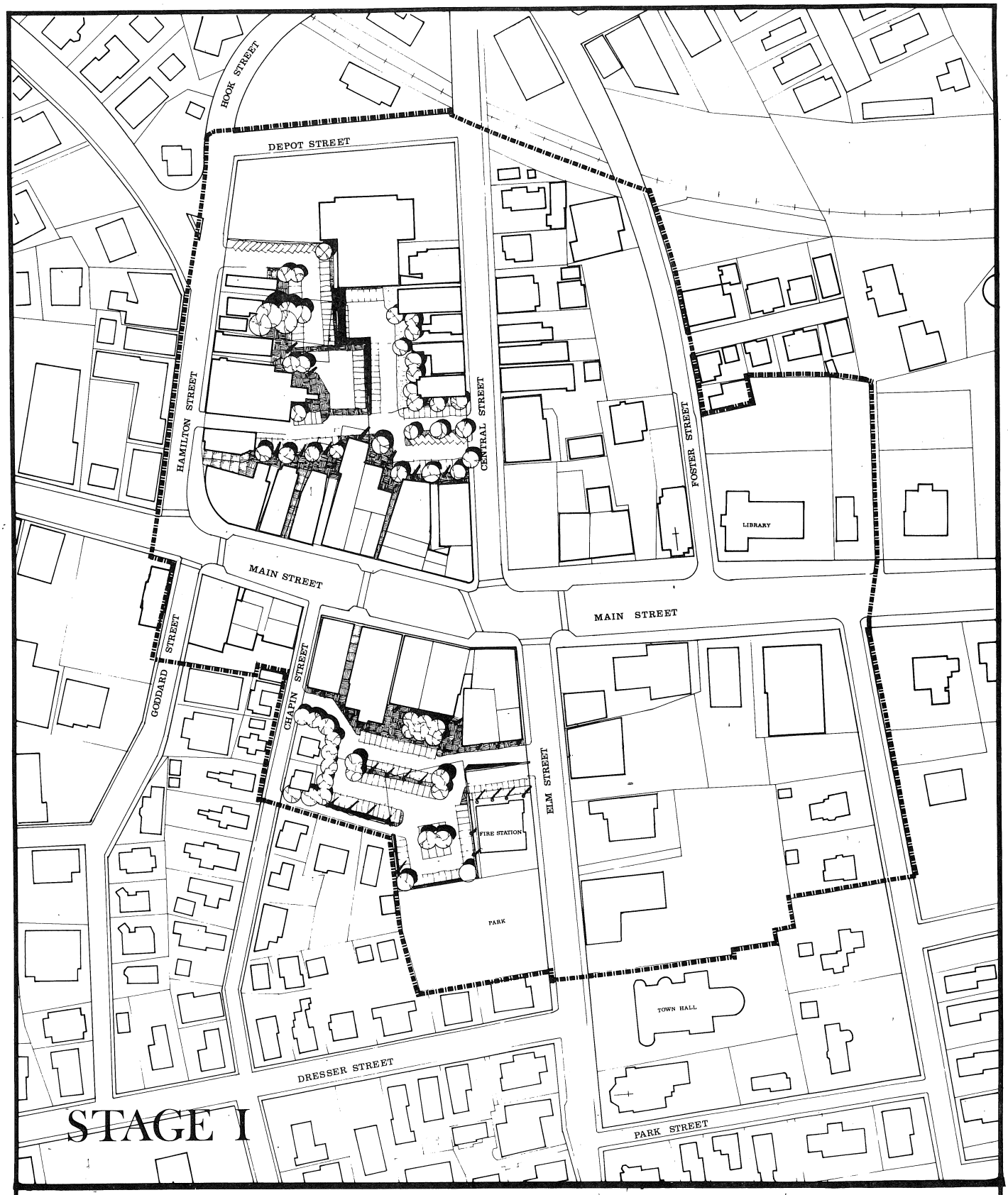
STAGE I

Due to currently modest market conditions and the shortage of funding to implement the complete Phase II package at once, a staged Implementation Plan is recommended. Stage 1 consists of a smaller initial package of parking and public improvements relating directly to the north and south sides of Main Street between Hamilton and Central/Elm Streets. Stage 1 is tied directly into development of the Edwards Block complex as the initial large-scale building reuse project for the downtown. Pending the success of this development effort, Stage 2 could be set into motion immediately to complete the Phase II program.

The plan for Stage 1 includes reorganizing the parking in Blocks 1 and 4 north and south of Main Street to increase the number of spaces and provide for the construction of parking decks at a future date. Public improvements include a limited amount of new paving, lighting and trees. The Stage 1 plan provides approximately 90 additional parking spaces, 30 of which are adjacent to the Edwards Block. This



Right: Proposed revitalization of area behind Goodwin's and the former Columbia Hotel.



SOUTHBRIDGE DOWNTOWN PHASE II

TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE, MASS.
TRI – COMMUNITY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

0 50 150

ANDERSON NOTTER FINEGOLD INC.
Architects & Preservation Planners
Boston, Massachusetts

Table 6

Stage 1 Costs

Block 1	Upper Limit	Lower Limit
Paving	$153,300	$ 89,300
Lighting	33,000	33,000
Trees	21,000	11,500
Miscellaneous (benches, trash receptacles, bollards)	5,500	3,500
Contingency (15%)	32,000	20,600
Total	$244,800	$157,900
Block 4		
Paving	$151,150	$75,600
Lighting	45,000	45,000
Trees	16,800	8,500
Miscellaneous (benches, trash receptacles, bollards)	5,500	3,500
Contingency (15%)	33,000	20,000
Total	$251,450	$152,600
TOTAL, Stage 1	$496,250	$310,500

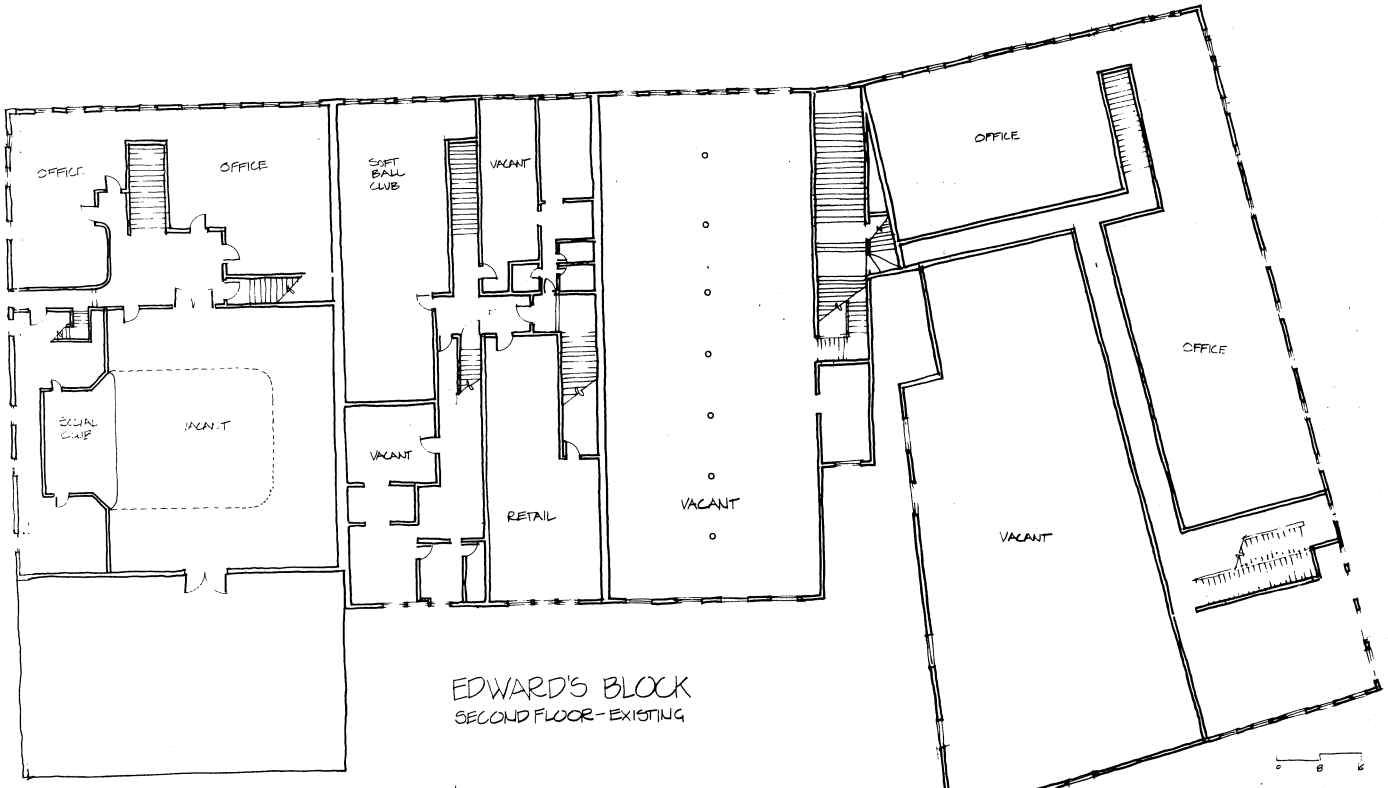
At left: Plan of Stage 1, a preliminary package of parking and public improvements.

additional supply meets existing demand conditions but would become inadequate as the Edwards Block reached full occupancy. The proposed Stage 2 deck might become necessary within the first two years after initial development and should be ready to go into construction at that point. Costs for Stage 1 are shown in Table 6.

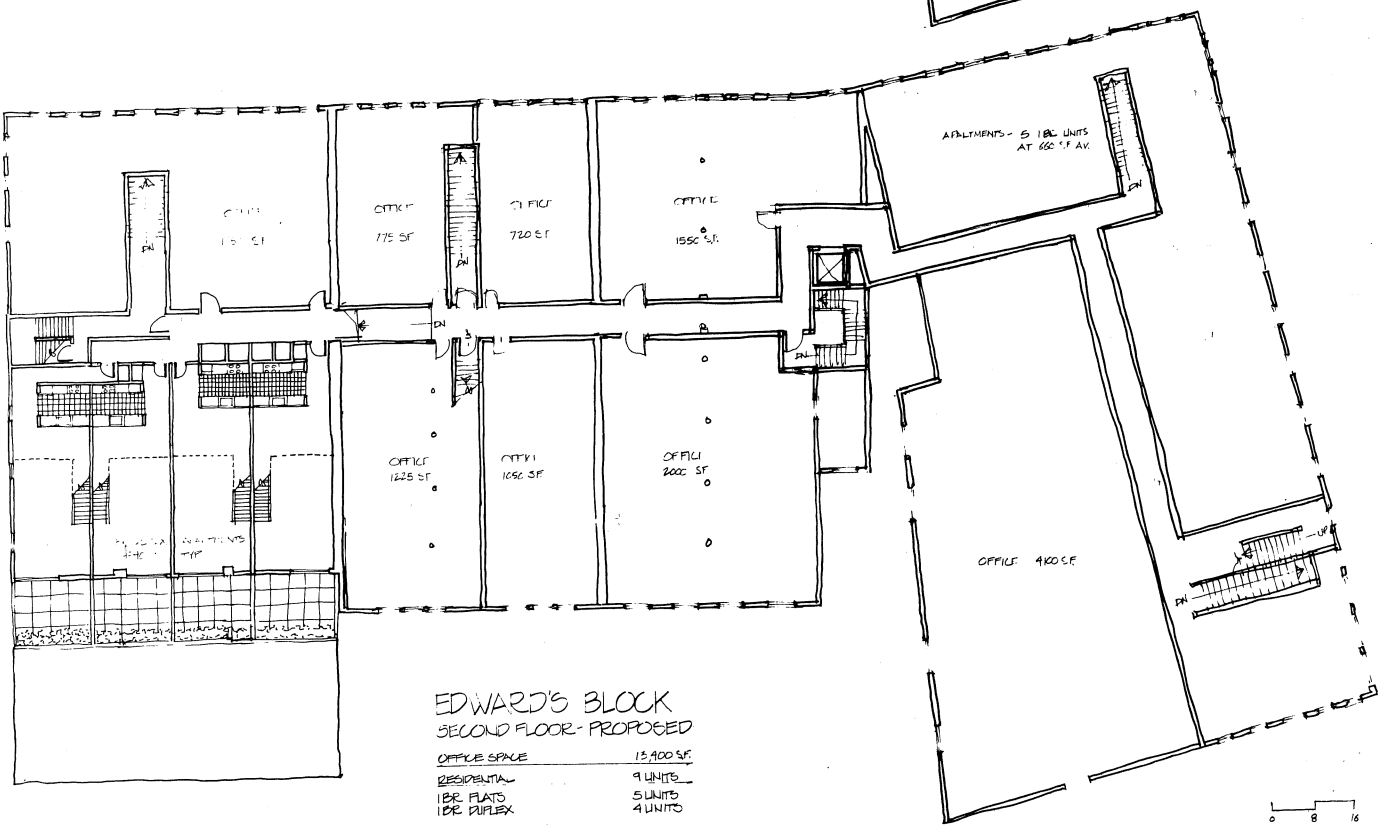
THE EDWARDS BLOCK

Three buildings in Southbridge were examined in greater detail as part of a separate study carried out for the Southbridge Historical Commission: The Whitford Building, The Barnes Building (also known as the former Guaranty Bank Building) and the Edwards Block. Plans for reuse of these three buildings have been presented to the Historical Commission and appear in the appendix of this report. Of these three, the Edwards Block and the two adjacent buildings proved to be the most economically viable overall development possibility. This finding is based on the size and physical relationship of the buildings, which enables them to be linked together to form a workable development package. Thus, redevelopment of the Edwards Block is a key element of the Stage 1 implementation plan.

As currently envisioned, the Edwards Block can be developed as a mixed use, residential, office and retail complex, including both the Centre Pharmacy and Blanchard Buildings, with a shared elevator core in the Edwards Block. These buildings and the Stage 1 public improvements could be implemented as soon as a development package and necessary funding commitments can be arranged. It is estimated that Stage 1 will take a minimum of two years to accomplish--one year to package the developments, arrange financing and prepare construction documents, and a second year for actual construction.



EDWARD'S BLOCK
SECOND FLOOR - EXISTING



EDWARD'S BLOCK
SECOND FLOOR - PROPOSED

OFFICE SPACE	13,400 S.F.
RESIDENTIAL	9 UNITS
1BR FLATS	5 UNITS
1BR DUPLEX	4 UNITS

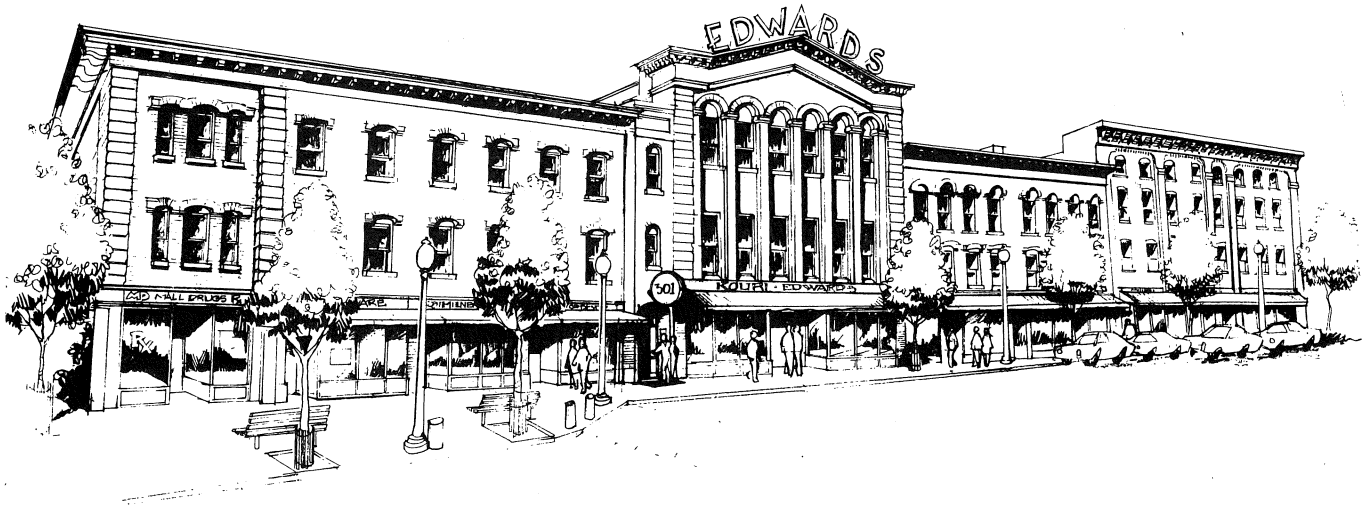


Facing page: The Edwards block, existing and proposed second floor plans. Above: current photo of the Edwards block. Below: conceptual sketch of revitalized Edwards block.

STAGE 2

Reuse of the former Columbia Hotel and adjacent structures could begin during either Stage 1 or 2, as soon as a developer comes forward. It is most likely that the initiative and interest shown in the Edwards Block will attract a developer for the second parcel soon thereafter, so that it need not wait for the formal commencement of Stage 2. However, it may be more practical to wait a year between stages so that the full effect of Stage 1 can be digested and evaluated before proceeding with Stage 2.

Stage 2 will span a three to four year period to achieve full implementation. Stage 2 will include construction of the two parking decks to the north and south of Main Street, expanded parking and landscape improvements in Block 2, along Foster Street and behind Edwards Library, and construction of a compatible new infill structure at the corner of Main and Central Streets to house a mixed-use residential, commercial and parking facility.



Implementation & Funding

Emerging at all levels of government, as well as in the private sector, is a renewed and growing interest in the revitalization of older areas, and in particular, historic downtowns. Basic factors, such as the need for energy conservation, soaring costs of new construction, the appeal of imaginative rehabilitation and a greater concern for the natural environment which has restricted new shopping center development have been major catalysts for the renewed interest in the downtowns. This changing attitude is evolving new policies and funding sources to assist communities to implement revitalization efforts.

Competition for a share of public funds is extremely keen. To be successful in obtaining funds, a community must be able to demonstrate the following:

- A comprehensive and well thought-out plan which can be implemented in phases;

- Strong local initiative and broad-based community support, which involves both public and private commitment;

- Specific physical and organizational accomplishments with local resources, such as the public improvements on Main Street and planning studies which culminate with this report.

Communities which meet these three conditions are in an excellent position to attract and capture outside support and funding assistance.

Southbridge, due to its present efforts in planning for downtown revitalization, is in an excellent position to receive favorable consideration from various federal funding sources. Broad-based community support exists, is expanding and is critical to the success of this revitalization effort. Implementation of downtown revitalization projects will require the close cooperation and commitment of both the public and private sectors, including existing property owners and potential developers.

A preliminary step in coordinating the Phase II Plan might be to form a Local Development Corporation comprised of merchants, property owners, developers and

civic groups. This non-profit organization would be able to apply for federal grants which, in some cases, are not available to individual property owners. In addition, the Corporation would oversee and coordinate the implementation process to ensure that individual elements and specific developer proposals are compatible with the objectives of the Phase II Plan.

During and after completion of the parking improvements, the Corporation could take charge of parking management. Marketing, promotion and special merchandising techniques could also be coordinated by this Corporation.

OVERALL PROGRAM FUNDING

Massachusetts Industrial Finance Authority

Commercial Area Revitalization Districts (CARD) are eligible to use industrial revenue financing for commercial enterprises, providing that such enterprises are included within an area for which a Commercial Area Revitalization Plan has been approved by the State Secretary for Communities and Development. The revenue bond program is administered by the Massachusetts Industrial Finance Authority (MIFA) and provides tax-exempt financing through local banks. Since the bonds are exempt from income taxes, the cost of borrowing to developers is generally 2% less than current interest rates. The MIFA also provides mortgage insurance for projects in approved CARD districts. Under the Urban Job Incentives Project (UJIP), developers can earn tax credits for hiring employees from the State's pool of qualified unemployed persons.

The CARD program can be used to finance commercial activities when the CARD plan's purpose is to prevent or reverse deterioration of an older commercial center resulting from movement of commercial enterprises to other areas.

In Southbridge, the CARD program could be used as the key financing mechanism for the Phase II Plan to finance architectural renovations, facade restorations and parking improvements directly associated with buildings which will house retail, office, and mixed residential-commercial uses. Based on the consultant's initial discussions with State officials, the CARD program is ideally suited to the Stage 1 Plan and an application would be likely to be looked upon favor-

ably. This document could be used as the program description required for submission with the initial application to the Executive Office of Communities and Development.

Under provisions of a bill recently enacted by the State Legislature, the CARD program will be expanded to include mixed residential-commercial projects within commercial districts, as well as the currently eligible retail and office uses. This expansion would enable Southbridge to apply this funding to the overall Phase II Plan.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Community Development Block Grants can be used as the basis to leverage a variety of federal, state and local financial resources. Southbridge can apply under the Small Cities program in the non-metropolitan discretionary category. There are two types of funding to apply for: 1) single purpose one-year grants; and 2) multi-year comprehensive grants for one to three years. Single purpose grants are of three types: housing needs, deficiencies in public services, and economic conditions. Maximum grant request for single purpose grants is $300,000, and for multi-year comprehensive grants is $2.1 million. First time applicants often find it more useful to apply for a single purpose grant for building renovations, facade restoration, parking improvements or a combination of the three as a concerted central business district revitalization project. These funds can be used to match and leverage other federal grant programs. CDBG funds can serve as the local match for a variety of other federal funding programs, such as National Register preservation grants and federal road improvement grants. Preliminary applications for Fiscal Year 1981 grants must be submitted in the fall of 1980. If accepted, full applications are then prepared in January 1981.

HUD 312 Rehabilitation Loans can be applied to residential or commercial properties in the designated CDBG or target area. Low-interest loans are available for code enforcement and building upgrading.

Community Development funds can also provide grants or loans to local property owners. Matching grants or loan programs could be developed for facade restoration or general property rehabilitation. A

revolving fund for commercial rehabilitation and municipal easement programs could also be developed.

PARKING

U.S. Department of Commerce

Grants and Loans for Public Works and Development Facilities are provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. Grants are available for 50 percent of costs for improvements which will expand business opportunities. Eligible costs include access roads, parking facilities and site improvements necessary for the revitalization of local businesses. Local governments, public and private non-profit organizations may apply.

The Redevelopment Area Program of EDA offers planning grants to help the business community restore commercial property, promote economic health through business development and promote tourism. Design fees and planning costs for parking and walkway improvements could be funded with this program. EDA occasionally announces a special round of funding for labor-intensive public works projects. Last funded in 1976, this Accelerated Local Public Works Program is an excellent source of funds for parking facilities and additional downtown public improvements. Funding can be anticipated for another round of the program in the future. It is best to have construction documents prepared in advance so that an application can be processed quickly, as soon as the program is announced.

CDBG funds might also be used for parking lot construction and landscaping.

U.S. Small Business Adminstration

Small Business Administration loans are available to assist property owners in financing capital improvements. SBA loans and loan guarantees can be used to renovate or expand businesses. Financial assistance is rendered through 7a regular business loans, Section 502 local development company loans, and economic opportunity loans. The National Urban Neighborhood Revitalization Program is a special combination of Section 502 loans and other SBA authorities to stimulate development in older urban areas. Local Development Companies formed by area citizens owning three-fourths of the businesses in an area are eligible to apply for this program.

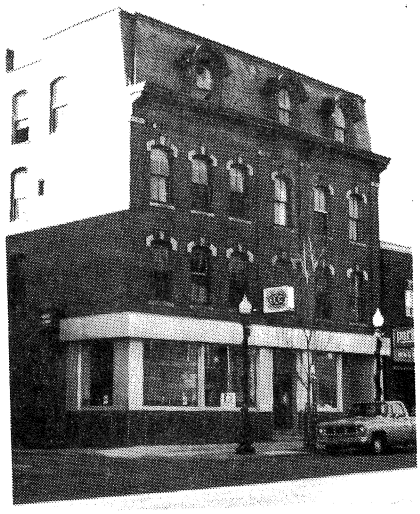
Farmer's Home Administration	Business and Industrial Loans are available to improve the economic climate in rural areas and to support development or expansion of business, industry or other sources of employment. Loans range from $11,000 to $700,000.
National Trust for Historic Preservation	The National Historic Preservation Fund makes loans available to non-profit National Trust member organizations. Loans can be used to finance rehabilitation projects or establish revolving funds and generally range from $25,000 to $50,000.
U.S. Department of the Interior	Historic Preservation Grants are provided by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service through the Massachusetts Historical Commission, for acquisition and development of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. These are 50% matching grants and can be used for exterior building improvements which restore or rehabilitate historic properties.
	The Tax Reform Act of 1976 creates tax incentives to owners of income-producing National Register properties for rehabilitating their properties. These preservation provisions permit owners of certain depreciable properties to amortize the costs of a rehabilitation over a five-year period or to depreciate certain costs for a rehabilitated structure at an accelerated rate. The Centre Village Historic District is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, thereby enabling property owners of most structures to apply for these benefits.
	The Revenue Act of 1978 provides a new tax incentive--a 10% investment tax credit--to encourage rehabilitation of older buildings. The building must be at least 20 years old and improvements must have a life of five years or more. The rehabilitation must be certified by the Department of the Interior. This tax credit can be used with the accelerated depreciation provision of the Tax Reform Act, but cannot be used with the rapid amortization.

Assembling for a parade, 1887,
on Main Street.



Appendix

Three proposals for downtown building reuse are presented in this appendix. This work was carried out as part of a separate contact with the Southbridge Historical Commission.

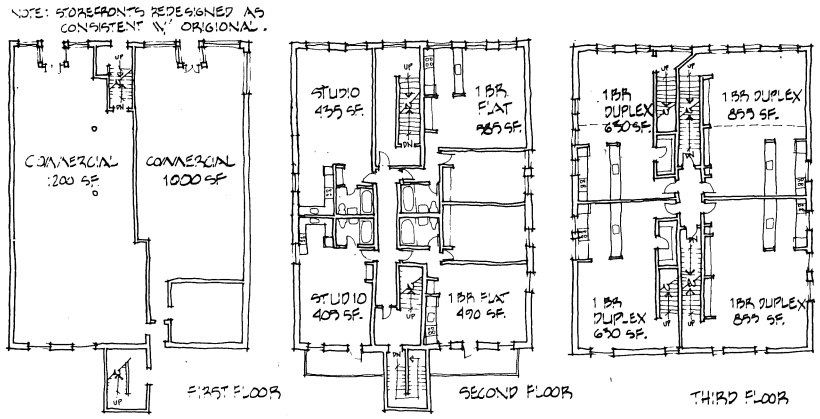


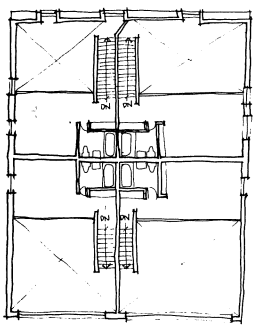
The Guaranty Building, 327-331 Main Street, existing. Owner: Main Street Trust. First through fourth floors: vacant.

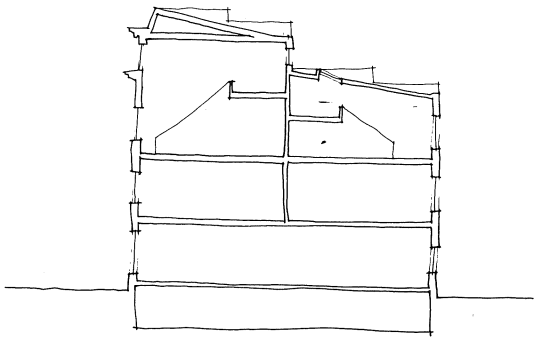


Proposal for the Guaranty building: First Floor: commercial. Second Floor: two studio, two 1 bedroom apartments. Third and fourth floors: four 2 bedroom duplex apartments.





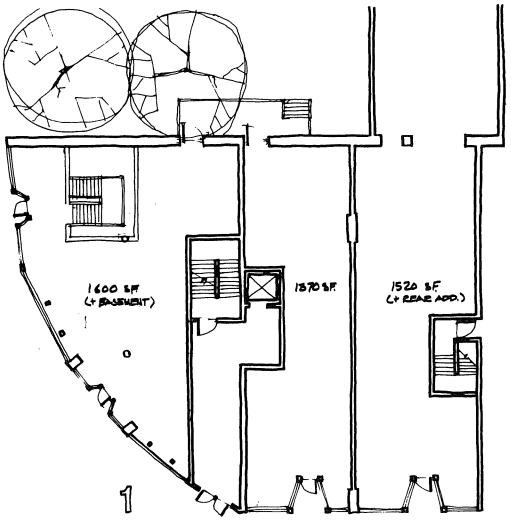


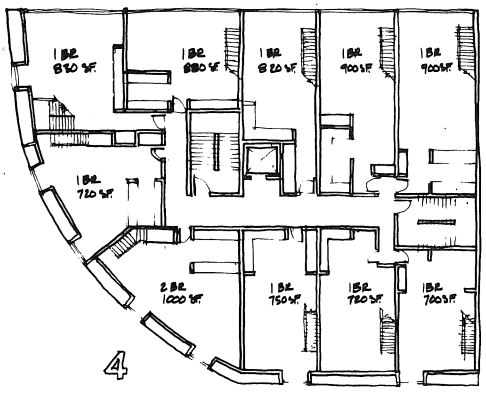


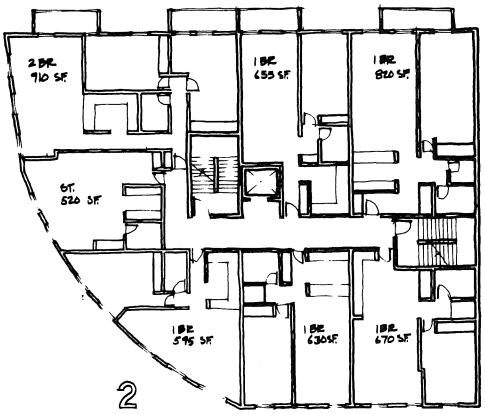
The Whitford building.(Existing plans for this building are not applicable as it is heavily damaged by fire.) Proposal: First Floor: retail. Second and third floors: flats. Fourth and attic floors: duplex apartments.

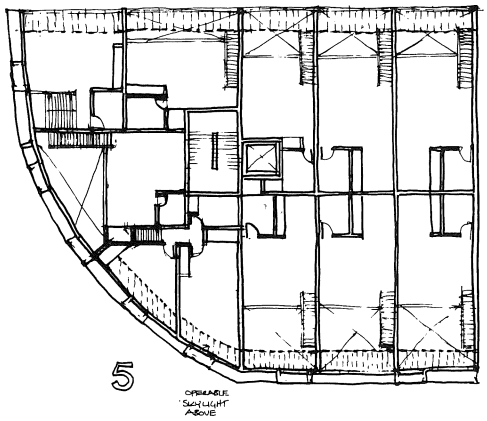


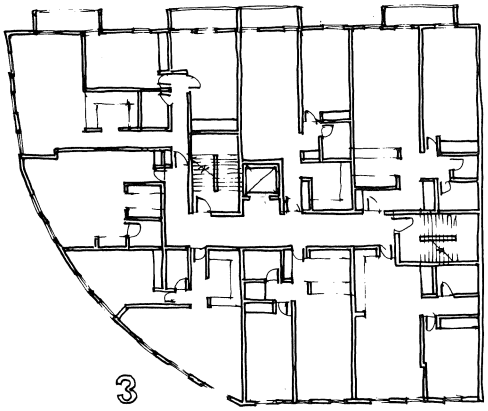


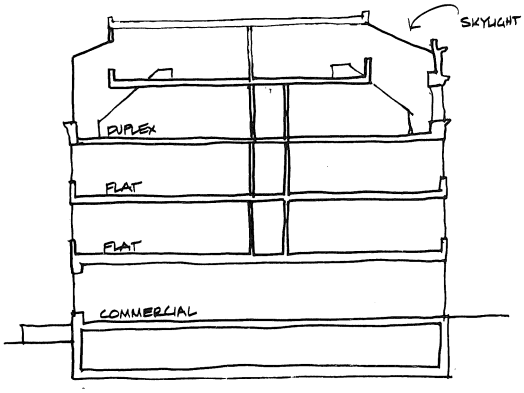

1600 S.F.
(+ BASEMENT)
1370 S.F.
1520 S.F.
(+ REAR ADD.)
1


1 BR
880 S.F.
1 BR
880 S.F.
1 BR
820 S.F.
1 BR
900 S.F.
1 BR
900 S.F.
1 BR
720 S.F.
2 BR
1200 S.F.
1 BR
750 S.F.
1 BR
720 S.F.
1 BR
700 S.F.
4


2 BR
910 S.F.
1 BR
655 S.F.
1 BR
820 S.F.
ST.
520 S.F.
1 BR
595 S.F.
1 BR
630 S.F.
1 BR
670 S.F.
2

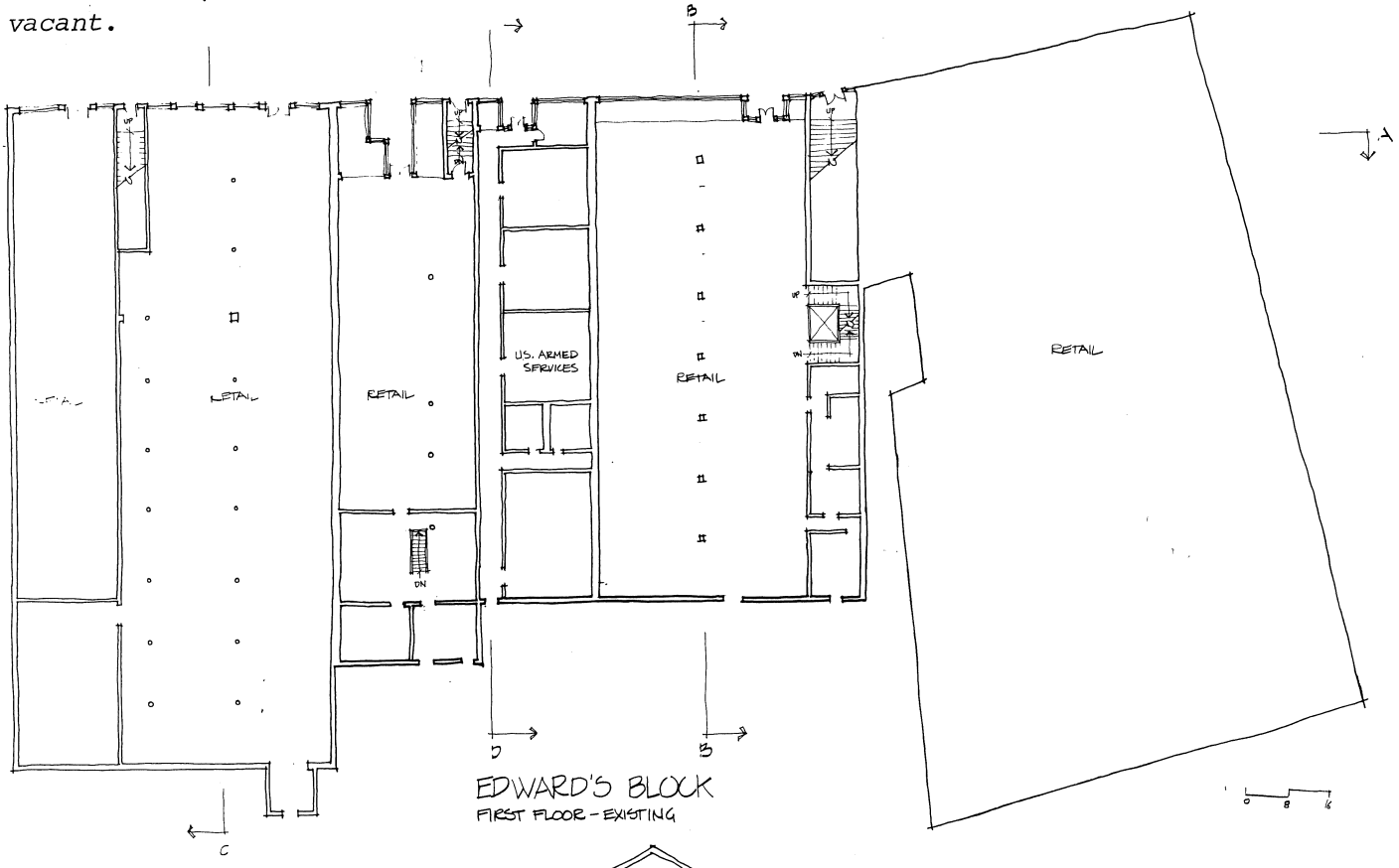

OPERABLE
SKYLIGHT
ABOVE
5

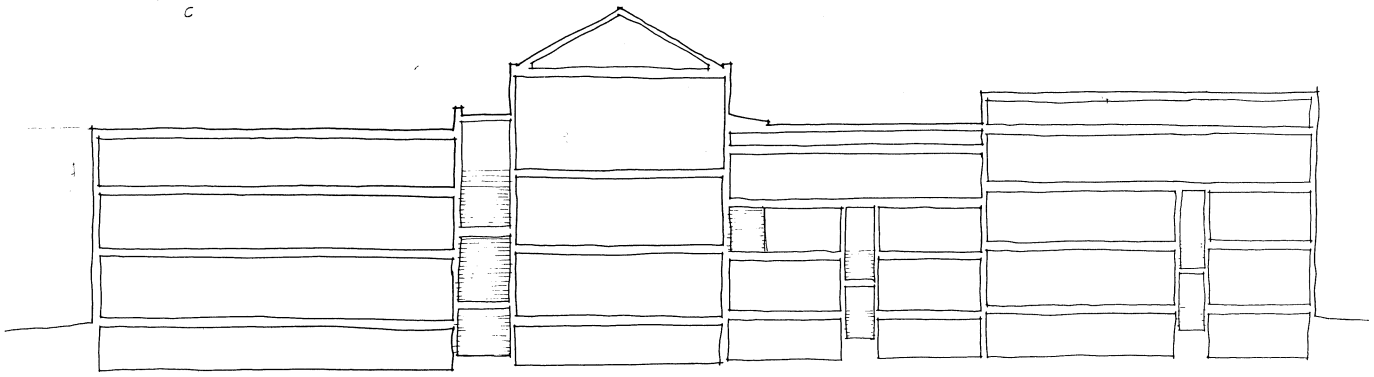

3


SKYLIGHT
DUPLEX
FLAT
FLAT
COMMERCIAL

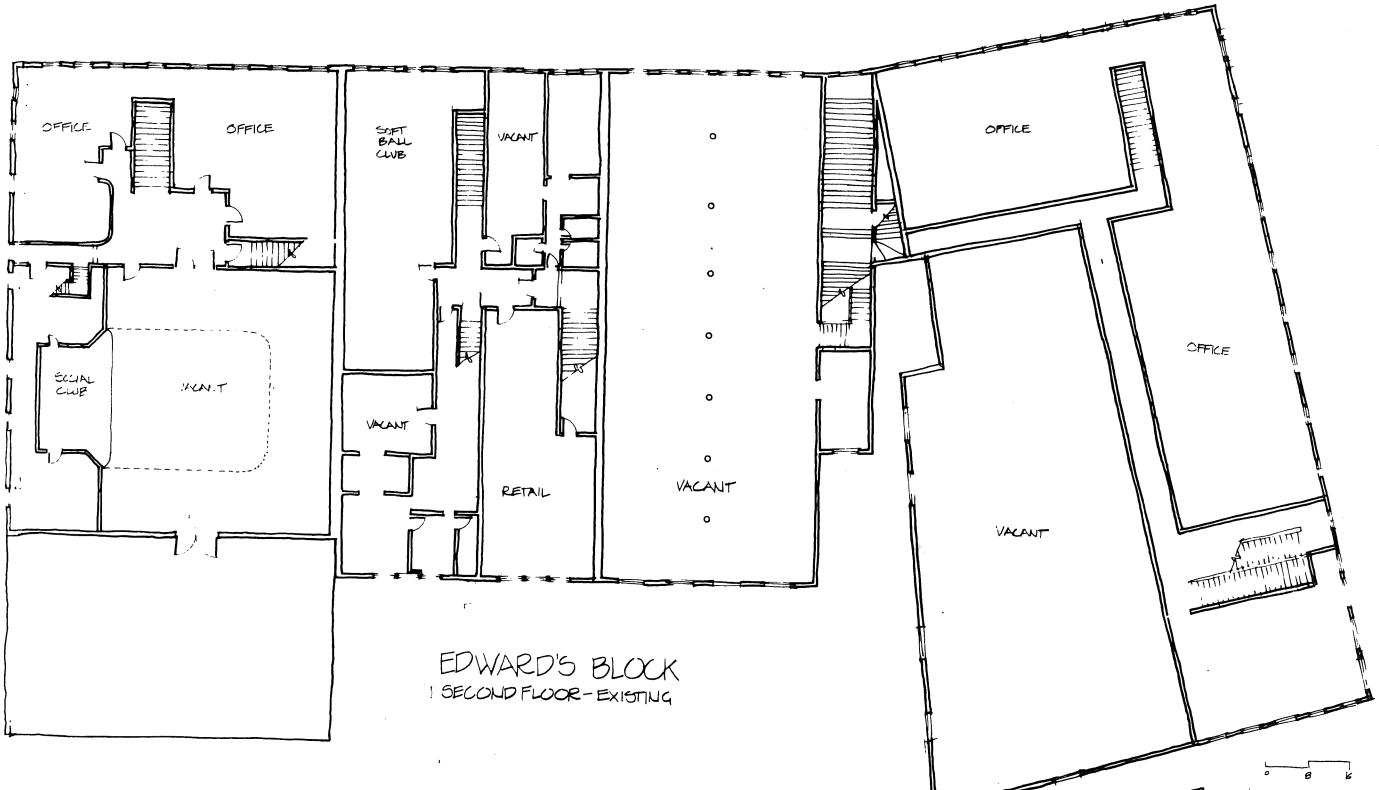


The Edwards Block, 301-309 Main Street, existing. First Floor: retail. Second Floor: offices, social clubs, and vacant. Third Floor: driving school, dance studio, miscellaneous and vacant.

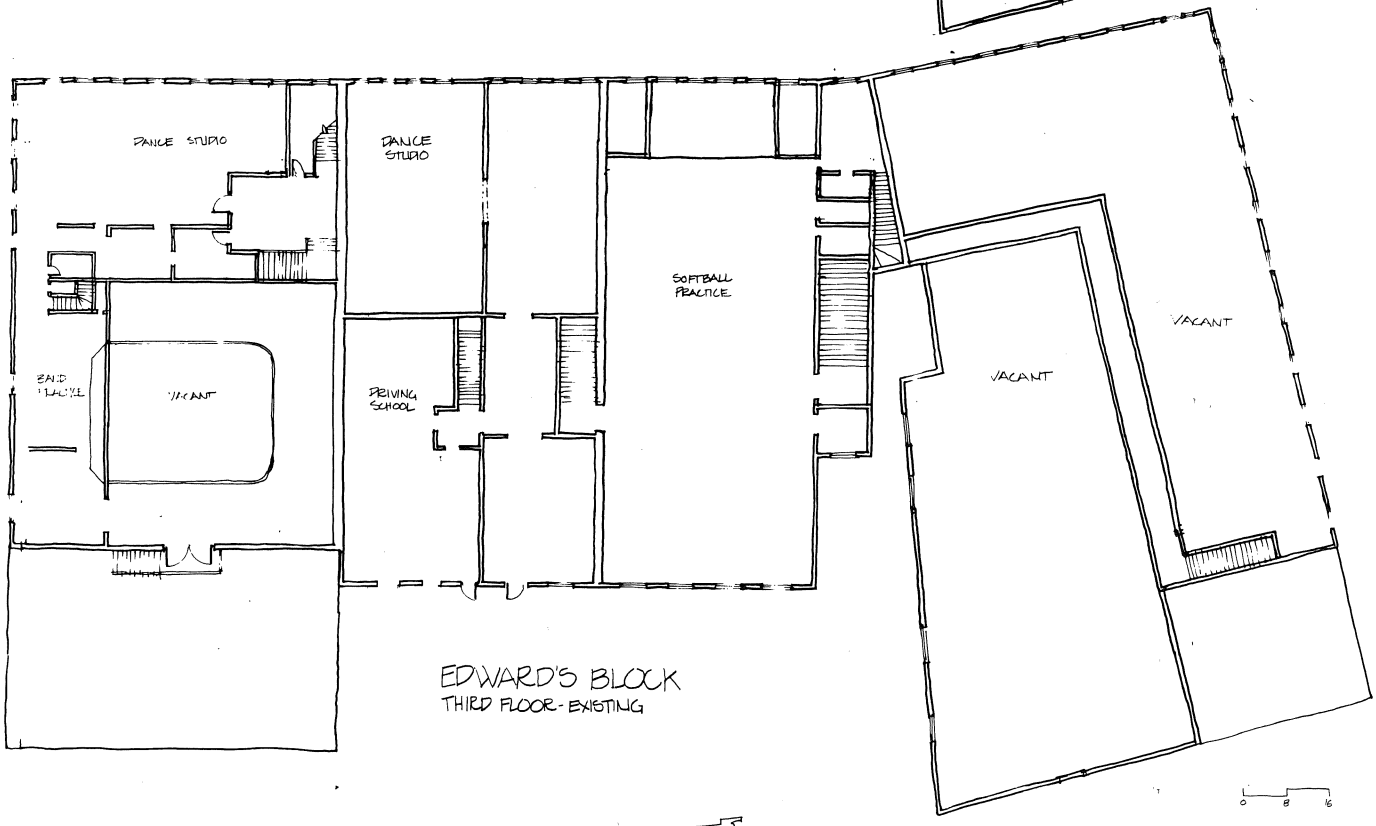




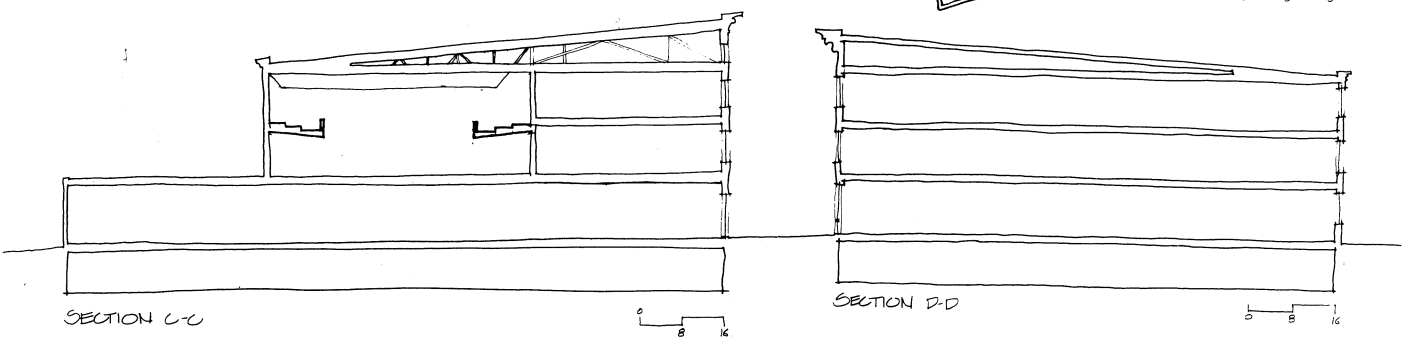
SECTION A-A



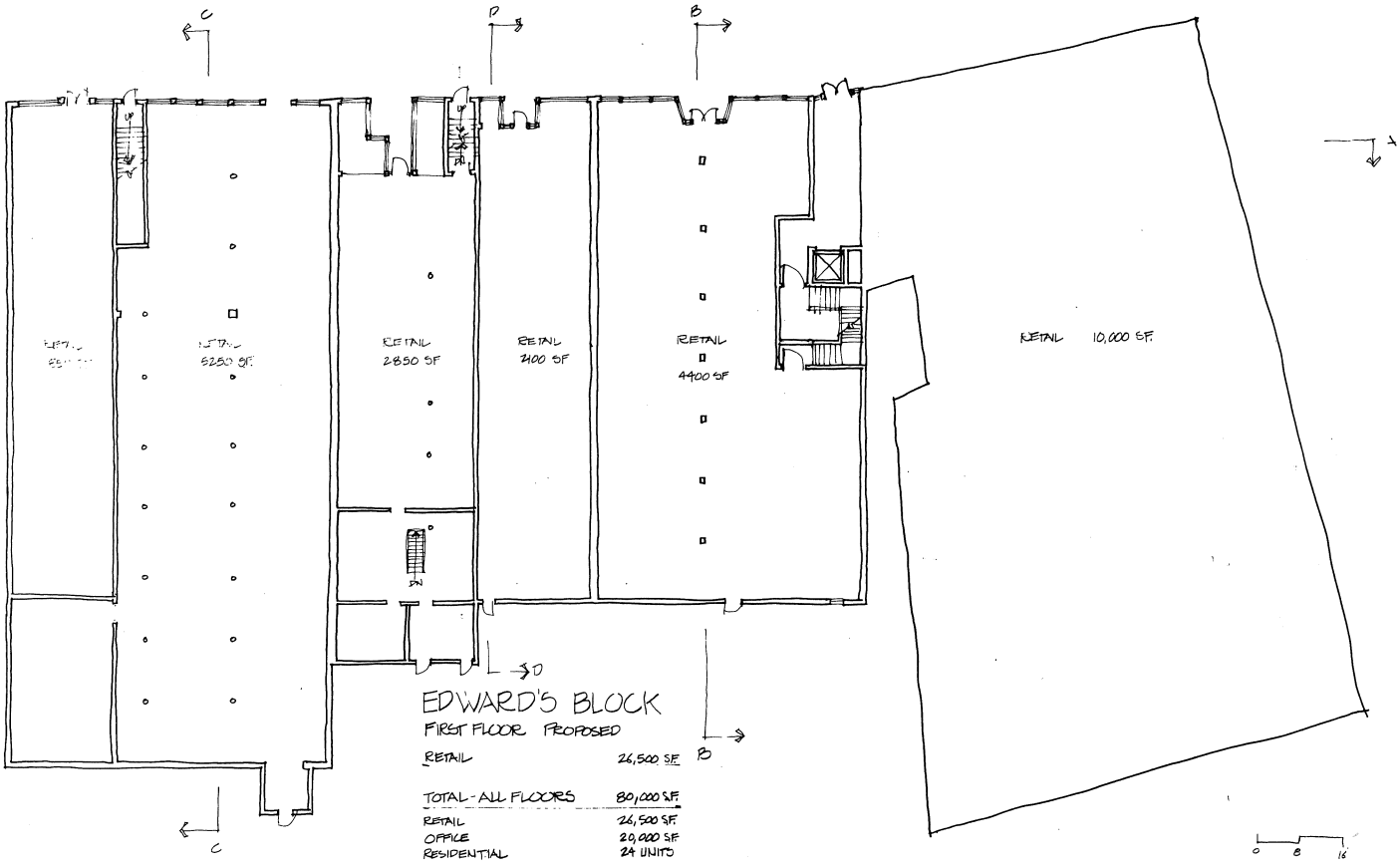
EDWARD'S BLOCK
SECOND FLOOR - EXISTING

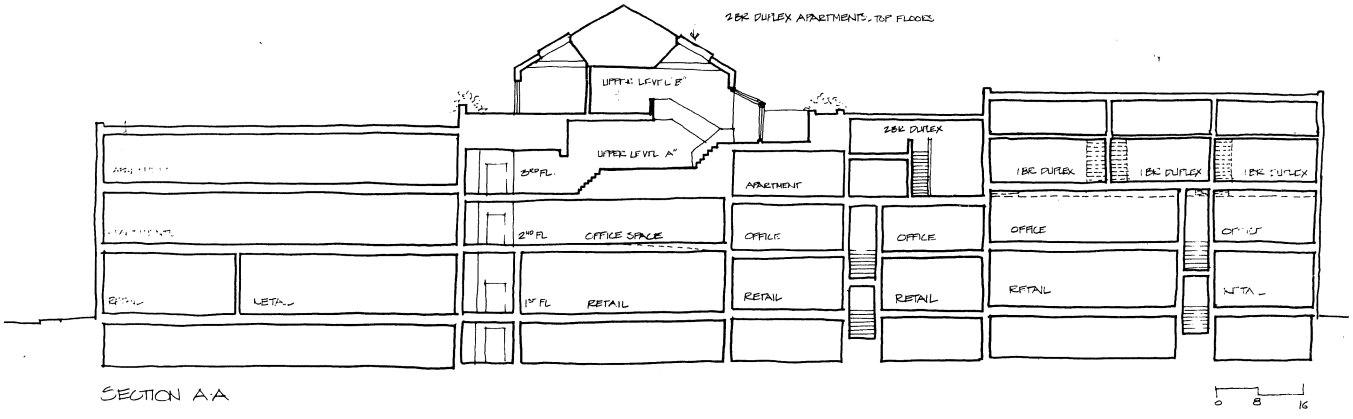


EDWARD'S BLOCK
THIRD FLOOR - EXISTING

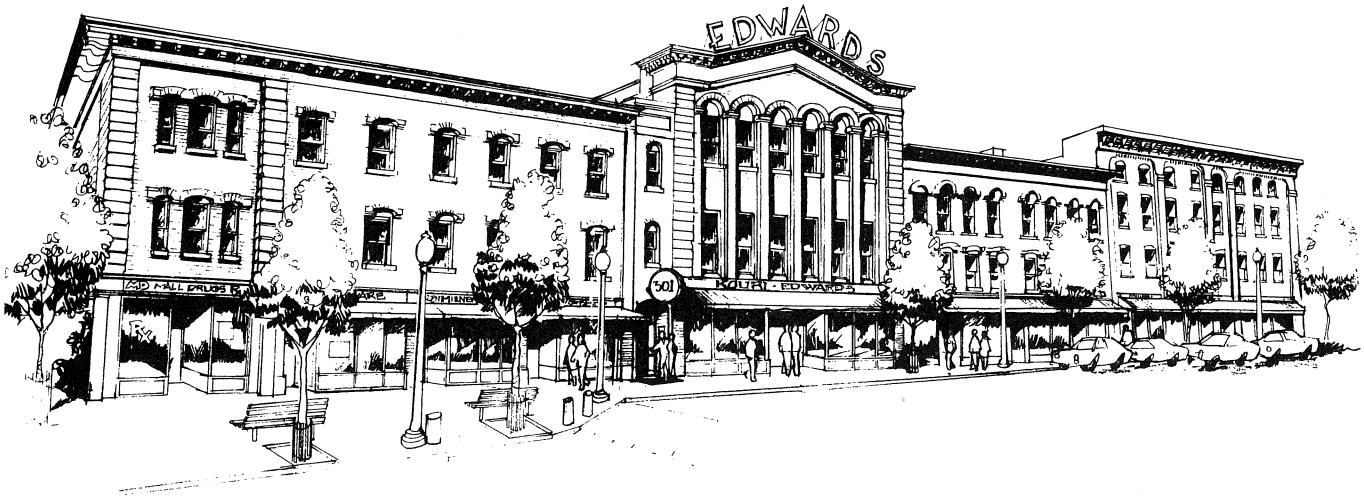


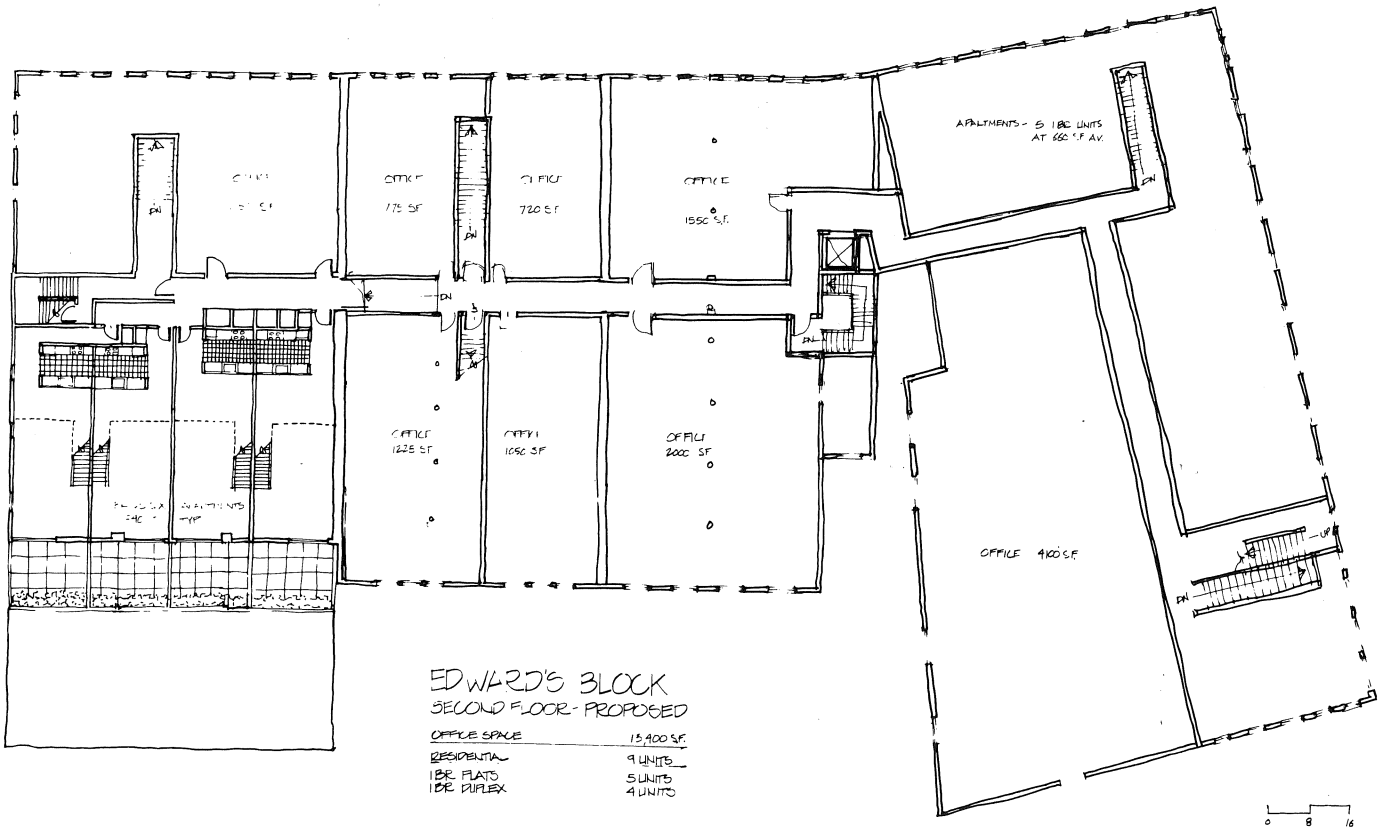
Proposal for the Edwards block: First Floor: retail. Second and third floors: offices, flats, and duplex apartments. Third floor at 301 Main Street and all attics: duplex apartments.





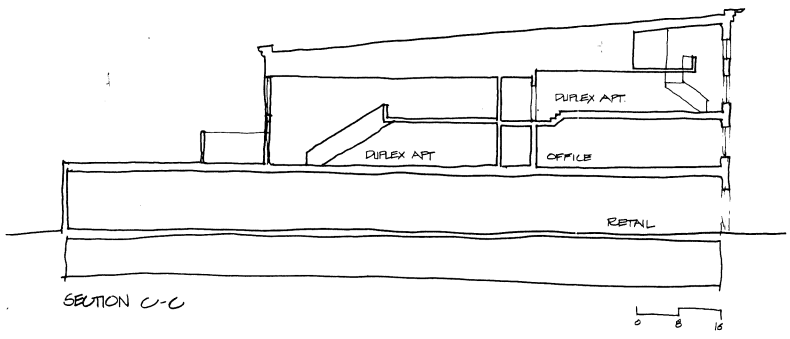
SECTION A-A



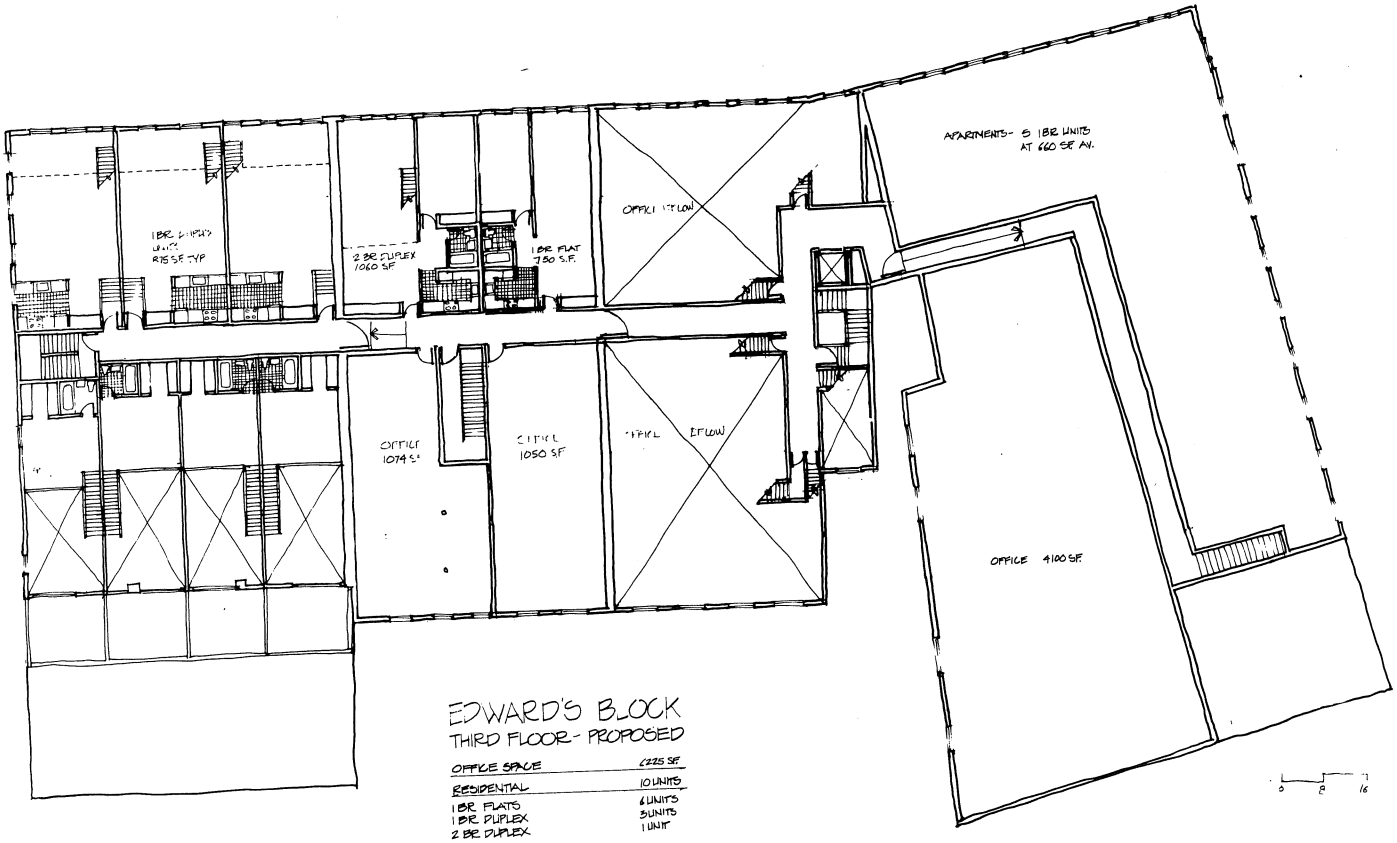


EDWARD'S BLOCK
SECOND FLOOR - PROPOSED

OFFICE SPACE	13,900 S.F.
RESIDENTIAL	9 UNITS
1BR FLATS	5 UNITS
1BR DUPLEX	4 UNITS

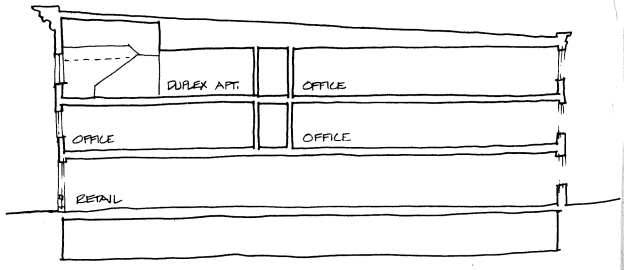


SECTION C-C

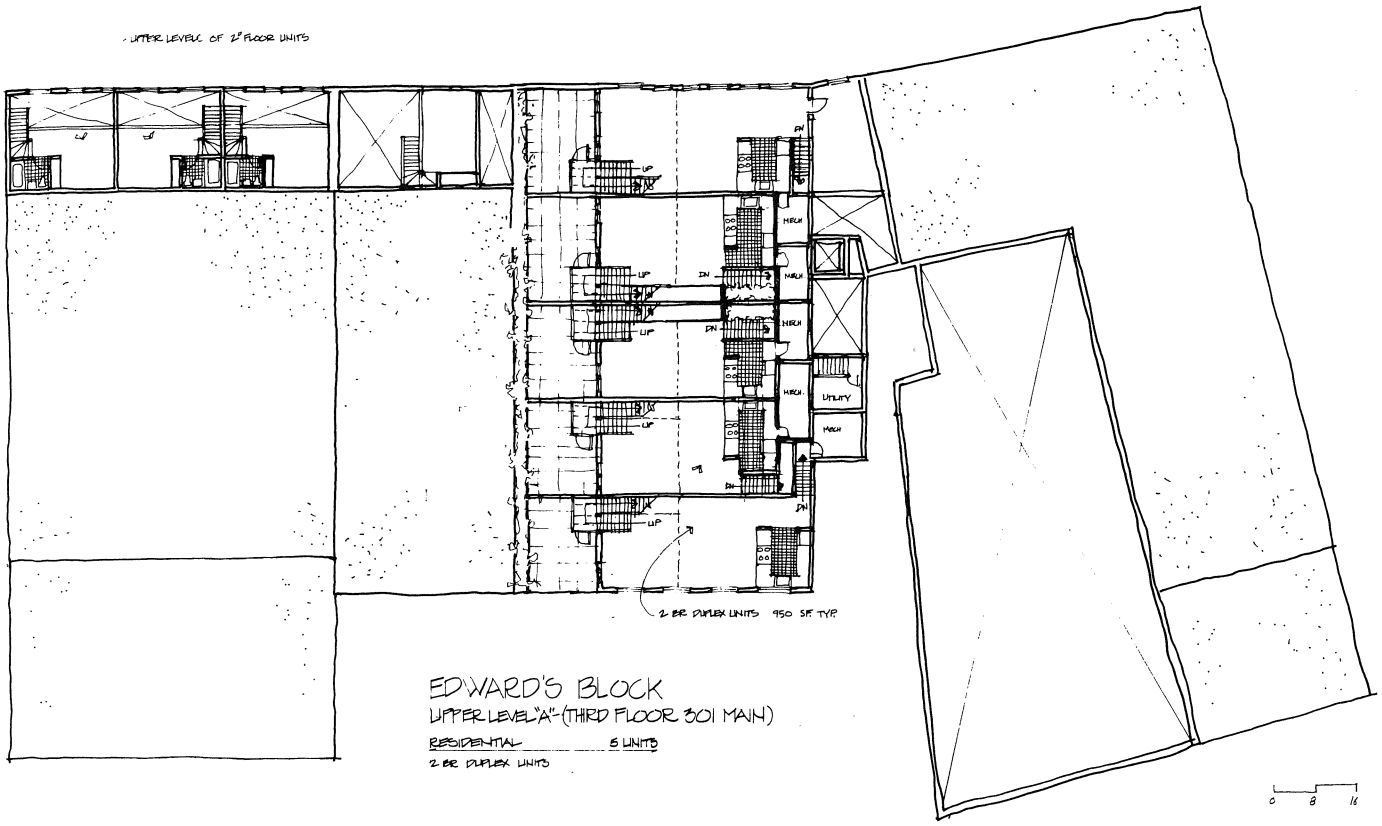


EDWARD'S BLOCK
THIRD FLOOR - PROPOSED

OFFICE SPACE	4225 SF
RESIDENTIAL	10 UNITS
1 BR FLATS	6 UNITS
1 BR DUPLEX	3 UNITS
2 BR DUPLEX	1 UNIT

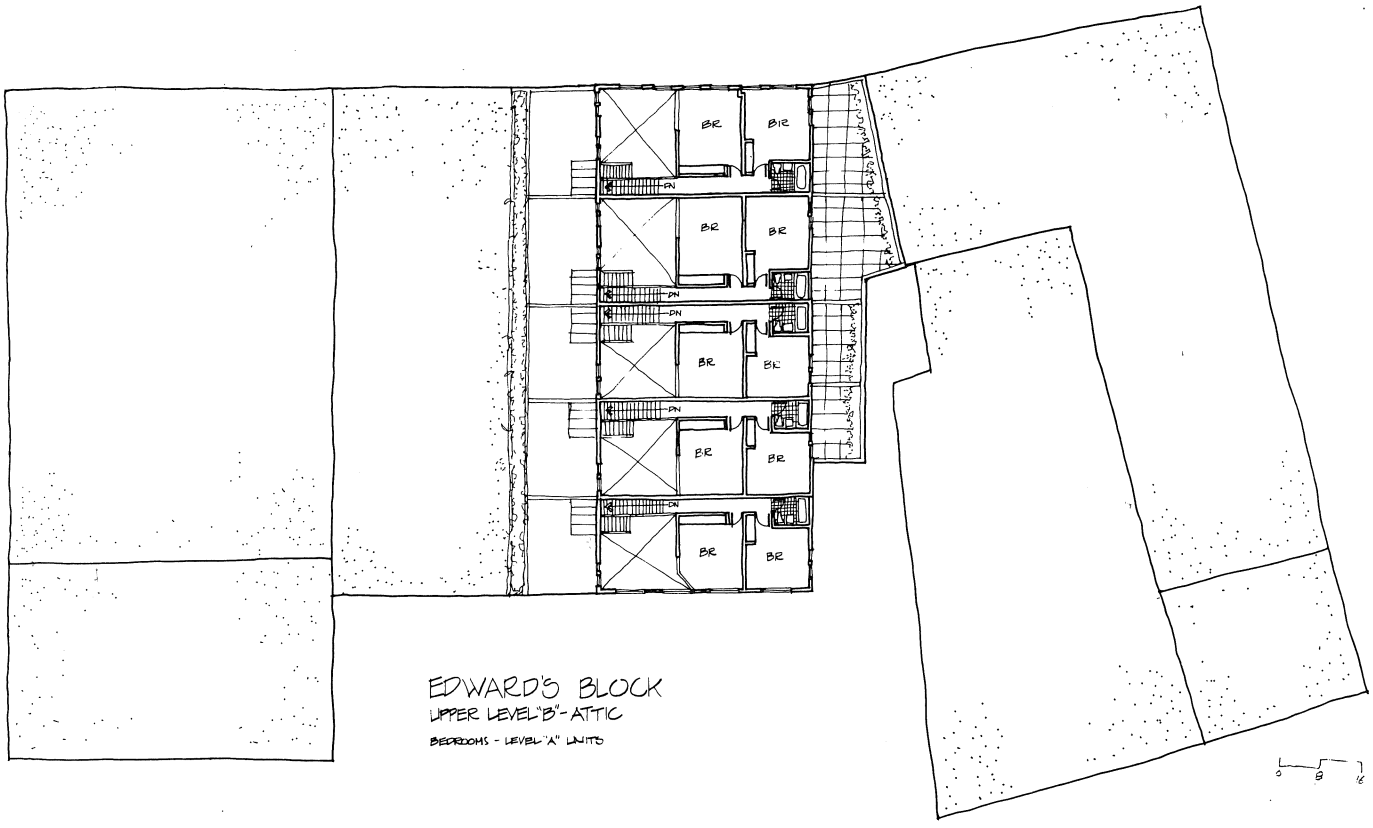


SECTION D-D



EDWARD'S BLOCK
UPPER LEVEL "A" - (THIRD FLOOR 301 MAIN)

RESIDENTIAL _____ 5 UNITS
2 BR DUPLEX UNITS



EDWARD'S BLOCK
UPPER LEVEL "B" - ATTIC

BEDROOMS - LEVEL "A" UNITS