

TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE

DOWNTOWN SOUTHBRIDGE CARD

AUGUST, 1980

1. RATIONALE FOR DESIGNATING THE COMMERCIAL AREA REVITALIZATION DISTRICT PLANS (CARD)

As in many older downtowns across the country, Main Street in Southbridge has seen more prosperous days. It has become a decadent area, detrimental to the welfare and sound growth of the community because of the existence of buildings which are out of repair, physically deteriorated, obsolete, or in need of major maintenance. The most pressing problem facing downtown Southbridge today 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 the downtown. Retailing occupies 35% of the total usable floor area. A building survey revealed that over 23% of the downtown floor space 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 occupied, the total vacancy rate approaches 30%.

It can be shown that over the past decade, the aggregate assessed value of the structures in the core area has decreased significantly. Using as an example, the tax income received from the downtown buildings, expressed a percentage of the total tax income for the town, you can see the decrease in the worth of the downtown structures. In 1972 the downtown represented 5.5% of the total, in 1977, 3.6% and in 1979, 3.8%. The slight increase can be traced to the expansion of a bank, and restaurant, also the addition of a residential home to the commercial classification. At the same time, other buildings have continued to decay.

The downtown CARD area was defined with the idea of dealing with these issues.

2. PLAN OBJECTIVES:

The CARD plan should relieve the economic problems of the downtown. The CARD will be a natural continuation of efforts of the town to revive the downtown area. This plan will focus on the commercial buildings themselves,

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an area previously untouched. With participation in the CARD program, the businesses will be able to modernize facilities and expand them so that they no longer operate in outdated quarters. With new facilities and easy access it is hoped that local merchants will be better equipped to compete with nearby malls.

The objectives of the Downtown Southbridge CARD Plan are as follows:

1. To renovate and revitalize the downtown and thereby improve the economic climate of the area.
2. To increase housing stock in the core area particularly for those people of low to moderate income.
3. To coordinate public parking facilities so that they are well distributed and readily accessible to the shopper.
4. To remove the decadent conditions of the downtown building and in turn, provide a stronger tax base for the town.
5. To increase employment by fostering the expansion of business and the creation of new businesses.
6. To create an attractive downtown which provides a pleasant supportive environment in which to shop, work and live.

The Town has begun to do what is possible to aid the local merchants. Through the use of an E.D.A. grant, the street area of the proposed district has been significantly improved. The installation of period street lights, tree plantings and spacious sidewalks has helped to take the downtown away from the automobile world and return some of the charm of turn-of-the-century Southbridge.

In 1979, the Centre Village Historic District was named to the National Register of Historic Places, making available incentives for preservation of the architecturally significant buildings found there.

The Town has taken these steps in an attempt to improve the appearance of the core area, hoping that with a viable appearance and the creation of a safe pedestrian oriented area, merchants would benefit and in turn, remain in the downtown. The Town has plans in the formative stage which will be further outlined in the Plan Strategy Section.

3. CARD BOUNDARIES:

a.) Grounds for Delineation of Boundaries

This area was selected for the CARD because of the following criteria:

It contains the concentration of decadent conditions within the core area of the Town and it contains major opportunities for improvements and reversal of decadent conditions. It provides opportunity to increase the supplement of low and moderate income households in mixed use structures.

b.) Description of CARD Boundaries

1. Verbal Description

The Downtown Southbridge CARD boundaries are outlined as follows:

Downtown Southbridge, starting at the intersection of Main Street and Goddard Street:

THENCE southerly along the west side of Goddard Street for a distance of approximately 135 feet to the extension of a property line;

THENCE easterly along said line for a distance of approximately 140 feet to a property line;

THENCE northerly along said line for a distance of approximately 7 feet to a property line;

THENCE easterly along said property line for a distance of approximately 50 feet to the west side of Chapin Street;

THENCE southerly along said line for a distance of approximately 180 feet to the south side line of Bowlen Avenue extended;

THENCE easterly along said line for a distance of approximately 200 feet to a property line;

THENCE southerly along said line for a distance of approximately 75 feet to the west property line of Elm Memorial Park;

THENCE southerly along said line to the south property line of Elm Memorial Park;

THENCE easterly along said line to the west side line of Elm Street;

THENCE easterly across Elm Street to the north property line of the Southbridge Town Hall;

THENCE easterly along said line for a distance of approximately 202 feet to a property line;

THENCE northerly along said line for a distance of approximately 13 feet to a property line;

THENCE easterly along said line for a distance of approximately 70 feet to property line;

3. CARD BOUNDARIES (continued)

THENCE northerly along said line for a distance of approximately 9 feet to a property line;

THENCE easterly along said line for a distance of approximately 24 feet to a property line;

THENCE northerly along said line for a distance of approximately 47 feet to a property line;

THENCE easterly along said line for a distance of approximately 185 feet to the east side line of Everett Street;

THENCE northerly along said line to the south side line of Main Street;

THENCE northerly across Main Street to the west property line of Massachusetts Electric Company;

THENCE northerly along said line for a distance of approximately 253 feet to a property line;

THENCE westerly along said line for a distance of approximately 60 feet to a property line;

THENCE westerly along said line for a distance of approximately 119 feet to a property line;

THENCE southerly along said line for a distance of approximately 43 feet to a property line;

THENCE westerly along said line for a distance of approximately 75 feet to the east side line of Foster Street;

THENCE northerly along said line for a distance of approximately 310 feet to the railroad right of way;

THENCE northwesterly along said line to the north side line of Depot Street;

THENCE westerly along said line to the west side line of Hook Street;

THENCE southerly along said line to the West side line of Hamilton Street;

THENCE southerly along said line to the north sideline of Main Street;

THENCE across Main Street to the point of beginning.

2. CARD Boundary Map

A map clearly delineating the CARD boundaries is in appendix #1.

4. LAND USE AND ZONING

a.) Existing Land Use Map

Existing land use within the CARD area is shown on Existing Space Use Map appendix #2.

b.) Predominate Commercial Acreage

Almost all of Downtown Southbridge is in the CARD district including the General Business District, and the predominate acreage is commercial. The uses of land and buildings are as shown in the existing land use table below.

EXISTING LAND AND BUSINESS USE

DOWNTOWN SOUTHBRIDGE CARD

	<u>Square Feet</u>	<u>Percent</u>
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%

Of the 383,465 square feet of occupied space in the downtown, 239,755 square feet are involved in commercial enterprise, this amounts to 63% of the occupied space for a total of 5.5 out of 8.8 acres.

c.) Existing Zoning

The CARD area is almost entirely within the General Business Classification. The zoning map of the CARD area is found in appendix #2A.

d.) Non Commercial Uses

The CARD area contains no areas that are not now used for commercial purposes. The following table of proposed space use shows the end product of the redevelopment resulting in a mixed use pattern in the downtown commercial buildings. A map delineations proposed space use is found in appendix 3.

PROPOSED LAND AND BUILDING USE

DOWNTOWN SOUTHBRIDGE CARD

	<u>Square Feet</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Total Area	<u>500,655</u>	<u>100%</u>
Vacant Upper Floor	---	0%
Vacant Lower Floor	---	0%

4. LAND USE AND ZONING (continued)

	<u>Square Feet</u>	<u>Percent</u>
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%

5. PLAN STRATEGY:

a.) Public Improvement and Facilities

It is the intention of the Town of Southbridge to apply for a Community Development Block Grant Small Cities Comprehensive Grant in October of this year for revitalization of the downtown area. This money would take over where the Economic Development Act grant left off. Money from C.D.B.G. would be used primarily for two purposes: The first to rehabilitate and increase new housing stock in the downtown by tapping the unused resources available in the upper floor space of the commercial buildings. The second, to provide parking for these additional people in a convenient area. The parking facilities would not be made into a sterile area of asphalt. There are plans to landscape the areas behind the Main Street buildings, thereby linking the buildings to the parking areas with a pleasant, well lit and safe pedestrian area. These plans are in accord with the recommendations found in the Phase II Downtown Revitalization Plan.

b.) Use Development Incentives Available Within Approved CARD Areas

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 what is known as the Edwards Block and the former Columbia Hotel. The existing shaftway in the Columbia Hotel could be used to serve the Goodwin's and Mathieu building.

5. PLAN STRATEGY (Continued)

A new elevator in the Edwards Block could be linked by shared circulation to both the Blanchard Building and the Centre Pharmacy Block. The Edwards Block and the two adjacent buildings proved to be the most 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. 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.

If possible development is instilled in these buildings, the impact will stimulate further redevelopment projects.

c.) General Characteristic of Development

1. The Extent of Development

Development will emphasize the upgrading of existing business, and the simultaneous creation of new spaces for expanding businesses and new businesses. It will also provide for housing in mixed use structures particularly for low and moderate income people. The redevelopment will include and emphasize the provision of new housing units within mixed use structures, which consist primarily of vacant upper floors of old and historic structures.

This housing will be primarily for low and moderate income people and will provide badly needed additional standard housing resources within historic structures in Southbridge. New housing will also provide added economic strength to downtown retail uses without increasing transportation needs.

2. Public Land Acquisition

The expansion and/or improvement of parking facilities will be undertaken in the near future. As a result of this activity, it may require land acquisition on the part of the Town. Possible sites currently in discussion involve an abandoned house, and a building now housing a bicycle shop. A map depicting these locations appears in appendix # 4.

5. PLAN STRATEGY (continued)

3. New Marketing Techniques

The local merchants will be able to utilize all modern marketing techniques available to them in their "new" businesses. The Chamber of Commerce will be responsible for disbursing new innovative marketing ideas to the local merchants, and hold seminars to keep them abreast of current trends in marketing.

d.) Local Financial Commitment

There is a demonstrated local financial commitment to the CARD area. All FY81 C.D.B.G. funds are being dedicated to the removal of blighted conditions in the downtown. If the town is successful in this funding it will amount to 2.1 million dollars for the CARD area over a 3-year period. The Chamber of Commerce will continue their unending marketing of the downtown. The Chamber was responsible for raising the necessary funds for the Phase II Revitalization Plan. Through their efforts, the Town expects to encourage participation and more local commitment to the CARD and at the same time, attract new business.

e.) Compatibility With Downtown Development

Not applicable. The entire CARD is within the Central Business District and contains the core of the Central Business District. The CARD is compatible with and complements the recently prepared Phase II Revitalization Plans within the Town of Southbridge.

f.) Land Use and Design Control

The Town does not see the need for any more restrictive land use controls over what new are in effect. The Anderson, Notter, Finegold Phase II Revitalization Plan concurs that the current designation of the area is compatible with Phase II proposals for revitalization. Any new construction should be in keeping from a design standpoint with the existing buildings of the historic district. The Town may develop a design review procedure with the Historic Commission to insure compatibility of design within the CARD area.

g.) Finding of Conformance with Other Local Plans

The CARD Plan is in conformance with the recently completed Anderson, Notter, Finegold Phase II Revitalization Plan which is a comprehensive plan for the

5. PLAN STRATEGY (Continued)

overall downtown revitalization and any previous studies that have been made of the downtown area.

h.) Business Community Participation Provision

1. Merchant and Business Involvement

Merchants and other businessmen have been involved in the formation of the proposed CARD Plan through their participation in the active Downtown Merchants Association. Representative members of this organization have participated in several "brainstorming" sessions with the town officials and the planners, Anderson, Notter, Finegold, thereby having significant input into the program.

2. Involvement in Marketing

Merchants and financial institutions will be involved in the marketing in several ways. By participation in the Downtown Merchants Association and the Chamber of Commerce, ideas and information can be put forward and discussed. The Chamber will invite merchants having had success with the CARD program in other communities to serve as guest lecturers to "sell" the idea of CARD to the local businessmen. Financial institutions can play a major role in the selling of the program. Having seen the success of other CARD programs, it is expected that local institutions will be willing to offer the participants added incentives to encourage taking advantage of the program. Several property owners have expressed their willingness to participate if such a program were available.

3. Business and Banking Involvement

The "business and banking community" will be informed directly from the Community Development Office of the development incentives available. It is anticipated that a packet with the program outline will be sent to each eligible firm. This will be followed up by a visit from a member of the Community Development Office for a more personal discussion of the idea.

i.) Local Implementing Agency

The Community Development Office under the direction of the Town Manager will oversee implementation of the program. The Community Development Office has

5. PLAN STRATEGY (Continued)

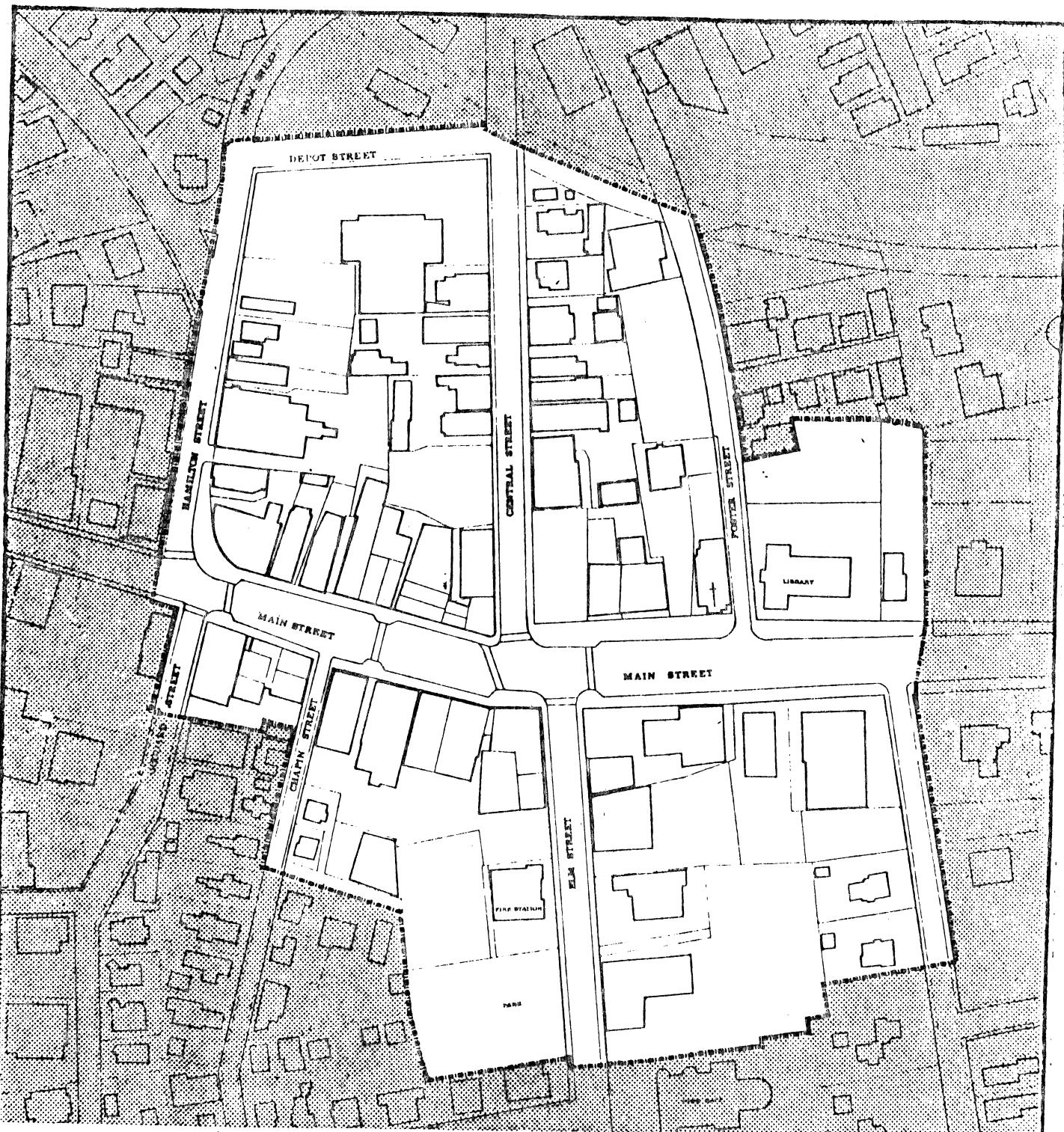
proven itself by successfully managing a 1978 - 1979 C.D.B.G. for \$581,000.00, since then the office has applied for a \$300,000.00 single purpose C.D.B.G. which it has received and is currently administering.

j.) Evidence of Public Hearing

The public hearing was held on August 27, 1980 at 7:00 P.M. in the Robert G. MacKinnon Council Chambers in the Town Hall. The Notice of the Public Hearing as it appeared in the newspaper can be found in appendix #5.

k.) Additional Documentation Required

1. Resolution of Local Governing Body (Exhibit A)
2. Certificate of Recording Officer (Exhibit B)
3. Opinion of Legal Counsel (Exhibit C)



DOWNTOWN SOUTHBRIDGE CARD DISTRICT

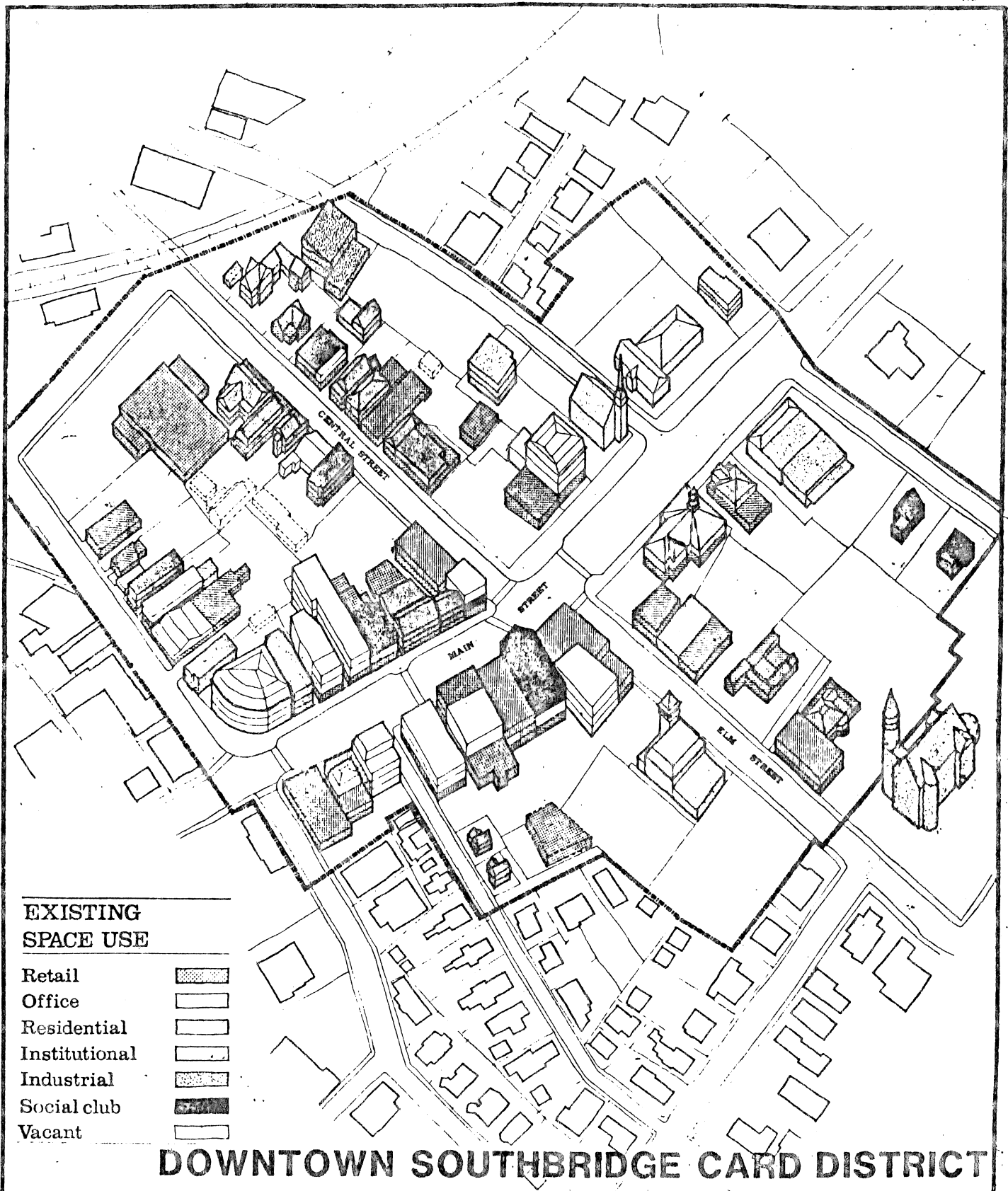
SOUTHBRIDGE DOWNTOWN PHASE II

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

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

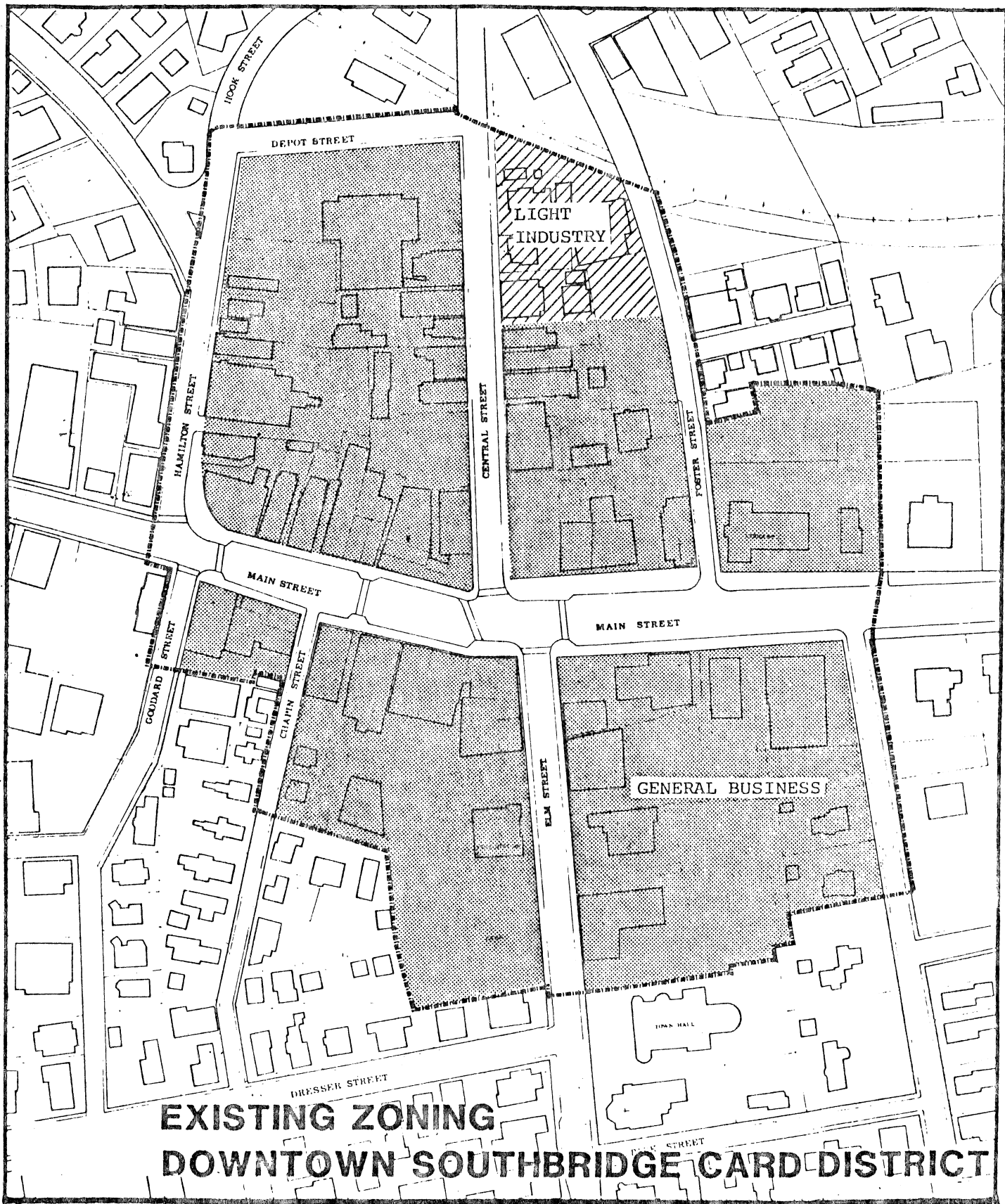


SOUTHBRIDGE DOWNTOWN PHASE II

TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE, MASS.
TRI - COMMUNITY CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE January 1980

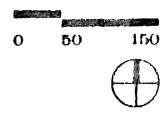
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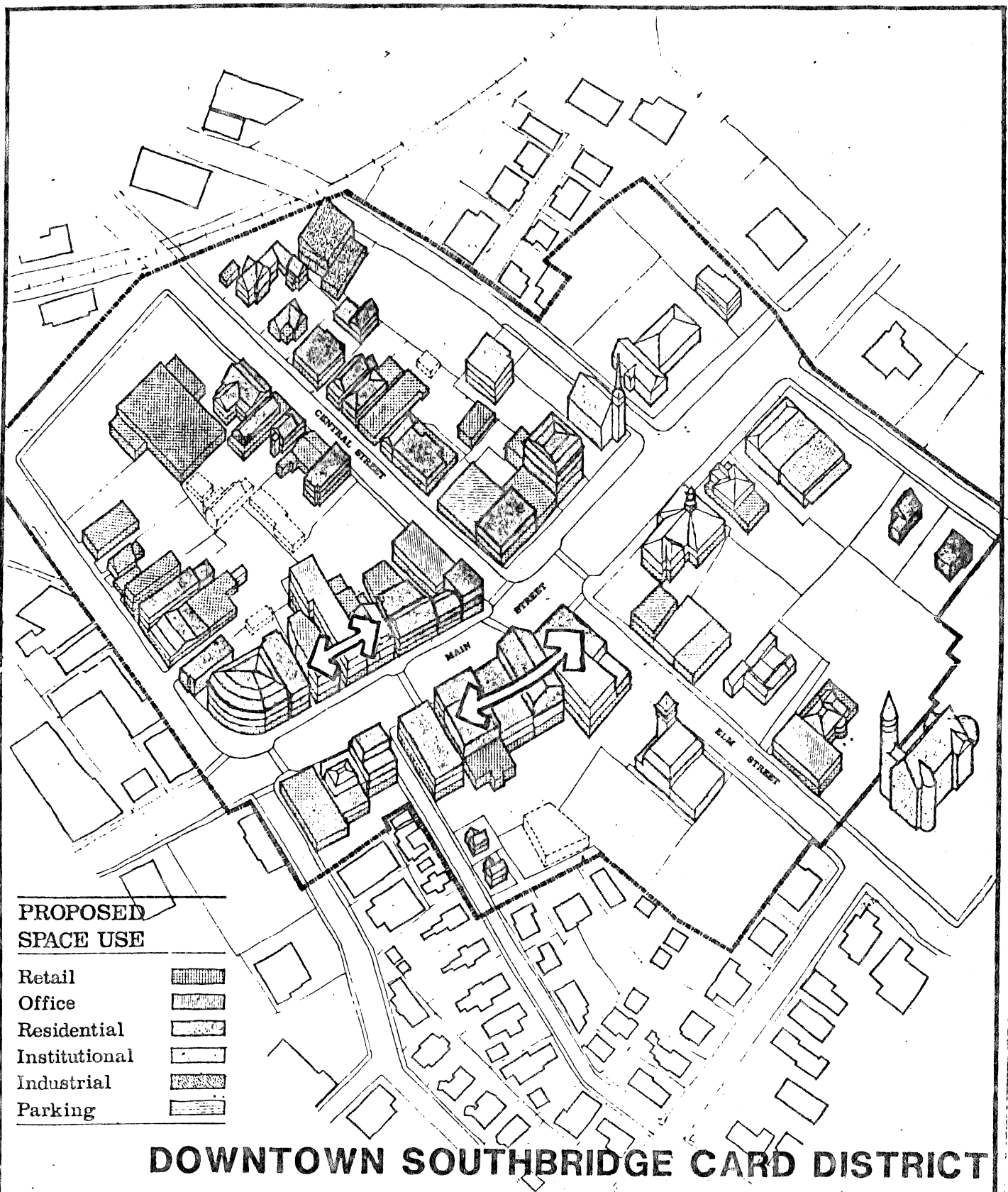


SOUTHBRIDGE DOWNTOWN PHASE II

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

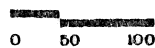


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SOUTHBRIDGE DOWNTOWN PHASE II

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

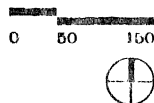


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SOUTHBRIDGE DOWNTOWN PHASE II

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



ANDERSON NOTTER FINEGOLD INC.
Architects & Preservation Planners
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Public Notice

development will be presented at the hearing. Section 12 of Chapter 40D of the General Laws as amended (by Section 1 and 10 of St. 1978 Chapter 495) authorizes the use of tax-exempt industrial revenue bond financing for "commercial enterprises" provided that any such enterprise is located in a district for which a Commercial Area Revitalization Plan has been approved both by the Town of Southbridge and by the Secretary of Communities and Development. A similar amendment to Chapter 23B makes approval of such a plan by the Secretary a precondition for the use of Urban Job Incentive Program Tax credits by commercial facilities. In the future, the State Legislature may tie the availability of other incentives to CARD plan approvals.

TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE

By: Bernard D. Sherry, Jr.
Town Council Chairman
(August 11, 1980)

Public Notice

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE

The Southbridge Town Council will hold a public hearing at 7:00 P.M. on August 27, 1980 in the Robert G. MacKinnon Council Chambers, second floor of the Town Hall, to discuss the plans for creation of a Downtown Southbridge Commercial Area Revitalization District (CARD). The suggested boundaries for the CARD ARE:

Downtown Southbridge: Starting at the intersection of Main Street and Goddard Street;

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A plan for the CARD's