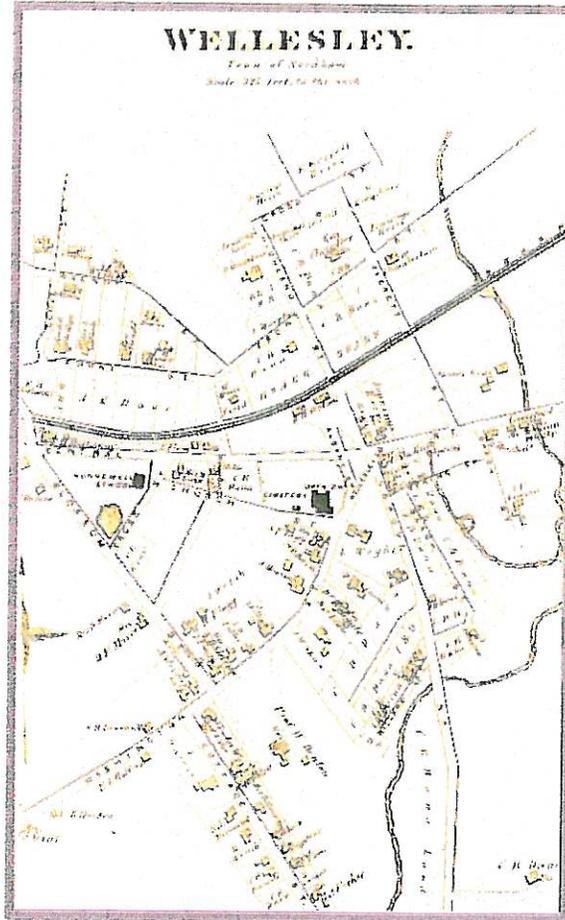


WELLESLEY SQUARE

ACTION PLAN



December 18, 1998

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WELLESLEY SQUARE ACTION PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Wellesley's Planning Board completed in 1994 a Comprehensive Plan which included recommendations to foster the continued economic vitality of the local business districts. In addition to facilitating public/private initiatives, the Board committed to retaining consultants who would prepare first a Vision Plan, and subsequently an Action Plan and an Implementation program for each of the Town's major commercial areas.

The Wellesley Square Forum was held by the Planning Board on June 12, 1997 and attended by over 100 residents, elected officials, and business leaders. The following goals were established in the Vision forum and set the framework for the Action Plan:

1. Establish and develop an **organization structure** that will permit **centralized management** of those Square issues requiring collective solutions while allowing for broadly inclusive participation.
2. **Balance** the demands imposed on the Square in its various roles: as Town center, as a business district, and as a neighbor to residential areas and colleges.
3. **Improve access** to the Square by more effective management and designation of existing parking spaces, adding new capacity as needed.
4. Create a **focal gathering place** for people with **pedestrian paths** linking different areas of the business district.
5. Develop **attractions** in the square that provide more entertainment, make students more comfortable, **emphasize the unique**, and continue after 5:00 P.M.
6. Strengthen and emphasize **cultural attractions**, whether offered commercially in the Square, from a central gathering place such as the Bandstand, or on a nearby campus.
7. Protect and enhance the **historical structures** and improve specific areas with plantings; consider **re-use of Grove Street/Railroad Avenue area**.
8. Maintain the Square's **boundaries** as currently defined.

This Action Plan builds on these goals. Under the leadership of the Planning Board and a Steering Committee, the consulting team headed by the firm of Larry Koff & Associates was retained in June, 1998 to refine this set of goals into a workable Action Plan. With the assistance of a retail market specialist, Todreas Hanley, an urban design firm, Bluestone Planning group, and a community development consultant, Ernie Zupancic, the consultant team addressed a broad range of issues concerned with the retail mix, downtown management, parking, physical improvements, zoning and permitting. A Vision Statement was created to guide the preparation of an Action Plan.

VISION

Wellesley Square is the center of the Town's commercial, cultural, and civic activity. In order to continue to enhance the district, Wellesley Square should continue to provide a broad mix of uses with a focus on up-scale specialty stores and personalized service which attracts customers equally from the Town and region. While both national and regional chain stores have entered the market, the business district should continue to be weighted towards individually owned businesses.

A Four Point Action Plan has subsequently been developed to ensure that the vision for Wellesley Square as the Town's center of commerce, culture, and civic activity is fulfilled. Continued diligence in managing change in Wellesley Square will be needed to ensure the quality of shopping, personal service, specialized mix of uses, and pedestrian scale of activity remains ahead of the major competitive locations in Natick, Waltham, Newton, and Boston.

FOUR POINT ACTION PLAN

Concerted efforts in the following four areas need to be undertaken.

Task One: Formalize Role of Steering Committee

To ensure greater coordination among Planning Board, the Wellesley Square Business Association, and the Selectmen, it is recommended that the Steering Committee's work program be adopted, that a chairperson be appointed, and that the Committee membership be formalized. As this committee successfully addresses the work program, the property owners and merchants will build a consensus for funding a downtown manager type position as described in Task 1 following.

Task Two: Implement Parking/Signage Plan

The Wellesley Square Parking Study prepared in 1996 by McDonough & Scully, Inc. identified a number of important recommendations concerning creation of the Weston Road lot and instituting a comprehensive signage and enforcement program. This work program will need to be carried out in concert with the Steering Committee and the Selectmen's Office. The cooperation of the business owners and the Selectmen's office is essential.

Task Three: Initiate Planning for Village Square

Issues which drive the need to develop a consensus vision and plan for Post Office Square include: traffic safety and circulation issues at Railroad and Central Streets, additional parking and an improved train station, the opportunity to "close the gap" and re-knit the commercial uses in the three sub-districts of Lower and Upper Wellesley Square and Church Street, and a re-design of the open space so that it serves as a focal point of commerce and community. Why not make this a community-wide effort involving the Planning Board, the Design Review Board, high school students, the abutters (Village Church), Crest Road Mall, Linden Street neighborhood? Begin with a vision workshop. Expand on the draft development goals statement.

Task Four: Make Zoning/Permitting More User Friendly

Various regulations i.e. the sign and zoning by-laws and policies which govern entertainment activities, are currently designed to minimize change. The Planning Board, the Design Review Board, and the Steering Committee can provide the leadership to develop the visions, policies, and by-law amendments which will be needed to build a consensus around desired changes. The by-product of these efforts would be to facilitate growth at certain key parcels such as the Wellesley Inn and possible Post Office Square, enable business owners to design signs which respond to a consistent vision and approval process, and permit existing establishments to foster local entertainment.

TIMELINE

Four key dates mark current progress on addressing issues of importance to Wellesley square:

- 1994 Town of Wellesley Comprehensive Plan
- 1996 The McDonough & Scully Traffic Report
- 1997 Wellesley Square Forum
- 1998 Wellesley Square Road improvements, consultants retained to carry out an Action Plan

The next two years could witness the implementation of the Action Plan.

Figure 1
WELLESLEY SQUARE ACTION PLAN

ACTION	YEAR 1		YEAR 2
	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS	
Planning Board			
1. Appoint chairperson, formalize role, membership, work program of Steering Committee	X		
3. <i>Obtain \$20,000 in Funding to Carry Out Action Plan to address issues identified in italics.</i>	X		
• <i>Prepare Pathway Plan/ Village Church</i>		X	
• <i>Undertake Vision Charrette for P.O. Sq.*</i>		X	
• Prepare new zoning for Wellesley Square development areas			X
Steering Committee			
• <i>Facilitate relocation of Farmer's Market to P.O. Sq.</i>	X		
• Coordinate Weston Road lot development with employee parking/enforcement programs	X	X	
• Establish Technical Assistance program with Babson College	X		
• Identify Wellesley Inn/Train Station/P.O. Square/Tailby lot/Cameron Street Development Program; prepare new zoning*	X	X	
• Plan installation of Parking lot signs, Book stalls, public bathrooms, band stand; obtain funding	X	X	
• Liaison with Library Trustees re. programming/design of addition	X	X	
• Work with Selectmen's office on sidewalk litter program, parking enforcement, designation of employee parking at Tailby lot, assignment of a "beat" officer for Wellesley Square		X	
• Establish guidelines for Entertainment Licenses	X		
• <i>Prepare proposal for establishing a Wellesley Square Manager</i>		X	
Selectmen's Office			
2. Appoint representative to Steering Comm; approve work program			
• Identify program (location/funding) for Signage, Weston Road parking lot, sidewalk litter clean-up	X	X	
• Implement Town Hall landscaping/parking plan			
Design Review Board			
• <i>Supervise preparation of sign guidelines report</i>		X	X
• Review plans for Village Church pathway and library "addition"		X	
• Review Store Directory and Parking Lot signage system plans	X	X	
Wellesley Square Merchants Association			
• Continue to carry out marketing/promotion/event planning; initiate marketing program with Wellesley College, establish evening hours on Thursday, distribute map flier/store directory, tenant recruitment	X	X	X
• <i>Explore feasibility of installing weekend "Book Stall Marketplace"</i> *		X	
• Undertake fund-raising for installing a Store Directory			X
• Assist in preparing proposal establishing office of Downtown Mgr		X	

*Note: In concert with NRC & DRC

ACTION PLAN

TASK I ORGANIZATION

INTRODUCTION

Because Wellesley Square is a mature, built-up business district in an affluent community there are differing points of view as to the need for a management structure to facilitate change and coordination between the merchants and Town government. While all agree that issues of the business mix, parking, physical improvements, maintenance are of concern, neither town government nor the business community are eager to take on more responsibilities or commit greater resources.

The Vision workshop and the research we have conducted, on the other hand, clearly identified the need and desire to initiate a number of activities to help Wellesley Square function more efficiently and effectively for its shoppers, retailers, property owners, and institutions. What this requires is better management. The establishment of a downtown manager type position would provide the centralized direction and coordination between the public and private sector that is presently either entirely non-existent, supplied by volunteers who lack the time, resources, specialized expertise or formal authority to do what is needed, or made available on an ad hoc basis by staffs and volunteers who have a myriad of priorities.

STAFFING NEEDS

The issues which a management structure would need to address in Wellesley Square have been organized into four categories as summarized below:

1. Business Development:

To compete with surrounding malls and other business districts, Wellesley Square needs to be marketed as a destination that will attract a targeted group of shoppers from the Town and neighboring communities. This will require the creation of a unified marketing campaign that includes the development of an image for the Square and the promotion of that image through appropriate media. Discussions with local business owners indicated the need for four specific types of activities to facilitate the growth of local businesses; 1) marketing and promotion, 2) technical assistance, 3) business recruitment, and 4) store hours.

The Wellesley Square Merchants Association periodically obtains the support of local businesses to prepare joint marketing materials such as the flier which was included in the Sunday Globe this past Spring. Increasing these activities was rated by a survey of local business owners as their greatest need. We have suggested that a flier and map listing all the local businesses and parking areas would be a good marketing tool. This same survey also identified the desire by the merchants to organize uniform hours for operation on Thursday nights and possibly Sundays. Technical assistance in the areas of marketing, computers, and accounting were also identified as needs by up to one-half of the merchants. The mix of businesses was, after marketing and promotion and parking, also a major concern of the business owners. Various types of businesses such as women clothing, shoes, restaurants, hardware, home furnishings, accessories, have been identified as voids which should be either filled or expanded. While this is a difficult task for a business district to undertake, if organized in cooperation with local brokers, it is an activity that could be pursued by the business community.

2. Event Planning:

There is widespread agreement in the Vision Statement as well as in our survey of residents that more needs to be done to create vitality in the Square as a means of bringing additional shoppers to the area. Some of this will be directly related to shopping events, but some will merely be a means of introducing potential shoppers to what the Square has to offer both in terms of goods and services and general ambiance.

There are already many events which take place in and around the Square, sponsored by the Village Church, Wellesley College, Dana Hall, non-profit organizations with offices in the square, the library, and the Town. A downtown manager could make contact with the groups sponsoring these events, perhaps coordinating their presentation so that they complement one another rather than compete. A manager could also develop a unified calendars of events and use that to promote the Square as a place where there's always something happening. Other churches and institutions on the periphery of or outside the Square such as Babson College would also be encouraged to participate.

A downtown manager could also take over and expand events which have traditionally been planned and organized by the business community, including important seasonal events with an obvious commercial impact. These would be featured prominently on the calendar of events.

Finally, of course, a downtown manager could look at the calendar and see where there are gaps that need to be filled with new events, then find a sponsor for such an activity or plan the activity him or herself.

3. Regulation/Enforcement

A true partnership of the public and private sector is required to address the complex concerns relating to 1) parking, 2) sanitation, 3) signage, 4) arts/entertainment, 5) appropriate street vending including the farmer's market. The business community, residents, and town government agree that they must work together to solve these problems. The provision of additional parking will require the Town's development of an off-street lot for employees, the adjustment of the rates in the Tailby and Cameron lots to ensure that adequate shopper parking is available, and cooperation between the owners of the private lots to develop a coherent and reasonable set of regulations about the public use of these facilities which are currently limited to certain stores. At the same time, the support of the merchants and property owners will be required to ensure that employees use the proposed Weston Road lot and refrain from violating the limitations on short term parking. Improved cleanliness of curbside litter will require additional manpower by the Town as well as increased responsibility by local merchants in policing and cleaning in front of their stores. Regulation of store signage and the provision of local entertainment in restaurants will require the adoption of "user friendly" guidelines. And the identification of appropriate forms of street vending including the relocation of the Farmer's market to a more central location in Post Office Square will require the cooperation of the public and private sector. By working together, the town and the business community can address these concerns.

4. Project Planning

A number of physical improvements have been recommended. These include the installation of a public pedestrian pathway over the Village Church driveway connecting Church and Central Streets, the development of a vision plan for Post Office Square area, new zoning for this area, the Wellesley Inn, and Cameron Place sub-area, the development of new parking, a train station, and public bathrooms. Without the focused attention of a designated project manager, it is likely that these initiatives will languish.

Wellesley Square Regional Context

Prepared by:
Larry Koff and Associates

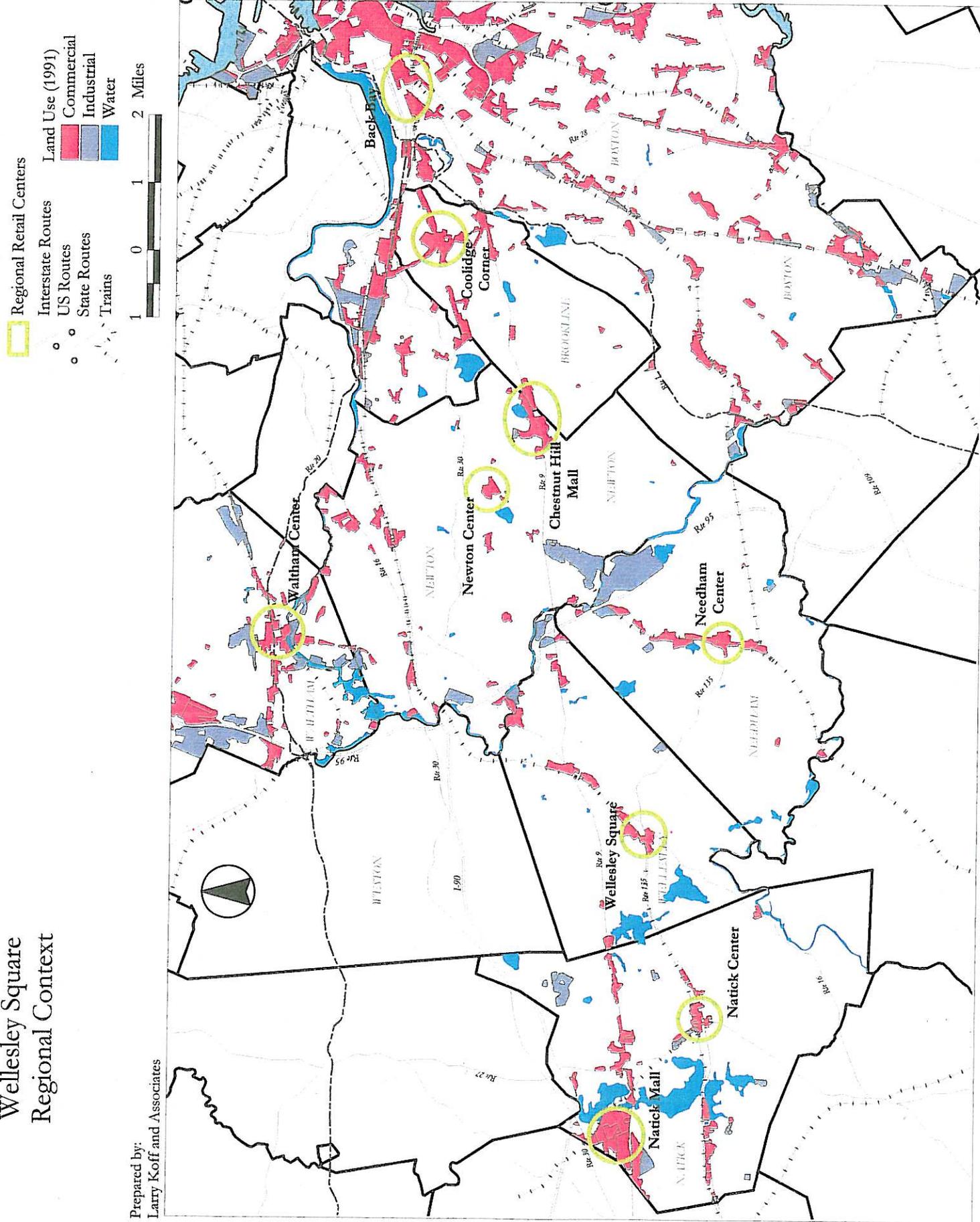


Figure 4

ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS

Of all the commercial districts with which Wellesley Square competes, as identified on Figure 4, i.e., Natick Center, Natick Mall, Waltham Center, Newton Center, Chestnut Hill Mall, Coolidge Corner, Back Bay, the Towns of Wellesley and Needham are the only municipalities which lack an economic development arm. All the other centers are located in a municipality which has an Economic Development staff in addition to staff supplied by a Mall or local Chamber.

The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is encouraging local communities to develop their own forms of downtown management. They have suggested three types of organizational structures, but stress that a variety of hybrid models are possible: The following table highlights those needs which are most readily addressed by one of four organizational models. As noted below, other than Business Development, the needs are more appropriately handled by an organizational model which includes the public sector.

Organization Models for Downtown Management

NEEDS	ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL			
	<u>Private Sector</u>	<u>Non-Profit Downtown Partnership</u>	<u>Town Department</u>	<u>Hybrid</u>
1. Business Development Marketing/Promotion Technical Assistance Business Recruitment Store Hours	X	X		X
2. Event Planning	X	X		X
3. Regulation/Enforcement Parking Sanitation Signage Entertainment			X	X
4. Project Development Project Planning Signage Kiosks		X	X	X

Private Sector Committee of an Existing Business Organization, Like a Chamber of Commerce

Under this scenario, the Wellesley Chamber of Commerce would use a member of its staff to carry out the activities outlined above. The manager would work for the Chamber's Executive Director, perhaps with a separate advisory committee made up of Chamber members who have businesses in the Square. The manager's salary would come out of the Chamber's budget, as would benefits, supplies and support services. Event sponsors would presumably continue to pay for events as they presently do, with some special arrangement for funding of marketing and advertising campaigns. Again, if the manager is successful, it would be easy to increase activities, funding and the manager's time.

The advantage of this approach is that the Chamber is an ongoing organization with an existing staff and a history of representing the business community. The major difficulty is that the Chamber is a

town-wide organization, so that it might have a problem concentrating on the needs of a particular business district, especially given the fact that there are several other significant commercial areas in Wellesley - though the Square is certainly the most prominent.

A variation of the theme of a private sector manager is the role of the "mall manager". Shopping malls like the Atrium, the Mall at Chestnut Hill, Natick Mall and Shoppers World employ such professionals at annual salaries approaching \$80,000. In fact, as representatives of the mall owner - a single entity - mall managers are literally in control of their "business district". While this degree of authority and responsibility cannot exist in Wellesley Square because of the diverse ownership interests, it is instructive to note the responsibilities that these private sector sponsored managers assume. Mall Managers are in charge of promotions and marketing, operations and maintenance, including items like snow removal and security. They carry out the terms of the leases which the owner has with each tenant regarding provision of services and assistance with any difficulties that may arise, and they ensure that the tenants comply with their obligations under the leases by paying their rent and staying open the agreed upon hours. Mall managers, of course, are paid by the mall owners, with the funding ultimately derived from the rents paid by the tenants. In that sense, they are a service included in the cost of doing business for the retailers.

A Separate Non-Profit Corporation, Like a Main Street Partnership.

The "downtown manager" position was popularized by the Main Street Program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and has now spread to virtually every state in the nation. In Massachusetts, the State Department of Housing and Community Development provided funding from its Community Development Block Grant Program to support the establishment of Downtown Partnerships that performed some of the functions of a mall manager. While the conditions in Wellesley are such (low vacancies, good building conditions) that grants would not be available to support the organization, State economic assistance might be available for facilitating public/private development projects. A role for the manager would be to assist in obtaining these grants.

There are presently 17 functioning Downtown Partnerships in Massachusetts, each of which is a private, non-profit corporation with a board of directors made up of a mix of private individuals and public officials. (Natick Center Associates, Inc., just down Route 135 from Wellesley Square, is one of these Partnerships.) The Partnerships control a budget which allows for the hiring of a downtown manager, staff assistance, the operation of an office, and the provision of a number of services. The most common of these services is advocacy for the district with municipal government on planning of various development activities i.e., parking facility, streetscape improvements, sign and facade improvements, and assistance to individual business people with particular problems they might have. Managers also usually try to obtain funding for the district for public improvement and storefront renovation projects and encourage retailers to cooperate on things like common store hours. They also keep in touch with retailers and property owners to learn when vacancies could be coming and to assist with recruitment. The marketing and promotion of the district, planning and implementation of events to draw shoppers and residents to the area is carried out by volunteers as part of the merchant's support of the downtown organization.

Downtown managers typically start out being paid from "seed money" grants from some non-profit or government source. The usual expectation is that the government money will be phased out to be replaced by payments from the businesses and property owners who are members of the downtown partnerships. In most cases these payments are voluntary, just as membership in the partnerships is voluntary. In Natick Center, the Office of the Downtown manager is paid from three equal sources; the town, the corporate leadership, and the local businesses.

Virtually every state, however, also allows for the creation of Business Improvement Districts, which provide a variety of services such as security, maintenance, marketing and promotion. The costs of such services - including the salary of a manager - is paid for with mandatory assessments on each property owner that are collected with real estate taxes but turned over to the BID management. In Massachusetts, only Downtown Springfield has a BID, although many communities are considering them and Boston and Hyannis are close to getting theirs approved. A description of the Business Improvement District legislation is provided in Appendix 1

As DHCD funding is phased out for the Downtown Partnerships, they are examining how to continue to pay for their downtown managers. Possibilities include a combination of Town funding from general revenue, contributions from business and property owners and fees for services. In some cases, Chambers of Commerce have or are expected to take over some of the functions of the partnerships, with funding coming from members' dues.

A Town Department

The most frequently mentioned model for this position is to create a staff person within Town Hall charged with economic vitality. This individual could report to the Selectmen or the Planning Board or to a new Economic Development Commission which the town might want to establish. The Town of Dedham has established an Economic Development Advisory Committee. This committee is chaired by the Town Manager and includes representation from a number of departments and boards. This committee is investigating the establishment of a staff person responsible for the vitality of the town's commercial areas.

A Hybrid Organization Involving Both the Public and Private Sector

The Town of Wellesley would need to more fully evaluate the various tasks and develop a position which fits these needs. The focus would relate to *facilitating economic vitality* in contrast to pursuing responsibilities solely around the issues of economic development as described below.

The City of Northampton and the Town of Brookline have adopted a hybrid approach to foster economic vitality. The City of Northampton utilizes State CDBG grant funding to help support planning staff charged with various economic improvement activities in the commercial districts. A representative of the Mayor's office also assists in this effort. Together these staff people work with the Chamber and local organizations and property owners on various initiatives to improve the downtown. The Town of Brookline employs an Economic Development Director who reports to the municipal government and is advised by an Economic Development Advisory Board made up of volunteers. The Director is an advocate for the business community within the government, assists merchants with any problems they might have and coordinates major events. Individual business district associations do joint marketing and advertising for their areas. The Chamber of Commerce employs a person who does promotional work for the entire Town.

FUNDING/COSTS

Identifying an appropriate organizational model will depend largely upon agreeing on a funding strategy. While the private sector cannot undertake the funding of these tasks on their own, their participation will be required in order to justify the public sector's financial support.

As identified below, there are four major funding sources: 1) establishing a Business Improvement District (BID) which permits the collection of fees from property owners, 2) allocating the towns tax revenue to this task, 3) establishing a dues structure for the business community, and 4) utilizing revenues from the Parking Fund and/ or hotel tax. All of these options have their limitations. A fifth possible funding source, private

contributions, is possible if there is a clear focus to the effort, broad support, and leadership. These ingredients do not appear to present at this time in Wellesley Square.

Funding Sources for Downtown Organizations

FUNDING SOURCES	ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL			
	Private	Non-Profit	Town	Hybrid
Business Improvement District (BID)		X		X
Taxes			X	X
Dues	X	X		X
Parking Fund			X	X

Three of these four models are applicable to Wellesley Square; establishing a staff person charged with economic development paid for utilizing town funds, creating a non-profit Main Street organization outside the control of government and/or creating some sort of hybrid organization or staffing relationships using a blend of public and private resources. The private sector clearly cannot finance this broad range of concerns on their own.

A Business Improvement District is difficult to establish as it needs the support of the property owners as well as the Town. Merchants have thus far been unwilling to support a local business organization. The Town has limited revenues and will find it difficult to fund one commercial district without supporting all the commercial areas. The Parking Fund is supposed to be expended on parking related improvements. By contrast, the hotel tax, as in the city of Northampton, could be targeted to the downtown.

Given the preceding limitations, it is apparent that some sort of hybrid organizational model must be developed to provide the funding needed to establish a focused management structure for Wellesley Square. The support of both the public and private sector might be nurtured with appropriate leadership and cooperation.

Cost of Staffing

The costs of a full time economic development position, i.e., a Downtown Manager or municipal staff person ranges between \$40,000 and \$60,000. The cost of establishing a downtown Partnership Office could range between \$60,000 and \$100,000 depending upon the need to support an office and administrative assistance. The cost of a part time marketing person for a district could be in the range of \$25,000.

See Appendix 2 for job descriptions of a Downtown manager (Natick) and an Economic Development Officer (Brookline). It might be useful for the Steering Committee to invite these individuals to a discussion of downtown organizational models and funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS: DOWNTOWN STAFF/ORGANIZATION

Two possible options appear likely at this time. The Steering Committee will have to work with the business community to identify and obtain support for an appropriate organizational model and funding strategy.

- **Establish a hybrid organization which builds on the existing separation of powers between the public and private sector.**
Under this scenario, the Town would support a staff person, full or part time, who would undertake the following responsibilities: Event Planning, Regulation/Enforcement activities including parking,

sanitation, the Farmer's market, and Project Development, i.e., facilitating appropriate planning/development of the Weston Road lot, Post Office Square re-planning, Village Church Pathway, and various private parcels which might be ready for the design review/approval process. Concurrently the local business community would retain the services of an individual or organization to undertake business development related activities including marketing and promotion. This appears to be the most viable option at the moment. Alternatively, the Town and Business Community could consider a second alternative as described below.

- **Establish a public-private partnership.**

A private, non-profit corporation would be created, with a board of directors including business and property owners, institutions, residents, and public officials. The corporation would receive funds from the Town and contributions from the private sector including businesses, institutions, and residents. Since there is a legitimate questions as to why the Town should be supporting Wellesley Square rather than other business districts, there would be a strict requirement for the matching of Town funds with private funds. There would be an expectation that other business districts could have similar arrangements if they also provided private matching funds.

The matching requirement should only apply to the basic management costs of the organization. Both public and private parties would then be able to contribute funds to pay for specific activities. For example, the Town might provide funds for certain events that it normally pays for in any case, and private businesses might contribute money to pay for an advertising campaign. The organization might also seek funds from other sources (State government, local foundations, major corporations, residents) for particular activities.

Under this arrangement, the partnership board would hire the downtown manager, approve an annual budget and provide overall advice and direction. The manager would be responsible for day-to-day operations. If this model were successful, the partners could consider expanding the scope of operations, with related increases in funding and time spent by the manager.

TASK II: PARKING SUPPLY, SIGNAGE AND ENFORCEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Many people have indicated that there is a parking shortage in the Square that is exacerbated by rail commuters (all day parkers) from other towns as well as by employees of the Square's businesses who often occupy the most convenient parking spaces that might otherwise be used by patrons of those businesses. To remedy these situations, Wellesley commissioned a parking study of the Square two years ago by McDonough and Scully. This Study largely supports their recommendations as a means to address the real and perceived parking shortages in the Square.

Figure 5 diagrams the locations of all public and private parking lot in the Square, while Figure 6 shows the walking distance from existing parking sites and indicates by yellow labels alternative parking deck sites talked of in the past as a means of increasing parking supply. Around large lots, there are two arcs drawn with radii of 300 and 500 feet from the lots indicating reasonable maximum walking distances that patrons of shops in suburban locales are willing to walk from their parked cars to do business. It can be seen that the Cameron Street lot well supports the Lower Square. The Cross Street Lot supports the Upper Square; and the Railroad Avenue lot supports portions of both the Upper and Lower Square.

What is apparent from viewing Figure 5 is that the majority of parking that serves the Central Street shopping area is privately owned and restricted to patrons and employees of the adjacent businesses. The two largest private lots are located behind CVS and Marco Polo. The restrictions for these lots are very confusing to the shopper who is unfamiliar with the district. The situation is also quite costly to the property owners who often have to pay for their own security system to ensure that the lot is reserved for employees and shoppers of businesses who are operate under their lease. This problem is most evident at the lot behind CVS. A fence has been erected by the owner to ensure that only stores with leases have direct access to the lot. This fence prevents the stores which front on Central Street to establish secondary entrances off the parking lot. A guard limits employees and shoppers to certain specific stores. A possible solution to this problem is to have all the private lots operated by the town under a single rate structure for employees and patrons. Alternatively, it might be possible to have the major owners get together and develop their own management plan.

The Town-owned Tailby Parking Lot to the north of the commuter rail tracks is too distant to support retail patronage for either the Upper or Lower Square the way the present Square is now developed. Its present use, therefore, as an all-day parking lot for rail commuters makes a great deal of sense since it is too distant and therefore unsuitable for supporting other uses in the Square, except perhaps, as a lot for employees of the Square's businesses so as to free up more convenient parking spaces for retail patrons now occupied by employees.

At present, the Town has begun to implement some parking improvements. For example, the Town is advancing designs to expand parking at Town Hall as a part of a more comprehensive Town Hall grounds and landscape improvement effort. It is examining the creation of a new parking lot on Weston Road to provide spaces for all-day employee parking, and it is revising the parking rate structure at the Tailby lot to encourage Wellesley patrons and discourage out-of-town parkers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations are currently being considered to address the parking shortfall. The Waban lot is proposed for approximately 60 employee parking spaces. A new rate structure is proposed for the Tailby lot to provide more commuter spaces for Wellesley residents. The consultants have also

recommended that some percentage of these spaces be reserved on a permit basis for non-resident employees who would find the proposed Weston Road lot too far to use.

In addition, the following recommendations from the Wellesley Square Parking Study, prepared by McDonough & Scully, Inc. in 1996 should be considered by the Steering Committee and the Selectmen's Office as part of implementing development/management of the proposed Waban employee lot.

Parking Enforcement (p. 37):

- *Track violators through the computerized tracking system and violators meeting certain criteria would be towed. Examples of the criteria are 5 tickets outstanding over a 21 day period with more than 10 tickets issued over a 12 month period, or other limits.*
- *Increase the application of regular ticketing patrols along Church Street, Grove Street, and Railroad Lot and the Waban Lot.*
- *Again through more extensive computerized tracking, overtime violators without a ticket issued over a 12 month period could be issued a warning. The warning could be a courteous reminder of the importance of short-term parking spaces to the nearby businesses.*

Options such as booting and towing have been considered but may be unnecessary or undesirable at this time. However, these techniques typically address the flagrant offender issue with high levels of effectiveness. Generally the threat of this a action addresses most if not all of the problem. Initial institution of these techniques could include warnings as well as high publicity campaigns.

It is important for the Town to follow through with the collection process in order to complete the enforcement process. All ticketing data should be processed through the Registry of Motor Vehicles which provides added incentive for violators (with Massachusetts registrations) to pay the fines.

See Appendix 4 for parking signage guidelines from the 1996 Parking Study.

Wellesley Square Action Plan

Town of Wellesley, MA



Larry Koff & Associates
 100
 Biltmore Park East Group
 Federal Health Associates
 Forest Edge, Inc.

Parking

-  Public
- C - Commuter (Tailby)
- L - Long Term
- S - Short Term
- R - Library/Town Hall
-  Private
 (Restricted to adjacent businesses)

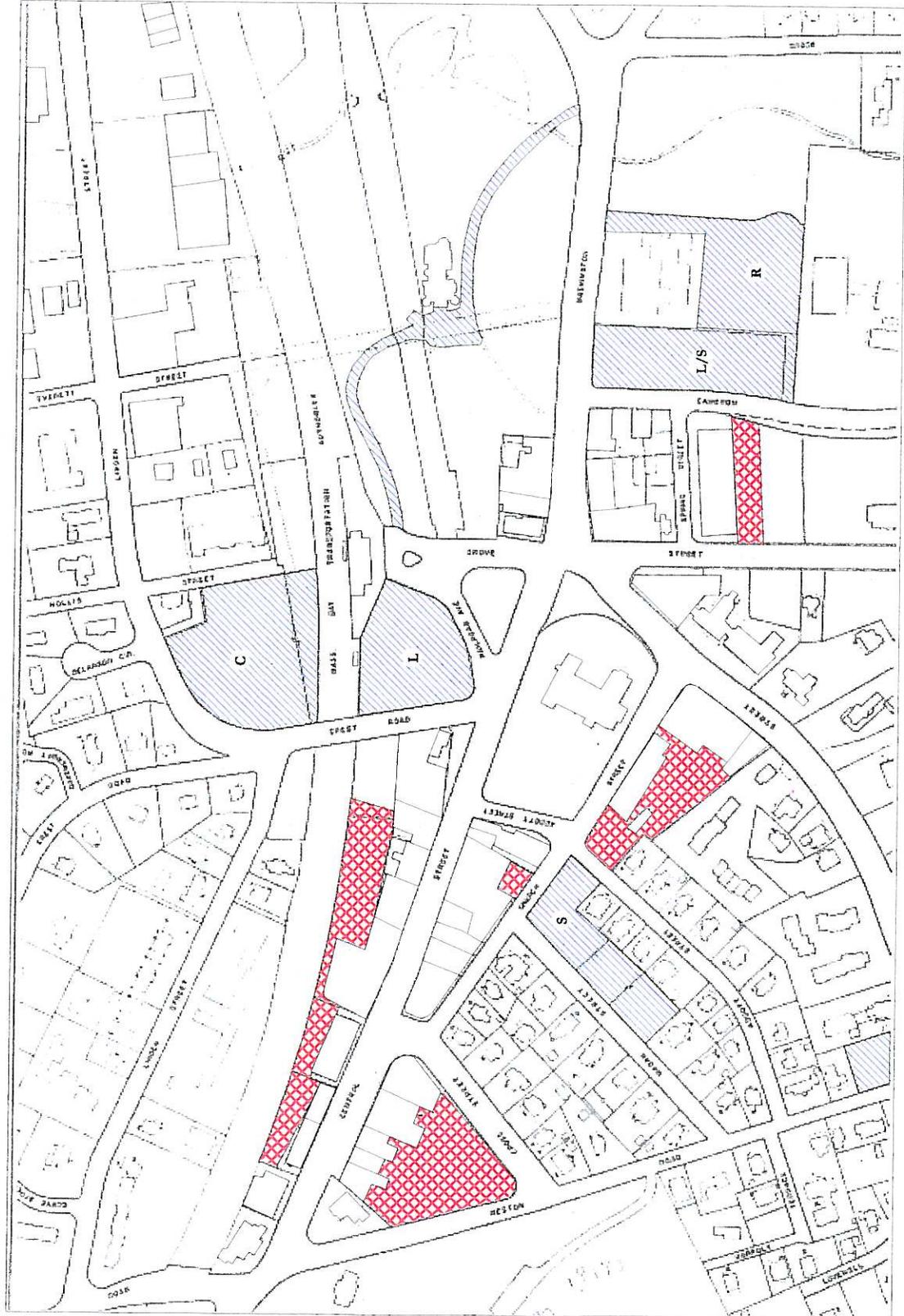


Figure 5

Wellesley Square Action Plan

Town of Wellesley, MA



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Parking
Analysis

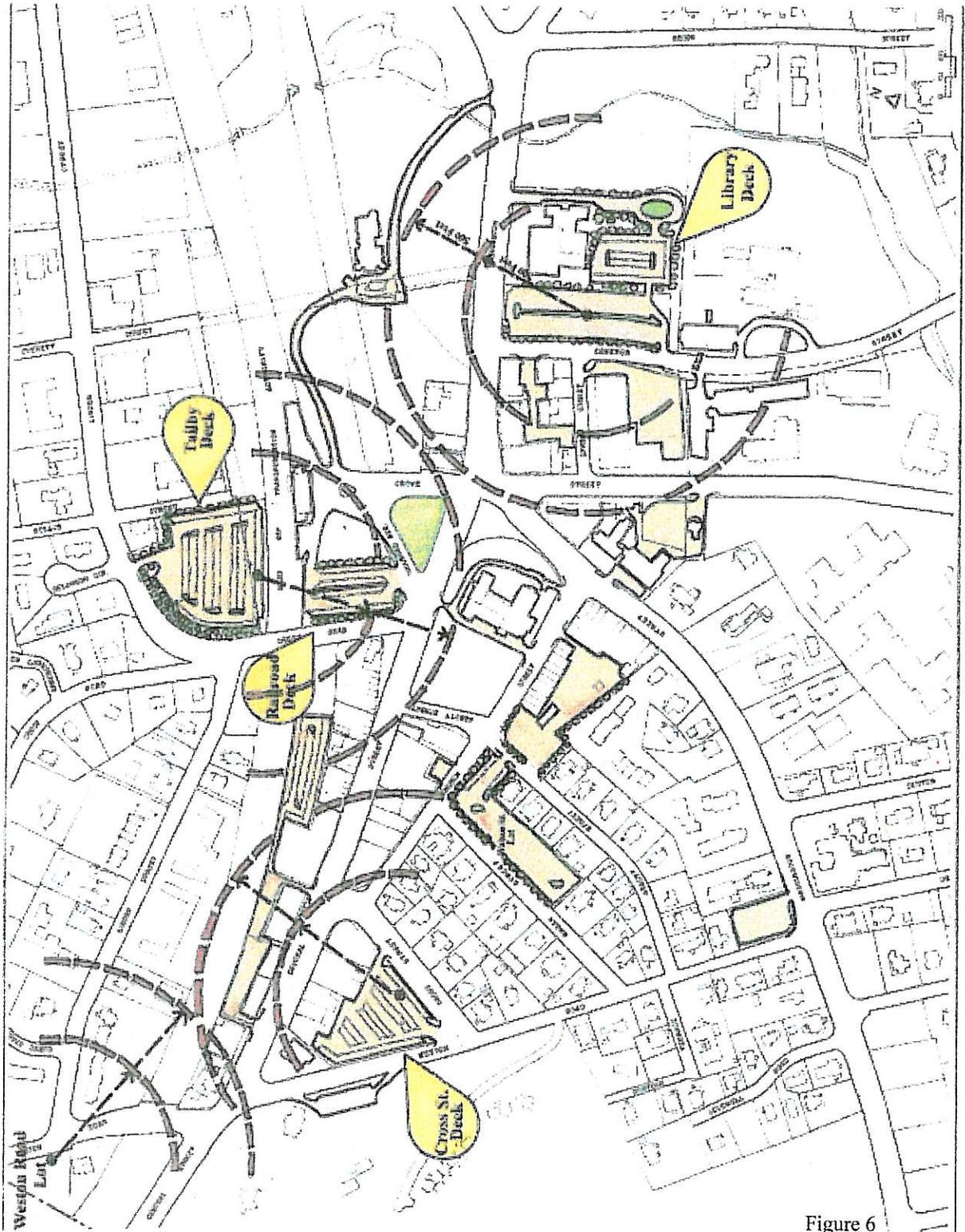


Figure 6

TASK III PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS/ZONING

INTRODUCTION

Wellesley Square is an attractive pedestrian-oriented town center of modest scale that hosts a mix of shops, restaurants, galleries, offices, and an inn. At its center (or the “100% corner” at the intersection of Grove, Central and Washington Street), it is served by commuter rail stop at the Wellesley Square MBTA Station, a US Post Office, and a small park that together comprise Post Office Square. Its landmarks include the picturesque “Village Church” at Grove and Central Streets, the Wellesley Inn, and the distinctive Town Hall itself at the eastern edge of the Square. Recently new sidewalks, landscaping and street furniture were installed throughout the Square which have greatly enhanced the Square’s physical appearance.

As can be seen in Figure 7, “Wellesley Square Structure”, the Square itself is rather sharply defined as a commercial center with clear and distinct districts bounding it on all sides. As a result, the commercial heart of the Square remains relatively compact and of comfortable walking distance. A handsome, historic, and diverse residential neighborhood bounds the Square to the south, the commuter rail line provides a sharp linear edge to the north, Wellesley College is to the west, and the town’s civic center (Town Hall, Library, Hunnewell Elementary School, and park grounds) is immediately to the east along Washington St. To the north of the commuter rail line lies the Linden Street retail and commercial district which is auto-oriented and in many ways competes with the Square for retail patronage.

In addition to providing commercial vitality, the Square serves as a civic center with public events, meetings and activities held at the Village Church, the Town Hall, and the Public Library. An underutilized event venue is the Bardwell Auditorium on the Dana Hall campus to the Square’s immediate south on Cameron Street.

URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

In many ways, the Square is a traditional linear “Main Street” focused along the Central/Washington Street corridor. As with many traditional Main Streets, parking lots (both public and private) are located behind the retail shops and offices on Central Street to serve them. The linear rail line parallels Central Street and bounds the Square’s northern edge. An abandoned underground concrete aqueduct also travels beneath Town Hall grounds and the Grove Street and Railroad Avenue area and gives shape to the park’s land forms there. When one focuses in upon the Square itself a bit more closely, however, its structure becomes a bit more complex. (See Figure 8, “Urban Design Analysis of Wellesley Square”.)

The commercial square is comprised of four separate mini districts, each with its own character:

The Lower Square east of Grove Street and adjacent to Town Hall and the Library is a small commercial area of a small intimate village scale. In fact, on Cameron Place, at the back of storefronts along Washington Street and Spring Street is an intimate pedestrian – oriented alley system that has begun to host business and shop entrances.

The Upper Square, with shops located along both sides of Central Street between Grove Street and Weston Road, may be considered a traditional linear “Main Street” commercial “Main Street” district. It begins at its western end at the entry gateway to Wellesley College and is architecturally highlighted at this western gateway by the Wellesley Square fire station and the Stuart Swain furniture building

Wellesley Square Action Plan

Town of Wellesley, MA



Larry Koff & Associates
c/o

Richard Fleming Casey
Victoria Mackey-Alexander
Susan Zupanchik, Consultant
Royal Research Group, Inc.

Wellesley Square
Structure

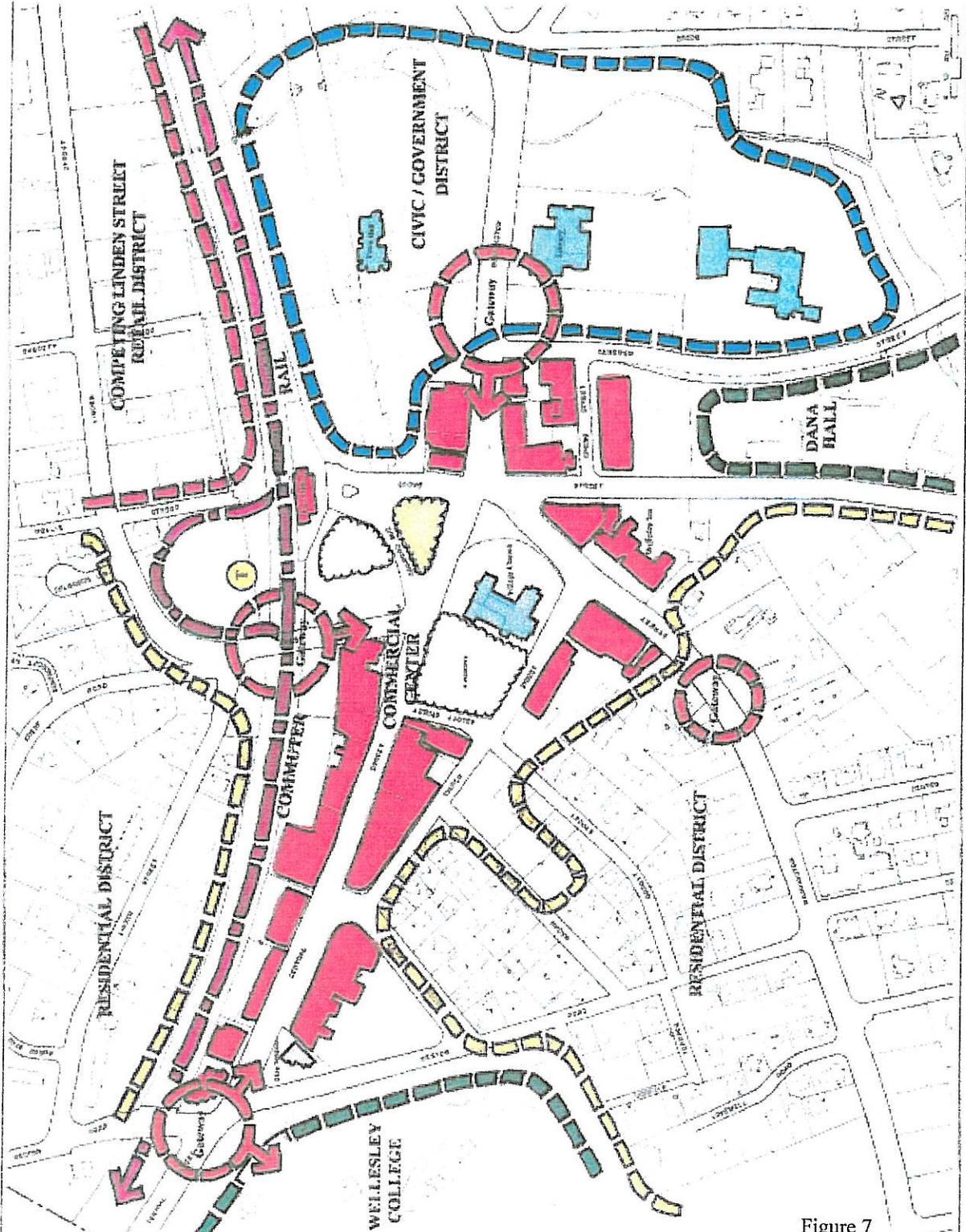


Figure 7

The Church Street/Wellesley Inn District, with the distinctive Wellesley Inn at its eastern end, is a separate and distinct village-scaled commercial street. However, it functions as a one-sided shopping street since the other side of Church Street includes the Village Church, the Cemetery, and the backside of retail shops whose storefronts face Central Street.

The Center, at the “100% corner” at Grove and Central/Washington Street, is not a commercial precinct at all. It is highlighted by a small park, the Village Church, the cemetery, the Post Office and the commuter rail station and Railroad Avenue parking lot. The park, Post Office, and commuter rail station comprise what some call “Post Office Square”.

The Civic District (Town Hall and Public Library) to the immediate east operates largely as its own precinct in a park-like setting and is considered by some as adjacent to but outside the Square itself. It is a diverse community gathering place where meetings are held, families enjoy the Duck Pond on Town Hall grounds, families visit the Library, and outdoor summer concerts are held. Town Hall itself, set back considerably from Washington Street in its park like setting, sits atop a hill or rise that gives it a visual sense of civic importance and prominence. This elevated setting also can give the appearance of a certain aloofness and non-participation in the life of the Square next door.

The “Gap”/A Vacuum At The Center

What becomes immediately evident by recognizing the distinctive but separate sub-district structure of the Square is that there is a large “gap” or “vacuum” at the Square’s center at Post Office Square. The various sub-districts are not visually related, do not link together well, and functionally, pedestrians do not readily walk between them. This disjunction between districts is because: 1) the visual and functional linkages are weak, 2) the continuity of flow between sub-districts is either interrupted by obstacles or passive spaces such as the Church grounds and cemetery, 3) lack of friendly or inviting pedestrian passages (i.e, Village Church driveway), 4) the rear of stores face much of the street frontage (i.e., Church Street) or 5) there exist large gaps in the continuity of store frontages along the street (i.e. at Post Office Square and at the Village Church/cemetery grounds). As a result, the sub-districts hang together only tenuously, if at all. Consequently, they do not support one another but are seen as separate places.

This latter obstacle - gaps in the continuity of storefronts - is most evident at the Square’s center in the vicinity of Post Office Square. There, along Central/Washington Street, there is a gap of more than one block in building and shop frontage. On the north side of the street, the gap opens up between the US Trust Building at Grove Street and continues westward to beyond the service station at Crest Road. Instead of a continuity of store frontage and activity, there is a pleasant but little used park, Railroad Avenue, and the Railroad Avenue parking lot. On the south side of the street, the Village Church and the cemetery.

The “Gap” is also exacerbated by busy, confusing and sometimes unsafe automobile traffic flows in this vicinity. One of the most unsettling and unresolved is the Railroad Avenue/Central Street/Crest Road intersection where the traffic flows (including U-turns from southbound Crest Road into Railroad Avenue) are confusing and unsafe for pedestrians.

Furthermore, the Wellesley Square commuter rail stop is not well integrated into the life of Post Office Square or the Square as a whole. The potential patronage it generates for Wellesley’s business owners is now dissipated and lost because there is nothing in the immediate vicinity of the commuter station to capture that patronage.

In support of all these observations, one of the most consistent and clear issues raised at the 1997 visioning session at the Village Church by Wellesley citizens was the complaint that there is no “center” in the Square and no strong central gathering place that provides the Square with a focus or heart. Calls to rethink the Railroad Avenue/Grove Street/Post Office area were clearly articulated.

The various disruptions to the continuity of flow between sub-districts that are described above and the large “gap” itself at the center can be readily seen in Figure 3, where the desired lines of linkages and lines of pedestrian flows between sub-districts are shown as broken arrows because these flows are now interrupted and discouraged.

IMPROVEMENT ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

(See Figure 9, "Improvement Opportunities")

As described earlier, the Town recently completed major road and streetscape improvements in the Square which have greatly enhanced the Square’s visual appeal. The Town is also now engaged in improving the landscaping and visual appearance of the Town Hall grounds. Yet many physical and functional improvement issues remain that can be resolved, remedied, or enhanced.

Based upon our own observations and analyses of the Square, together with issues and opportunities raised by Wellesley citizens at the 1997 visioning session, described below are some of the key issues and opportunities this Plan hopes to address or raise for consideration. Some of these opportunities can be pursued by the public sector. Others are opportunities that can only be accomplished by private property owners or business owners. Still others may require public/private alliances.

- Creating a public gathering place – a village square. There is currently a functional and perceptual “gap” at the center of the Square that separates the Square’s various sub-districts from one another. There is now opportunity to rethink the layout of the Post Office Square area so that it can be reconfigured to mend these gaps so that the several sub-districts reinforce one another. A reconfigured Post Office Square may provide an opportunity to create a real community focus in this location – perhaps a new well-defined Village Center and Village Green where now only a “gap” in the fabric of the Square exists.
- Better parkland as community focus. At present there is a small park bounded by Central Street/ Grove Street/Railroad Avenue at Post Office Square that is very pleasant but poorly and infrequently used. In many ways, it functions primarily as a traffic island. There is now an opportunity to reconfigure the Post Office Square area to provide and program a more useable and inviting park space – perhaps a small “Town Green” – that could become a major center of community life and provide a strong landscaped visual focus to the Post Office Square area.
- Eliminating unsafe street intersections. The street pattern and traffic flows in the Post Office Square vicinity are confusing and at times unsafe. There is now opportunity, as a part of a revised plan for the Post Office Square vicinity, to reconfigure street alignments, traffic flows, and traffic signal timing and turning movements to eliminate or reduce these confusing and unsafe conditions.
- Forging linkages between sub-districts. Pedestrian linkages between the Square’s several sub-districts are weak. There is now opportunity to forge better linkages between sub-districts via improved pedestrian passages, creation of more lively storefronts, and in-fill of storefronts along streets to provide continuity of experience as one walks down the Square’s streets. Important pedestrian linkages include the driveway/walkway adjacent to the Village Church and cemetery that link Post Office Square to the Church Street sub-district.

Revitalized uses in buildings can also provide the linkages to reconnect sub-districts. Such an important building improvement is the renovation of the Wellesley Inn as a revived destination to help draw people back and forth between the Lower Square and Church Street.

Wellesley Square Action Plan

Town of Wellesley, MA



Larry Koff & Associates
with
Heather Phang-Guy
The Wellesley Planning Commission
Robert Aronick, Director
Royal Research Group, Inc.

Improvement
Opportunities

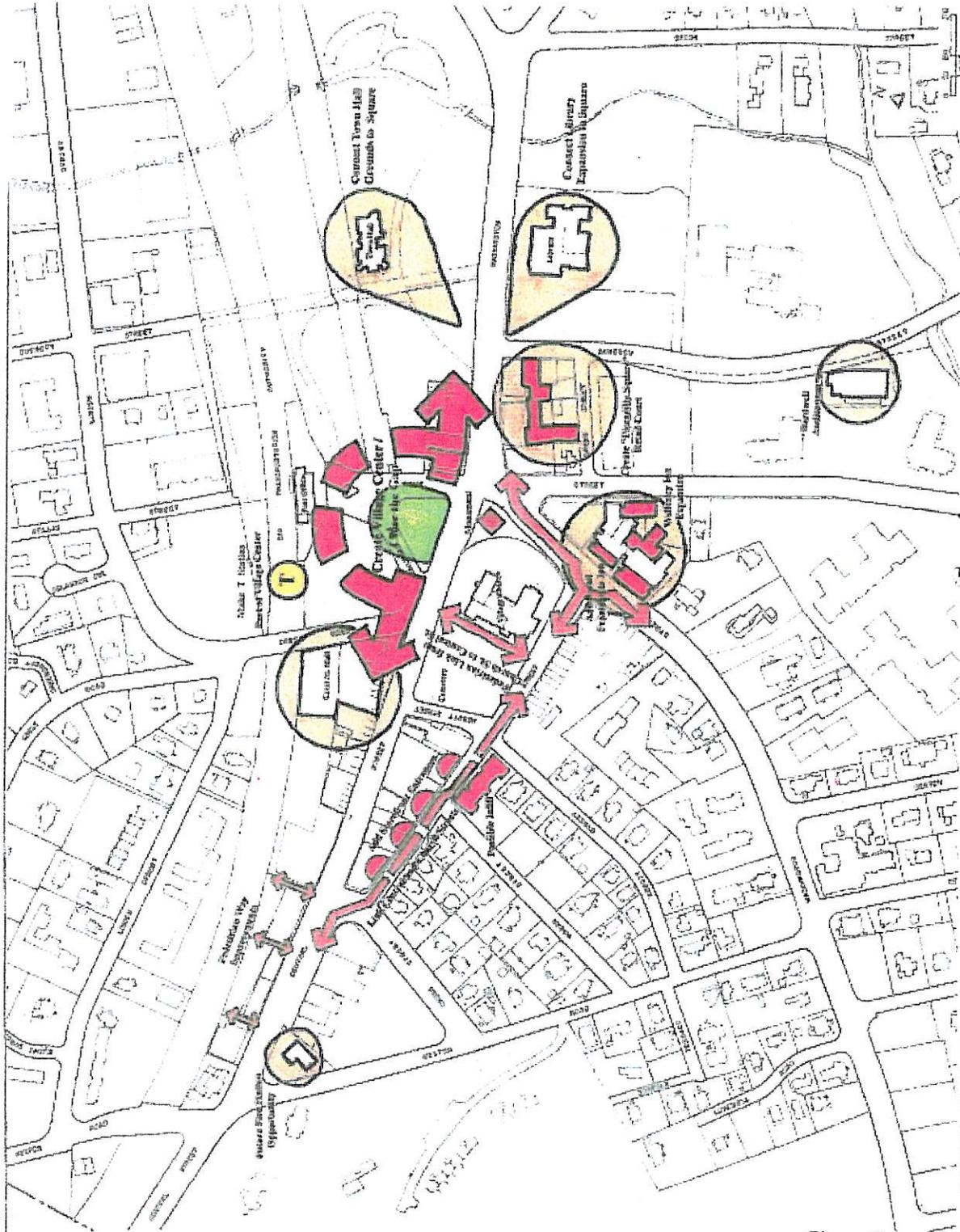


Figure 9

- Improving buildings to improve the Square. Certain buildings in the Square are not used to their fullest potential in terms of their supporting lively activity, or, are not visually appealing. Some of these properties include the service station, Crest Road Mall, the US Trust Building, and the Wellesley Inn. Some of the owners of these buildings may be poised to take actions or make improvements that would greatly improve the life and visual harmony of the Square. The town should seize the opportunity of this Study to encourage and enable those improvement efforts.
- Expanding the parking supply for the Square. the Town has already begun to expand the Square's parking supply (Town Hall grounds/parking study) and provide spaces for employee parking (at proposed Weston Road lot) that free more conveniently located parking spaces for patrons of the Square's businesses. A revised plan for Post Office Square could provide new ways to take advantage of the parking spaces already available at the Tailby lot to better support the short-term parking needs of the Square itself rather than out-of-town all-day parkers.
- Encouraging the Library to become an even more direct contributor to the life of the Square. The Public Library is now an important part of the town's life. As it now stands, it is located very close to, but just beyond the life of the Square itself. Now that its Trustees are planning to expand, including expanded meeting room spaces that will be open to the public, there is an opportunity to take advantage of that planning effort to devise ways in which the expanded or new Library can become a greater participant in the life of the Square and the creation of a stronger village center.
- Increasing the retail vitality of the Square at Cameron Place. The businesses and small shops along the alley at Cameron Place have begun to evolve into an interesting business/shopping enclave. There is opportunity for Cameron Place to become a much richer, intimately-scaled shopping enclave – much like Piccadilly Square in Newton Center.

RECOMMENDATIONS: GOALS AND GUIDELINES



Post Office Square: A New Village Square

(See Figure 10, "Post Office Square Village Center Site Plan"; Figure 11, "Bird's Eye View"; and Figure 12, "Wellesley Square Recommendations and Guidelines".)

Goals

Reconfigure Post Office Square to become a new Village Center with a new Village Green. With proper planning, Post Office Square can become the focus of the Square and a true central gathering place for the entire Wellesley community. It can also more successfully capture the patronage of the rail commuters and draw them more vitally into the life of the Square. By reconfiguring this important area, the "gap" which now exists at the Square's center can be plugged.

- Form/Uses. To shape the new proposed Village Center, modestly scaled new buildings of two to three stories in height should be constructed to define and give street wall edges to a newly configured "Town Green" which will open onto Central Street across from the Village Church. At the northern end of the new Green will be the Post Office and commuter rail station. The ground floor of these new buildings (particularly along Central Street) should consist primarily of small specialty shops, restaurants, galleries and a coffee shop. The upper floor can be occupied by small offices or housing. The construction of new retail frontage on Central Street will help close the "gap" in store fronts which now exist and will provide the continuity of active and lively street edges that will help draw people to walk back and forth between the Upper and Lower Squares.



Figure 10
Post Office Square Village Site Plan



Figure 11
Bird's Eye View

As a supplementary idea about potential uses, there has been some very preliminary discussion of constructing a new expanded Public Library in Post Office Square which would give Post Office Square a strong civic focus.

As a new interim use in Post Office Square to highlight the possibilities for increased Post Office Square vitality, there has also been discussion of opening a Farmer's Market along Grove Street on weekends to attract people to the area.

- Village Green Focus/Bandstand. A new Village Green will replace the now little-used park in Post Office Square and will become the visual/civic focus of Post Office Square. It may be a good home for a bandstand as a focus piece, or, perhaps, an international newspaper stand.
- Improved Street Configuration. Railroad Street and Grove Street should be reconfigured to shape the new Town Green. They can perhaps be designed as a one-way flow traffic circulation system that will eliminate the current poorly configured and unsafe Central Street/Crest Road/Railroad Avenue intersection.
- New Parking Lots. New parking will be needed to support new development in Post Office Square. Two parking lots are proposed, both located *behind* the proposed new buildings and both *hidden* from view from the street. The first lot will be located approximately where the Railroad Avenue Lot exists today. The second lot will be located behind the US Trust Building on town-owned parkland. The Tailby lot across the track will also contribute as an important parking resource for Post Office Square development. (See discussion below on Tailby Lot.)
- New Commuter Railroad Shelter. As a part of the reconfiguration of Post Office Square, a new commuter rail shelter should be constructed that provides better weather protection and which is better connected to the new amenities of the Post Office Square revitalization. If the Post Office should ever choose to relocate, the present Post Office Square building or site can become an enhanced commuter rail station and shelter with built-in amenities such as a coffee stand and/or a newspaper stand.
- Maintain View Corridor to Town Hall from Post Office Square. Because the view to Town Hall from the Post Office Square vicinity is important to retain, any new building constructed on the eastern edge of Post Office Square should include a large open air portal through it to maintain that important vista. That portal will also function as a sheltered pedestrian passage between the new parking lot at the rear of the new building and the shops and storefronts facing the new Village Green.
- Post Office. The Post Office should be retained in Post Office Square because it is an important community function and meeting place. It can either remain at its present site or be relocated into the ground floor space of one of the new buildings. If it should relocate, the existing Post Office building can be renovated for a new rail shelter and shops, or be replaced with a new building entirely (i.e., shops, a restaurant, or even a new public library site).
- US Trust Building Exterior Renovations. The US Trust Office Building is located at a very visually prominent corner at Grove and Washington Streets at the entry into Post Office Square. Unfortunately its 1950's era exterior panel cladding is not in keeping with the brick, wood cladding, and masonry architectural character of the rest of the Square. The building owners should be encouraged to renovate the exterior and return it to an architectural character more in keeping with the Square's traditional building materials. Perhaps the building owners could be encouraged to do

Wellesley Square Action Plan

Town of Wellesley, MA



Larry Holt & Associates
INC.

Richard G. Holt, P.E.
Richard G. Holt, P.E.
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Post Office Square
Village Center
Recommendations

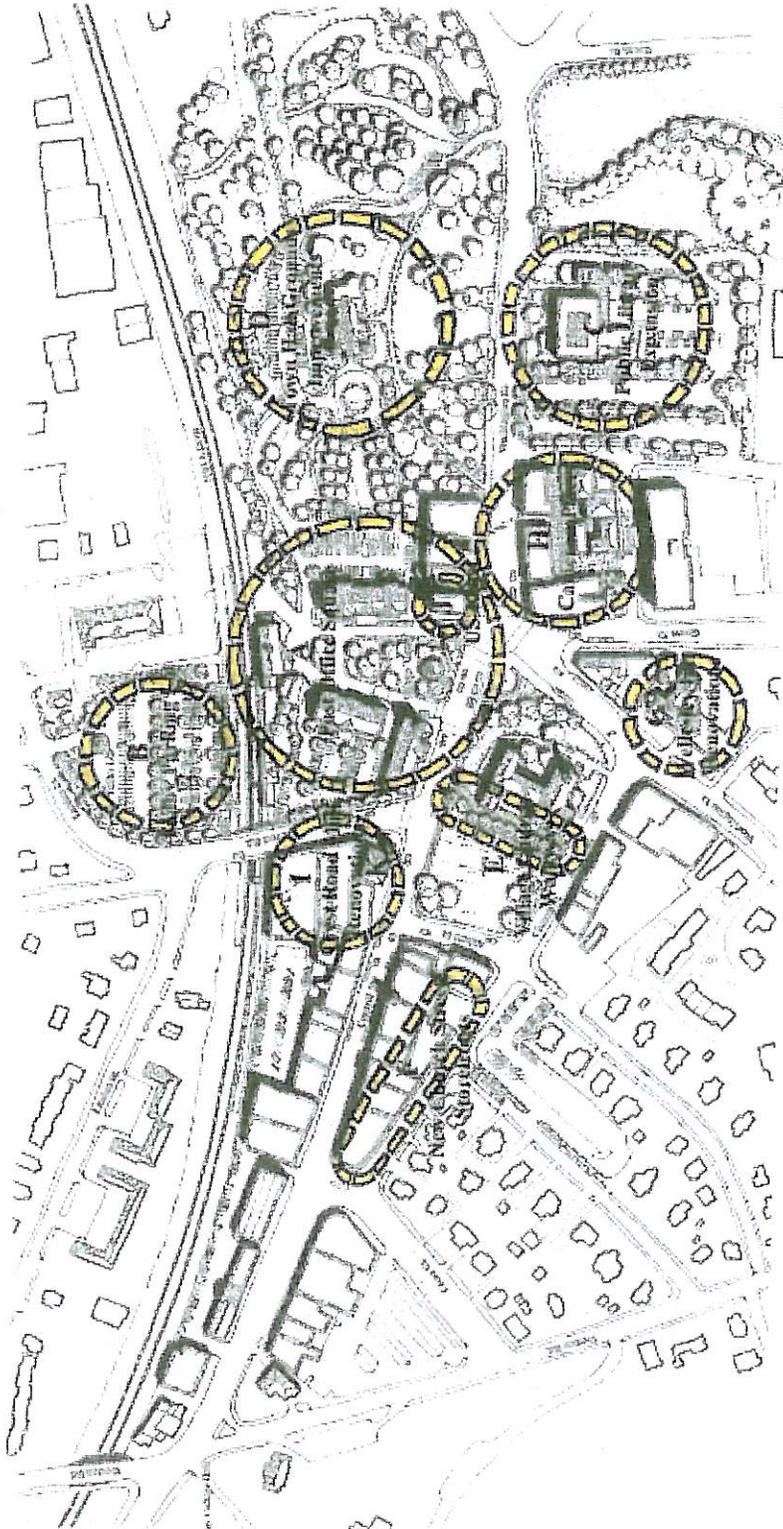


Figure 12

so by joining in the development of Post Office Square and receiving additional parking spaces in the new lot proposed behind them in exchange for their renovation efforts.

- Public Library Expansion Options. (See Figure 9, "Post Office Square Village Center Site Plan – Library Option") As briefly discussed above, there has been preliminary discussion of relocating an expanded Public Library to Post Office Square. Whether this is a desired or viable option for the Library Trustees will depend upon their own evaluation of their building and parking space needs.
- Town Hall Grounds Landscaping/Parking Improvements. At present, the Selectmen have been exploring a redesign of the Town Hall grounds and the relocation of Town Hall parking to the rear of the Town Hall building. Current designs for this project are entirely compatible with plans for a reconfigured Post Office Square. In fact, the new parking lot proposed at the rear of the US Trust Building as part of the Post Office Square development could serve as "overflow" parking spaces for evening meetings and events at Town Hall.

Policy Guidelines:

Uses

- Create a sense of place, a Village Center
- Uses to be located within Post Office Square should provide space for community inter-action i.e., arts, entertainment, community events, a train station
- Ground level retail (especially along Central Street) and upper story housing or office uses
- Private development in Post Office Square should be utilized to leverage financing of public facilities
- Investigate relocation of post office into a joint use facility

Density

- Floor Area Ratio should be comparable to that of adjacent properties at the corner of Washington/Grove and Central/Crest road Mall Streets
- An FAR of 2 should be sufficient to accommodate new development. (U.S. Trust has an FAR of 2.68.)

Traffic/Parking

- Resolve traffic conflicts i.e, Railroad/Central Streets, Grove/Washington Street
- Parking plan should maximize shared use and minimize impact upon open space
- Tailby Lot should be viewed for its potential to provide accessory parking to serve new development in Post Office Square
- Hide parking from view on Central Street

Design

- Maintain view corridor from Town Hall
- Height limits of 2 stories plus attic (35')
- Infill street frontage on Central Street to close the retail "gap" between lower and upper Washington Street

Open Space

- Create a Village Green
- Open Space should be a pedestrian space framed by a street wall of adjacent buildings
- Development should be minimized as to retain sense of place



Figure 13
Post Office Square Village Center
Site Plan -Library Option

Zoning

- Development would be considered under a comprehensive site plan review process similar to that prepared for Wellesley Lower Falls and led by the Design Review Board

B. Tailby Parking Lot/Support for Post Office Square**Goals:**

- Support Parking for Post Office Square. The Tailby Lot is now used for all-day parking for commuter rail passengers, many of whom are from towns surrounding Wellesley. As such, it does not now contribute to the support of or the vitality of Wellesley Square. To support Post Office Square development, consideration should be given to converting up to 50% of the parking spaces at the Tailby Lot to short-term parking spaces. This may be accomplished by signage, parking fee rate structure, or the use of a resident parking sticker program. The consequence of this policy shift would be to discourage out-of-town all day parking commuters from using the Tailby Lot, thereby substituting usage to patrons of Wellesley Square and Post Office Square businesses.
- Co-development of Tailby Lot for Housing. There has been discussion in the past of developing the Tailby Lot. This discussion has taken two forms: 1) construct a parking deck, and 2) construct development (i.e., housing) with additional parking on a deck. Either one of these concepts would be supportive of Post Office Square development but not absolutely necessary for it.

A new parking deck *without* development of Post Office Square would make little sense since the additional parking provided by the new deck would only serve additional rail commuters who contribute little to the life of the Square. (The lot is too distant from existing Wellesley Square businesses to be used by their patrons.) If Post Office Square were developed, however, a new Tailby Deck would be close enough to serve that new development.

Alternatively, new housing at the Tailby Lot site would be supportive the Square's vitality in that it would add another close-in residential community to the Square that would help support Wellesley Square businesses. In any case, development of this parcel could enhance the views and character of Wellesley square.

C. Wellesley Inn Renovations and Expansions: Linking the Lower Square to Church Street**Goals:**

Wellesley Inn is a potentially vital player in the life of the Square and is the hinge connecting the Lower Square to the Church Street area. A more lively frontage on the Inn, including a restaurant and even shop fronts would serve as a draw to encourage pedestrians to flow between the Lower Square and Church Street more readily than at present. Fortunately, the Inn's owners are now planning a renovation and expansion of the Inn. The Town should encourage this renovation and allow zoning revisions which would allow this renovation and expansion to occur.

Policy Guidelines:Uses

- Encourage expansion of convention/meeting facilities
- Support uses which might include additional rooms, retail, and dining

- Space/programs should be expanded for enhancing Wellesley Square as the town's center of commerce and culture i.e. arts, entertainment, community events

Density

- Floor Area Ratio should not exceed the FAR of the adjacent property at the corner of Washington and Grove Street (2.75). Note: the current FAR square footage is 44,040; FAR of 2.75 would permit an additional 50,000 s.f.

Traffic/Parking

- Resolve traffic conflicts i.e. use of entrance to by-pass intersection of Grove and Washington Street
- Parking plan should maximize shared use; provide, if possible for over-flow parking to be utilized by adjacent commercial uses

Design

- Height limits should not exceed current building elevation
- Encourage infill of parking lot with building addition to reinforce adjacent building wall setback line

Open Space

- Provide for pedestrian connections to Church Street and Grove Street

Zoning

- Development would be considered under a comprehensive site plan review process similar to that prepared for Wellesley Lower Falls and led by the Design Review Board

D Cameron Place

Goals:

The businesses and shops which front on the alleyway system that is called Cameron Place have begun to develop as a potentially interesting pedestrian-oriented and intimately-scaled shopping enclave. The Cameron Place building owners should be encouraged to extend this direction, add shops and add pedestrian streetscape amenities (paving, lighting, etc.) to the alley to provide a supporting atmosphere appealing to Wellesley shoppers.

Policy Guidelines:

Uses

- Encourage expansion of unique retail, arts, entertainment activities which will reinforce Wellesley Square as Town Center of specialty retail and cultural activities

Density

- Floor Area Ratio should not be exceeded
- Encourage store entrances off the existing alley-way system

Design

- Height limits should not exceed current building elevation

Open Space

- Improve alleyway to encourage pedestrian environment

Zoning

- Development would be considered under a comprehensive site plan review process similar to that prepared for Wellesley Lower Falls and led by the Design Review Board

E. Crest Road Mall Renovations

Goals:

The Crest Road Mall, linking Crest Road and Central Street with an internal passageway system is vastly underutilized. The potential for the Mall to be home to a series of more upscale retail shops exists if the Mall were renovated, reconfigured, better connected to the private parking lot at its rear, and given greater exposure to Central Street. (See discussion of Global Service Station below.)

F. Global Service Station/New Development Opportunity

Goals:

The service station at the corner of Central Street and Crest Road is automotive-oriented and not in keeping with the pedestrian-oriented storefronts throughout the rest of the Square. Its owners should be encouraged to relocate and the vacated site used for an expansion of the Crest Road Mall to provide a wide and inviting entry into the Mall at this visually prominent corner.

Policy Guidelines:

Uses

- Pedestrian orientated uses which are compatible with adjacent retail activity should be encouraged

Density

- Floor Area Ratio should be comparable to that of adjacent Crest Road Mall properties (FAR of 1.88)

Traffic/Parking

- Auto related uses should be minimized to reduce traffic congestion at key downtown intersection

Design

- Height limits should not exceed adjacent Crest Road Mall building elevation
- Establish building facade at adjacent building wall set-back line

Open Space

- Provide for pedestrian connections to Crest Road Mall

Zoning

- Development would be considered under a comprehensive site plan review process similar to that prepared for Wellesley Lower Falls and led by the Design Review Board

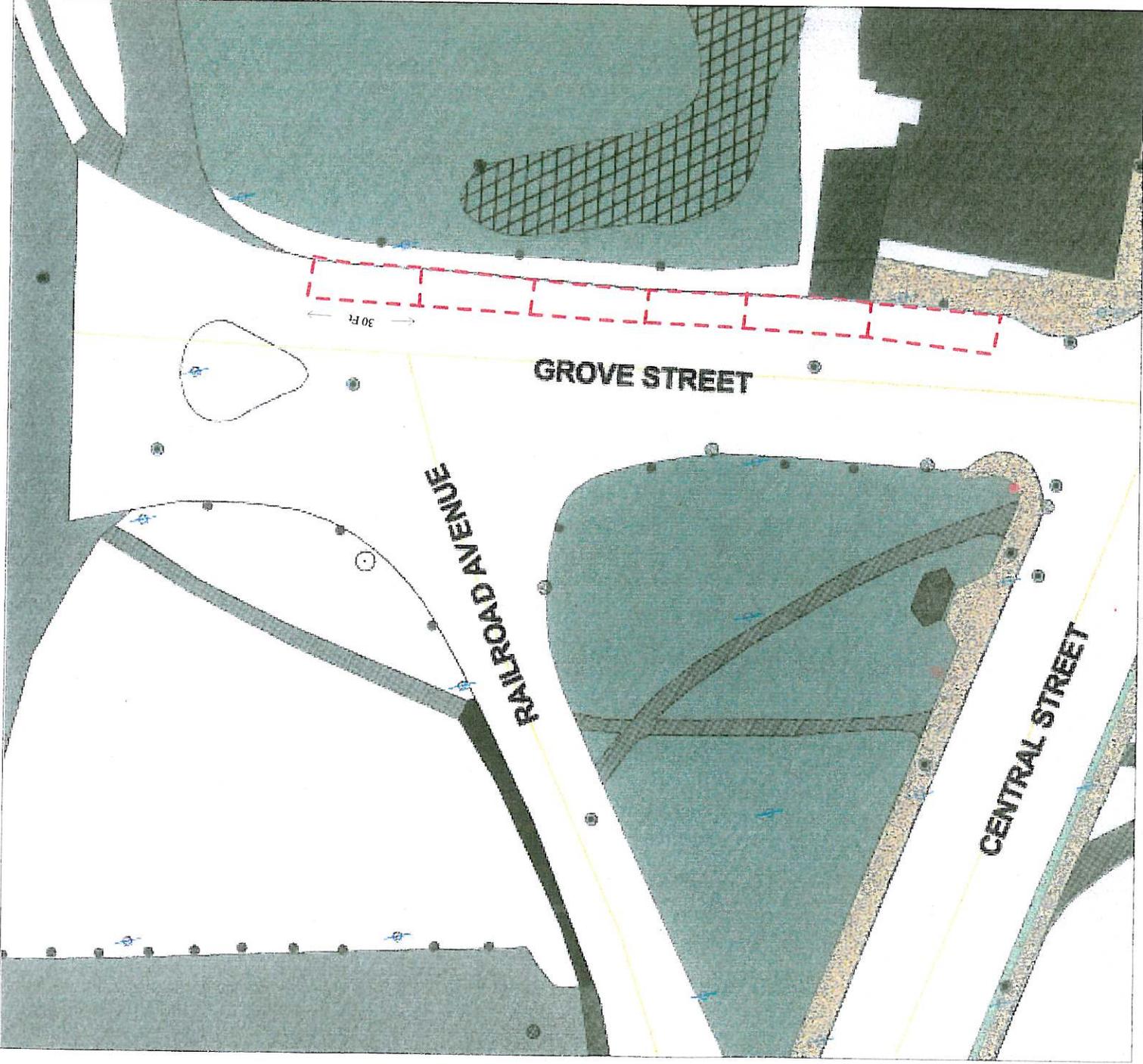
G.

Wellesley Square

Proposed Layout for Farmer's Market

--- Spaces for Farmers' Trucks

1" = 40'



Village Church Walkway: Linking the Church Street Sub-district to the Upper and Lower Squares

Goals:

The Village Church driveway connecting Church Street and Central Street now serves as an informal but seldom used pedestrian link between the Church Street district and the Upper and Lower Squares. It is used by the Church for employee and event parking. With the addition of certain streetscape amenities such as pavers, plantings, and pedestrian lamp fixtures located along its length, the driveway could become an inviting pedestrian walkway as well providing a much needed pedestrian passage linking the Church Street sub-district, the Upper and Lower Squares, and the proposed Post Office Square development.

Policy Guidelines:

- Encourage improvement of driveway as joint pedestrian walkway and parking area
- Upgrade with planting, paving, signage, lighting
- Church to provide town with easement permitting town to assume liability for public walkway

H Encourage New or Secondary Storefronts and Entries: On Church Street linking the Upper Square with the Church Street Sub-district as well as on Central Street linking the storefronts to the train station and parking lot to the rear.

Goals:

Church Street is the natural pedestrian link between the western end of the Upper Square and the Church Street commercial area. Unfortunately, Church Street does not draw pedestrians up its length to its shops because the street is largely lined along its western end with only the backs of stores. Therefore, the Town should consult with property owners and merchants there to explore whether shops can be reconfigured to provide store entries and window displays on the Church Street side of their stores as well as on Central Street.

Access to the rear of the Central Street store fronts located between the Crest Road Mall property and the block of stores extending to the driveway adjacent to the CVS and Hunneman & Company Realty Offices should in similar fashion be made more accessible. The development of secondary storefronts on the parking lot behind Central Street would lead to increased utilization of the retail uses by making them readily available to patrons of the rail line.

L Relocate Farmer's market to Grove Street

Goals:

The attached diagram indicates a possible lay-out for 6 trucks which could occupy the parking spaces along Grove Street for the day of the Farmer's Market. This plan will have to be discussed with the Farmer's market and the Town and modified where appropriate. It might also be possible to utilize some of the park frontage along Central Street and/or Railroad Avenue.

**TASK IV
SIGN GUIDELINES**

The Design Review Board (DRB) has recommended that they work with the Planning Board on establishing a "user friendly" set of guidelines describing the Sign Review Process for obtaining DRB approval of a business sign.

A document is needed to assist the business owner interested in guidance on the design criteria for Wellesley Square as distinct from one of the Town's other commercial areas, as well as the process for obtaining the permit.

The Design Review Board adopted a handbook in 1989 which identifies the role and responsibilities of the DRB with respect to sign review as well as design review of Major and Minor construction projects. This 34 page document addresses a broad range of concerns and does not provide any focus on Town's different commercial areas. Having considered a number of examples of design guidelines, it was the consensus of the Board that the services of a consultant should be obtained to assist the DRB and the Planning Board in the preparation of this document.

By reference, the guidelines from the Town of Reading (see Appendix 5) seemed to be a good starting point for beginning the development of a set of guidelines for Wellesley.

MARKET STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Wellesley square (excluding Linden Street) covers approximately 33 acres and includes some 500,000 square feet of retail space. The focus area is located at the intersection of Washington Street (Routes 16/135) and Central Street (Route 16), extending from the Town Hall to Church Street to Weston Road, and including the parking lots on both sides of the Commuter Rail tracks. The businesses along Linden Street were also taken into consideration in the market analysis and are included in the business inventory.

This study examines the types of businesses and clientele who shop in Wellesley Square, and the regional market in which this business district competes. Finally it identifies the types of business which would best add to the existing retail mix.

MARKET MIX

Wellesley Square contains a broad mix of office as well as specialty and general retail uses. In keeping with the image of Wellesley Square, the mix of retail businesses is weighted towards specialty stores and personal services with a limited number of general merchandise and convenience type retail uses. Surprisingly, the largest number of businesses are professional service and other office-type businesses. While both national and regional chain stores, specialty stores and restaurants have entered the market occupying primarily the larger store fronts along Central Street, the preponderance of stores are individually owned.

Office:

- Professional service uses (101 businesses). This category includes office support services and media. Typical businesses in this category include medical offices, lawyers, consultants, insurance agencies, etc. The majority of these establishments are located on upper floors over ground floor retail uses.
- Personal services (53 businesses). These uses are scattered throughout the district. This category includes beauty salons and spas (17 establishments), shoe repair, cleaners and tailors (combined 9 establishments), as well as photographers and framing shops (7 establishments). Other interesting uses in this category include Hands On Science and Abin Furniture Restoration.

Retail

- Specialty Retail (82 stores). This is the largest grouping of retail activity. Stores selling gifts, apparel related, and home furnishings are included. Some of the district's most long term tenants such as Marco Polo, Swan Furniture, and Talbots are included in this category.
- Restaurant, Accommodations, Foods (32 businesses). This category of retail sales has grown in importance in response to changing lifestyles i.e. two income families and an increase in demand for prepared foods by students, the elderly, and families. Included in this grouping are sit-down restaurants (9), take-out restaurants (12), convenience and grocery stores, and the Wellesley Inn.
- Banks (10). There are 6 commercial banks, 3 savings banks, and 1 credit union. Three of the banks are local, the Wellesley Cooperative Bank, the Middlesex Savings Bank and CambridgePort Bank. In 1990 the Town of Wellesley had the fifth highest median household (\$79,111) income in the Commonwealth.
- Drugs and Miscellaneous Retail (20 stores). This category includes 2 drugs stores (CVS and Professional Pharmacy) as well as a variety of retail uses including florists, opticians, hardware stores, and auto related uses.

Wellesley Square Action Plan

Town of Wellesley, MA



Larry Koff & Associates
 Inc.
 Executive Planning Group
 Transportation Alternatives
 Environmental Consulting

Business Types

- General Merchandise
- Specialty Retail,
- Apparel Related,
- Home Furnishings
- Restaurant, Accommodations,
- Food
- Drugs, Miscellaneous Retail
- Banks
- Personal Service
- Professional Service, Office
- Support Services, Media
- Recreation
- Institutional
- Vacant

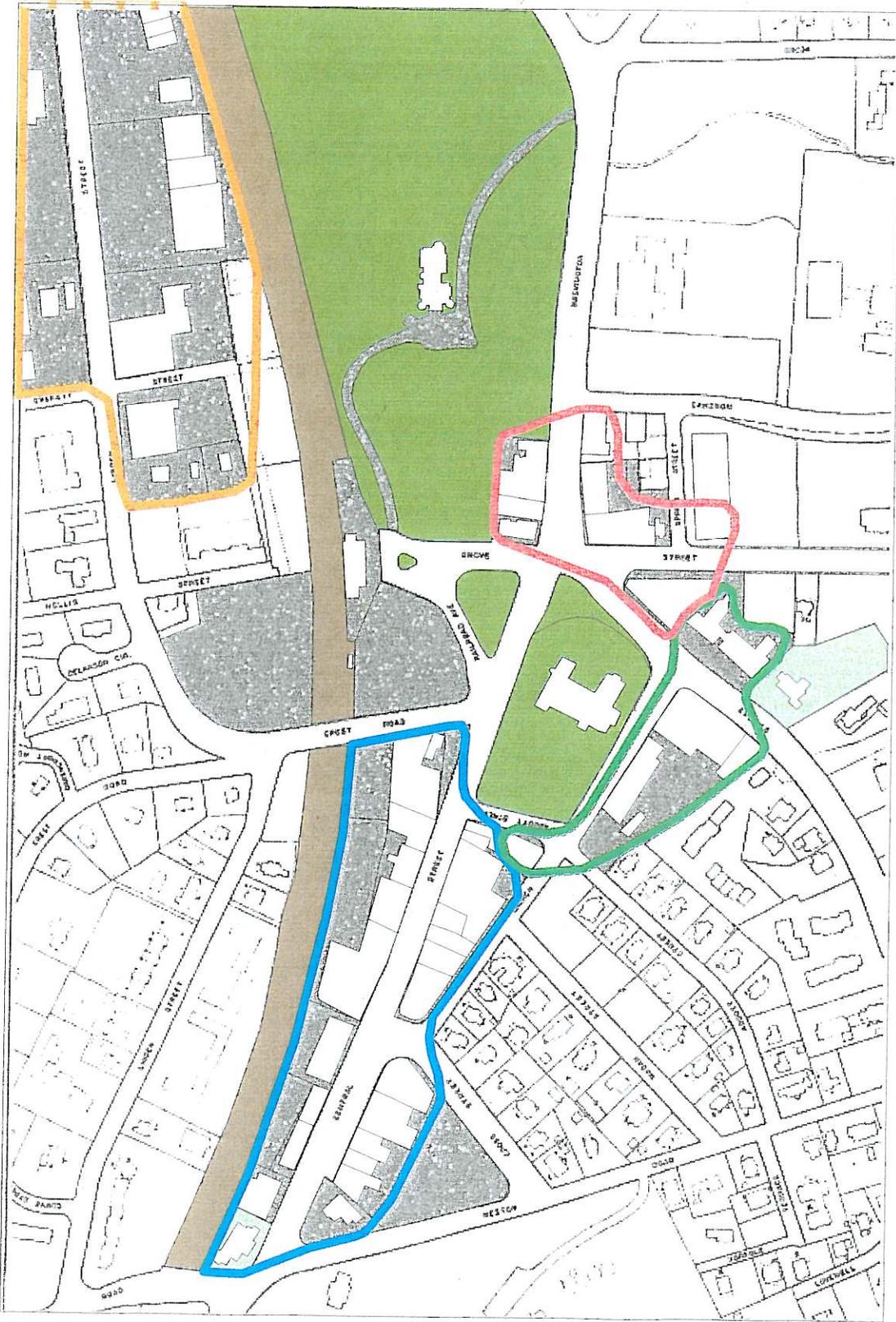


Wellesley Square Action Plan

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Wellesley Square Subareas

- Central Street (General Shopping)
- Church Street (High End Specialty Shopping)
- Grove & Washington Streets (Office and Services Mix)
- Linden Street (Convenience Shopping Centers)

- General Merchandise (2 stores). It is unusual today for Town Center business district to contain any general retail uses. These businesses are attracted to larger stores located in the nearby malls. Decelles and E.A. Davis are the general retail businesses in Wellesley Square. Decelles is a discount retail store, while E.A. Davis is a unique junior department store.
- Institutional (6). The predominant institutional uses in Wellesley Square are the Congregational Church, the Town Hall, Post Office, and Library. In addition there are non-profit/religious organizations such as Christian Science Reading Room and the Wellesley Right to Life Resource Center.
- Recreation uses (3 businesses) This activity is often a growing use in town centers but these uses in Wellesley are located in the adjacent Linden Street area. The major recreation/exercise establishments in Wellesley include Cho's Tae Kwon Do Academy, the Fitness Club for Women and McCrohon's Dance Center.

Sub-Area Groups

The study area can be loosely arranged into four distinct sub-areas.

1. A general shopping area is located along Central Street, which consists mostly of retail establishments, including several national and regional chain stores, and some personal services.
2. A concentration of up-scale specialty shops and restaurants forms a second sub-area located adjacent to Central Street along Church Street and Washington Street near the Wellesley Inn.
3. Office space and personal services along with convenience-type restaurants and retail dominate the third sub-area which is located along Grove Street and Washington Street across from Town Hall.
4. Major shopping for the community including a grocery store, a hardware store, drug store, several banks and office uses is located adjacent to the town square in a stretch of strip commercial centers along Linden Street. All of these businesses have adequate parking.

Customer Base

The merchants who participated in the business survey and/or the focus group indicated that there are four types of shoppers:

1. The family shopper with children of which the college student market is a sub-component. One-half of these shoppers come from Wellesley.
2. The destination shopper for the unique upscale specialty stores. Possibly less than half of these shoppers come from Wellesley; the balance is split between shoppers from the surrounding towns and the Boston region.
3. The off-price shopper comes from the region for shopping at Decelles and some other stores.
4. The convenience retail shopper from the surrounding neighborhoods.

An assessment of the 201 retail businesses located within Wellesley Square (and Linden Street) indicated that the largest number of businesses, 61, are geared to the high end specialty shopper. Unique gifts, home furnishings, high end restaurants are in this category. The family/student market is serviced by some 48 businesses. These establishments provide restaurant services, clothing/apparel, salons, drugs and grocery, banks and office uses such as travel. The local convenience market included florists, banks, appliances, salons, auto repair, and hardware stores.

The market for shops in the Central Street sub-area is mixed. Students and family shoppers are likely to be attracted by the more moderately priced apparel shops and restaurants, the drug store, banks, and some of the service-related business, while specialty shoppers are drawn to the unique gifts and home furnishings. The Grove and Washington Streets sub-area market is also fairly mixed, with stores that draw more neighborhood shoppers and students and family shoppers, as well as many non-retail businesses. Businesses in the Church

Street area draw mostly high-end specialty shoppers, while the Linden Street sub-area caters especially to neighborhood shoppers.

Market Statement

Wellesley Square is the only town center in the region where there are an abundance of unique specialty stores in one walkable area in the Boston metropolitan region. Although there are some regional and national chains, the predominant retail character remains that of an upscale specialty center.

Wellesley Square continues to be dominant in the metropolitan Boston region as a suburban downtown specialty center. It is a place that people from the region enjoy coming to for upscale specialty shopping, particularly for jewelry, art, home furnishings, and gifts. It is a place where some people in neighboring towns come to walk, shop, and eat.

There are several small specialty stores selling unique merchandise and providing personalized service that are destinations for customers from all over New England. There are several other stores that serve the Wellesley residents and students offering gifts, clothing, shoes, accessories, and specialty foods for take-out. The national chains are considered important by some of the smaller independent retailers since they do serve as anchors to the Square for attracting some customers.

Competitive Analysis

The competition for Wellesley Square is mainly found in the other surrounding towns which provide an alternative shopping experience to the conventional mall:

- Newton Center is a destination for shoppers seeking women's apparel boutiques and small neighborhood restaurants.
- Specialty stores in Needham Center particularly in home furnishings and related accessories for the home have become an attraction. Here the stores are slightly larger with the ability to offer a greater quantity of merchandise at lower prices. Needham also has two large off-price stores, Bed and Bath and Trader Joe's which attract customers from all over the region.
- Waltham with its great variety of restaurants at relatively low price points and its arts movie Theatre is also competition for evening entertainment.
- Natick now has three new reasonably priced restaurants which draw residents from the entire region.
- Concerning mall competition, other than the standard malls for necessities and general shopping needs, Chestnut Hill, Copley Place, the Prudential Center, and Newbury Street all draw the up-scale specialty center shopper and thus compete with Wellesley Square.

Retail Voids

As stated above, there is about 500,000 square feet of commercial space in Wellesley Square. The largest store is Decelle's containing approximately 30,000 square feet. While various voids in retail space have been identified as described below, surveys carried out by the consultants did not substantiate the need or market for a large department store (over 40,000 square feet), or for a substantial increase in retail space.

An improved tenant mix for Wellesley Square would be a greater variety of women's apparel, shoes, accessories, and home furnishings, all of which would focus on quality merchandise individually selected with the demographics of the community in mind. (See Appendix 6, Survey Responses) This finding was supported by the business survey and the resident survey. Upscale clothing, including women's clothing, men's clothing, and shoes were the most common items mentioned. There is also an opportunity to add new

small food stores, cafes, specialty books and music stores, a general store with convenience items, moderately priced home furnishings, a garden shop, international papers and magazines, an apothecary with make-up and perfumes, and unique arts and crafts in the Square. Services businesses such as a copy shop might also be needed. The resident survey indicated strong support for evening entertainment such as live music.

While there has been an expressed desire to locate a theater in Wellesley Square, the consultants have concluded that the district is not sufficiently well located for this use. First, Natick and Waltham have built new cinema complexes and are located within close proximity to Wellesley. Second, Wellesley Square is not easily accessible from the regional highway network. Third, an existing auditorium, Bardwell Hall, which is owned by the Dana Hall school, is available for rental to non-profit groups for theater or cinema activities. Bardwell Hall is the oldest building on the Dana Hall campus. Its rental by a local non-profit group would also serve to retain this historic structure.

According to students of Wellesley College, Wellesley Square could easily attract more of the student population by promoting this market. Their suggestions for an improved Square started with simple suggestions such as hanging up Wellesley pennants and flags, posting sales and promotions on campus, and making an effort to hire Wellesley students in local stores. In addition, the students also highlighted the need for longer store hours, more stores with student friendly prices, and possibly the opportunity for some restaurants to participate in the Wellesley College meal plan. Most importantly, there was a consensus among the women surveyed that all Wellesley students desired more respect from local merchants.

Management of the Square needs a merchandising/marketing professional to assist owners and brokers in identifying potential retail tenants from the region, to coordinate the production of a Wellesley Square Store Directory, to coordinate the production of a marketing brochure which owners and brokers could use to attract the desired retail tenants; to coordinate a marketing program of advertising and promotional events, to work with tenants on extending hours at certain times of the year, and other issues which arise that require communication between tenants themselves.