

*"New Connections,
Better Connected"*
A VISION FOR DOWNTOWN UXBRIDGE

Prepared by:
The Cecil Group

Prepared for:
Town of Uxbridge

Partnered with:
MassDevelopment

April 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

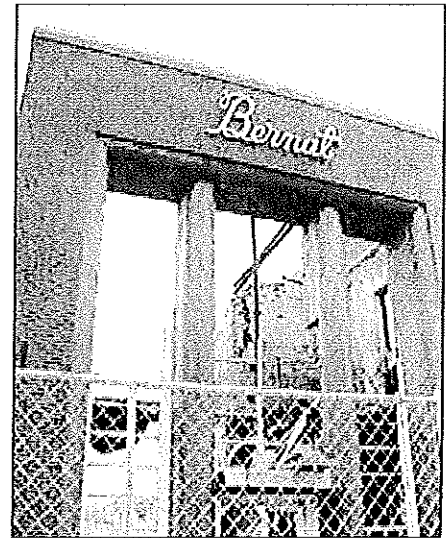
Introduction	1
Vision	4
Existing Conditions	5
Connections and Gateways	9
The Private Realm	14
Views and Imagery.....	18
The Public Realm.....	20
Implementation.....	24
Phasing	30
Uxbridge Headlines on February 20th, 2018.....	32
 <u>Figures</u>	
Figure 1: Project Area	2
Figure 2: Land Use Boundaries.....	7
Figure 3: Street and Pedestrian Access Improvements	22

'New Connections: Better Connected'

Uxbridge is a town of roughly 12,000 residents located in the Blackstone River Valley of Central Massachusetts. In 2007, Uxbridge faced a community tragedy in the loss of the Bernat Mill to fire. It was not only the mill building that was lost. The 400,000 sq ft mill housed 65 different businesses; a substantial part of the local economy. The loss of the mill energized the community around a rebirth not only of the mill businesses, but also of the Downtown. The recognition is that activities at the Mill are intimately related to the success of the Downtown. Both sides of the river must fulfill certain functions towards the overall vitality of the town center.

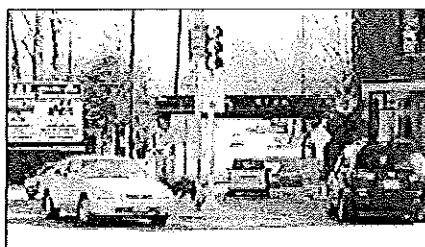
Downtown Uxbridge and Bernat are at a cross roads, physically and metaphorically. The economic potential of the community should equate to a vital district, yet the reality is that the full potential has not yet been reached. The primary challenge at hand is how Uxbridge takes full advantage of the redevelopment of the Bernat Mill, both from a physical and economic standpoint. In its previous form, the Bernat Mill served as an economic island located adjacent to the Downtown, bringing in customers and serving them within its walls. Neither the Mill nor Downtown clearly benefitted from their shared geography. However, new options for redevelopment of the Mill are being considered by the owners and this provides new opportunities for reconnecting the Downtown and Mill.

This document is a recommended approach to redevelopment and revitalization of the Downtown, with specific ideas for improving the physical and perceived connections between the Bernat Mill site and Downtown. Therefore, this plan is not a proposal for the redevelopment of the Bernat Mill. Rather, it is a plan for what Uxbridge can do to create stronger connections across and along the river, and bring together the Bernat Mill site, Downtown, and surrounding neighborhoods as a vital town center.



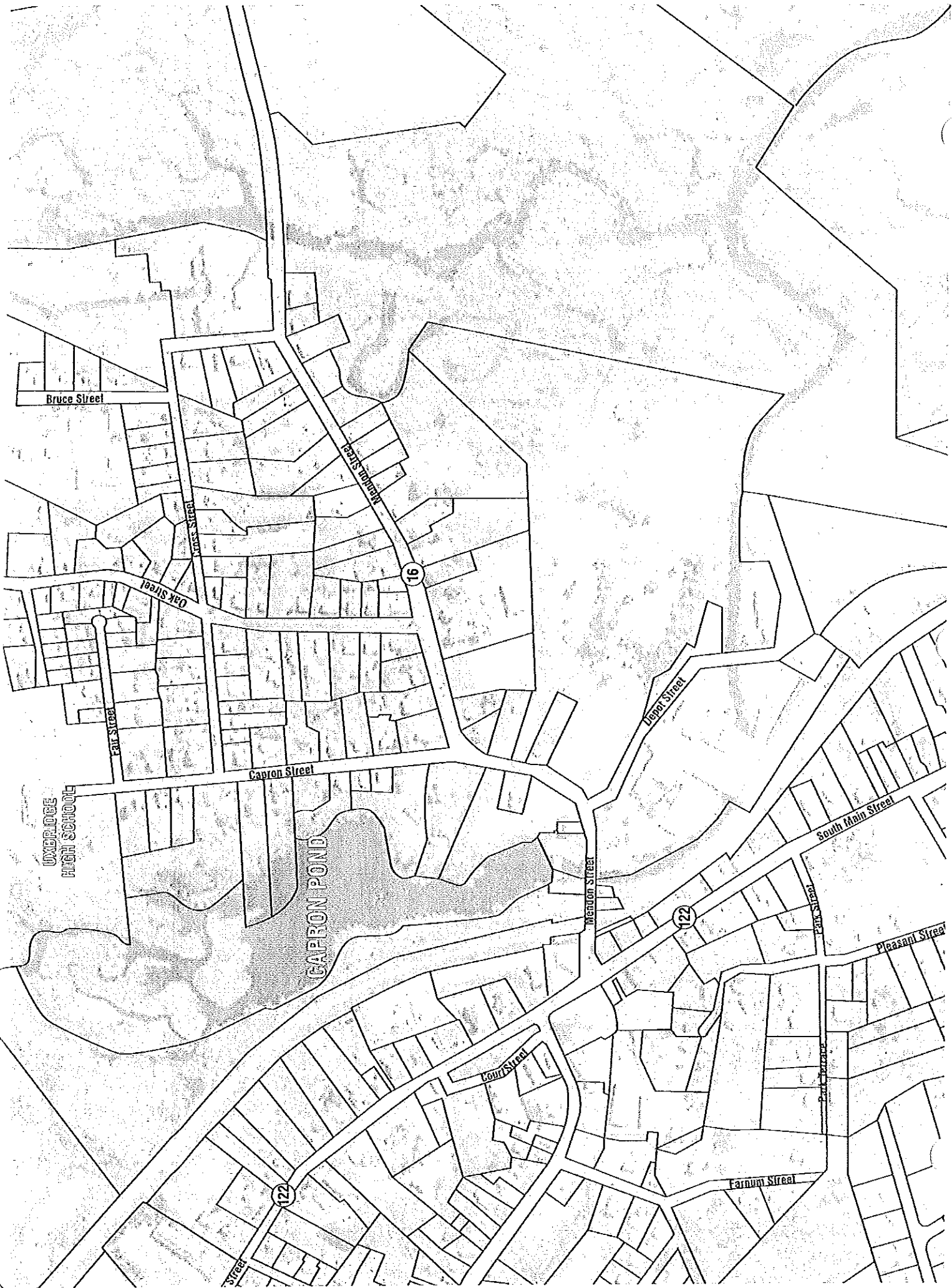
Process

MassDevelopment was retained by the town to provide economic development and planning assistance for this revitalization. In turn, The Cecil Group was retained as a sub-consultant to create a vision for the downtown area, which includes the Bernat Mill site, with guidance and input from the Uxbridge community.



The purpose of the study is to create a plan of physical improvements that strengthens the physical and economic relationship between Main Street, the river, and the Bernat Mill.

The town organized a steering committee made up of property owners, business people, and town



representatives to provide input and feedback during this project and potentially shepherd the projects through implementation. The town also offered community input through two public meetings focused on the findings and recommendations. This report is the product of local stakeholder involvement, public meetings and interviews with local leaders. Baseline data was collected based on information that is publicly available.

Data Collection

Baseline data for this report was collected using publicly available information provided by the Town of Uxbridge and information available via the internet. Two site visits were made by the consultant to Uxbridge to complete visual surveys of the community and to gather information from steering committee members.

Steering Committee

The Town of Uxbridge designated a Steering Committee which met three times over the course of the project. This group provided input on the baseline information that was collected and on each of the strategies that are presented in this report.

Interviews

Interviews were held with individuals on the Steering Committee as well as individuals involved in economic development in the Downtown, specifically building owners. Phone interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of the challenges faced by the business and property owners downtown and the opportunities they see on the horizon with the redevelopment of the Bernat Mill. Much of the input provided by these interviews is contained within this report.

Public Meetings

The Cecil Group presented its draft approaches to downtown redevelopment and revitalization to the Steering Committee in an open public meeting held on February 20, 2008 at the Uxbridge Police Station. Feedback provided by the Steering Committee and the public was used to refine and finalize this report. This meeting was recorded by the local cable access channel for further viewing by the public. A second public meeting is scheduled for April 17, 2008 to discuss the recommendations of this study.

2004 Master Plan Vision

The following excerpts are from the *Vision of the Future* found in the 2004 Master Plan. The focus of the *Vision* is on Downtown.

“...twenty years hence:

“Downtown Uxbridge flourishes as the Town’s Center. Pedestrians walk safely on wide sidewalks, free from speeding trucks. They come as tourists but also to do business, finding ample parking nestled among restored 19th century buildings. These and the nearby mill buildings are crammed with art, crafts and antiques, as well as exhibits featuring Uxbridge’s natural and cultural landscape. In addition to retail consumers and tourists, the entire Town has become a destination for contractors, remodelers, interior decorators and antique dealers.

“...At lunch time, many of the employees come Downtown to sample a rich variety of eateries.

“...The local economy thrives, in part, because of nearby, affordable housing, both rented and owned. Uxbridge offers a wide range of housing options from lofts in the Downtown and mills to cluster single-family and garden apartments.

“...Bus service from Downtown takes residents to major centers... The regional bike and equestrian paths along the three rivers draw thousands over weekends. Many detour to the Downtown.”

Updated Vision for Downtown Uxbridge and the Bernat Mill Redevelopment

Rebuilding of the Bernat Mill will start a new era for the Downtown, not so much as a new place, but as a brightened, lively district largely composed of renovated buildings and new compatible architecture, with places to live, shop, work and recreate.

Downtown will continue to serve the citizens of the Town, local businesses, and those visitors that are drawn to a picturesque center that is genuine, historic and pleasant. Downtown will also continue to provide local, quality jobs, just as it has through the town’s history.

New and improved access across the river and between Main Street, the mill properties, and the residential neighborhoods will create a well-connected town center that serves the whole populace. It will be easier to get around on foot, in a car or on a bicycle, with the right amount of convenient parking. Downtown will thrive with better connections within the district and to the rest of the community.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The following information was compiled to provide a common base of information which all stakeholders can utilize to move forward in the implementation of this plan.

Demographics

Uxbridge is just over 30 square miles in size and has a population of roughly 12,000 residents. According to the 2000 US Census, of the 3,988 households in Uxbridge, 41% have children under age 18 and 64% of the households are married couples. The median age in Uxbridge is 35 years old and the median family income is just over \$70,000. Since less than 50 people reside in the Downtown, demographic data for this specific area is not provided by the U.S. Census.

Land Use

Land use in the study area can be loosely determined by looking at Uxbridge's Zoning Map. The entirety of South Main Street within the study area is zoned Business (orange). The gateway points, both east and west of Route 16, are zoned Residence A or single family, while the Bernat Mill is zoned industrial.

Parking

Ample off-street parking is found throughout the district. Open spaces have been found in the on-street and off-street spaces during all visits.

Streets

Downtown Uxbridge follows a north south linear pattern on South S. Main Street or Route 122. Perpendicular to the Downtown is Route 16 which delivers visitors to the Bernat Mill or out to Route 146 and I90.

Open Space

Downtown Uxbridge has a remarkable collection of open spaces in and around its Downtown. Directly in Downtown there is the park at Capron Pond and the Mumford River that runs through the Bernat Mill. Beyond the eastern Route 16 gateway, there are extensive federal and state preserved open spaces that offer outdoor recreational opportunities.

Historic Resources

The Town of Uxbridge was officially incorporated as a town in 1727 and boasts over 250 sites on the Massachusetts State Historic Register and over 50 on the National Register of Historic Places (www.wikipedia.org).

Historic District

The historic district in Uxbridge includes but extends beyond the Downtown. Established in 2004, the district contains 76 buildings and several significant historic landmarks such as the D.A.R. House (1767) and the Farnum House (the oldest house, from 1715). These landmarks provide quite a bit of character to the downtown area.

Economic Development

The commercial district in Downtown is characterized by storefront commercial spaces as well as stand alone commercial developments such as Saver's Bank and Cove Insurance. The businesses are a mix of restaurants, retail and services. The Bernat Mill is an important part of the economic development potential of Downtown. Before the fire it offered inexpensive incubator space for small businesses. The genesis of the Bernat Mill and what it can accommodate in the future is under study outside the scope of this report. How the future mix of uses there interacts with South Main Street is critical for the success of Downtown Uxbridge.

Downtown Defined: the Boundary

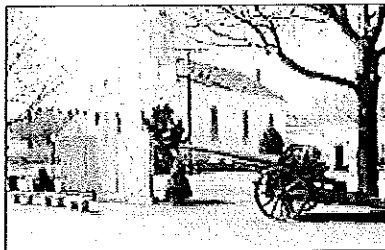
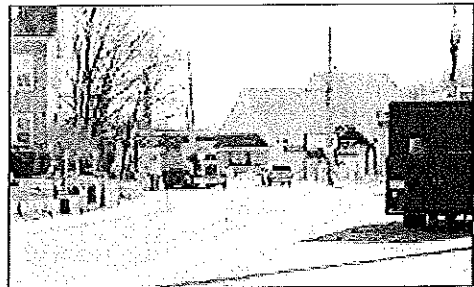
The vision for downtown Uxbridge's transformation begins with a delineation of where the boundary of downtown lies. Consequently, defining the boundary of Downtown was a first step in this process. While it appears a straightforward task, there are various versions of the defined boundary depending on the source.

As shown on the Existing Conditions Map, there is a historic district boundary that delineates the historic qualities of downtown Uxbridge. There are also zoning district boundaries that follow the zoning ordinance for the central business district. And finally, there is the economic and psychological boundary for downtown that has been defined through discussions with community leaders, residents, business owners, and through consultant observations. The latter boundary references the "geography of place" and how people perceive the spaces within their town. This is particularly important when we consider the implications of change.

For the purpose of this report, the delineation of the downtown occurs at four major access points: west at Route 16, north at the Town Common, east at Depot Street and the Farnum House of Capron Street, and south at the intersection of South Main and Park Streets. Each of these points represents not only a delineation of the downtown, but also a gateway point into the area.

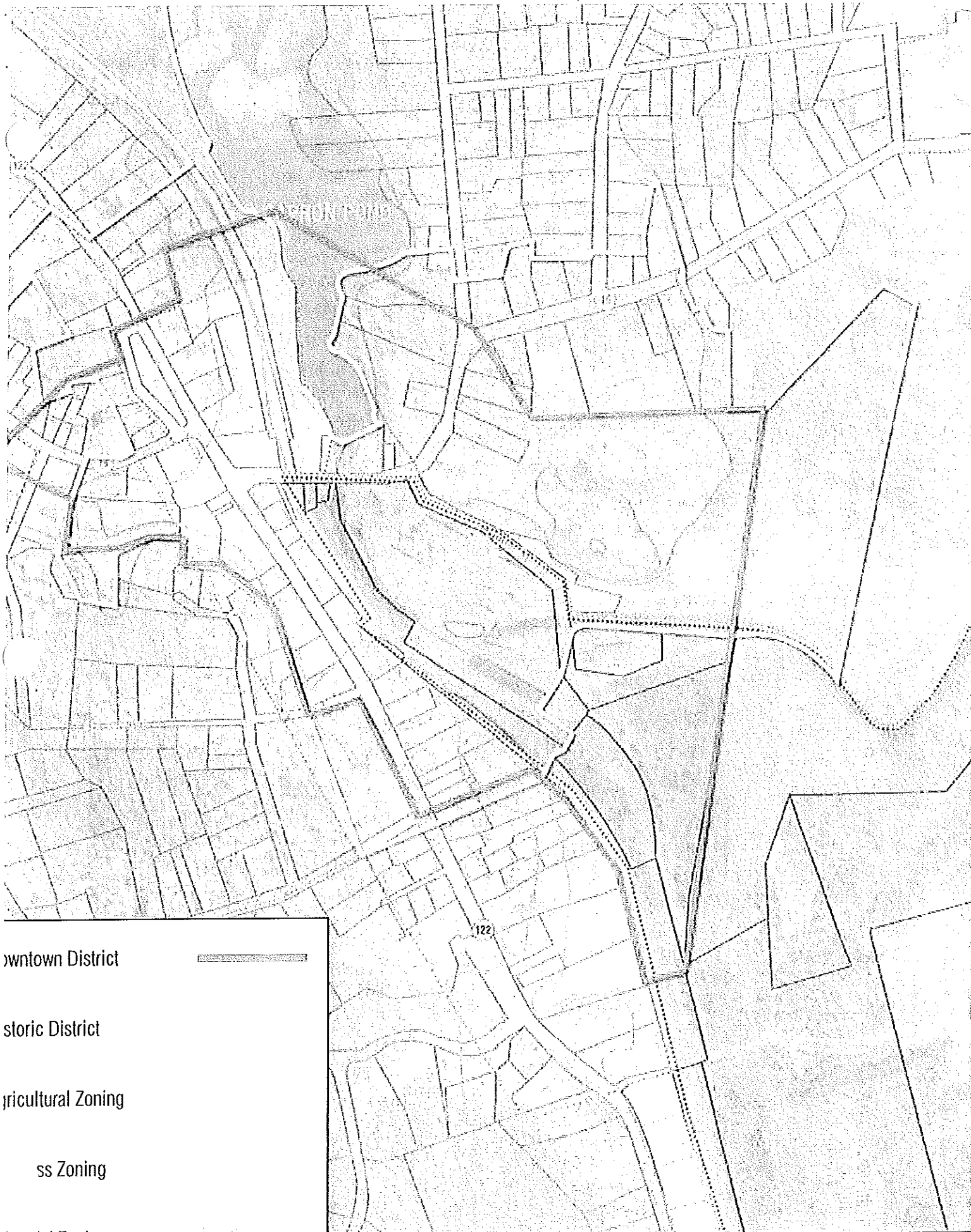
West: Rt. 16, Charlie's/ Cumberland Farms

The western edge of downtown is defined by the commercial district access on Route 16. Traveling east on Route 16 into Uxbridge, the gateway is marked by Charlie's, the Lumberyard and Cumberland Farms on the right and the doughnut shop on the left.



North: Town Common/ DAR house

The Town Common is an anchor for downtown and serves as the northern boundary. This boundary is more specifically delineated by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) House and the Masonic Lodge.



Downtown District

Historic District

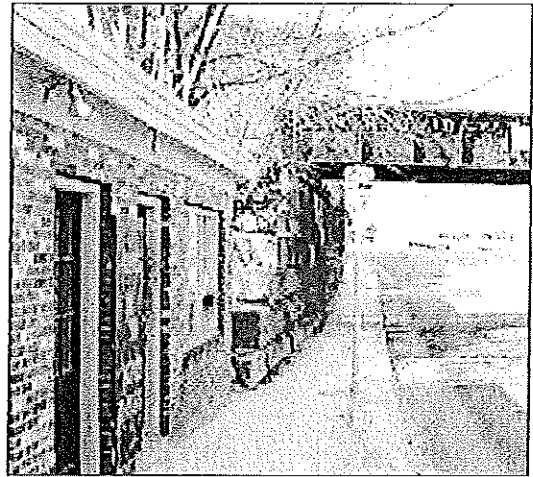
Agricultural Zoning

Residential Zoning

Industrial Zoning

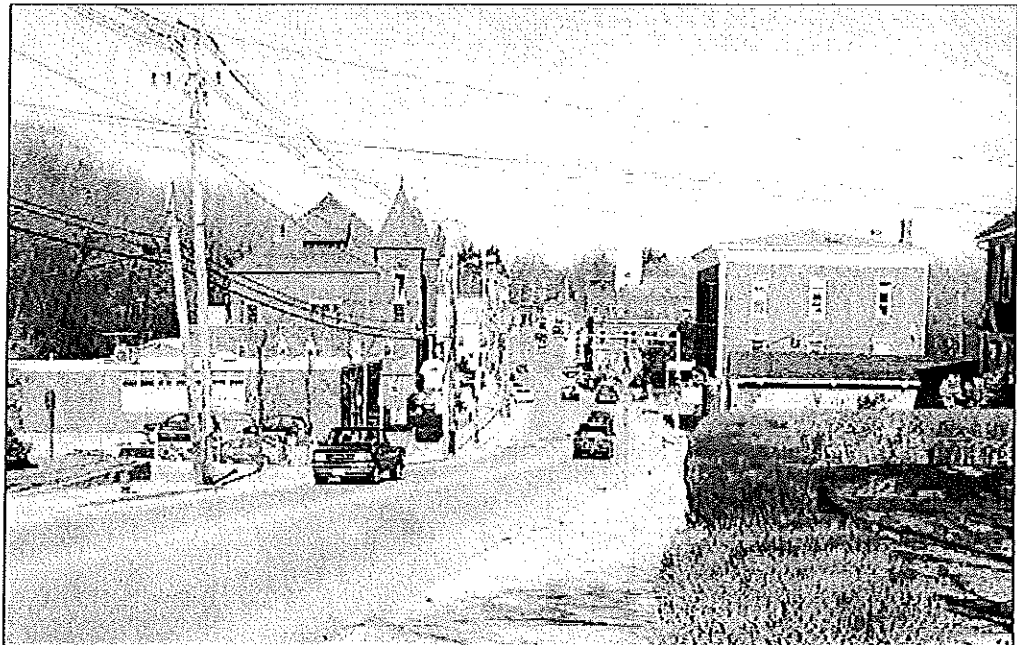
East: Capron Street/ Depot Street/
Farnum House

The eastern boundary of Downtown is marked by more than one street. The consensus is that the Bernat Mill is a part of Downtown. There are also views from Capron Street heading west where Downtown is clearly visible and identifiable. For this reason, the eastern boundary is set at the historic Farnum House on Capron Street and just past the Bernat Mill entrance on Depot Street.



South: S. Main Street/ Curves/ Park Street

The southern end of Downtown extends just past the Senior Center to Park Street. At this point, the structures are one story and the storefront retail is diminished. This gateway to Downtown is anchored somewhat by a good size public parking area.



Connections and Gateways: Mobility and Accessibility

The Automotive Realm

Gateways

Automotive gateways mark the beginning and end of the downtown district. A gateway marks the entry and exit of a defined economic area. Gateway points also define the psychological boundaries of an area. Gateways offer an opportunity to let people know when they have entered a particular area and what economic or recreational opportunities exist there. It is important to distinguish these points with markers such as signs or informational kiosks so people passing through these areas are not an economic lost opportunity.

Gateways can be marked with signs as well as distinguished by a streetscape that is set apart and different from what comes before and after it. These streetscape elements should provide the image and the character to the locations being marked. Specific recommendations for downtown streetscape elements are provided in a later section.

North and South Gateways

Route 122 serves as the north-south travel corridor in Uxbridge. It is also South Main Street, the main road that runs the length of downtown. As noted earlier, the gateway on either end of this road for downtown is the Town Common and Park Street to the South. The Town Common acts as an institutional anchor for Downtown. The public library is there and annual events are held on the Common.

East and West Gateways

Route 16 serves as the east-west travel corridor in Uxbridge. It is the road that connects downtown to the Bernat Mill and the Stanley Woolen and Waucantuck Mills. It also connects travelers with Route 146 and all points north.

Each of these four gateway points should be clearly marked with a welcoming gateway sign that indicates entry into Downtown Uxbridge. Each gateway sign should double as a way-finding sign and indicate what points of interest lie ahead in the direction being traveled. Each gateway sign should have information for automobile passengers as well as pedestrians.

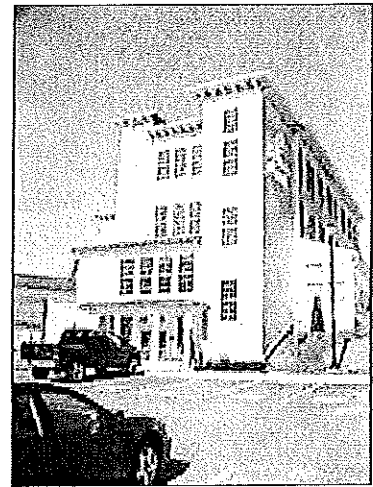
Internal Connections

Internal connections within downtown Uxbridge are vital to the redevelopment and reinvestment of this area. The Bernat Mill is being planned for redevelopment and its close proximity to downtown and arguably its location within the downtown makes it critical that the connections between South Main Street and the Mill appear seamless. The physical and psychological barriers between these two areas have to be eliminated in order to combine the two areas economically and increase the synergies between them, thus increasing the redevelopment opportunities for downtown Uxbridge.

There are two primary internal connections that will be addressed. These connection points were highlighted by the stakeholder input received as difficult and in need of attention.

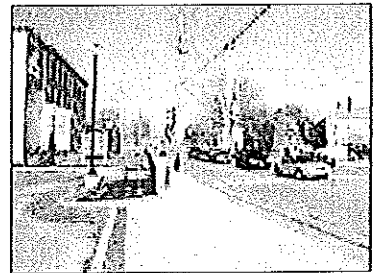
Rt. 16 and 122 Intersection at Saver's Bank

This intersection is just past a primary gateway into Downtown and an important internal connection point. When stopped at the light, one can clearly see the Town Common to the left, and around the dog leg, a commercial district to the right. While this intersection appears inefficient because of its layout, it may provide a view of and connection to the Town Common that would otherwise be lost if the dog leg were not there. Additional way-finding at this point directing people to the Town Common or South Main Street would be helpful here.

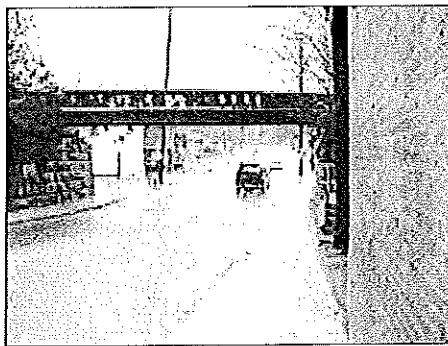


Saver's Bank Parking Lot

Located along South Main Street, this parking area is expansive at this point and since this area is a major pedestrian link between the Town Common and the South Main Street corridor, it should have a interactive point of interest here. A kiosk could be added here that informs visitors about the history of the Saver's Bank building and directs visitors to other points of interest.



What is not apparent at this intersection is the location of the Bernat Mill. This intersection needs to serve as an internal connection point to the Town Common, South Main Street, and the Bernat Mill. A way-finding sign here to indicate the location of the mill, and perhaps even the two mills further up the road, is essential for visitors to Uxbridge.



Rail Bridge Underpass

This is the connection point between South Main Street and the Bernat Mill as well as other points of interest including the Farnham House and Capron Pond. While driving through this internal connection point is not difficult, it is not inviting and could be easily missed if someone is not looking for it. Once over the bridge, the view of the cemetery and a brick wall continues to make this a reluctant

destination. Removing the wall so travelers can find the Mill and get a sense of where they are would open this area up and make it feel more connected to Downtown.

The Pedestrian Realm

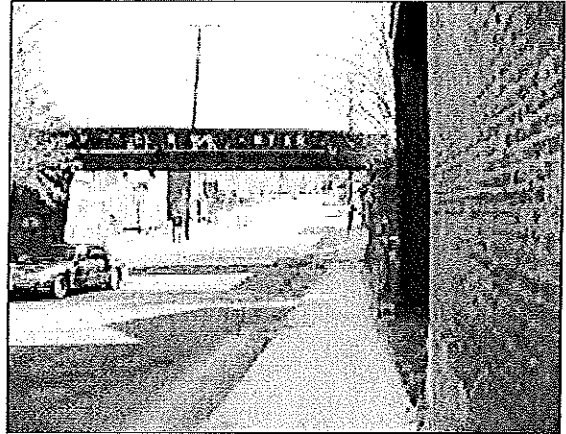
Functional Paths

In the pedestrian realm, functional paths are those that intentionally take people from one destination to another. They are meant to be the alternative travel corridor to automobiles and streets. Functional paths provide pedestrians with a safe and convenient travel corridor

and can at the same time offer an enjoyable experience with the outdoors. The following are the major Functional Paths that pedestrians utilize in Downtown Uxbridge.

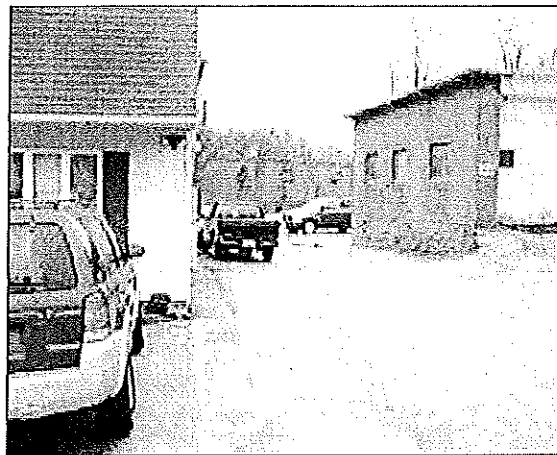
South Main Street to the Bernat Mill

The first functional path is the rail bridge underpass which serves as the critical link between South Main Street and the Bernat Mill. In its current condition it is unwelcoming and does not provide an inviting connection between South Main Street and the Bernat Mill. The underpass is poorly lit, is subject to flooding, and has a pigeon population that further detracts from a pleasant walking experience.



Once through the underpass, the bridge over the river is narrow and doesn't seem to go anywhere worth pursuing. Crossing through this internal connection, it is difficult to even know that the Bernat Mill complex lies just on the other side. In order to better connect Downtown with the Bernat Mill, this internal connection point needs to function safely and be inviting. A large scale renovation or replacement of this structure should be seriously considered. A lower cost option would be to at least clean the pigeons out, add lighting, and perhaps public art.

Just as with the vehicular traffic, the brick wall at the Bernat Mill entrance serves as a visual barrier that limits the connection between the Downtown and the Mill. Psychologically the wall is a barrier and feels like a boundary that cannot be crossed. Removing this wall will invite pedestrians to enter the Bernat Mill complex and interact with all it has to offer.



Rail/ River crossing at Senior Center

The connection between Downtown and the Bernat Mill is currently limited to the bridge on Route 16. Public input provided by the community indicated that Downtown may be better served if there was another pedestrian link to the Mill which would ultimately create a walking loop. Because of the grade and the location of the Mumford River and the rail tracks, a crossing at the Senior Center may make the most

sense. If a crossing is not possible, it is important that at a minimum someone walking on South Main Street near the Senior Center can easily see the Bernat Mill and activity there and quickly get a sense of how to get there.

Main Street from Park Street to Town Common

The Senior Center and the intersection of South Main Street and Park Street is within easy walking distance to the end of the Town Common. This walk is even nicer because there are few interruptions with busy intersections. The major intersection to cross is Routes 16 and 122. This intersection, because it has a dog leg, needs to be easy for pedestrians to cross with well timed pedestrian lights. Crosswalk treatments can be added here as well to make pedestrians feel as though they are completing a continuous walk and not ending one segment and beginning another one.

Residential Neighborhoods within a 10 minute walk of Downtown

Within a ten minute walk of Downtown or about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile in any direction, there are established residential areas. Because Downtown has a very small residential population, it is important that the nearby residents feel connected to Downtown as a walking destination. Downtown will function better as a commercial district if it has more people to draw from. There is direct competition with Downtown in and around Uxbridge for retail, restaurants, and services. If Downtown feels like a safe and enjoyable stroll, it will capture the attention of nearby residents who might not consider it a convenient destination. Sidewalks should be examined for continuity. And sidewalk improvements or additions should be considered here if needed.

Recreational Paths

Uxbridge is unique in that it can offer an exceptional outdoor experience in an urbanized setting. Pedestrian paths that connect these destinations are "Recreational Paths" and if marked well can help Uxbridge position itself as a destination for outdoor enthusiasts looking for a shopping and



recreation experience. In order for the recreational path to be used, it must be well connected and visible (and at times the same as) the functional paths described previously.

Capron Pond Park

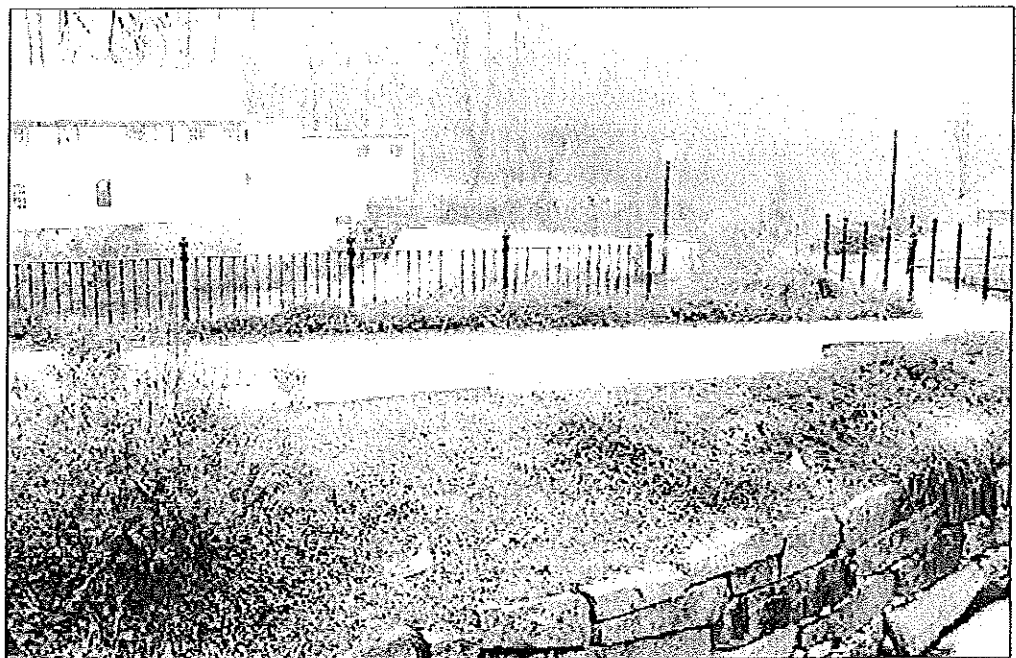
The park at Capron Pond is a local destination because it is well hidden and only locals would know where to find it. The park has picnic opportunities and could be a great spot for someone to sit down and enjoy a meal they grabbed from a local restaurant. It should be easy for pedestrians to find and marked both with way-finding signage and contiguous pavement treatments.

Kayak/ Canoe Launch Area

On the other side of the bridge from Capron Pond park is the Kayak/ Canoe launch area on the Mumford River. This launch area should be conveniently accessible to pedestrians and should be connected to South Main Street with a watercraft/ outdoor equipment rental storefront.

Riverside Picnic Area

Just like the picnic area at Capron Pond park, this area should be easy to find and should be connected to the functional pedestrian realm and South Main Street.



Economic Development: The Private Realm

Zoning and Land Use

Downtowns have historically been built to accommodate vehicles and pedestrians. As was summarized in the previous sections, there are special considerations that must be taken into account for both pedestrian and automotive traffic in a downtown. Zoning is one such consideration because land use determines potential traffic generation.

Zoning is a regulatory tool that can be used to encourage a mix of land uses in a downtown that generally are identified with such a place. Downtowns can host a mix of uses such as restaurants, retail shops, offices, services, civic uses, churches, housing, and open spaces. What makes a downtown attractive and vibrant is its ability to offer a mix of uses. If every first floor space is occupied by an office, there will be little activity in the downtown after 5:00 p.m. or on weekends. If a downtown is all restaurants, it becomes a destination for a single event where people arrive, park, eat, and leave. Allowing an interesting mix of businesses and public uses through zoning is part of what gives downtowns their character.

Likewise, if a downtown becomes overrun with gas stations, drive through oriented businesses, and other uses that are oriented to cars, it will suffer. The mix of uses in a downtown must be accessible by car, but connected to a pedestrian experience. Zoning has to be used as a filter that allows those uses that are pedestrian friendly and limits those uses that are not.

The existing zoning is shown on Figure 2. The current Business zoning district for Downtown is a 'one size fits all' district for Uxbridge and is not specific to Downtown. Zoning in many ways can dictate the character of an area. The downtown commercial district in Uxbridge is unique to the Town and should have zoning that reflects this.

Allowed Uses

Currently, the mix of uses allowed in Downtown Uxbridge are retail, services, offices, banks, hotel or motel, and shopping centers. Automotive uses such as repair shops and filling stations are allowed with a special permit. Residential uses are not specified, but are allowed with an approval from the Board of Appeals. All of these uses are regulated under the "Business District" article of the zoning bylaw. A small portion of Downtown is also zoned residential and the Bernat Mill area is zoned industrial.

As mentioned earlier in the report, a first step would be to create a Downtown Commercial District that has a mix of uses specific to a downtown area. This mix should include both commercial and residential uses and should prohibit automotive uses and shopping centers. The allowed uses should be located along the sidewalks and should not have parking, other than on-street parking, located in front of them.

When creating a Downtown Commercial District zone, the zoning boundary for the commercial district should match the boundary delineated earlier in this report. By doing this, any development near the Mill on Capron Street or any of the other gateway areas will be compatible with the downtown character. Most importantly, parking in this area would not dominate the front of any future buildings, ensuring a sustained pedestrian experience.

Dimensional Standards

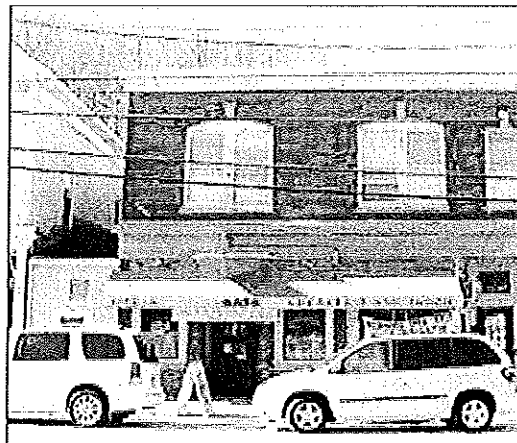
Dimensional standards are important in a Downtown because they determine where buildings are placed and the height to which they are built. The physical form a commercial district takes on is dictated by the dimensional requirements of a zoning district. In Downtown Uxbridge, the current zoning regulations require a 30 foot setback from the public way for any new construction. This requirement automatically sets up a break in the pedestrian corridor and makes way for parking to be located in front of the buildings.

A new district should be created for Downtown that allows buildings to locate with no setbacks and allows for parking to be located off-site or on the street in the public realm. It is not uncommon for downtown commercial districts to eliminate a parking requirement all together. This is done because the developer will on his own make sure that there is an accommodation for parking somewhere close by in order for the project to work.

Additionally, the maximum allowed height of a building in Uxbridge is 35 feet. It may be wise to amend this requirement in the Downtown and instead include a minimum height of two stories so that the density of uses in the district can be maximized and one story buildings, which are much more suburban, can be eliminated. Finally, any new construction in Downtown should take into account views of the river and the surrounding open space and should be oriented towards South Main Street.

Pedestrian Orientation

The pedestrian realm has been discussed extensively in this report- and it cannot be emphasized enough. This is primarily due to the fact that the success of Downtown Uxbridge



and its relationship to the Bernat Mill and the surrounding residential areas is heavily tied to a well built and well maintained pedestrian experience. One further way to achieve this, in addition to the tools described already, is to create design guidelines for the properties in Downtown. Design Guidelines are a way to ensure that signs, windows, landscaping, streetscape furniture, open spaces and street crossings are part of a pleasant experience for pedestrians on South Main Street. This

enhanced pedestrian realm through the use of design standards will also translate into a more pleasant experience for automobile traffic passing through. In the end, any new investments made in Downtown both in the public realm and on private property will be cohesive, attractive, and reinforce or enhance its character.

Parking

On-Street Parking

On street parking is essential in a Downtown. It is both a traffic calming device and a means of making access to storefronts convenient. On-street parking should be maintained in Uxbridge and well marked.

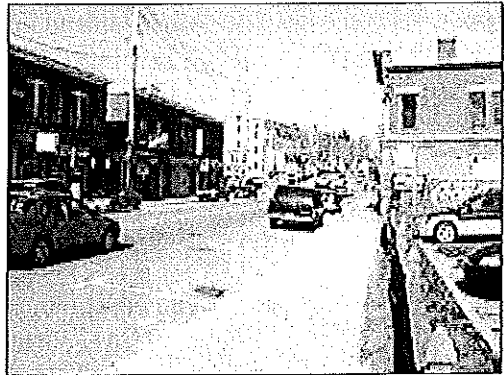
Private Parking as Shared Public Parking

There are five parking areas in Downtown Uxbridge which are privately owned, yet serve the majority of the parking needs of Downtown visitors and employees. These private lots need to serve the employees and patrons of their business first and other patrons second. However, each lot appears to have capacity for additional parking beyond their own needs. In this case, there is an opportunity to meet the public parking shortfall with shared parking agreements between private land owners and the Town of Uxbridge. By formalizing this relationship, there is little need to construct additional parking in Downtown.

South Main Street Economic Continuity

Parking lot for 107 South Main Street (Desruisseaux's Real Estate Office)

The Real Estate Office located at 107 South Main Street is an architectural and historic landmark in Downtown Uxbridge. It is located in the center of the Downtown and has a parking area for 35 cars that is a prominent part of the landscape. However, from a continuity standpoint, this parking area disrupts the pedestrian experience in



Downtown. Because there are so many opportunities to take advantage of in Uxbridge, it makes sense to replace some of the parking spaces closest to South Main Street (two or three spaces at the most) with a visitor kiosk that can offer anything from information to coffee to information on bike or canoe rental. Because of the location of the canoe/ kayak launch area near the Mill, it may be possible to purchase rental equipment at this small location and pick it up at the Bernat Mill.

31 South Main Street

The property at 31 South Main Street is currently occupied by a national chain women's fitness center. This property is set back a bit and feels disconnected from the rest of South Main Street. Improvements to the front of the property should be made both to the façade

and the landscaping that make this property feel more like part of South Main Street and the fabric of the streetscape.

Senior Center

As mentioned previously, the Senior Center is in the best location for an additional connection to the Bernat Mill. A connection at this end would mark the beginning of Downtown and create a clear destination point for visitors. Redevelopment of the site should include new construction to anchor this end of Main Street.

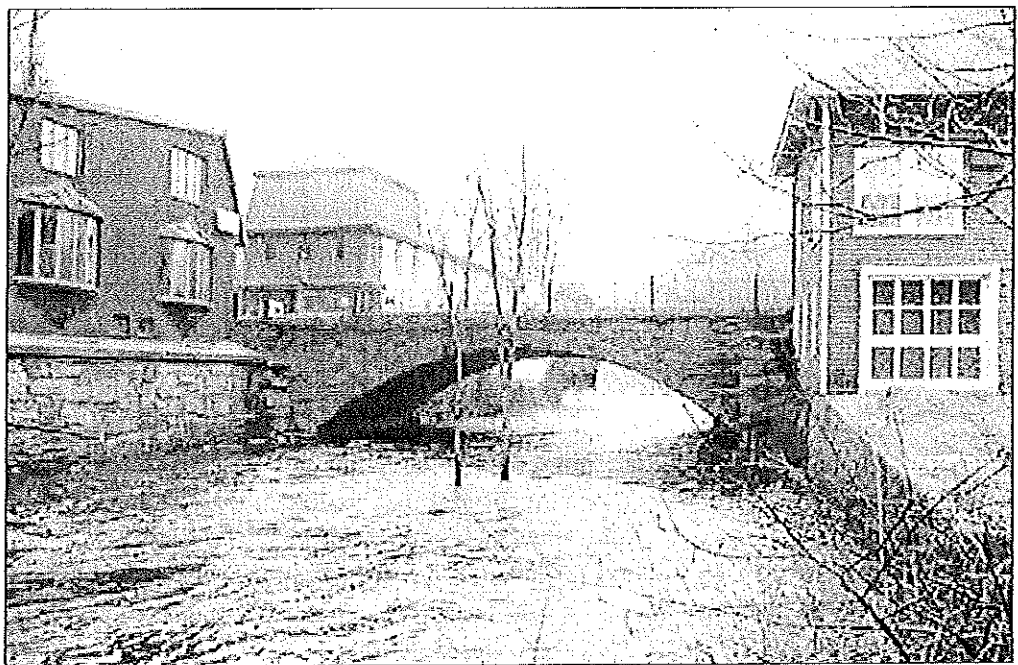
Bernat Mill

Civic Uses

The Bernat Mill prior to the fire hosted a number of youth destinations. Stakeholders report a problem with teen loitering in Downtown that could be in part addressed at the Mill with the accommodation of youth activities of some sort. Civic uses for seniors, youth and other municipal or educational services would provide additional reasons for people to connect to the Mill from South Main Street.

Mixed Uses

The Bernat Mill is no longer a textile mill. It is a mixed use complex that most recently hosted civic and educational uses, small businesses, budding artists, and larger distribution companies. This mix of uses at the Mill should continue in some way. With the addition of residential uses, the property could also become a more significant source of market support to itself and the whole of Downtown. This diversity of uses will give people a variety of reasons to visit Downtown and the Mill. Better connections will allow an ease of movement that supports all businesses and residents.



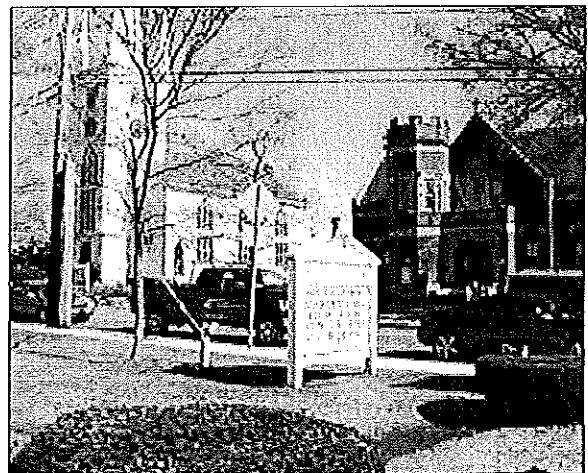
The classic New England imagery of Uxbridge as a small mill town nestled along a major river might have been lost to modern development. However, the preservation of much of the original topography and many of the historic buildings presents an overall framework with a series of view points that announce the downtown to travelers in very unique ways. While the street system is fairly regular with a general trend of north-south and east-west orientation following the river, the low point at the main intersections of Routes 122 and 16 allow travelers from any direction to visualize substantial portions of the downtown at the key entry points or gateways.

This is a key part of the image of Downtown that must be considered in future development. This is consideration of more than historic preservation of buildings; it is preservation and enhancement of the viewsheds, landscape, and built form.

There are several ways this imagery could be maintained and improved. But it is important to first define the key viewsheds. There are three viewsheds that are recommended for preservation and, where possible, enhancement. They exist north and south along North Main Street and South Main Street, and at the eastern entrance to the Bernat Mill on Mendon Street.

North Main Street

North Main Street in the downtown is anchored by the town common or memorial green. The buildings that surround it, for the most part, contribute to the overall quality. Large building setbacks and tall buildings allow the green to be properly framed at a historic, small town scale. Other than maintenance and upkeep of both the public spaces and buildings, very little is necessary to maintain the community fabric in this area. However, a key design element is that the



roads converge on the memorial green allowing it to take a passive role in the definition of the North Main Street portion. The green's offset from the north-south street line and the large bank building at the corner separates the green physically and by perception. Moving the Main Street and Route 16 intersection would further separate the green and would not be recommended if the importance of the green is the primary consideration.

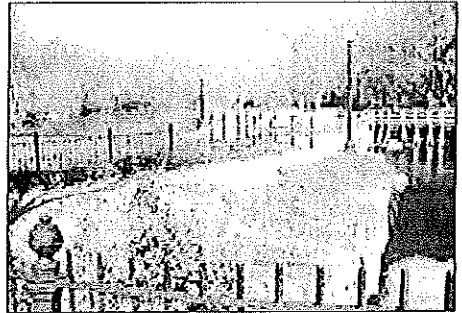
South Main Street

South Main Street is a classic central business district, with medium sized commercial buildings and several public properties. The buildings are close to the street for the most part and create a corridor that because of the straightness of the road and the surrounding topography, provides an interesting view of the whole of South Main Street's central business district. There are also several openings between buildings that create secondary yet important viewsheds. While the western side of the town beyond Main Street rises up and allows one to perceive the connection between the business district and the surrounding

neighborhood, the eastern side provides a view across the river to the mill and cemetery. If this street were fully lined with buildings on the eastern side, the views out to the eastern bank of the river and beyond, and the views back into downtown as discussed next, would be lost. It is the suggestion of this study that this would be a significant loss. It is important to note, and unfortunate, that the view does not include the river within the central business district. The section on pedestrian trails and access suggest ways this could be addressed.

Gateway Views from Mendon Street

For the most part Mendon Street does not suggest an entrance to the downtown. However, as one rounds the bend past Capron Street at the Farnum House, a key vista opens up that announces the town as mill town with a substantial downtown that includes civic and public buildings and a historic river park. This is really an important view that could be improved and should be protected.



The improvements to the view could include removal of the brick security wall between the buildings at the northern edge of the Bernat Mill property. This simple step would allow preservation of the historic buildings but open up beautiful views of those buildings, the river, and the more distant edges of downtown as one travels along Mendon. Secondly, the Railroad overpass requires some additional treatments to improve its visual and physical separation of Main Street, and invite travelers into Main Street. Lighting, vegetation, and choices of materials that accent the visual connection could make these improvements.

Preservation of the viewshed should be connected with development or redevelopment of properties fronting on Mendon from Capron down to the river. This would primarily impact four properties; the mill on the southern side and the Farnum House, adjacent vacant land and the dentist's office on the northern side. Setbacks from Mendon Street should be established and building heights should be controlled to ensure this valuable viewshed is maintained. Incentives and bonuses could be included in the regulations to accomplish this viewshed preservation, as well as restrictive standards.

The regulatory standards should be based on the actual views that are to be preserved or gained. To accomplish this, a detailed visual study could determine the viewsheds and their seasonal variations, so that a reasonable design approach could allow new development with certain parameters. If the parameters are too restrictive for appropriate development, then the bonus provisions or public assistance may be necessary. However, the implications will be clearer with the detailed analysis.

Streetscape and Facades: The Public Realm

There are two aspects to the public realm which are important in defining the Downtown. One aspect is the public street; sidewalks, curbs, parking, and travelways within the right-of-way. The other aspect is the building facades and signage, which while private property, are the public side of those properties, and by location in the Downtown become parts of the town's image. There are a number of streetscape treatments that are proposed within this report. However, the facades of the buildings for the most part present a unique historic quality and only need maintenance with few exceptions.

Facade Improvements

Buildings have an average lifespan of 40 years. Many of the downtown buildings far exceed this, which means that their maintenance is an important and costly element to ownership. The bank building is an example where certain compromises were made to maintain as much as possible of the original historic character, yet improve the building materials to reduce long-term maintenance. These choices were permitted because the owner of the building created the market for renovation.

When a major renovation project is not possible, such as in the buildings on South Main Street with a number of small businesses with lower rents, rehabilitation is a more difficult choice. In these cases, the concept of low interest loans or grants may be appropriate. Several communities use CDBG funds for signage and facade improvement loans and grants. Other communities raise local funds to seed these programs. Fifty percent matches, technical assistance, and other program conditions ensure the programs match local needs.

Signage

Signage links closely together with building facade improvements in business districts, and Uxbridge is no exception. As the buildings are improved and users change, the signage will be altered. Signage guidelines are available for historic properties but are not provided as a site plan review component for every property in the central business district. Sign design standards that guide the size, number, placement, material, and lighting of any new signs should be established that allow for a process that ensures creative, yet compatible signs are hung in the downtown.

Streetscape Improvements

Just as the property owners are expected to maintain their properties for the public health safety, and welfare, so too does the town carry a responsibility to maintain its infrastructure. There are several ways to approach these improvements as a program.



Funding

The design of an approach to streetscape could be funded with federal CDBG money, or state funds, such as MassHighway funds, Public Works Economic Development Grant, and MORE funds. Most of these programs require a project connection to housing and job creation. The main street commercial area has a current deficit of jobs and housing allowing a very competitive application for state funds to be presented based on future growth within the existing buildings and proposed mill redevelopment projects.

Design Elements

The streetscape elements; lights, benches, trash cans, planters, trees, and sidewalk treatments, are typically presented as a palette of options that relate to each other and the overall design concept for the area or neighborhood. A series of images have been pulled together for initial consideration of the streetscape elements.

Maintenance

Long-term maintenance of public improvements are always a concern when certain improvements are made that require upkeep. Several methods to ensure some maintenance could be provided, including simple adoption of planting areas by adjacent land owners and merchants, or a special business improvement district sponsored by the local business owners.

Specific Streetscape Recommendations

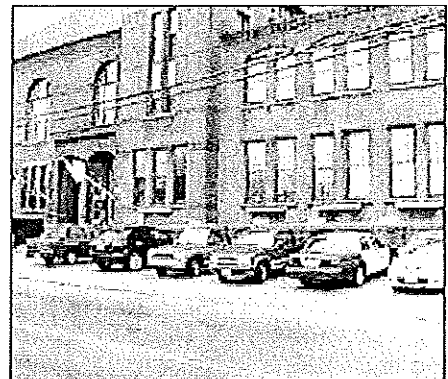
There are several areas where certain design concepts are recommended that should be consistent with the overall streetscape plan, but could be acted on at any phase of improvements.

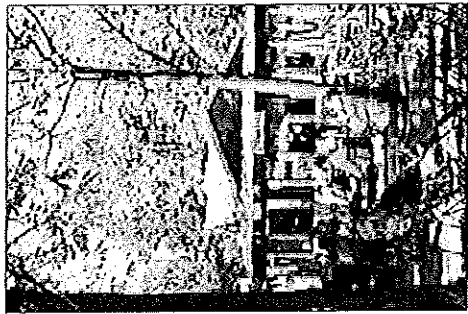
Trail Concept

Just as the region benefits from the connections provided by the Blackstone River Heritage Corridor, so could the Downtown and Uxbridge benefit from a local historical trail defined by simple markers and public spaces. Interpretive markers and information kiosks will provide a method of connecting both sides of the river and the North and South Main Street commercial sections. Well-placed, the markers could also help break up the on-street visual impact of large expanses of off-street parking.

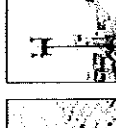
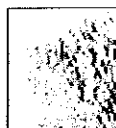
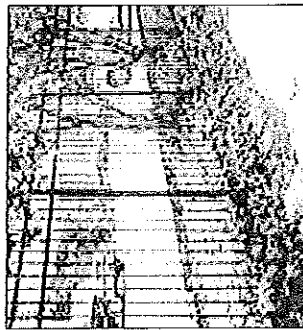
Town Hall Parking Space Relocation

The few parking spaces in the front of Town Hall are creating a greater impact on the visual qualities of this historic building than providing valuable car storage on a daily basis. The use of the on-street parking spaces and possibly added handicapped access parking, this pavement could be altered for relatively little cost to greatly improve the "curb appeal" of Town Hall. The users of those spaces could be relocated to the town lot several properties south of the building.



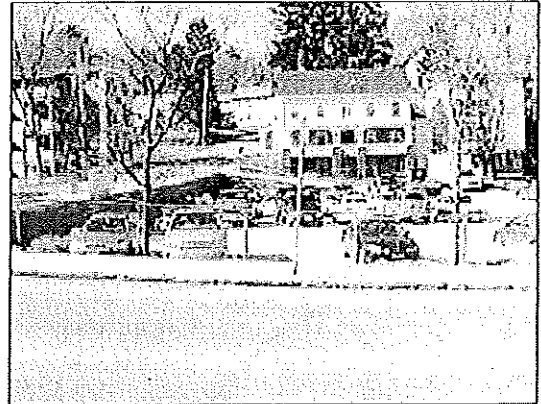


PARKING LOT TREATMENT



Treatment for Off-street Parking

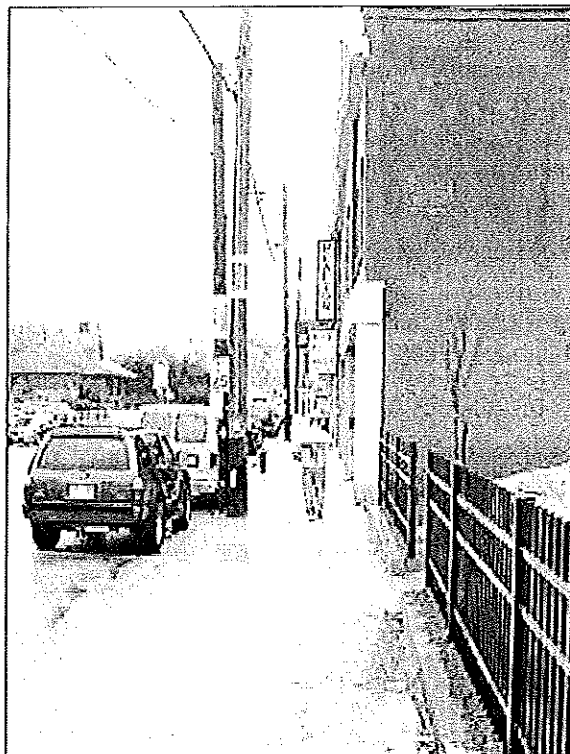
A common problem in many commercial centers is how to handle off-street parking and pedestrian access to create a vital and connected street. Parking lots fronting on sidewalks have been proven to be deterrents to pedestrians considering whether to walk in front of the lot to businesses beyond the lot. Consequently, the use of one or more design methods to make the pedestrians feel more comfortable will help to connect businesses.



In addition, the parking lots at the intersection of routes 122 and 16 at the center create a visual impact that is not conducive to understanding the overall qualities of Main Street. Consequently, one of the treatments suggested to mitigate the view of parked cars is recommended, together with the consideration for a trail marker or kiosk (see above) to 'activate' the location.

Utilities

Undergrounding overhead utility lines is commonly seen as a significant visual improvement to a commercial center. However, the cost of undergrounding utilities is significant and is not funded by state grant programs. However, one option is adoption of Chapter 166, section 22 of the state law which allows two percent of the electric and telecom utility rates to go towards undergrounding those utilities.



Accomplishing the recommendations will require public and private actions, and funding. Therefore to be effective, implementation should consider the organization and administrative requirements necessary to accomplish the plan in a coordinated fashion.

The recommended elements of the implementation plan are:

- A Toolkit – Expansion of the range of administrative, financial and regulatory tools available to the town for completing public actions and encouraging private investment.
- A Plan of Action – A summary and phased plan of the recommended investments that need to be made to unlock the potential economic revitalization of Downtown.
- Organization – Define the town goals and responsibilities for the shepherding through the actions.

Organization

Putting Downtown and the Bernat Mill into a productive place in the community requires a series of organizational steps that build the base for making choices for their revitalization. These steps are designed to create the partnerships that leave the Town in a position to control the ultimate plan for redevelopment.

- Adopt a Policy Directive – The chief elected officials, the Selectmen, should lead the effort by establishing town policy to act according to the remainder of the steps. This will ensure that further actions and discussions can be advanced with the non-town entities such as the state and federal agencies. The policy should state the ultimate objective, generally defined through the vision, and commit the town to taking the series of steps that could achieve that vision.
- Designate an Implementation Team – Success requires a team of individuals committed to completion of the plans, such as concluding contracts, agreements, and negotiations. One step is the planning to decide on an appropriate plan for action. This requires analysis of the properties, consensus building, and designing a program that can be implemented. The other step is implementation. The team must become familiar with financial and legal standards that are unique to each project. This team must also be prepared to respond to changes in direction that will occur in a complex redevelopment project. The proposed tasks for this team are:
 1. Advancing zoning amendments to define the downtown as a land use priority;
 2. Obtaining grants and funds to finance the public improvements;
 3. Completing the next level of design of the project elements to determine feasibility;
 4. Defining the program phasing so that as different parts of the plan advance, the other connecting elements can be arranged to fit into the total program.
- Coordinate with other levels of government – Similarly, the State legislative body should be informed to ensure that they are familiar with the plan of redevelopment and with their potential roles in ushering through supporting legislation. This supporting legislation will be necessary for certain legal agreements and easements that will be needed to accomplish the plan. At the same time, certain federal programs such as road and railroad infrastructure (SAFETEA-LU, federal transportation program) could be explored with the assistance of the area's federal legislators.
- Funding and Programs – The suggested "toolkit" for implementing the redevelopment

project was provided in the list in the previous section of this report. These include funding mechanisms, zoning regulations, and capital program decisions. Many of these require Town Meeting action and should be scheduled for the Warrant as soon as possible. Other actions only require the filing of an application, such as the grant programs. However, to make the strongest application, the initial steps of setting a policy direction for the Town should be completed to support the program requests.

The Toolkit

The financial and administrative burden of completing the vision for downtown requires a long-term supporting management structure that should be supported with financial programs, agreements, and land use powers available to the Town. These are the recommended tools that the Town should be prepared to use the following:

Downtown Overlay District

Zoning is one of the town's most powerful tools to focus private investment. However, it appears that the downtown zoning districts in relation to the actual land uses - and the perception of what the downtown is to residents - is not clearly connected. An overlay district could provide some consistency of land use designations, recognize the key distinctions between the different sections of downtown, and ensure the historic qualities of the district remain, but allow additional supporting development and uses. This valuable tool could be supplemented by incorporating certain design and performance standards, if necessary. This downtown district could be similar in structure to the Historic Mill Adaptive Reuse Overlay District. This type of zoning could also apply in a similar fashion as the Waucantuck Mill overlay district.

Action – Review options for overlay zoning and consider draft appropriate changes for review and discussion.

Design Guidelines and Performance Standards

Design Guidelines and Performance Standards are found in some of the newer advances in land use regulation. These are standards that go beyond the general form for construction defined within most zoning standards and gets to some of the detail and context of the buildings so that the character and quality are high, and the livability and sustainability are built in to the project.

Design guidelines are typically used to clarify what is acceptable in terms of site and building design based on a public purpose. The standards do not redefine the community character, but instead reinforce it and improve the certainty of what the design will create. A common example is specifying the size, location and construction of signs to maintain a particular look and feel on the public street. These design guidelines are meant to complement and work in concert with Historic District guidelines and not be in conflict with them.

Action - Add design guidelines and performance standards to specify desired aspects of redevelopment possibly through the zoning, or as guidance for project reviews.

Community Preservation Act Funding

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a local funding mechanism to pay for the acquisition of land, affordable housing and historic preservation. If adopted by the community, a property tax of up to 3% may be set aside for the purposes of the fund, with exemptions for low income families and up to \$100,000 of housing costs. A portion of the CPA funds could be used to fund acquisition of land, construction of improvements for recreation, historic preservation, and downtown housing. All of these elements are found in the downtown vision.

Action – Explore the potential for the Town to use the CPA program for funding acquisition of the land.

State Funding

Certain State funds are available to help advance the project, depending on the final decision for the reuse plan. These include planning and zoning work, affordable housing programs and infrastructure grants. As examples:

- The affordable housing programs are quite numerous but include not only subsidies to the housing projects but also, direct subsidies to the Town under chapter 40R.
- The Public Works Economic Development (PWED) grant program is a useful option for road and other infrastructure improvements, when associated with economic development, job growth and housing.
- Planning funds for redevelopment can be obtained from the Priority Development Sites, chapter 43D program.
- The Transit Oriented Development program was also reauthorized with \$30 million in funds for bicycle, pedestrian and housing improvements related to transit.

Action – Complete applications for grant programs and discuss affordable housing program options with the Department of Housing and Community Development in preparation for future projects.

Plan of Action

The following is a summary of the action steps that have been discussed in this report. This section is organized by strategies that are regulatory or programmatic and those that are bricks and mortar projects.

Regulatory/ Programmatic Strategies

Regulatory Strategies

- Establish a formal delineation of downtown that is reflected in public policy documents such as the Zoning Bylaw.
- Amend the zoning to create a Downtown Commercial District that has a mix of uses specific to a downtown area. This mix should include both commercial and residential uses and should prohibit the currently allowed automotive uses and shopping centers. The district could appear as an overlay district like the one that has been adopted for the mills.

- Establish shared parking agreements between private land owners and the Town of Uxbridge to formalize the overflow private parking areas as shared public parking spaces. By formalizing this relationship, there is little need to construct additional parking in Downtown.

Design Strategies

- Preserve the viewshed connected with development or redevelopment of properties fronting on Mendon Street from Capron Street down to the river. This primarily impacts four properties; the mill on the southern side and the Farnum House, adjacent vacant land and the dentist's office on the northern side. Setbacks from Mendon Street should be established and building heights should be controlled to ensure this valuable viewshed is maintained. Incentives and bonuses could be included in the regulations to accomplish this viewshed preservation, as well as restrictive standards.
- Complete a detailed visual study for downtown that determines what the regulatory standards should be based on the actual views that are to be preserved or gained. Viewsheds and their seasonal variations should be considered so that a reasonable design approach could allow new development with certain parameters. If the parameters are too restrictive for appropriate development, then bonus provisions or public assistance may be necessary. However, the implications will be clearer with the detailed analysis.
- Establish sign design standards that guide the size, number, placement, material, and lighting of any new signs should be established that allow for a process that ensures creative, yet compatible signs are hung in the downtown.
- Create design guidelines for the properties in Downtown as well as the public spaces they face. The streetscape elements; lights, benches, trash cans, planters, trees, and sidewalk treatments, are typically presented as a palette of options that relate to each other and the overall design concept for the area or neighborhood.

Programmatic Strategies

- Establish a simple program for adoption of planting areas by adjacent land owners and merchants, or a special business improvement district sponsored by the local business owners. Long-term maintenance of public improvements are always a concern when certain improvements are made that require upkeep
- Offer low interest loans or grants to building owners for façade improvements. Several communities use CDBG funds for signage and façade improvement loans and grants. Other communities raise local funds to seed these programs. Fifty percent matches, technical assistance, and other program conditions ensure the programs match local needs.

Bricks and Mortar Strategies

Signage Strategies

- Clearly mark each gateway point with a welcoming gateway sign that indicates entry into Downtown Uxbridge. Each gateway sign should double as a way-finding sign and indicate what points of interest lie ahead in the direction being traveled. Each gateway sign should have information for automobile passengers as well as pedestrians.
- Place wayfinding signs at the intersection of Rt. 16 and 122 at Saver's Bank, the parking lot at Saver's Bank, and the rail bridge/ underpass located on Rt. 16 before the Bernat Mill. These signs should clearly indicate the location of major points of interest such as South Main Street Commercial District, the town common, and the Bernat Mill (as well as the two mills located just past it).

- Visually identify recreational areas with way-finding signs and the recreational paths that connect them. These areas are Capron Pond park, the kayak/ canoe launch area, and the picnic area located along the river. Their location should be obvious from the functional paths as well as the recreational paths.
- Establish a local historical trail defined by simple markers and public spaces. Interpretive markers and information kiosks will provide a method of connecting both sides of the river and the North and South Main Street commercial sections. Well-placed markers could also help break up the on-street visual impact of large expanses of off-street parking.

Physical Renovation Strategies

- Improve the Railroad overpass with some additional treatments to improve its visual and physical separation of Main Street, and invite travelers into Main Street. Lighting, vegetation, public art and choices of materials that accent the visual connection could make these improvements. Complete a large scale renovation or replacement of the rail bridge/underpass if at all possible or as funding allows.
- Remove the brick security wall between the buildings at the northern edge of the Bernat Mill property in order to invite pedestrians to enter the Bernat Mill complex and interact with all it has to offer. This simple step would still allow preservation of the historic buildings and open up beautiful views of those buildings, the river, and the more distant edges of downtown as one travels along Mendon Street.

Infrastructure Improvement Strategies

- Evaluate the potential for a pedestrian crossing from South Main Street, over the river, to the Bernat Mill at the Senior Center.
- Enhance the intersections along Main Street with crosswalk treatments which can help make pedestrians feel as though they are completing a continuous walk and not ending one segment and beginning another one.
- Connect residential areas within a 10 minute walk from Downtown with well maintained and easily walkable sidewalks. Sidewalks should be examined for continuity. Any needed sidewalk improvements or additions should be made.
- On-street parking should be maintained and well marked.

Economic Development Strategies

- Replace some of the parking spaces at 107 South Main Street closest to the street (two or three spaces at the most) with a visitor kiosk that can offer anything from information to coffee to information on bike or canoe rental. Because the canoe/ kayak launch area is near the Mill, it may be possible to purchase rental equipment at this small location and pick it up at the Bernat Mill.
- Make façade and landscaping improvements to the front of the property at 31 South Main Street that make this property feel more like part of South Main Street and the fabric of the streetscape.
- Allow for some accommodation of youth activities of some sort in the redeveloped Bernat Mill complex. Civic uses for seniors, youth and other municipal or educational services located at Bernat would provide additional reasons for people to connect to the Mill from South Main Street.

Streetscape Strategies

- Maintain the current location of the Route 16 and Main Street intersection. Moving the Main Street and Route 16 intersection would further separate the town green and would not be recommended if the importance of the green as an anchor to downtown is the primary consideration.
- Improve and protect the view of downtown from Mendon Street. As one rounds the bend past Capron Street at the Farnum House, a key vista opens up that announces the town as a mill town with a substantial downtown that includes civic and public buildings and a historic river park.
- Implement an overall streetscape plan that follows future design guidelines. There are several areas where certain design concepts are recommended that should be consistent with the overall streetscape plan, but could be acted on at any phase of improvements.
- Eliminate all but the required handicap parking spaces from the front of Town Hall. These spaces are creating a negative impact on the visual qualities of this historic building which is not balanced by the small value it adds as a daily car storage space. This pavement could be altered for relatively little cost to greatly improve the "curb appeal" of Town Hall. The users of those spaces could be relocated to the town lot located a few properties south of the building.

The following list of phases outlines the recommended action steps for implementing this plan. The actions are divided into phases based on the ideal timeframes by which they would be initiated. The first phase is the baseline for establishing a framework for implementation that the town can move forward from. Past this phase, the committee that is assembled has to make decisions about how to prioritize the projects that are listed in the previous section under "Action Plan". The remaining phases are meant to act as a roadmap for advancing any of the projects that are listed in the action plan. Cost considerations are provided for some projects where the information was readily available. Additional and more detailed cost estimates for specific projects should be addressed during the prioritization and implementation phase of the project.

Phase I: Begins Day One

Organization

- **Designate an Implementation Team.** Assemble a team of individuals committed to the completion of the plans, such as coordinating contracts, agreements, and negotiations.
- **Adopt a Policy Directive.** Adopt a town policy that states the ultimate objective of the plan, generally defined through the vision, and commit the town to taking the series of steps that could achieve the vision.
- **Coordinate with Other Levels of Government.** State and federal legislators should be informed of the plan and its implementation strategy to ensure that they play an active role in ushering through supporting legislation and funding requests. This should be ongoing throughout all phases of implementation.
- **Funding and Programs.** The preparation of grant applications (PWED, TOD, MORE, etc.) is a part of almost every strategy in that securing funding for many of the project is critical to the plan's overall success. It is important that funding is requested in a coordinated and well organized manner and continues throughout all phases of implementation.

Regulatory/ Design/ Programmatic Strategies

- **Establish a formal delineation of downtown** that can be reflected in public policy documents such as the Zoning Bylaw and that sets the framework for advancing all of the projects.

Bricks and Mortar Strategies

- **Prioritize the list of projects.** Use this prioritization to move ahead on securing funding and convening discussions on implementation with the public, legislators, and other project partners.

Phase II: Beginning of Project (This can be any project from the action plan list and will have to be modified according to the level of complexity and funding that the project requires.)

Organization

- Information disseminated on projects to support financial plan
- Town-wide bond vote

Regulatory

- Open discussions on regulatory changes
- Submission of regulations for adoption by Town Meeting, and town boards and commissions

Infrastructure

- Initiate design process; divided into phases

Phase III

Organization

- Implementation team transitions to building committee
- Issuance of grants or loans for façade and sign improvement program

Regulatory

- Implementation of regulations

Infrastructure

- Issuing contract documents for bid

Phase IV

Organization

- Construction oversight

Regulatory

- Continue implementation and consider further revisions as needed

Infrastructure

- Construction of public improvements

Project Costs

The following is an estimate of how much some of the specific projects will cost. These numbers are rough estimates based on similar projects completed in the past. As with any project, a range is provided that reflects the level of project sophistication that is decided upon by the Implementation Team.

- Phase I Streetscape: \$1.2 to 1.6 million
- Railroad Bridge: \$2.5 to \$3 million
- Pedestrian Bridge: \$750,000 to 1 million
- Trail markers/ kiosks: \$25,000 to 60,000
- New Road: \$500,000 to 625,000
- Façade Improvements: \$50,000 to 100,000

As projects are chosen for implementation, true estimates for construction will have to be determined.

UXBRIDGE HEADLINES ON FEBRUARY 20TH, 2018

UXBRIDGE Voted Most Livable Community in Blackstone Valley

UXBRIDGE HISTORIC DISTRICT Receives Award for Best Town in Massachusetts

UXBRIDGE: Bringing Grace to the Valley

By Supporting Their Own Downtown, UXBRIDGE BOOMS

Senior Center Renovation Project Attracts Baby Boomers

From Ashes to Revitalization in Downtown UXBRIDGE

B-LINE: East to Boston, South to Providence

Uxbridge Fights to Curb Excessive Commercial Growth

UXBRIDGE DOWNTOWN among New England's Pretties

UXBRIDGE HAS DEFINED ITSELF

UXBRIDGE a Quaint "New England" Town

VISIT HISTORIC UXBRIDGE Original Buildings, 1710 John Farnum House, Historic Mills

UXBRIDGE; A Trip in to Past

NEW RAIL LINE OPENS; Worcester to Providence

UXBRIDGE T-STOP FACILITIES COMPLETED

COME LOOK AT AN HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND TOWN

UXBRIDGE HISTORY REVISITED

UXBRIDGE to Discuss Vision of Downtown

GREEN LINE COMES TO UXBRIDGE

People and Business Come to UXBRIDGE and Thrive