

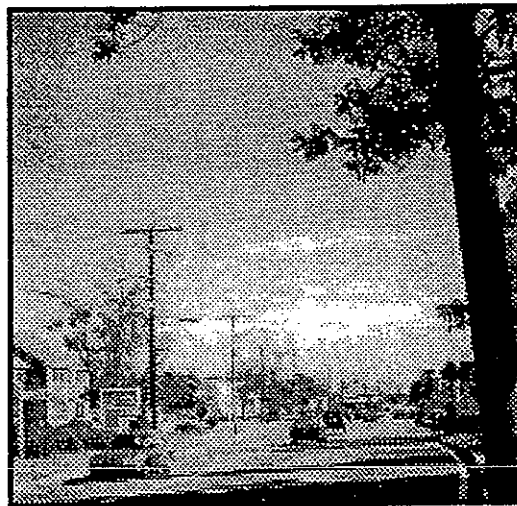
The Economy

According to the 1996 Comprehensive Plan Survey results, the majority of residents came to Marshfield for the coast, schools and town character. Job proximity and proximity to retail malls were not critical issues. The survey indicated that in the future Marshfield residents would like to strengthen the existing services in Town by improving the types and variety of non-residential development. The primary objective should be to strengthen Town character through economic development. Increasing employment opportunities and the tax base are important, but they are lower priorities to Marshfield residents than enhancing Town character.

Specifically, residents would like to see improvements in the appearance and economic

health of the downtown and the Route 139 corridor. Respondents also indicated that they are open to more commercial development in the Town and most support business growth in the form of small retail stores. A majority of respondents would also like to see more shops within their village centers.

Marshfield has a limited number of economic development challenges in its future. Business activity is largely contained within the Route 139 corridor, the Downtown, the Enterprise Drive area, Brant Rock and numerous small businesses within the villages. Of those areas, Enterprise Drive has the most potential to change and the Downtown is the area that residents would most like to see change.



Residents would like to see improvements in the appearance and economic health of the downtown and Route 139 corridor.

Villages

In general, the character of the village centers is intact. No major zoning or land use changes are recommended at this time. Public investment in recreation and pedestrian facilities may be appropriate in particular areas. The most critical economic development issues that need to be addressed in each of the village areas are as follows:

- Provide some form of small neighborhood center in North Marshfield that would provide meeting space, recreation fields and serve as a central point for accessing the open space resources of the area and the Town.
- Examine the Marshfield Hills village area

and determine what, if any, steps might be taken to ensure continued vitality, provide a modest increase in the amount of services (in order to reduce traffic levels), and maintain its village charms.

- A critical component to the ongoing health of the villages will be the continued presence of the Post Offices in the villages.
- The beach area in general is in need of more year round businesses and recreational opportunities.
- Improve the efficiency of town parking areas in order to accommodate more visitors and residents at the beach and at nearby businesses.



Post Offices in the village centers contribute to the ongoing economic health of the area.

The Downtown

One of the important areas where land use planning can impact the future of Marshfield is the Downtown. Respondents to the community survey reported that along with Route 139 traffic management, the Downtown is one of their major concerns for the future. A total of 48% of respondents cited the design and appearance of the Downtown as a *critical* problem (only Route 139 traffic exceeded this figure with 66% defining that issue as critical.) An additional 38% of respondents felt that this issue was *important*. Just 14% thought that this was a *minor problem or non-issue*.

Fifty-four percent supported the concept of second story offices and apartments in the downtown, if sewer service is provided. Majorities of respondents supported more retail, retirement/assisted living for the elderly, two story offices, commercial recreation, and health/medical services in the downtown.

In addition to this expression of public opinion, the Town's recent Downtown Revitalization Plan conducted charrettes and public workshops to involve Marshfield residents in

planning for their Downtown's future. The results of that effort is a plan that defines a wide range of design strategies to enhance the appearance and traffic circulation efficiency of the area. The Town has received a \$100,000 state grant to assist with physical improvements on public land and along public right of ways and streets. The total estimated costs for the Downtown Plan improvements are approximately \$800,000.

The development background and current physical form of the Downtown are important to understand.

The general zoning and development framework for the area was recommended in the 1962 Master Plan by Technical Planning Associates. This plan envisioned the need for a centralized retail area to serve the entire town. It recommended a mixture of apartments and retail uses along with new roads including a straightened Snow Road (as in the current Downtown Plan) and a new road parallel to Snow Road to the south of the current shopping mall.

The time at which this recommendation was made, along with the time at which the development occurred, largely shaped the current downtown. During the 1960's and 1970's, thinking in planning was driven by transportation efficiency and modernism in design. Traditional town centers were thought to be quaint relics of the past, not a development form to be protected or emulated. Thus, despite the 1930's -1940's character of the Ocean Street shops, the area to the south is a classic expression of 1960's modernism: the Town Hall's design, the general lack of landscaping, the lack of pedestrian space, the complete focus on parking and moving cars, and the clean (or lean, depending on your preferences) architectural style of the original commercial buildings.

For better or worse, what was created cannot be undone without significant public cost. The most important unchangeable feature of Downtown is the size of the Webster Square Mall buildings and their placement directly in the middle of the lot. This significantly reduces what can be done to enhance or redevelop this area as there is little room to introduce additional buildings and the parking they would need.

There are also three existing conditions that will largely prohibit increasing densities in the Downtown.

- The high demand for parking from the existing uses,
- The current inaccessibility of parking to the rear of the Webster Square buildings. Even



Webster Square is the dominant land use in downtown Marshfield.

if access is opened, the spaces to the rear of the mall will not benefit land uses close to Ocean Street.

- Due to this parking situation, there is a resulting overall lack of space in which to place new buildings or public commons and green spaces.

The result of the current mixture of building sizes, land uses, lot sizes and road placement means that Downtown's land use pattern cannot be substantively changed, although its appearance and traffic circulation can be improved.

Key Issues and Challenges for the Downtown

The key problems identified during the course of the Comprehensive Plan are the following:

- The Downtown is not aesthetically appealing due to large unlandscaped parking lots, no consistency in signage or facade design, and a lack of a circulation and pedestrian system that provides visual coherency and physical coherency to the area.
- The Downtown does not provide an appealing pedestrian environment.
- The Downtown does not offer outdoor space for people to gather, rest, talk, eat or play. There is currently no reason to linger in the Downtown.
- Route 139 traffic levels create a barrier between each side of the Downtown's traditional Main Street — Ocean Street.
- The current traffic circulation pattern in Webster Square is confusing, makes no provision for pedestrians and disrupts the potential continuity of the space as a downtown area.
- The Downtown does not provide a space that has emotional meaning for Marshfield residents. The Town's other villages — Brant Rock, Humarock and Center Marshfield — have more character and more meaning. Elements of that character are present Downtown — the cemetery, historic buildings, the railroad bed — but they are obscured by a hodgepodge of architectural styles and the problems noted above.
- Therefore, the 1996 City Design Downtown Revitalization Plan has recommended much of what can be done to improve this area: the Snow Road realignment, the introduction of sidewalks and more landscaping, the closure of some streets, a storefront improvement program along Ocean Street, the Old Colony Railroad Park and the improvements along the extended Snow Road into the Library area. There are two exceptions to this endorsement, however. It appears that the Library Plaza has the potential to be used to offer an additional well landscaped open space. Secondly, there are opportunities for creating a pedestrian system through the downtown.

Enterprise Drive

In addition to the Downtown, the Enterprise Drive Industrial Area in southwest Marshfield has great potential for change. This area is located south of Route 139 and extends west to the Pembroke town line and south to Route 3. Enterprise Drive itself is a long cul-de-sac extending south from Route 139. While some possibilities for extending this road to become a "loop" have been discussed, there is only one access point at this time.

The area is zoned Industrial-1 and contains several large industrial uses such as Kirwan surgical products, WATD radio, Sabian Cymbal, and other businesses located within small commerce centers, but the majority of the land is vacant. Additional land uses to the east and west of Enterprise Drive (but still within the

I-1) zone include general office buildings, discount stores, a lumber yard and storage and warehouse operations. There is also a substantial amount of municipal land on the eastern side of this zone.

The commercial B-2 zone to the north and the residential R-2 zone to the east place development pressure on the vacant land as the adjacent zones continue to grow. In fact, the residential development pressure was great enough that it resulted in a portion of the I-1 zone being changed recently to R-2.

Seventy percent of community survey respondents would support the Town in taking a direct role in promoting new development in the Enterprise Drive Industrial Area.



The Enterprise Drive industrial area has great potential for change.

Key Issues and Challenges in Enterprise Drive

The key issues relative to Enterprise Drive are as follows:

- The Town would like more economic development in order to increase tax revenues and improve the quality of life in Marshfield by strengthening businesses.
- There is a history of resident opposition to proposed industrial uses and other uses (e.g. the courthouse in this area).
- Development and improvement of the Enterprise Drive area should minimize traffic impacts on Route 139.
- The presence of Town owned land in the Enterprise Drive area provides additional options for development.
- There is a substantial amount of flexibility on the site to accommodate a range of potential uses.
- Development that duplicates nearby uses or jeopardizes the health and stability of the downtown should be avoided.