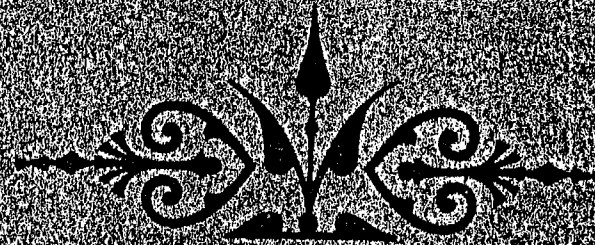


MIDDLETOWN



Downtown Development Plan

Downtown Development Plan Middletown, Delaware

A Publication of
The Delmarva Consortium

Design Study Prepared by
Ben-Ami Friedman & Associates, Inc.
New York, New York

Economic Market Study Prepared by
College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy
University of Delaware

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March 1980

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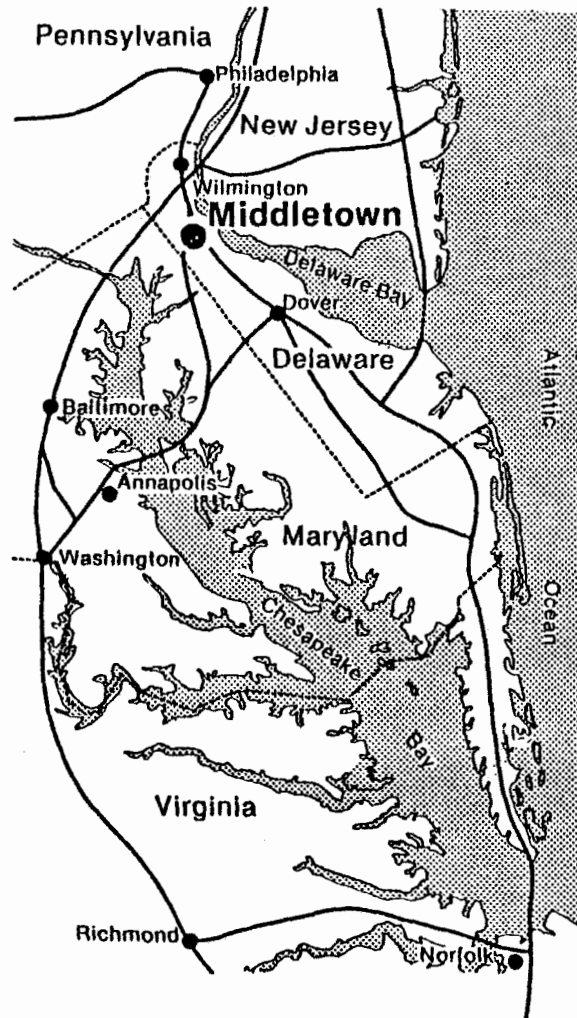
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Introduction



The Delmarva Consortium's Downtown Revitalization Demonstration Project believes that downtown revitalization can provide a new source of economic growth to communities while they preserve their unique architectural and historical features and small town character. Middletown, Delaware and three other Peninsula communities -- Smyrna, Delaware, Snow Hill, Maryland, and Onancock, Virginia -- were competitively selected by the Consortium. Key to their selection was evidence of a joint commitment by the local government and private sector to reverse the decline of their downtowns.

As a winner Middletown received technical assistance services including a streetscape and design study and an economic market analysis. The results of these are detailed within, having been presented at a public meeting in December. The studies were undertaken with a view to identifying key strengths and weaknesses associated with the downtown commercial area and to making suggestions for improving the physical and economic vitality of these districts.

We hope these suggestions stimulate your vision and that you choose to implement some or all of the improvements as time, opportunity and funds permit. A positive climate for expanding markets for rural businesses and contributing to the commercial revitalization of small town "Main Street" exists, as evidenced in the recently released Federal Small Community and Rural Development Policy.

We thank city government and local businesses as well as citizens of Middletown for their cooperation in our work in their community and encourage them to work together to build on Middletown's special qualities.

THE DELMARVA CONSORTIUM

Delaware Department of Community Affairs and Economic Development
Maryland Department of Economic and Community Development
Virginia Housing and Community Development
New Castle County Department of Community Development and Housing

Design Resources



Upon entering the center of Middletown, Delaware, one is immediately struck by a sense of place and history. Indeed, the routes along the two major thoroughfares -- Main and Broad Streets -- contain fine examples of architecture that range from the late 18th Century to the early 20th Century. In recognition of Middletown's architectural heritage, it has been designated as an historic district on the National Register of Historic Places.

The town center is situated around the crossing formed by Main and Broad Streets, known locally as "Four Corners". The town was laid out around these two early roads and grew outward from Four Corners. According to the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs of the State of Delaware, this crossroads area reflects almost every period of the town's history. Although it has undergone considerable change since originally laid out, the design and placement of the five buildings that front on Four Corners are very important to its composition.

Set into the southwestern corner is Cochran Square, named for Robert A. Cochran, a founding settler in the mid-18th Century. During the 20th Century, the Square became a humble parking lot with only a narrow strip along Main Street allocated to a World War I monument. The west side of the square is framed by the remains of the Witherspoon Inn, built in 1761; a recent fire and insensitive renovation have drastically obliterated its historic features. The south side of the square is faced by an Italianate structure built in 1871 to house a thriving mercantile building, now a tavern and apartments.

The northwest corner of the crossroads was filled in 1918 by a Georgian Revival brick structure occupied by the Delaware Trust Company. The northeast corner is distinguished by the most visible landmark: a large brick Victorian commercial building with wooden towers projecting from both corners of its Mansard roof. It was originally a general store, but recently it has been vacant and in a state of deterioration. On the southeast corner is a brick Federal-style structure which dates back to the early 1800's. Once a residence, it was later converted to commercial use and is now vacant.

The north side of Main Street on either side of Four Corners still retains significant architectural integrity, while the south side has lost most of its early structures. South Broad Street contains three significant Second Empire brick buildings in which the fire hall and the district court are located.

It is clear that Middletown's architectural heritage is its greatest physical resource. Unfortunately, this resource has been tragically abused in the last

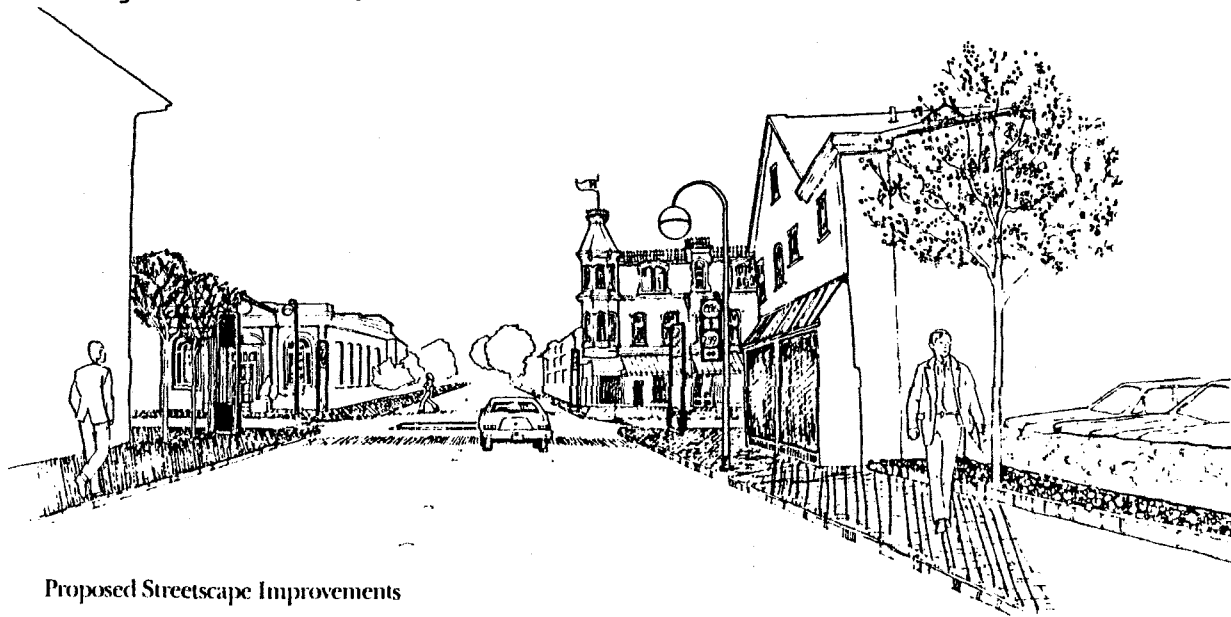


Existing Streetscape

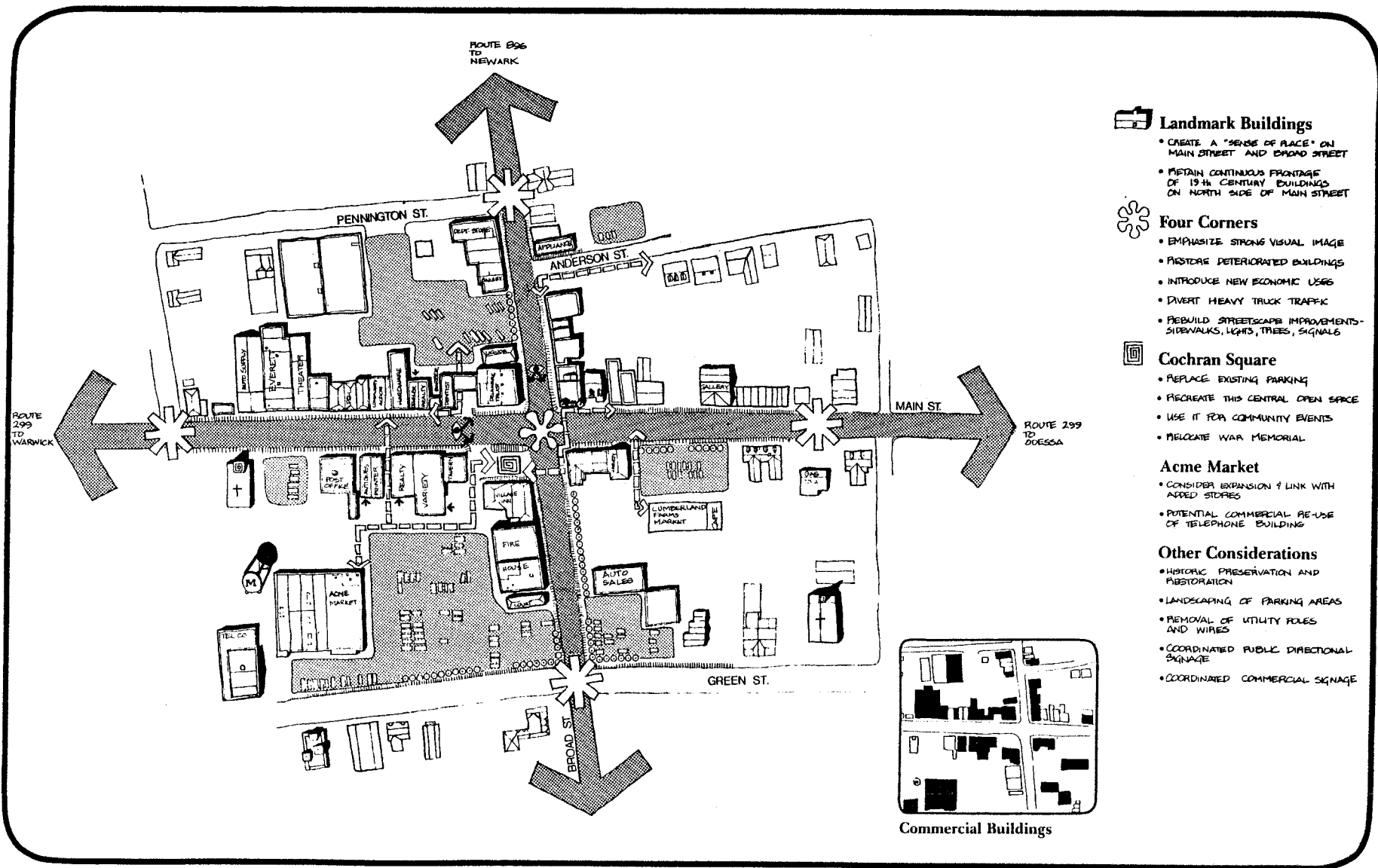
30 years by insensitive remodelling and demolitions. It is now vital for the local government to protect its historic architecture for the future by specific regulations and review procedures.

Standing at Four Corners, one quickly becomes aware that the town's most pressing problem is the heavy volume of truck traffic converging on this point at all times. According to information provided by the New Castle County Department of Planning, the principal problem is caused by trucks moving between US 301, north of Middletown, and US 13 on the east, via Main Street. Most of these trucks are large tractors and trailers which generate considerable noise, vibration and fumes, and are visually objectionable. State Highway Department traffic counts indicate that 30-35% of all daily traffic in both directions on Main Street immediately east and west of the town limits is truck traffic. These figures average out to about one truck per minute at Four Corners; at peak traffic periods, this figure could easily be as many as three or four trucks per minute.

It is obvious that this traffic must be removed from the town center if revitalization is to succeed. The first action would be to install signing on US 13 and US 301 directing truck traffic to a truck route bypassing Middletown. Such signing would also indicate "Downtown Business District" to discourage trucks. However because trucks are not required to follow the posted truck route, other measures might also have to be taken to discourage this traffic.

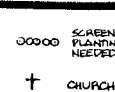
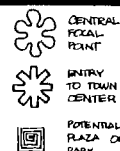


Proposed Streetscape Improvements



DESIGN RESOURCES

Middletown



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Opportunities

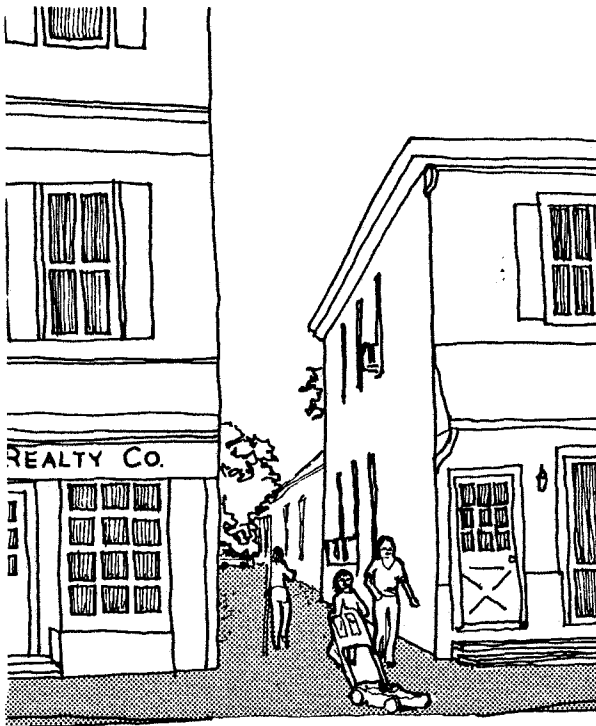
Because of its crossroads intersection, building layout and architectural resources, Middletown offers excellent design potential for physical and economic revitalization. This revitalization effort has two major focuses: Four corners and the Acme Market.

Four Corners and the surrounding buildings and spaces are the major focal point of Middletown. The following actions are recommended as a joint public and private effort for the near future:

- Cochran Square should be re-established as Middletown's central town square. Preliminary research shows that most of this site is public property and, therefore, presumably available for such use. Parking should be relocated so that a pedestrian plaza can be created.
- All streetscapes within the Four Corners intersection should be rebuilt with specially paved sidewalks and crosswalks, trees, street lights, and directional signs.
- A building facade restoration program should be concentrated on Four Corners and then expanded throughout the downtown area. Care should be taken that all building restorations and renovations are prepared by a qualified restoration architect.
- Additional public parking should be developed on the east side of South Broad Street.
- A search should be made for appropriate investors and occupants for vacant buildings. For example, interest has been expressed in relocating the Appoquinimink Public Library from its crowded space in the Town Hall to a location at Four Corners. The Library might be combined with a stationery/book store to provide a multiple attraction, and an opportunity to generate revenues. Consideration should be given to antiques, arts and crafts and related uses which make sense here given the historic architectural setting. Also, the influx of young families to the area points up the need for home improvement and hardware items, children's furniture, appliances, personal services, and health foods in the downtown area.

The Acme Market is a key factor in the economic role of the downtown as a local convenience shopping area. Accordingly, the following improvements are proposed:

- The town government, local property owners and the market owners should work out a mutual plan to expand the market, businesses next to the market, and improve parking.
- Pedestrian links should be developed between the Acme Market and businesses on Main Street and Cochran Square. In this manner a unified shopping area with shared parking would begin to emerge.



Revitalization Concept Plan

Cochran Square

CREATE A NEW TOWN SQUARE ON ORIGINAL HISTORIC SITE.

Acme Market

PROVIDE FOR EXPANSION & PEDESTRIAN LINK TO MAIN STREET.

Streetscapes

- NEW SIDEWALKS
- CROSSWALKS
- STREET LIGHTS
- TRAFFIC SIGNALS
- DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE
- STREET FURNISHINGS
- REMOVE OVERHEAD WIRES

Facade Improvements

CLEAN & RESTORE ORIGINAL BUILDING FACADES & ORNAMENTATION. INSTALL SIGNS & AWNINGS APPROPRIATE TO FACADE DESIGN.

Pedestrian Links

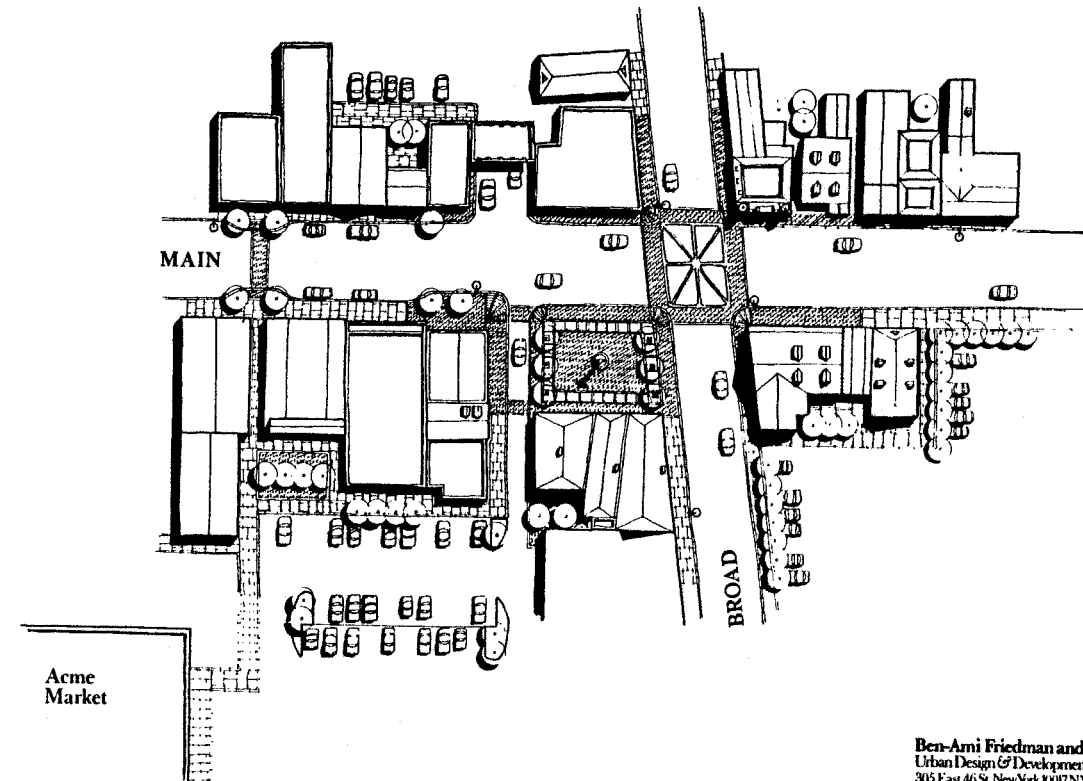
PROVIDE PAVED & LIGHTED WALKWAYS BETWEEN PARKING LOTS & BUSINESSES.

Parking

PROVIDE LANDSCAPED SETBACKS, INTERIOR TREE PLANTING & LIGHTING.

Rear Access

ENCOURAGE PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO BUSINESSES FROM PARKING LOTS.

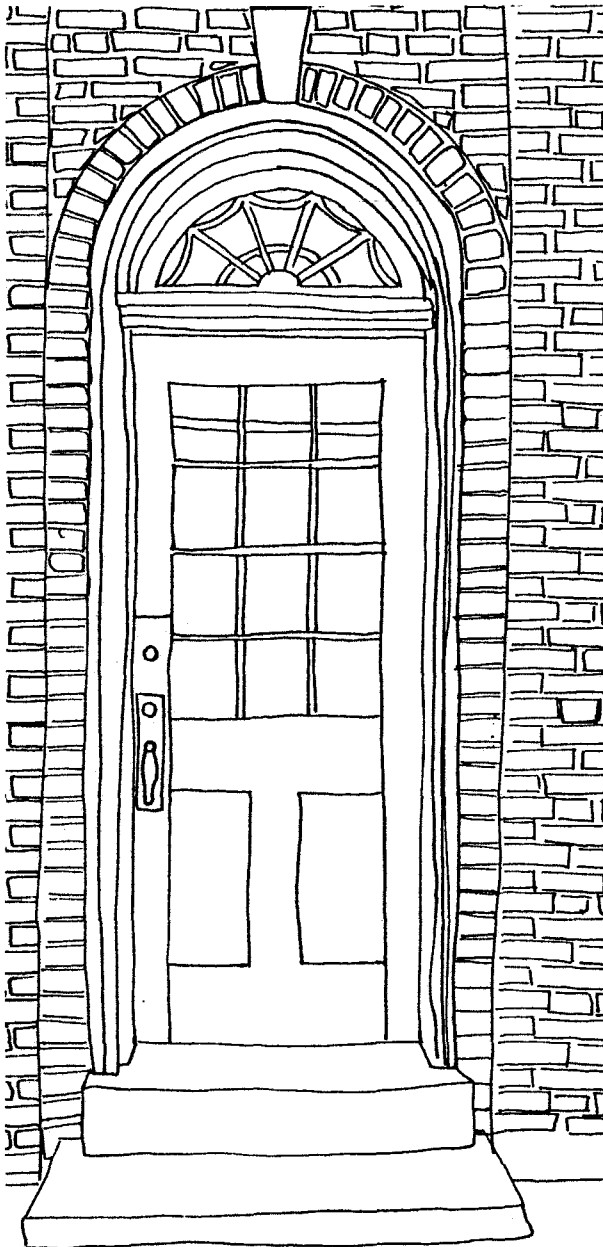


Middletown – Delaware

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Implementation



As with many small towns that have experienced economic decline in the past, it will take a major effort for Middletown to reverse this trend by a local revitalization effort. The most important ingredient to commercial revitalization is not money, but creative and dedicated leadership. This commitment has been made in Middletown and the process of revitalization is underway.

The drawings on these pages represent the kinds of improvements that have generally been accepted as a first priority for the rehabilitation for the Four Corners area. Such an effort could be worked out as a joint venture by the town government and agencies of the county, state and federal governments in conjunction with commitments for building restoration by owners of the properties at Four Corners.

An approximate budget for constructing Cochran Square in the manner shown on the opposite page would be about \$60,000. A reasonable budget for 400 feet of completely new streetscapes along both sides of Main Street and another 200 feet on both sides of Broad Street would be approximately \$100,000 over several years. Both estimates exclude major utility or subsurface changes.

The following actions are suggested to begin implementation of public and private improvements by the end of 1980 or early 1981:

First Half of 1980

- Hold coordinating meeting with county, state and federal representatives.
- Obtain local bank participation.
- Form an LDC (Local Development Corporation), get state approval.
- Prepare feasibility study for special downtown assessment district.
- Retain a restoration architect for comprehensive design administration.
- Prepare and legislate design standards for building restoration and signage.
- Negotiate agreements with owners and merchants to restore buildings and rehabilitate properties.
- Prepare applications for various loan and grant programs.
- Begin tenant search and commercial promotion program.
- Budget and commence with design contract for public improvements to Four Corners and Cochran Square.
- Begin property acquisition for public parking on South Broad Street.
- Prepare restoration plans for historic buildings at Four Corners.

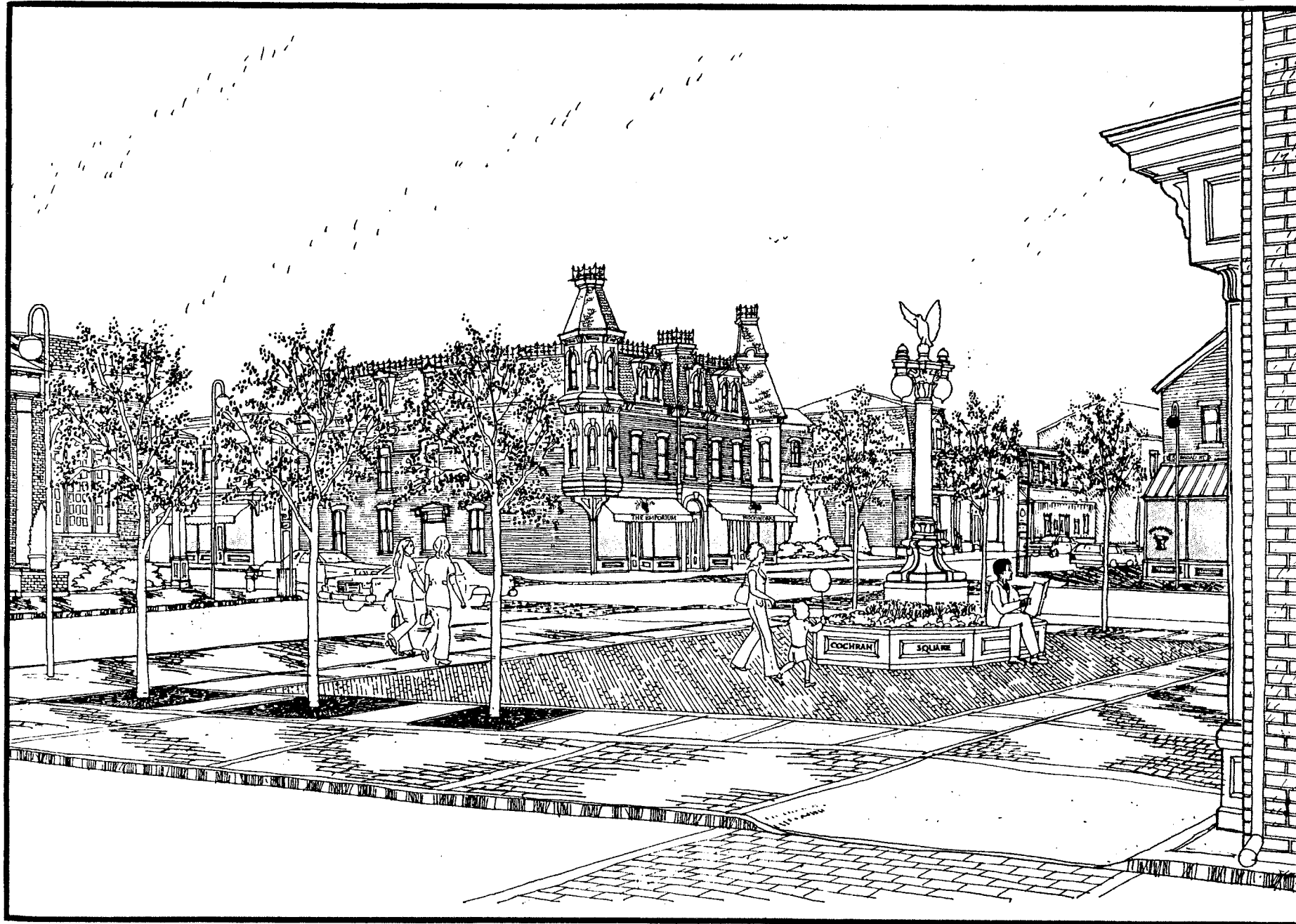
Second Half of 1980

- Establish special downtown assessment district.
- Initiate and coordinate programs of LDC and assessment district.
- Merchants and owners submit applications for various types of restoration loans and grants.
- Complete construction documents and advertise for public improvements to Four Corners and Cochran Square.
- Commence design of public parking on South Broad Street.

First half of 1981

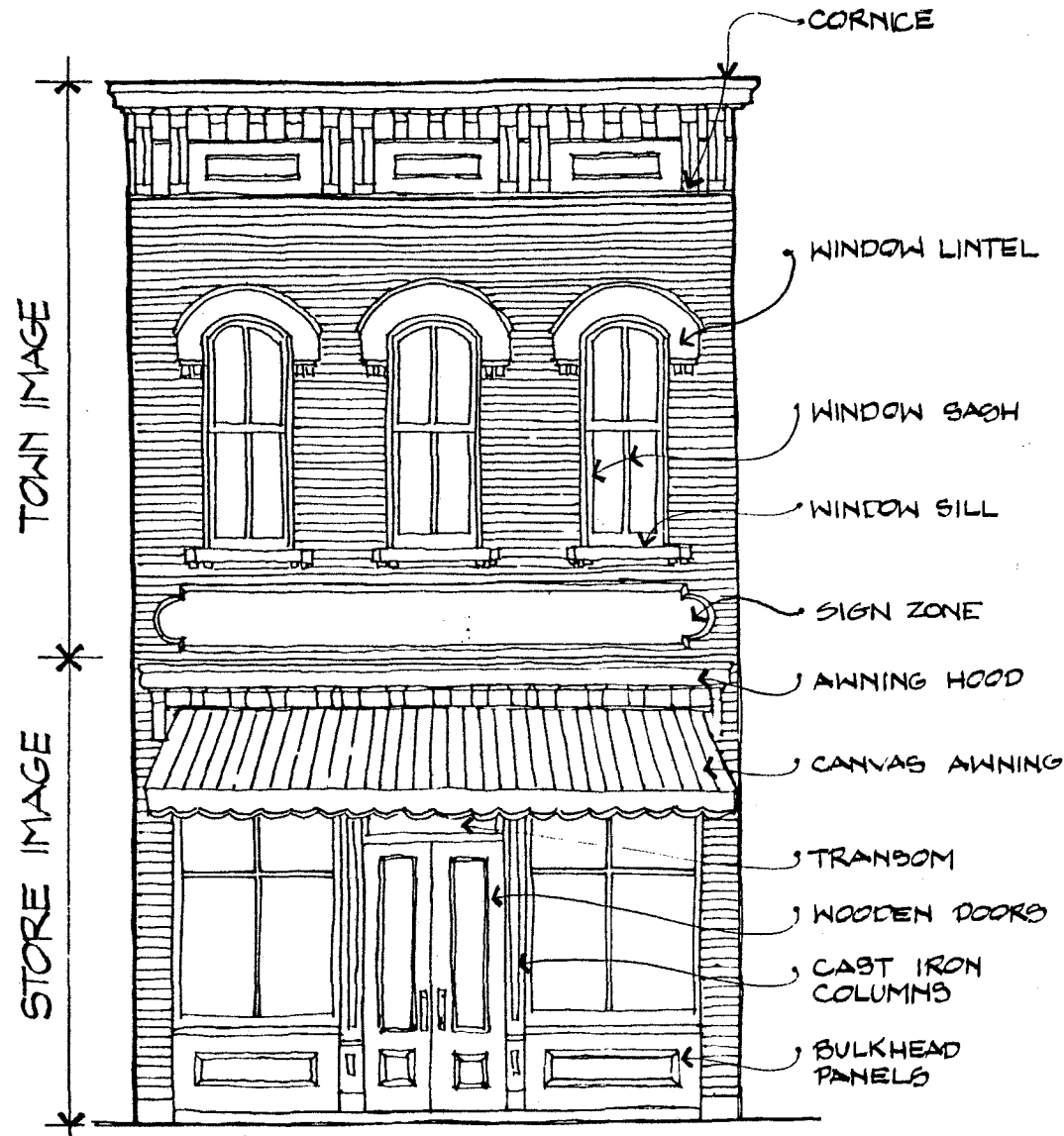
- Start construction of public improvements and parking.
- Merchants and owners receive funds and begin restoration of buildings.

View of Four Corners showing proposed improvement of Cochran Square and restoration of historic buildings



Architectural Styles

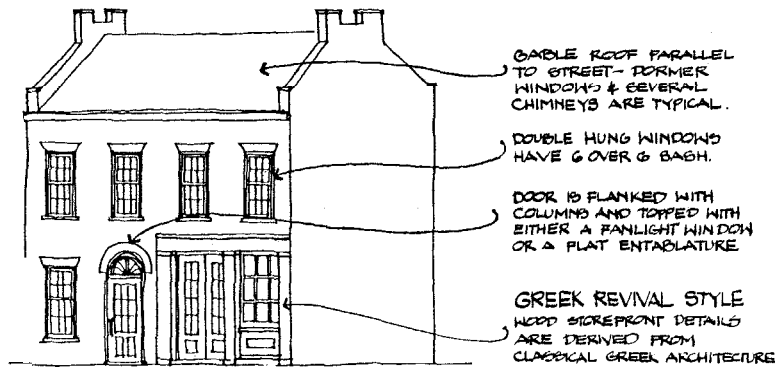
PARTS OF A BUILDING



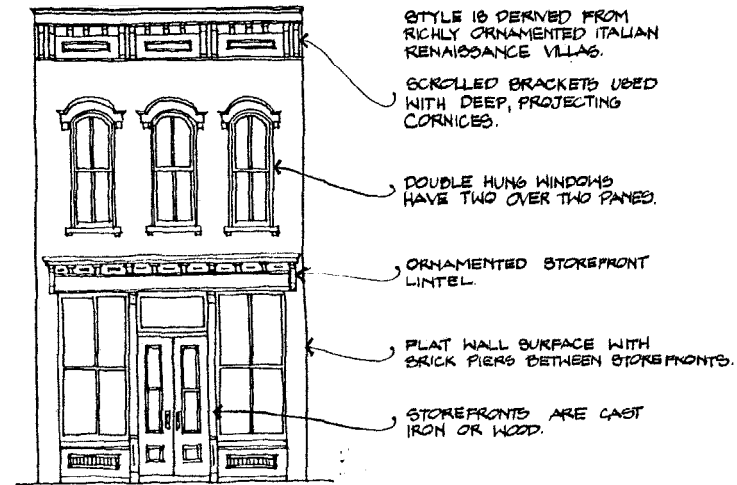
The vitality and personality of a downtown commercial district is to a large extent determined by its architectural character. The towns of the Delmarva Peninsula are fortunate to have a large variety of historic buildings that are relatively intact. These buildings illustrate the history of each town and the evolution of various architectural styles from the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The sensitive restoration of this unique resource is a key factor in successfully recapturing the vitality of these downtown commercial districts. Particular attention must be given to the intricate ornamentation in brick, wood, iron, stone, stained glass and brass. Proper restoration of this wealth is crucial. Stripping or covering original ornamentation for the sake of "modernization" is definitely inappropriate; and so is the remodelling from one original architectural style to another. Illustrated on the opposite page is a guide to determining in what style a building is constructed and the salient characteristics that should be retained.

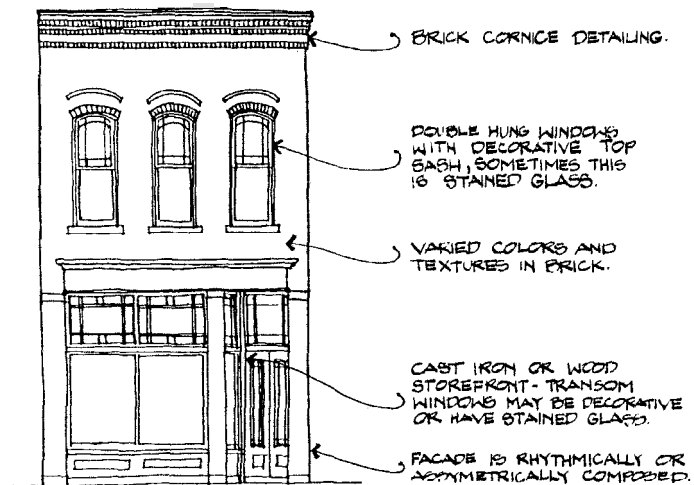
FEDERAL STYLE 1790-1830



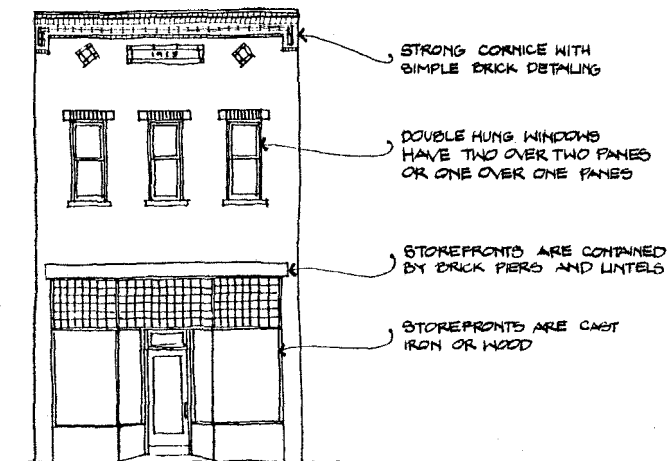
ITALIANATE STYLE 1865-1885



QUEEN ANNE STYLE 1875-1900



20TH CENTURY COMMERCIAL 1900-1920



Streetscapes

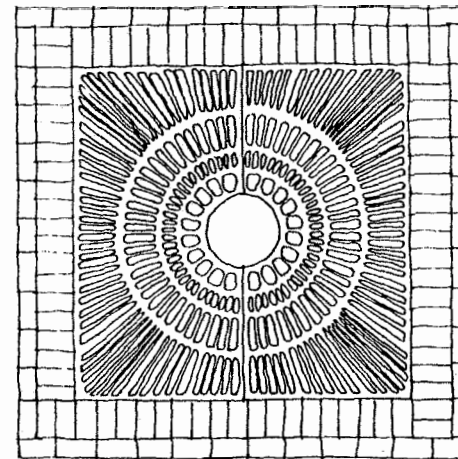
Most town centers on the Delmarva Peninsula have developed characteristically around narrow streets. As pressures of vehicular traffic and parking needs increased over the years, roadways have been widened and sidewalks narrowed. Today many of these sidewalks provide only minimum widths for pedestrian needs.

For downtown commercial revitalization to succeed, increased numbers of people need to be attracted to shop, browse, socialize and do business. Much will depend on providing a safe and appealing pedestrian environment in conjunction with restored building facades and improved merchandising. Accordingly, the public streetscape needs to be renovated in keeping with a carefully prepared design that is befitting the character of the historic town center.

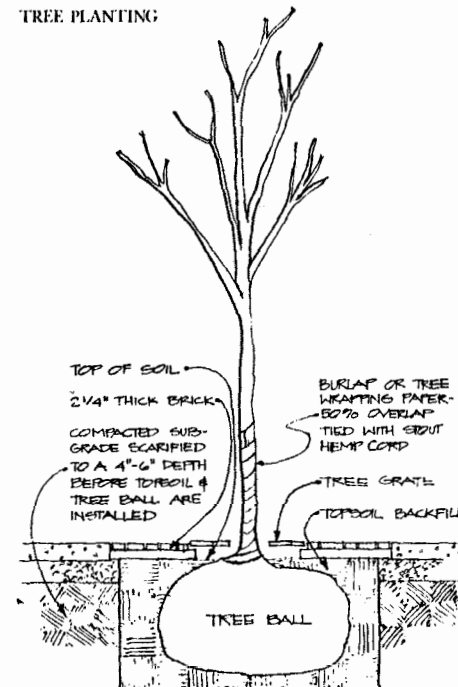
Shown on the right are examples of the elements to be included in a typical streetscape design. In some instances a selection of styles is shown for one component so as to offer an appropriate choice. Additional styles are available from various manufacturers. Also shown is a plan of a typical street intersection as seen from above illustrating how a new, unified streetscape program would look upon completion of installation of widened sidewalks with decorative pavements, paved crosswalks, lights, and planting of trees.

TREES

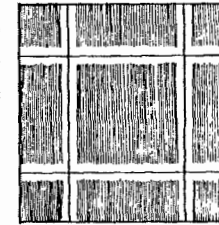
TREE GRATE IN PAVED BORDER



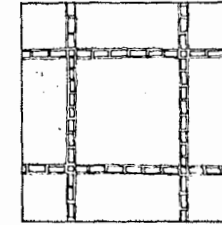
TREE PLANTING



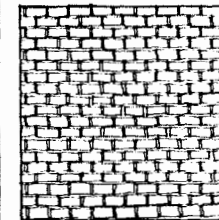
PAVEMENTS



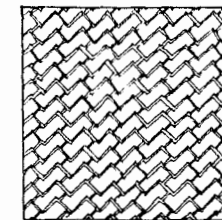
BRUSHED CONCRETE



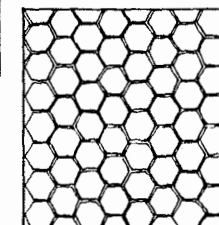
EXPOSED AGGREGATE



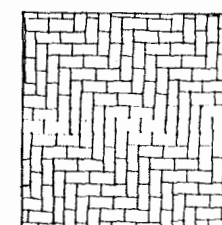
BRICK PAVERS



Z-BLOCK

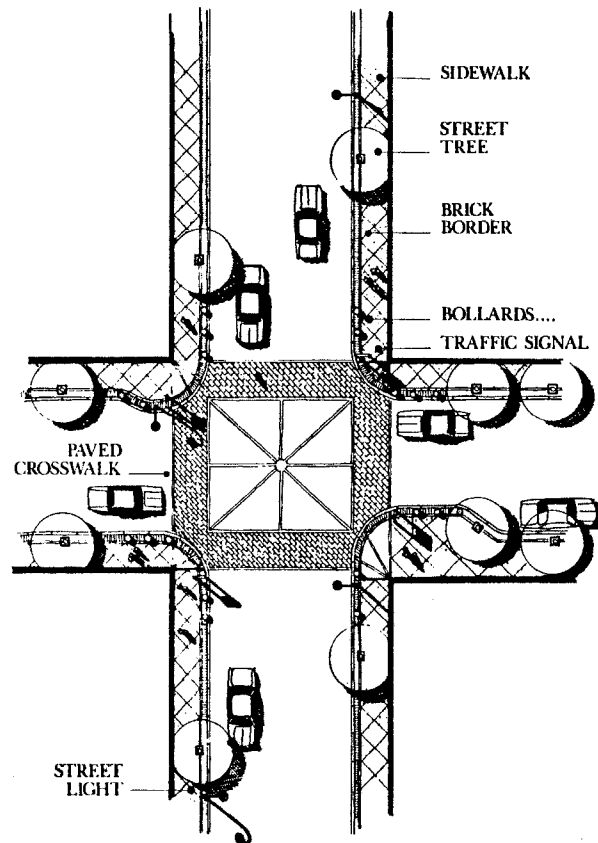


HEXAGONAL BLOCKS

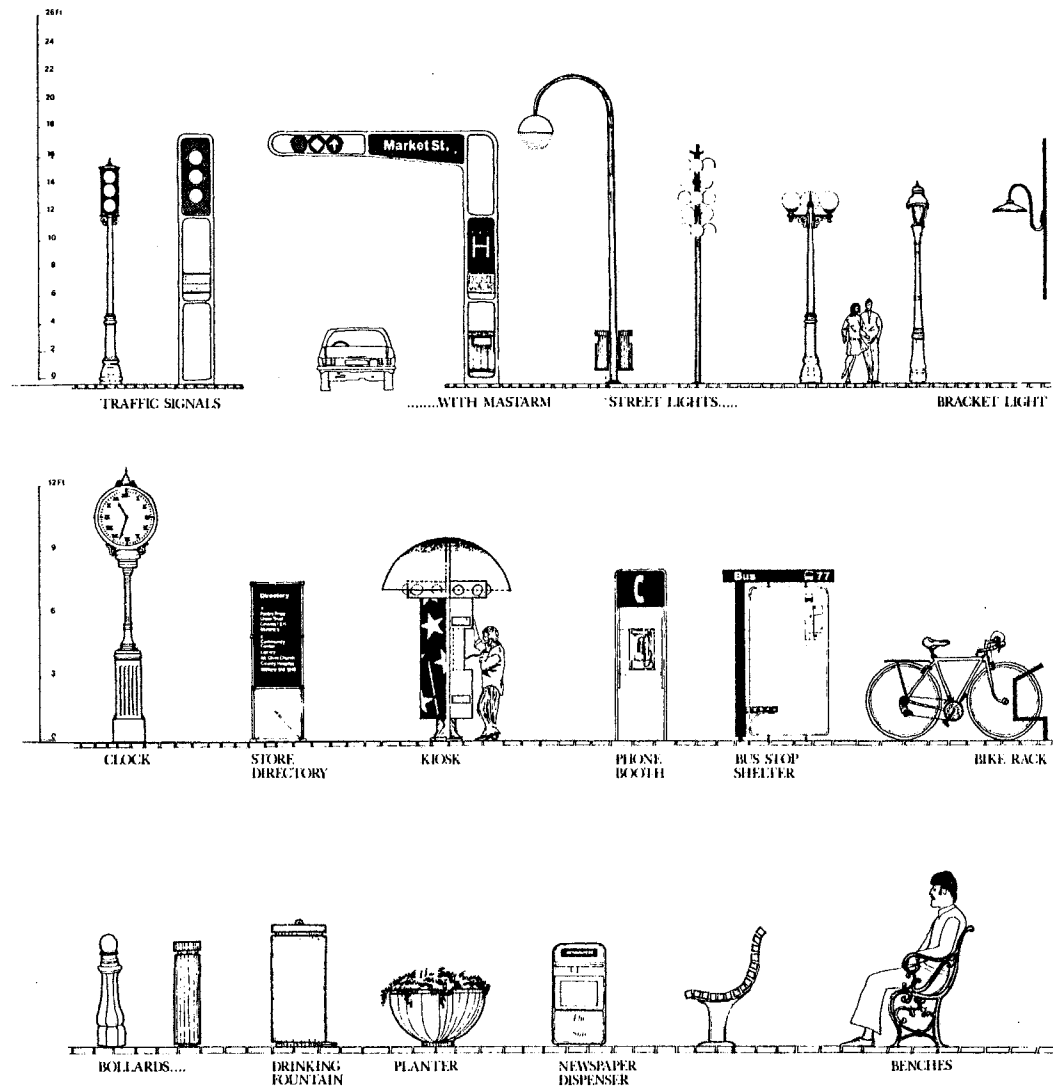


HERRINGBONE BRICK

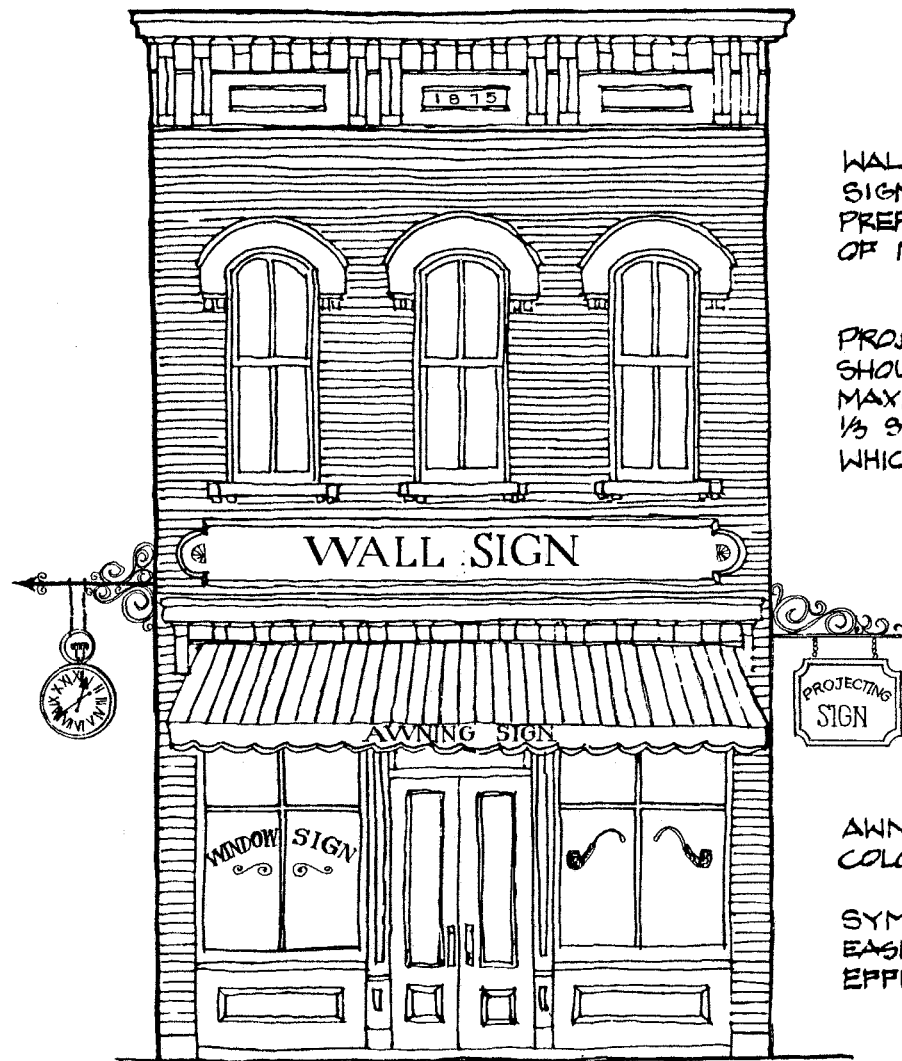
INTERSECTION



FURNISHINGS



Signs



WALL SIGNS ARE IN
SIGN ZONE AND ARE
PREFERABLY MADE
OF NATURAL MATERIALS

PROJECTING SIGNS
SHOULD PROJECT A
MAXIMUM OF 48" OR
1/3 SIDEWALK WIDTH,
WHICHEVER IS LESS.

AWNING SIGNS ADD
COLOR & VARIETY

SYMBOLS ARE
EASILY LEGIBLE &
EFFECTIVE.

As much as any single element, signs determine the quality of a downtown district. Whereas good signage can add variety and life to a commercial district, poorly designed signage can destroy the historic quality of the downtown and negate any of the positive effects of restoration.

Simplicity is the key to successful signs; graphic symbols and a minimum of information provide quick and easy identification. Light letters on a dark matte background are the most effective.

Commercial signs in small historic towns should:

- Have a unified and consistent theme.
- Use a type face style consistent with building age.
- Have a maximum of three colors.
- Fit into the size and proportions of the storefront.

Wall signs should be placed in the sign zone of the facade which is usually directly above the store front. Projecting signs should not extend more than 48 inches or 1/3 sidewalk width from the face of the building, whichever is less.

Signs may also be carefully placed on awnings to add variety and color to the streetscape. Sign standards need to be agreed upon and strictly enforced by local ordinance.

Economic Market Study

TOWN REVITALIZATION: GENERAL CONDITIONS

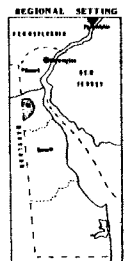
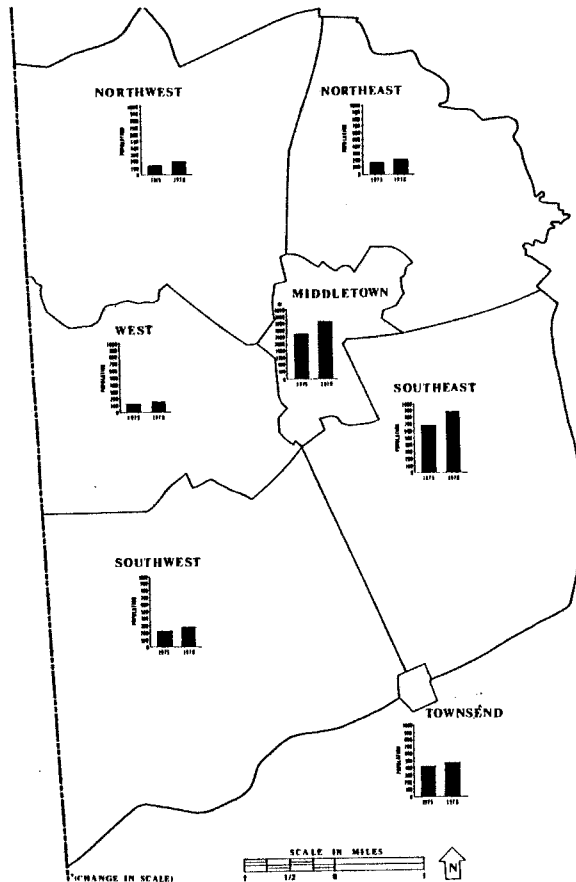
Investment decisions made by families, developers or business firms are what set any town's revitalization in motion. Investment usually consists of additions to and replacement of an area's capital stock, such as houses, stores and factories.

The key to area or town economic revitalization lies in attracting investment.

Two forces may presently favor commercial investment in downtown Middletown: (1) population growth over the next decade and (2) current consumer demand. The location of Middletown in southern New Castle County, Delaware, puts it at the fringe of a metropolitan area and at the rim of an orbit of economic activity and access regionally centered first on Philadelphia and secondly on Wilmington. With growth controls, tighter zoning, environmental constraints, and rising congestion in the suburban ring, the metropolitan areas continue to decentralize. This means attractive smaller towns at the metropolitan fringe like Middletown are likely to recapture a definite share of the increased demand for custom built homes and may expect to maintain moderate or above average rates of population growth.

MIDDLETOWN AREA: TREND ANALYSIS

MIDDLETOWN AND VICINITY



MAP 1

The past for Middletown is rooted in the quality and availability of the land in the area, in the form of agricultural activity and in transportation. So is the present. The future of Middletown also will revolve around economic performance of land (particularly with regards to residential development), agriculture and transportation. Today retailing, services (banking, municipal, legal) and industry (gas supply, battery production) are the internal activities sustaining Middletown residents along with commuting to jobs in Wilmington, Newark, or other sections of New Castle or Kent Counties.

The population size of Middletown at the time of the 1970 census, was 2644, up from 1755 persons in 1950 and 1567 persons in 1900. Much of this population expansion was due to expansion of the town limits; between 1966 and the end of 1970, expansion of the town limits; between 1966 and the end of 1970, Middletown annexed 914 acres of land.

What has happened since 1970? Map 1 shows Middletown and the surrounding vicinity. Table 1 shows for each of the areas on Map 1 recent estimates of

TABLE 1 MIDDLETOWN AND VICINITY*

	Housing Units		% Change
	1975	1978	
Northeast	59	68	15.3
Southeast	247	301	21.9
Townsend	143	169	18.2
Southwest	75	86	14.7
West	40	45	12.5
Northwest	52	60	15.4
Middletown	909	1150	26.5
TOTAL: Middletown and Vicinity	1525	1879	23.2

SOURCE: College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy, University of Delaware.

*The six sub-areas outside town limits identified in Map 1.

housing units, most of which are within three miles of downtown Middletown. The number of, and rate of change in, housing units represents one concrete reflection of investment and indicates area revitalization.

Middletown and its vicinity gained 354 new housing units between 1975 and 1978, a percentage increase of 23.2. Two-thirds of these housing units were built in the town of Middletown itself. (241 new units).

Population change is a second component important for downtown revitalization. Table 2 displays population estimates for Middletown and its vicinity.

TABLE 2 MIDDLETOWN AND VICINITY POPULATION*

	<u>1975</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Northeast	162	203	25.3
Southeast	696	888	27.6
Townsend	417	497	19.2
Southwest	207	255	23.2
West	107	135	26.2
Northwest	144	178	23.6
Middletown	2576	3389	31.6
TOTAL: Middletown and Vicinity	4309	5545	28.7

SOURCE: College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy, University of Delaware.

*Excludes population in group quarters.

The changes in Middletown can be compared with changes in the entire Middletown, Odessa, Townsend Planning area (called M-O-T area), which represents all of New Castle County below the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. Also shown for comparative purposes are the changes in New Castle County overall, excluding the City of Wilmington.

TABLE 3 COMPARATIVE CHANGE: HOUSING AND POPULATION

	<u>1975</u>	<u>Housing</u> <u>1978</u>	<u>% change</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>Population</u> <u>1978</u>	<u>% change</u>
Middletown	909	1150	26.5	2596	3389	31.6
Middletown and Vicinity	1525	1879	23.2	4309	5545	28.7
M.O.T. Area	3518	4189	19.1	10,300	12,520	21.6
New Castle County excluding Wil- mington	99,879	112,110	12.2	322,633	325,284	0.8

SOURCE: College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy, University of Delaware.

The clear conclusion reached from Table 3 is that the entire region below the canal has had strong growth between 1975 and 1978, but Middletown has had the greatest growth.

Beyond area to area comparisons, in which Middletown rates of change are very strong, it is important to evaluate the year to year trends in both population and housing. As illustrated in Table 4, the pace of housing change, while persistently positive, slowed between 1977 and 1978, in Middletown and the area around the town. The rates of population growth were highest between 1975 and 1976.

The overall conclusion is that the town of Middletown has grown far more in numbers of people (813) in three years (1975 to 1978) than it grew (188) in a fifty-year span (1900 to 1950). Housing unit growth represents substantial permanent investment in the town and nearby vicinity. Both population change and housing starts hinge on the regional economy, especially on the performance of northern Delaware which has been weak over the past three to five years. The population of New Castle County above the canal has not grown significantly

TABLE 4 · RECENT TRENDS: HOUSING AND POPULATION (Annual Percentages)

	<u>1975-1976</u>	<u>1976-1977</u>	<u>1977-1978</u>
<u>Housing</u>			
Middletown			
in town limits	8.3	12.3	4.1
Vicinity around			
Middletown	7.8	5.1	4.4
<u>Population</u>			
Middletown	15.0	11.3	2.8
Vicinity around			
Middletown	15.3	4.8	2.9

SOURCE: College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy, University of Delaware.

since 1975 and previously fast growing places like Newark have even lost small numbers of people. Against this backdrop, the activity in Middletown must be regarded as quite strong. Like many areas outside metropolitan centers, Middletown has gained families with children who want to be near city and suburban jobs.

MIDDLETOWN: MARKET CONDITIONS

Trends in Middletown retailing followed by an estimate of spatial distribution of consumer demand in the Middletown-Odessa-Townsend area are described. Then, the general locational constraints placed upon retail and service outlets by the spatial distribution of product demand are examined, concluding with a discussion of the retail and service potential of Middletown. Every five years the United States Bureau of the Census conducts a Census of Retail Trade. The results for Middletown are set forth in Table 5.

TABLE 5 MIDDLETOWN RETAILING TRENDS

	Levels of Activity		
	<u>1972</u>	<u>1977</u>	
Number of Stores	51	57	
Sales (\$1,000)	\$7,240	\$15,178	
Payroll (\$1,000)	\$ 795	\$ 1,805	
Employees	149	265	
Pay per Employee	\$5,336	\$ 6,811	
Percentage Change Comparisons (1972-77)			
	Middletown	New Castle County	State of Delaware
Number of Stores	11.8%	-10.2%	-7.7%
Sales	109.6	39.2	44.5
Payroll	127.0	32.3	38.7
Employees	77.9	5.5	9.8
Pay per Employee	27.6	25.5	26.3

SOURCE: Census of Retail Trade 1972 and 1977, U. S. Bureau of the Census.

All five retail indicators shown in Table 5 improved in Middletown between 1972 and 1977, and the rate of change for Middletown on all indicators outran rates of change in New Castle County and the State of Delaware. If the same annual increase in sales and payroll that took place between 1972 and 1977 held through the past two years, these are the estimates for 1979: total sales \$18,353,000 and total retail payroll \$2,209,000.

Middletown is the largest service and retail center in New Castle County below the canal. Because of its location and road access, it has the potential to attract people from sections of Maryland. Families from around Odessa, around Townsend, and in Middletown itself provide the prime market for Middletown service and retail outlets. Downtown revitalization investments rest heavily on this area-wide market potential.

Table 6 shows the most recent estimates of households by income level for the years 1969 and 1975. In that six-year interval the number of families, or households in the area also rose. More households and households with higher incomes mean expanding market potential.

TABLE 6 HOUSEHOLD INCOME: M-O-T PLANNING AREA, 1969 and 1975

Household Income	Number of Households		Percentage Distribution		% Change 1969-1975
			1969	1975	
	1969	1975	1969	1975	
Less than \$5,000	564	442	21.8	12.0	-21.6
\$ 5,000 - 9,999	958	648	37.1	17.6	-32.4
\$10,000 - 14,999	704	1707	27.2	46.4	142.5
\$15,000 - 24,999	280	765	10.8	20.8	173.2
\$25,000 and over	78	118	3.1	3.2	51.3
TOTAL	2584	3680	100.0	100.0	42.4

Estimated Total Household Income (\$ millions)

1969: \$25.8

1975: \$46.7

SOURCE: U. S. Census, 1970 and the College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy, New Castle County Information Survey, 1976.

Total household income rose almost 81 percent or about 13.5 percent per year from 1969 to 1975. When these income figures are adjusted for inflation, the real purchasing power in the M-O-T area rose a healthy 21.6 percent or about 3.6 percent per year. The estimated total household income in the M-O-T area

for 1979 was \$63 million based on 4224 occupied households with average household income of \$14,909. Estimated after tax spending power was \$53.5 million.

Table 7 shows the estimated market potential in 1979 for the M-O-T area broken down into seventeen different spending categories.

TABLE 7 SPENDING RATES AND MARKET POTENTIAL: M-O-T AREA 1979

Spending Category	Estimated* Rates of Spending (%)	Estimated Market Potential (\$1000)
Food at Home	10.3	\$ 6,491
Food Away	3.5	2,202
Alcoholic Beverages	0.8	504
Tobacco	1.1	693
Shelter	8.3	5,229
Household Operation	9.7	6,111
Housefurnishings & Equipment	3.4	2,142
Clothing	4.6	2,890
Dry Clean & Laundry	0.5	315
Transportation	16.0	10,083
Health Care	5.1	3,213
Personal Care	1.3	819
Recreation	6.0	3,780
Insurance-Pensions	6.4	4,032
Gifts & Contributions	4.0	2,520
Taxes	15.0	9,450
Savings	4.0	2,520
TOTAL		\$ 63,000

*The U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has conducted detailed surveys of family income usage. The percentages for each spending category in Middletown were derived from these family income surveys, adjusted for factors affecting spending when households are located at the fringe of metropolitan areas and for

Transportation, including vehicle purchases, gasoline and vehicle maintenance, leads all categories of consumer expenditure. Leaving taxes aside,

transportation expenditures are followed in importance by food purchases and expenditures on shelter (including rent and mortgage payments). Expenditures on household operations rank fourth and include telephone charges and payments for fuel, water, trash, sewage, laundry and cleaning supplies, domestic and other household services, and miscellaneous household products (e.g., light bulbs and paper towels). In recent years, the fastest growing expenditure categories have been purchases of food away from home, health care, household operations (including utilities) and recreation.

The price a consumer pays at the counter for an item is not the item's full purchase cost. In addition to the counter price, a customer "pays" the costs of transportation to and from the store. Since many household retail and service purchases are for frequently needed and relatively low-priced convenience items (e.g., food, toothpaste), the bulk of these consumer purchases occurs close to home, where travel costs are minimized.

On the other hand, spending on large durable items (e.g., cars, furniture, appliances) will be more geographically dispersed. Consumers seeking favorable quality and price on large items will often search among various sellers.

Thus, not all of the \$53.5 million in private market potential will be spent in Middletown or in the M-O-T area. Leakages of expenditures will be related to a number of factors. First, as indicated, household spending on larger budget items (dishwashers or automobiles) will be spread over a wide spatial area. Secondly, consumer travel studies show that trips from the home to any shopping destination increase when the number of activities (banking, stores, library) at the destination increase. M-O-T households will shop in the regional Christiana and Blue Hen Malls, at community malls surrounding the city of Newark, and even in downtown Newark and Dover. Middletown and Smyrna will, for the most part, siphon off convenience item purchases, together with stores along major local roads and in Odessa and Townsend.

Finally, a large proportion of M-O-T district residents commute to jobs located above the canal and in Dover. Household purchases by these families will be spread over a broad spatial area. Purchases of items such as food, clothing, and consumer durables will shift toward the site of employment,

TABLE 8
GOODS TRADED IN CITIES AT
DIFFERENT LEVELS IN THE
HIERARCHY

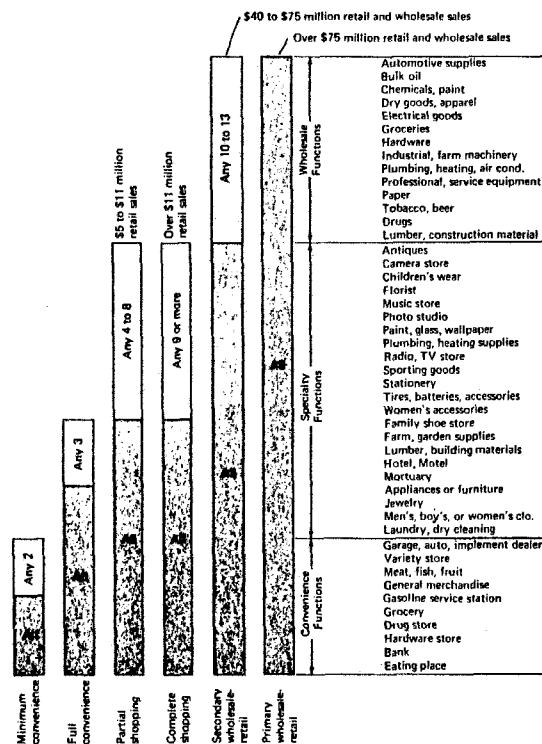


Fig. 8-6. Specifications of Six Orders of Trade Centers in the Upper Midwest Study
SOURCE: John R. Borchert and Russell B. Adams, *Trade Centers and Trade Areas of the Upper Midwest*, Upper Midwest Economic Study, Urban Report No. 3 (Minneapolis: September 1963), p. 4.

while purchases of products such as automobile supplies actually will increase in the town where commuters live. (1)

The leakage of resident consumer expenditures can be offset by shoppers coming into the M-O-T area from around Smyrna, from Maryland, and from tourist traffic on Routes 299 and 896. On balance, however, the expenditure estimates in Table 7 can be taken as the upper limit of potential 1979 purchases inside the M-O-T area.

Given the size of its trade area. Middletown with around \$20 million in retail sales, can accommodate retail activities such as a supermarket, a drug store, and a hardware store, a restaurant, a bank, and an auto garage. There is a lower probability that Middletown merchants could successfully operate separate outlets for all of the goods at the upper level of Table 8 which is to the left.

The Urban Land Institute surveys performance of stores and service outlets, chiefly in shopping centers. (2) They then publish data showing the average square footage and the average sales for different types of outlets. The most recent set of data covers 1975. After making several adjustments, it is possible to estimate the 1979 threshold sales size by various kinds of shops. Table 8 shows these estimates. Fundamentally, the kinds of products and services shown are those a town the size of Middletown, given its present market potential, could support. Most of the products are convenience goods items, bought frequently; and presumably most of the regular customers would come from Middletown and its vicinity, an area previously shown on Map 1. This is an area, within three miles or less of downtown, which has a spendable income after taxes estimated at \$23.4 million in 1979 (as compared to \$53.5 million for the entire M-O-T area). Middletown merchants have a comparative advantage with households in this area simply because of accessibility.

(1) William T. Boehm and Martin T. Pond, "Job Location Retail Purchasing Patterns, and Local Economic Development," *Growth and Change*, January 1956, pp. 7-11.

(2) *The Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers: 1975*, Washington, D.C.: The Urban Land Institute, 1975, pp. 159-205.

Should each one of the 23 outlets of Table 9 operate in Middletown, and should they achieve the average sales level for their type of outlet, then,

TABLE 9 SINGLE OUTLET SALES AND SIZE ESTIMATES

	1979 Average Annual Sales (\$000)	Average Leasable Area (Sq. Ft.)
Food		
Meat & Fish Market	\$ 380	1,600
Supermarket	3,400	20,000
Restaurant w/liquor	230	3,150
Restaurant, no liquor	155	2,300
General		
Catalogue Store	390	4,200
Discount Department	2,400	36,000
Variety Store	400	7,500
Clothing		
Children's Shoes	155	1,600
Ladies' Specialties	150	1,650
Men's Shop	180	2,000
Family Wear	190	2,200
Specialty Shops		
Camera	210	1,020
Liquor-wine	250	2,400
Appliances	250	2,600
Drugs	625	7,300
Auto Dealer	530	7,500
Hardware	310	5,400
Furniture	240	6,500
Services		
Cinema	310	10,800
Photographer	150	1,250
Cleaner	75	1,600
Beauty Shop	80	1,200
Shoe Repair	40	600

they, alone, would have generated \$11.1 million in sales during 1979: a level of sales well within Middletown's market potential.

Utilizing information from Table 7 and Table 9 and taking into account the types of retail activities and services already established in Middletown and vicinity, the following general conclusions can be reached:

1. Certain categories of business may presently be excluded from consideration as tenants for Middletown: a major department store, an additional super-market, package store, appliance store, dry cleaners, cinema, hardware (based on sales to consumers only, not businesses) or luncheonette.
2. Some expansion of space in existing grocery stores seems justified, given recent population and income trends. An additional two to five thousand square feet of grocery space seems warranted.
3. There is some potential for the entry of new establishments. The estimated annual market potential for household furniture purchases in the M-O-T area is currently over \$690,000. An average furniture store would need to capture only one-third of this market. At present, there is no store in the Middletown area that sells new furniture.
4. Local retailers are only capturing about one-third of the potential market for clothing in the Middletown vicinity and about one-seventh of the market for the entire M-O-T area. An additional clothing store, perhaps specializing in men's clothing seems warranted.
5. A well-managed family restaurant should be established.
6. Discussions with merchants and patrons and an examination of the available retail and service outlets in the Middletown area suggests that there may be a need for the following types of facilities: shoe and shoe repair shop, television and radio repair shop, toy store, antique shop, tobacconist and newstand, and a professional office building.
7. The estimates of spendable income indicate that the Middletown area has a growing sales potential and should easily be able to maintain its present level of retailing.

DOWNTOWN MIDDLETOWN

For the purposes of this project, downtown Middletown is defined as the area on Main and Broad streets within one block of the intersection at Cochran Square. The study area contains 65 separate facilities including 39 retail stores or professional offices, 13 single or multi-unit residences, 7 public or private nonprofit organizations (church, post office, fire station, justice of the peace, and 3 social agencies), and 6 vacant units. The boundaries of the downtown are indicated in Map 2.

Downtown Middletown



Information Gathering Techniques

Information about the downtown was gathered through a questionnaire distributed to the retailers and professionals located in the study area; by telephone and face-to-face contacts with nonrespondents, realtors and others who are knowledgeable about the downtown area; and through a survey of persons encountered on the street. Thirty out of thirty-six of the retailers and professionals responded to the written questionnaire; 3 were contacted by phone as well as 2 additional persons who operate enterprises that are open on a seasonal basis.

(An additional store opened in early November after the business survey was completed.)

Forty-seven persons were interviewed on the street over a period of several days. These individuals varied in age from 15 to 68 and included 33 females and 14 males. Nearly 60 percent live within three miles of the downtown and over 95 percent have lived at their present address for a year or more. The respondents included 82% whites and 17% blacks. Their mean household income was \$9,800.

Over 40 percent of the individuals encountered on the street had come to the downtown area to do their banking, 20 percent were working in the downtown, and only 15 percent were shoppers. The remaining 25 percent were present for a variety of reasons: going to the doctor, the post office, or a barber, transporting children, dining out, walking, and job hunting. Ninety percent indicated that they usually came downtown during the weekday.

The information gathered through the surveys and other data collection methods is presented in the following summary of the problems and characteristics of the downtown.

Problems and Characteristics of the Downtown

Business Climate. According to the business survey respondents, the business climate in downtown Middletown in recent years has been at least satisfactory. About 75 percent report that the trend in sales growth over the last two or three years has been somewhat better or much better than expected. Seventy percent expect that in the next year or two business will be somewhat better or much better than at present.

Customer Views of the Downtown. The respondents to the customer survey were asked to indicate what they liked and disliked about the downtown. The positive views included its proximity to home or work (55 percent), customer service (17 percent), the atmosphere, community and image (21 percent), safety (6 percent), and the quality of merchandise and values (8 percent). Single mentions were given to the restaurants, store variety, transportation access, absence of sales tax, and meeting friends. About 17 percent of the respondents stated that there was nothing that they liked about the downtown.

The negative views included ugly store exteriors (70 percent), poor variety of stores (21 percent), poor selection of merchandise (19 percent), lack of safety (13 percent), limited store hours (9 percent), trucks (9 percent), poor quality merchandise (6 percent), and unpleasant store interiors (4 percent). Single mentions were given to parking, prices, drunks, vacant stores, poor customer service, lack of entertainment, and the police.

Competition. Respondents to the customer survey reported that they also shopped in Dover (53 percent), Wilmington including Prices Corner and the Concord Mall (23 percent), the Middletown Shopping Center (17 percent), the Christiana Mall (10 percent), Newark including Castle Mall (10 percent), Elkton (8 percent), and a variety of other areas (19 percent). These figures do not add up to 100 percent since some respondents indicated more than one shopping area. The most frequently stated reasons for shopping in areas outside of downtown Middletown were store variety (63 percent), and merchandise selection (63 percent). Other reasons stated by 3 or more respondents included proximity to home, good values, attractive store exteriors, and change of scenery.

Local Stores and Services. The following retail outlets and services are located in the downtown study area (see Map 2):

Downtown Middletown	
<u>Retail</u>	<u>Square Footage</u>
Ceramics Supplies	1100
Convenience Grocery	2200
Automobile Parts	6000
Jewelry	700
Hardware	3500
Variety Store	2100
Automobile Dealer	6400
Appliances	1000
Bakery	500
Clothing and Footwear	2400
Gas Station and Fuel Oil	----
Gift Shop	1400
Package Store	600
2 Combination Package Stores & Taverns	3000
Art Gallery	2400

<u>Service</u>	<u>Square Footage</u>
4 Real Estate Offices	3000
Bank	---
Photography Studio	600
2 Dentists	2000
Chiropractor	800
Savings and Loan	3000
Barber	480
Movie Theater	8000
2 Tax Consultants	800
Newspaper	2500
Lawyer	1000
Optometrist	800
4 Luncheonettes	4250

The following stores and services are found within a three mile radius of the downtown:

Catalog Store	Automobile Parts
Carpet Service	2 Appliance Dealers
2 Hair Salons	2 Women's Clothing Stores
3 Restaurants	2 Banks
3 Luncheonettes	Barber
2 Cleaners	2 Flower Shops
2 Pharmacies	2 Vegetable Stands
Hardware/Paint Store	Cheese Shop
6 Gas Stations	Flower Stand/Nursery
3 Package Stores	Palm Reader
2 Used Furniture Stores	Farm/Home/Garden Stores
Funeral Home	Gift Shop
Variety Store	2 Corner Markets
2 Lumberyards	2 Full-Sized Markets
Wood Shop/Construction	Convenience Market
2 Automobile Dealers	3 Insurance Offices

Public and Institutional Occupancies in the Downtown

<u>Type</u>	<u>Square Footage</u>
Private Social Service Agency	1800
Community Action Agency	1800
Day Care Center	2000
Church	3500
Post Office	3500
Justice of the Peace	----
Fire Station	----

The most deteriorated structures, residential and commercial, are in the areas of highest visibility, particularly at or near Cochran Square. Over 50 percent of the respondents to the business survey felt that the primary thing that needs to be done in the downtown is to restore and renovate the exterior of the buildings. The feature of the downtown that was disliked by the largest number of individuals contacted on the street (70 percent) is the appearance of the store exteriors and generally poor image of the downtown.

Truck Traffic. A large volume of truck traffic passes through the intersection at Main and Broad Streets, moving primarily in an east-west direction. There may be structural damage occurring in the buildings and residences in the downtown as a result of the constant passage of heavy vehicles. People are discouraged from shopping in the downtown or establishing a residence there as a result of the truck traffic.

Property Ownership. Twenty one (54 percent) of the retailers and professionals own the structures that house their enterprises and only four of the structures housing rental units are owned by landlords who reside outside of Middletown. Control over the property in the downtown area thus rests in large part in the hands of the business and professional community or residents of Middletown. The problem of absentee landlords, uninterested in the future of the downtown, should not be a major barrier to a program of revitalization.

Rental Space. Approximately 30,000 square feet of ground floor space is now being rented in the study area at an average annual rate of approximately \$2.50 per square foot. Another 14,200 square feet of space is vacant and being offered for rental at an average annual rate of \$1.55 per square foot with the rent being asked for some of this vacant space reaching almost \$5.00

per square foot. Smyrna prime space rents for between \$1.20 to \$2.80 per square foot. If in Middletown finding tenants becomes difficult, landlords should consider reducing rents during the first year of occupancy to help new enterprises to become established.

Vacancies and Lack of Store Variety. The presence of four large vacant structures in prominent spots and one smaller vacant unit, as well as a general lack of store variety, limits the amount of business traffic that reaches the downtown. The five units vacant as of December 1, 1979, had areas of 300, 1800, 2400, 4700 and 5000 square feet. About 21 percent of the customers surveyed complained about the poor variety of stores in the downtown, and 19 percent complained about the poor selection of merchandise. Respondents to the business survey and the customer survey were asked to indicate what types of stores are needed in the downtown. The following types of stores were identified:

<u>Store Type</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
	<u>Business Survey</u>	<u>Street Survey</u>
Clothing	50	48
Department	31	29
Drug	43	4
Shoe	25	6
Restaurant	6	21
Grocery	--	8
Sporting Goods	6	4
Electronic Repairs	12	--
Newsstand	12	
Furniture	12	
Professional Offices	12	

Single mention was made by respondents to the business survey of an active movie theater, recreation for the young, a fabric store, an animal clinic, and an auto parts store. Respondents to the street survey also mentioned a tea-room, an antique shop, a theater, a doughnut shop, a toy store, a bowling alley, a handicrafts store, and a late night entertainment or dining establishment.

Respondents to the business survey were also asked to indicate which stores or services were now in excess supply in downtown. The following types were indicated: luncheonettes (43 percent), package liquor store (18 percent), real estate offices (18 percent) and taprooms (12 percent).

The Theater. The theater cannot be sustained solely by movie presentations. Some additional use for this facility must be identified. The interior has been beautifully maintained and is a classic representation of early twentieth century theater architecture. It can never be replaced and ought to be considered an important part of Middletown's heritage. Renovation of the exterior and the lobby is needed. The building is now being offered for sale.

Vandalism and Public Drunkenness. Businessmen and customers indicated concern about vandalism and public drunkenness in the downtown area. About 13 percent of the customers stated that lack of safety was an aspect of the downtown that they disliked, and a number of merchants felt that the police were not providing adequate protection. Several windows in vacant buildings have recently been broken by vandals. The problem appears to be centered in the area around Cochran Square.

Parking. This does not seem to be a serious problem at present. Only three of the respondents to the customer survey had trouble finding a parking space, and only one indicated that parking was a dislikeable aspect of the downtown. However, travellers through the town on a north/south route are discouraged from stopping because there are no easily accessible parking areas.

Parking is reported to be a problem by some of the merchants. There is a feeling that employees of some organizations on Main Street are using space that should be available for customers. Areas for employee parking need to be located. The social service agencies may contribute to this problem and should be encouraged to cooperate in finding a solution. These agencies are an important part of the activity in this sector and ought to be involved in planning and implementing the revitalization process.

The Middletown area's population and retailing activity, relative to that in Northern New Castle County has grown at a significant rate in recent years. This stands in stark contrast to the condition of downtown Middletown where physical deterioration continues and nearly one-third of the available commercial floor space is vacant. Downtown Middletown is not capturing its proportionate share of the area's retail and service market. The following set of recommendations, if adopted, will improve the business climate in the downtown.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY

- o Strengthen Chamber of Commerce and create subcommittees on Downtown Cleanup and Revitalization, and Downtown Promotion.
- o Start the process of revitalization by establishing a cleanup week, developing cooperative efforts to repair and repaint storefronts, and decorating vacant storefronts.
- o Capitalize on the Historic District status of the downtown by seeking Historic Preservation Funds and advertising the historic aspects of the downtown.
- o Work to remove or greatly reduce the truck traffic from the downtown; request the State Department of Highways to explore alternatives for remedial action.
- o Relocate the Appoquinimink Public Library to Cochran Square.
- o Develop new parking area on South Broad Street to help draw foot traffic into the downtown.
- o Establish municipal regulations to allow local merchants to operate street vendor carts in Cochran Square.
- o Recruit new branch store tenants to the downtown among established businesses in northern New Castle County and Dover.
- o Establish a farmer's market near the downtown.
- o Create contractual arrangement between the town and the owners of private parking lots in the downtown to repair, landscape, and provide for general use during regular business hours.
- o Use the Everett Theater for community activities, live shows as well as for commercial movies.
- o Involve the business community in improving the residential facilities located in the downtown.

- o Promote the downtown through joint advertising, an annual sidewalk sale, and an annual Middletown Day.

Substantial awareness of the problems of the downtown and insight into needed solutions already exist among the merchants and public officials of Middletown. What is not well understood is how to develop a plan of action to begin and sustain the process of revitalization. These recommendations are intended to make the most efficient use of limited resources so that downtown Middletown can once again become an active and attractive shopping and service area.

Organize

Restoration will require a coordinated effort over a long period of time. It must involve the city officials and community residents as well as the professionals, merchants, and others interested in revitalization of the downtown area. Leadership, of necessity, will have to come from those with the greatest stake in the process, the members of the business community.

It is vitally important that the recent efforts to rejuvenate the local Chamber of Commerce be continued. No significant progress toward downtown revitalization can occur without the active support and leadership of an organized business community.

This organization must take the lead in locating new business enterprises, pool resources for better and more widely distributed advertising, develop common hours and joint sale days, press the town and the State to assist in the restoration and maintenance of the downtown, and seek resources for community development. These efforts will be difficult because they must be voluntary, and there will always be some who will not participate yet will gain from the work of others.

The Chamber should establish the following committees: Downtown Clean-up and Revitalization, Tenant Selection and Recruitment, Downtown Promotion. These committees will provide an organizational framework to the important tasks described below.

Clean-up and Rehabilitate

Appearance is one of the basic problems of downtown Middletown. This problem is made more significant because the deterioration and poor maintenance is concentrated in the most visible section of the downtown, the area around Cochran Square. A sustained, long term effort to clean up, rehabilitate and maintain

the downtown should be initiated immediately.

While deterioration is evident, nearly all the buildings in the downtown are structurally sound and many have architectural or historical character. Some merchants have taken the lead already. At least two structures have been completely renovated during the last three years. Other buildings have been carefully maintained but more needs to be done in the rest of the downtown.

The primary asset of the area is its character, tradition and architectural style. Middletown cannot compete with large shopping malls in Dover and northern New Castle County in terms of variety of goods and services and business volume, but these areas must artificially create what Middletown already possesses--an authentic architectural heritage. The structures found in Middletown will never be built again. They provide the focal point for drawing people into the area. Replacing them with modern structures does not make good economic sense. The logical way to an improved business climate in downtown Middletown is to preserve and restore as many of the older structures as possible.

Restoration should include all structures occupied by public agencies and community organizations. Upper stories of all buildings should be put in good repair to present the best possible image to the customer. Indeed, one merchant on Main Street shows how care and concern for the clientele can be demonstrated by keeping flowers and curtains in an upstairs room that is used for storage.

The proposed Chamber of Commerce Committee on Downtown Cleanup and Revitalization should start immediately to accomplish the following tasks:

1. Establish a cleanup week to encourage the city, merchants, professionals, organizations and others located in the downtown to clean curbs and sidewalks and remove refuse and weeds from all properties including vacant lots.
2. Encourage individual and cooperative refurbishing efforts to repair and repaint storefronts, clean windows, install new curtains and shades in upper floor windows, and clean brick or stonework.
3. Decorate vacant storefronts with attractive displays. The local schools and other public and charitable groups should be invited to provide displays.

The town administration should support revitalization through a continuing program of downtown beautification, including improvement of sidewalks and curbs, landscaping, street lighting, public signage, and maintenance of fixtures and plantings. The town should also ask county inspectors to perform a courtesy inspection of properties in the downtown and to provide owners with a list of deficiencies. No enforcement action should be taken at the present time.

Capitalize on the Historic District Status of the Downtown

Designation of the downtown as a historic district makes structures there eligible for Historical Preservation Loans and Grants. In addition, it helps identify the area as a tourist attraction and enhances its value for prospective buyers of historic homes. Individual property owners and the Chamber should identify restoration projects that are eligible to receive Historic Preservation funds. Historic aspects of the downtown should be identified and advertised.

Any structure in a certified historic district that is not obviously of non-historic character (e.g., gas stations) is eligible for a Historic Preservation Grant for approved rehabilitation. Grants of up to 50 percent of costs may be obtained for structural repairs, bringing plumbing and wiring to code standards, insulation, installation of storm doors, and windows and rehabilitation for adaptive re-use. Matching funds must come from non-federal money or from approved donated goods and services. Community Development funds are not considered federal money and therefore may be matched to the federal Historic Preservation Grant.

Any residential structure in a historic district is eligible for a Historic Preservation Loan of up to \$15,000 per dwelling unit, not to exceed \$45,000 per structure, with up to 15 years to repay. Interest is at the current market rate, not to exceed 12 percent. Community Development Block Grants may be used to subsidize the costs. Loans are available for work similar to that eligible for Historic Preservation Grants.

Finally, the Tax Reform Act of 1976 allows owners of commercial or residential rental structures in a historic district to amortize the costs of approved rehabilitation over a five year period. Any work done between June 14, 1976, and June 15, 1981, is eligible.

Truck Traffic.

The center of Middletown is plagued by an unnecessary volume of truck traffic,

bringing noise, congestion, pollution, vibration, and danger to a degree which detracts significantly from the area's attractiveness for shoppers and residents. These negative effects lower the value of residential and commercial property and reduce the degree of investment in the downtown. To be competitive, the downtown has to be an area where shoppers will be able to browse comfortably and to accomplish this, the trucks must go.

A large percentage of the truck traffic is unnecessary since it can be shifted to the bypass running from Route 896 to Route 13 by way of Mt. Pleasant and Boyd's Corner. Failure to use this alternative can be explained only by the fact that it adds several minutes to a Maryland-northern New Castle County trip. In order to change these traffic patterns, assistance must be obtained from the State Department of Highways and the State Police. New signage, portable weighing stations at strategic points, and additional stop signs will direct truck traffic away from the downtown.

State officials and truck operators have no incentive to change the status quo unless the citizens of Middletown focus attention on the problem through actions that cannot be ignored. We recommend that the Town Solicitor draft an ordinance which bars non-local truck traffic from the downtown area on the basis of noise and/or vibration. Even if the ordinance cannot be enforced locally, it will at least bring public attention to the issue and require the State to recognize that there is a problem.

We also recommend that those who represent the Middletown area in the state legislature request the state Department of Highways to examine the flow of truck traffic through Middletown and to explore alternatives for remedial action.

Relocate the Appoquinimink Public Library to Cochran Square

The library should be moved from the Town Hall to the southeast corner of Cochran Square. The library is now overcrowded, and the vacant structure on this corner has the required floor space. This move would initiate restoration at the central intersection, generate traffic in the downtown, and provide an anchor for the establishment of new enterprises nearby. The additional space and more visible location would allow the library to serve as a regional facility (called for in the New Castle County General Comprehensive Plan, 1985).

Moving the library to Cochran Square may be the single most important step toward the reestablishment of the downtown as a center of activity. Before this move can be accomplished, the problem of acquiring public rights to the property must be resolved. These rights could be acquired either through a long term lease with an option to purchase in the future, or by purchase prior to occupancy. The latter alternative is difficult to accomplish, since it requires a substantial amount of resources, but it may be preferred by all of the involved interests. The options should be carefully examined. Funds for the new library could be obtained by combining support from the following sources:

1. The Appoquinimink Public Library
2. Town of Middletown
3. New Castle County
4. Community Development Block Grant program
5. Historic Preservation Loans and Grants
6. Individuals and organizations interested in improving the educational and cultural resources of the Middletown area as well as the image of the downtown.

Develop New Parking Area on South Broad Street

The vacant lot on the east side of South Broad Street should be developed as a multiple use public parking lot. This area could be used as a parking facility for the proposed public library at the intersection. In addition, proper directional signage to the lot and to activities located in Cochran Square during peak travel periods could attract visitors to the downtown. Promotional activities in Cochran Square will require parking.

Feature Cochran Square to Attract Foot Traffic Into the Downtown

Merchants can increase the level of activity in the downtown by promoting and operating street vendor carts in the Square. Pushcarts located in the Square during peak periods of traffic will encourage people to stop and browse in the downtown. With appropriate municipal regulation and support of downtown merchants, this type of activity can make a substantial contribution to increasing sales in the downtown, particularly when accompanied by downtown events and sidewalk sales. The Chamber of Commerce might take the initiative to purchase and rent out pushcarts. Flowers, a variety of specialty goods, small items that individual merchants are already selling, antiques, bakery items, hot dogs, sandwiches, and ice cream are particularly appropriate for street vendor operations. The use of Cochran Square in this manner would have to be accompanied

by the provision of accessible parking, places where people could sit down and eat, trash receptacles, and regular clean-up.

Recruit New Tenants for the Downtown

A Tenant Selection and Recruitment Committee should be established by the Chamber to identify retail activities and services needed in the Middletown area and to visit successful entrepreneurs in northern New Castle County and Dover who may be interested in establishing branches in Middletown.

The market analysis of the Middletown area provides some guidelines for determining what types of retail or service activities have potential as successful tenants in Middletown (see Chapter III). A large department store or an additional supermarket, package store, appliance store, dry cleaners, cinema, hardware store, or luncheonette, are not likely candidates for location in Middletown. Given the existing array of services and retail outlets now located in the area (Chapter IV), there may be room for some expansion of grocery space, a furniture store, a men's shop, a shoe store/shoe shop, a television and radio repair shop, a tobacconist and newsstand, antique store, family restaurant, and additional personal services.

The committee should have information about each vacancy in the downtown, a brief description of the downtown and the trade area, and information about the revitalization program. In addition, the committee should work with landlords to obtain needed building improvements and to negotiate incentives to assist tenants during the first year of operation (reduced rent, help in remodeling, etc.).

Establish a Farmer's Market Near the Downtown

Middletown needs to become a more attractive destination for residents of northern New Castle County and a stop-off point for traffic moving through the area, particularly in the summer and early fall. A farmer's market, providing wholesale and retail facilities for fresh fruits and vegetables and commercial space for specialty shops, would capitalize on the agricultural base of the Middletown region.

The market should be located in an area adjacent to the downtown so that businesses in the downtown will have an opportunity to benefit from the traffic drawn to the market. Careful attention should be given to the impact of the market on the food stores now located in Middletown. A contractual arrangement between a general service food store and a farmer's market might be mutually beneficial.

In cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, the town council may want to establish a nonprofit development corporation to attract resources for this project.

Make Better Use of Existing Parking Space

Two privately owned parking areas in the downtown should be upgraded. The area in front of the convenience market on East Main Street should be repaired and landscaped. The lot next to the church on West Main Street should be paved and made available for regular use by the public during business hours. A contractual arrangement should be established between the town administration and the owners of these areas to facilitate general use of these areas and to draw upon public and private funds for their development, landscaping and maintenance.

Employers should make sure that their employees are not utilizing valuable parking space on street frontage. Off street parking should be located and reserved for employees.

The town should consider the merits of a municipal parking authority to develop and maintain parking areas in the downtown.

Encourage Multiple Uses of the Everett Theater

The theater is a valuable asset to Middletown and should not be allowed to deteriorate or to be abandoned as a theater. Increased gasoline costs over the long run will strengthen the market for a local movie theater, but in the meantime movie presentations alone will not sustain the theater. Creative use of the theater for community activities and live shows as well as for commercial movies will help preserve it as a facility and bring larger numbers of people to the western side of the downtown. Live performances may be an effective way to increase revenue for the theater and to attract people to Middletown.

Improve the Residential Character of the Downtown

There should be an organized effort, supported by the business community, to improve the residential structures in and around the downtown. Upper floors that can be used for apartments should be renovated, and vacant residential facilities should be restored and made suitable for occupancy. This will contribute to the physical revitalization of the downtown and generate additional activity that will add to the general vitality of the area.

Promote the Downtown

The proposed Chamber of Commerce Committee on Downtown Promotion should start immediately to accomplish the following tasks:

1. Develop a program of joint advertising for downtown businesses.
2. Develop an annual sidewalk sale similar to that held in Newark, Delaware.
3. Establish an annual Middletown Day in cooperation with community organizations, the fire company and the local schools. Food, music, events in Cochran Square, a flea market, special sales on Main Street, garage sales around the downtown, and other activities could be part of this annual event.