

II. EXISTING CONDITIONS

A. OVERALL ENVIRONMENT

Gorham Village contains a rich mixture of uses and experiences. The historic district along South Street retains stately homes with large street trees. Main Street has been heavily impacted by the dominance of traffic through the years. In much of the commercial district, these impacts have manifested themselves in development that is oriented to the automobile and its occupants rather than the pedestrian. This is evident in the large expanses of exposed parking and the signs that visually clutter the streetscape. Pedestrian accommodations are also generally poor to fair. Sidewalks and curbing are in poor condition except where new development has occurred. Overall, the streetscape lacks definition and unity.

The Gorham Village commercial district contains a strong older core of buildings that reflect the Town center's history. Some recent development, such as the Key Bank building, has reinforced this development pattern. It includes traditional elements such as pitched roof, building style (e.g., clapboard siding) and its orientation to the street with parking in the rear. There is also a strong core of pedestrian oriented, first floor retail and office businesses. To those passing through the village on Main Street, it is easy to perceive that the commercial district is only the narrow, linear space along Main, State, South and School Streets.

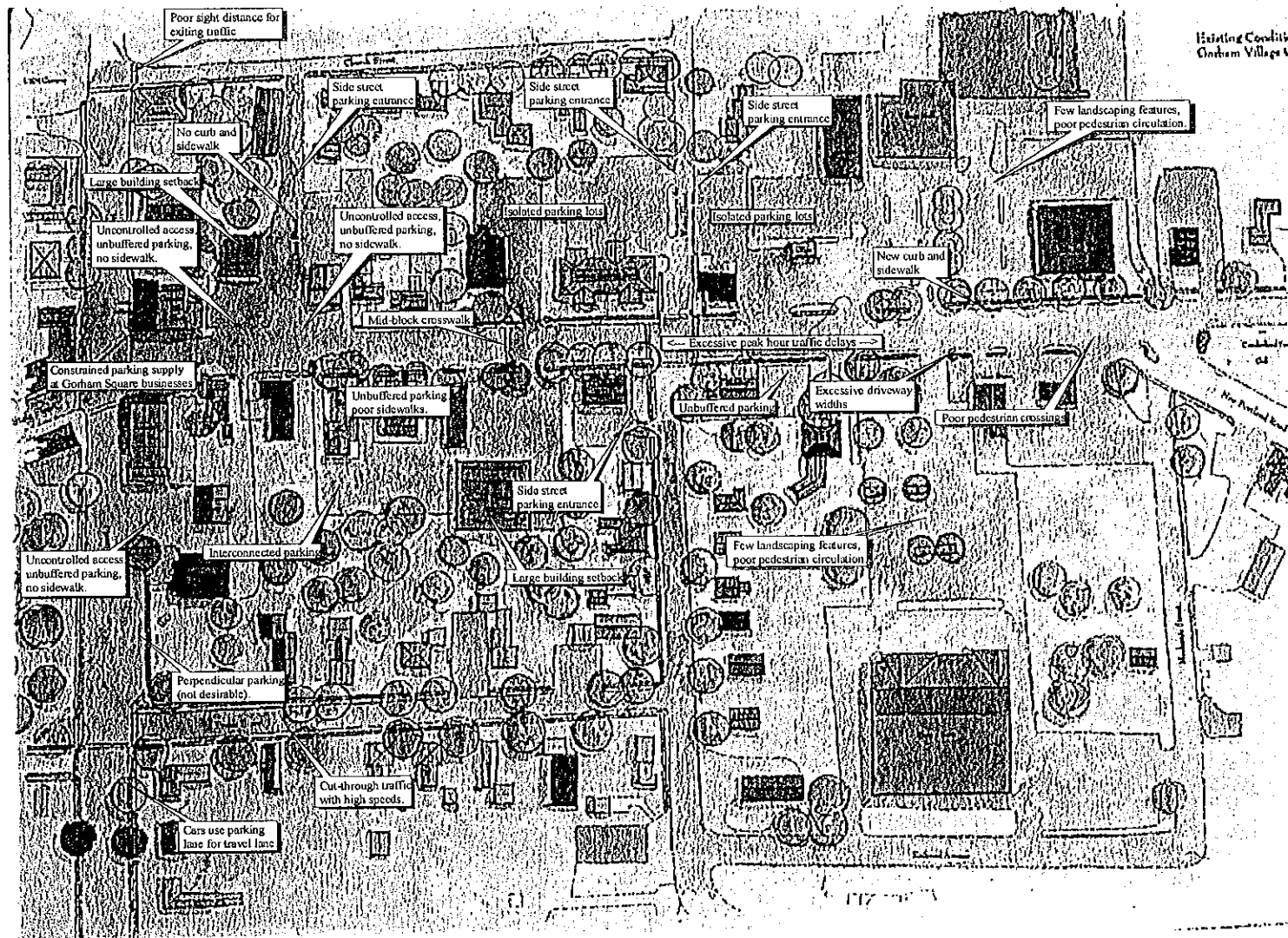
B. CHARACTER ZONES

Through the inventory and assessment stage, a series of "Character Zones" were identified that group activities and design elements. The analysis identifies distinctions between common characteristics such as building setbacks and streetscape elements. The intent is to show how well (or not) existing conditions correlate with existing zoning and the amount of consistency in the streetscape. Zoning, intentionally or not, is the blueprint for how a community will develop and has design implications. It was the desire of the Committee to reinforce the positive design elements present within these zones and change the negative.

"Village" Character Zone

The Village character zone consists of a denser building arrangement than found elsewhere with buildings close to street at the sidewalk with little or no side setbacks. Building entrances and windows relate to the sidewalk. Sidewalks are mostly brick pavers and are curbed, with painted crosswalks and no esplanade.

GORHAM MAIN STREET MASTER PLAN



Existing Condition
Gorham Village

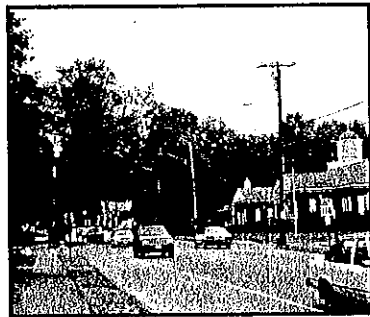


Existing Conditions Analysis Summary

Source: Richardson & Assoc.;
Wilbur Smith Assoc.; Pinkham &
Greer (basemap).



Village character zone



Quasi-Village character zone

The minimum height of buildings is two stories. Signs are oriented to both pedestrians and vehicles. There is a mixture of uses within the same buildings, most often with retail on the first floor.

Residential/Business Character Zone

This zone consists of older residential types of buildings. Most have been converted to business use. Building spacing is consistent, at a residential scale. They are located near, but not at the sidewalk. Mature trees are present and an esplanade between the sidewalk and street.

Urban Residential Character Zone

This zone also consists of older residences with consistent building spacing at a residential scale. Buildings are near but not at the sidewalk edge. Mature trees line and define both sides of the street and there are esplanades between sidewalk and street. Much of this area is in a historic district.

Suburban/Commuter Character Zone

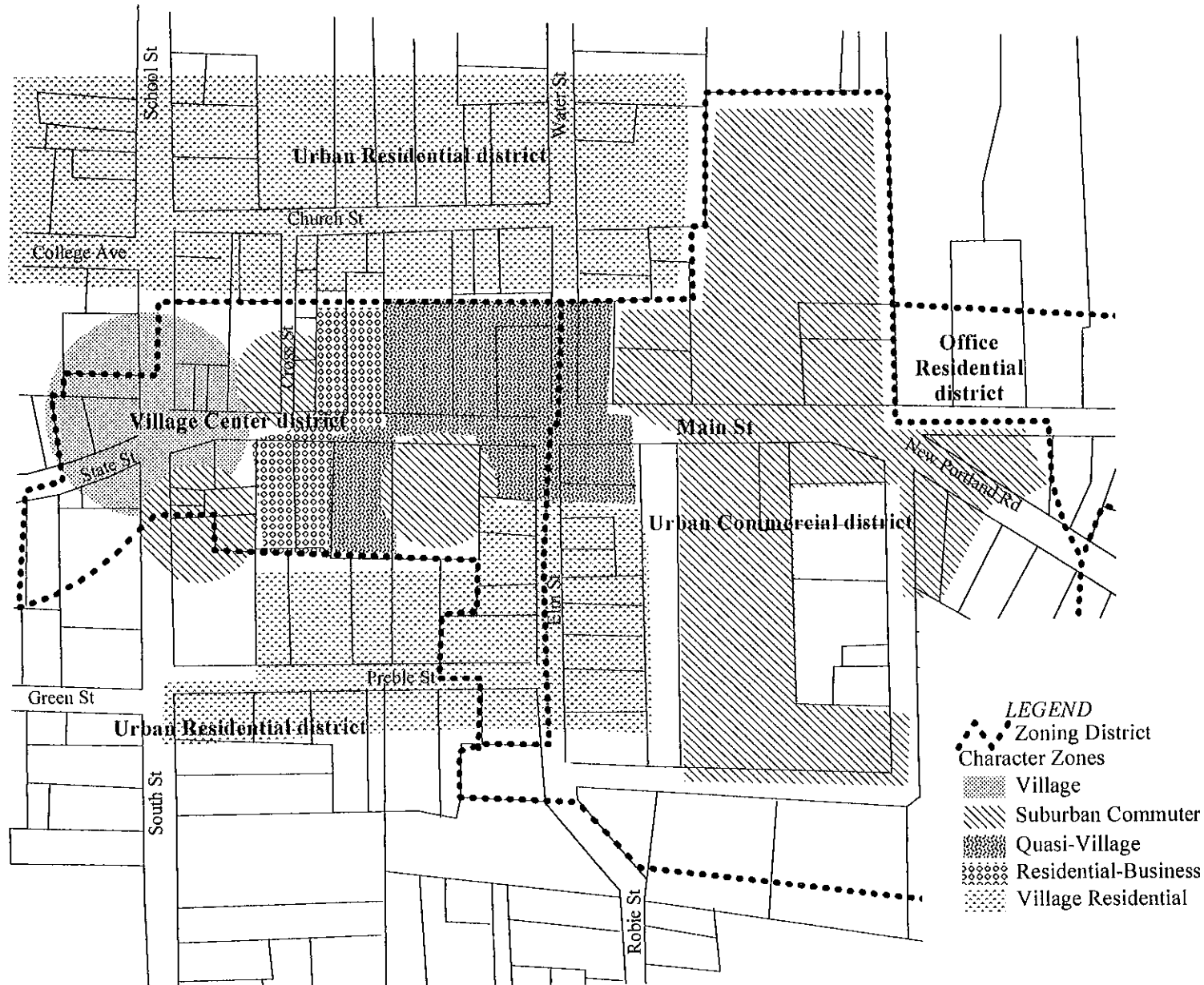
This character zone consists of one story buildings with box-style architecture. Buildings generally have large setbacks with parking in front and large curb cuts. Buildings have blank facades. Parking lots do not have landscape buffers. Signs are oriented to vehicles rather than pedestrians. Many uses are automobile oriented.

Quasi-Village Character Zone

This zone has building spacing wider than village character zone. Buildings are near but not at the sidewalk edge. Trees, massings of shrubs and esplanades define the street. Sign designs are vehicle-oriented. Parking is in the rear of buildings and in side yards.



Suburban Commuter character zone

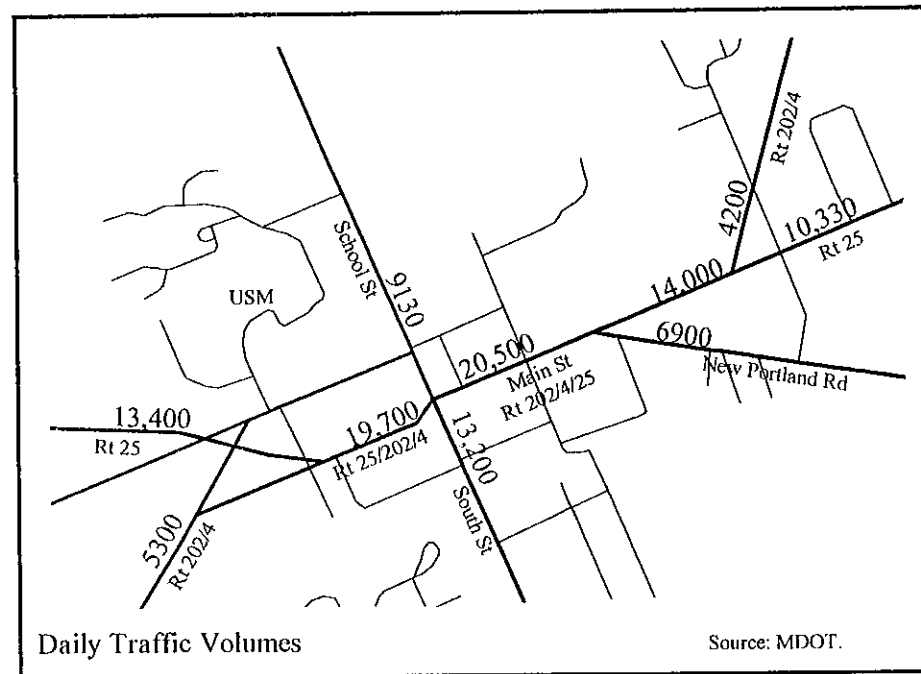


Character Zone & Zoning District Analysis

Source: Richardson & Associates.

C. ROADWAYS & TRAFFIC

Main Street functions similar to the narrow portion of an hourglass. Several state highways and other minor arterial roadways converge and diverge from the commercial district. Average daily traffic on Main Street is over 20,000; volumes on village roadways are shown below. Afternoon peak hour traffic volumes are approximately 1800 vehicles per hour. The road has one lane in each direction.



Congestion in the village is aggravated by a number of factors.

- * The traffic signal equipment at the two signalized intersections is too inflexible to handle the complexity of traffic in the village.
- * There are a large number of curb cuts for driveways, serving adjacent land uses, the businesses and residences in the village. Driveways and side streets often have long delays for exiting traffic.

- * The exclusive pedestrian phase at the Main Street/South Street intersection reduces the capacity of the intersection. Time that would be available for green time for vehicles is used for an all vehicles stopped crossing period for pedestrians when requested. A minority of users wait for or use this crossing phase. This location has a high number of pedestrian crossings including children.
- * The remaining core of buildings in “Gorham Square” preclude any significant changes to the configuration of this major intersection. The number of turning lanes has been maximized.

Noise and fumes often dominate Main Street. Gorham is a major cross roads for trucks going east-west on Route 202/4 and east west from Portland to points west of Gorham. Main Street, where it is Routes 25/202 and 4, is part of the National Highway System. This system is important for interstate commerce.

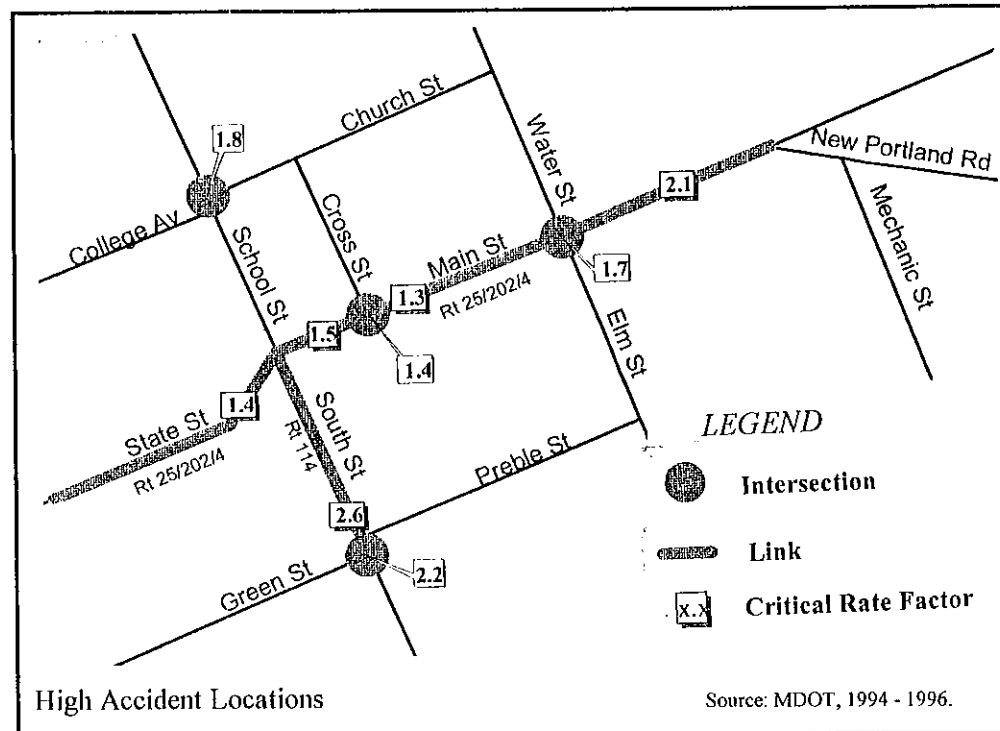
Accidents are also a problem in the Village Center. Numerous road segments and intersections are classified by the Maine Department of Transportation as high accident locations (HAL). Locations are classified as HAL if they have a higher than average number of accidents for similar roadways statewide and if they have over 8 accidents within a three year period. A Critical Rate Factor (CRF) expresses how a location relates to the average accident rate for a similar location (1.0 is “average”). For instance, a CRF of 2.0 means a location has twice the expected number of accidents. The figure below shows the segments and intersections classified as HAL; the table below lists these locations, the number of accidents from 1994 to 1996 and their CRF.

Neighborhood cut through traffic has also been identified as an increasing problem. This is especially true on Church and Preble Streets. Sight distance for traffic exiting from Church Street is poor. A series of memorandums describing in more detail traffic and accident analyses are given in Appendix A.

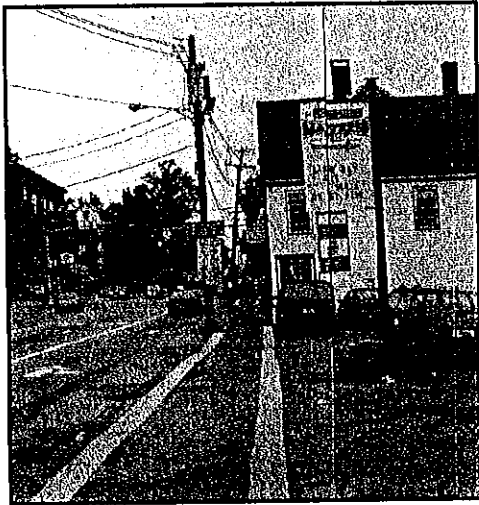
High Accident Locations

Location	No. of Accidents	Critical Rate Factor
Intersections		
Church St./School St.	10	1.8
Green St./South St.	17	2.2
Cross St./Main St.	15	1.4
Water St./Main St.	20	1.7
Road Segments		
State St. west of South St.	18	1.4
South St. south of Main St.	16	2.6
Main St. east of South St.	8	1.5
Main St. east of Cross St.	15	1.3
Main St. east of Water St.	22	2.1

Source: Maine Department of Transportation, 1994-1996.



D. STREETSCAPE & PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT



Lack of curb and sidewalk --
auto-scale signage.

The pedestrian environment is heavily impacted by and oriented toward the large volume of vehicles that traverse the Village Center. Much of the existing sidewalk network is in poor condition and is in need of upgrading. The following sections characterize the existing streetscape in the areas of walkways, landscape treatment, signs, lighting and pedestrian amenities.

Walkways

- * Unsafe street crossings
- * Crosswalk markings substitute for sidewalks at very large curb cuts
- * Walking on sidewalks is like 'island hopping'
- * Change in sidewalk paving materials is haphazard and in poor condition
- * All walkways are along streets (no exclusive pedestrian ways identified between streets)
- * Over half of walkway areas are not true walkways (lack curbing or other walkway designation)
- * Over half of walkways have pavement on both adjacent sides (streets, parking, vehicle areas)
- * Many retail businesses have no walkways from sidewalk to building entrance
- * Not enough crosswalks
- * Long street crossing distances at many intersections

Landscape Treatment

- * No clear landscape idea throughout the Village Center — lacks unity
- * Some areas work well (i.e., a group of mature trees, evenly spaced near Elm Street) but the sense of the whole does not
- * Small isolated, unrelated areas of plantings make a limited visual impact on the streetscape
- * In the section of Main Street toward New Portland Road, planting type is of residential, decorative scale (scattered, low, ornamental shrubs)
- * In the section of Main Street toward South Street, planting type is of simpler, street scale (grass, esplanade, trees)
- * Street tree placement is neither continuous nor consistent
- * Trees are impacted by the utility wires
- * Neighborhoods adjacent to Main Street contain healthy, mature trees

Signs

- * Lack consistency
- * Compete for height, size and visual dominance
- * Many are out of scale with a pedestrian-oriented environment
- * Numerous types of signs present –
 - ◇ Street signs
 - ◇ Free-standing signs
 - ◇ Building-mounted flush signs
 - ◇ Building mounted perpendicular signs
 - ◇ Retractable awning and faux awning signs
 - ◇ Front-lit signs
 - ◇ Back-lit signs
 - ◇ Permanent signs
 - ◇ Temporal signs with changeable messages

Lighting

- * Street lights are ‘cobra’ head style and scaled to the vehicle
- * Off-street lights (in parking lots and gas stations) vary in style and are scaled to the vehicle
- * Style of lighting fixtures lack distinction
- * Intensity and quality of light are oriented to a highway environment rather than pedestrian

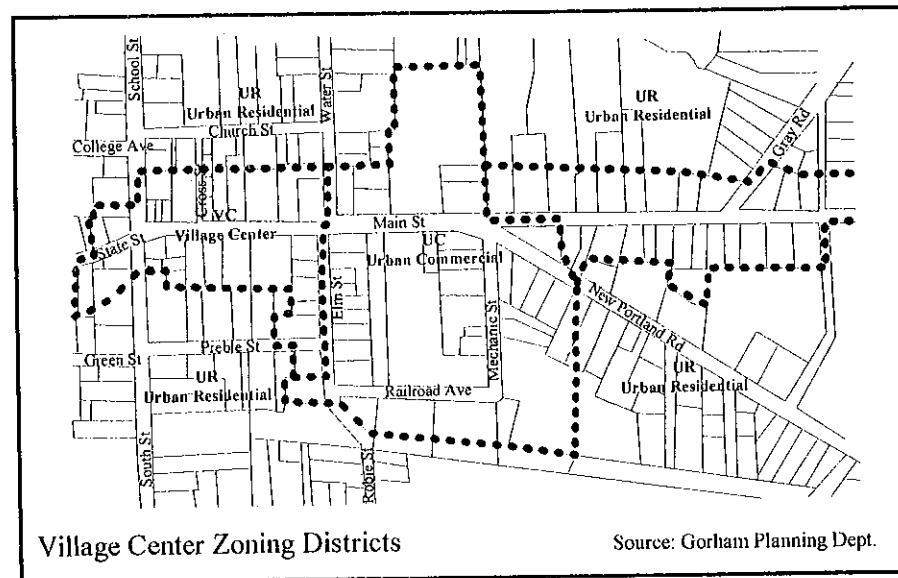
Pedestrian Amenities

- * Benches exist in four locations
- * For most benches, their placement and context lack comfortable, social aspect
- * Style and materials of benches is not unified
- * Lack of bike racks (only one identified) encourages bikes to be left on sidewalks
- * Lack of trash receptacles
- * Amenities relate to a specific place or building rather than to the streetscape as a whole
- * Many unmet opportunities and needs for outdoor seating and gathering places

E. LAND USE, ZONING & BUILDING ORIENTATION

Zoning

Zoning in the Village Center is comprised of Village Center, Urban Commercial, Office Residential, and Urban Residential districts. The commercial district is covered by the first two categories. The districts adjacent to the commercial district include Office Residential along Main Street east of New Portland Road and Urban Residential in most all other areas in the village.



The *Village Center* district is located primarily between South and School Streets and Water and Elm Streets along Main Street. It also includes parcels adjacent to Gorham Square including the Masonic Block. The purpose of this district is provide space within the village for small, local, retail sales, commercial services, and office uses which are in scale with the character of the village.

The purpose of the *Urban Commercial* district is to provide general sales, services and business space in the Town. It is located between Elm/Water Streets and New Portland Rd., includes the Village Mall Shopping Center and Shop n Save, and extends down Mechanic

Street and Railroad Avenue.

The purpose of the *Office Residential* district is to provide space within the Town for a mixture of residential uses and business and professional offices in close proximity to the existing commercial areas of Town. The *Urban Residential* districts provide for village scale residential, institutional and non-commercial uses in the village center.

The zoning requirements for the Village Center and the Urban Commercial districts, as set forth in Gorham's Land Use and Development Code, are very similar. The major differences between the two districts include the following items.

Uses:

- * In the Village Center (VC) district, a drive-through service is permitted when it is accessory to a financial institution. In the Urban Commercial (UC) District, a drive-through service is permitted when it is accessory to a permitted use. All other permitted and special exception uses are the same.

Maximum Floor Area:

- * Retail use in the Village Center (VC) district is limited to 7000 square feet within a building. There is no limit in the Urban Commercial district.

Space Standards:

- * Building Setbacks. In the VC District, the setback is the average of the existing setbacks in the block in which the building is located, or, if a building is being demolished, the pre-existing setback, whichever distance is greater. In the UC District, the front yard setback is 25 feet.
- * Minimum Side and Rear yards. In the VC District, the requirement is 10 feet unless otherwise required by the buffer provisions. In the UC District, the requirement is 20 feet unless otherwise required by the buffer provisions.
- * Minimum Open Space. In the VC District, there is no open space requirement. In the UC District, the requirement is 25% of the lot area.

Performance Standards:

- * Parking in Front. In the VC District, no portion of the lot in front of the front building line may be used for off-street parking, service or loading. There is no similar

requirement in the UC District.

- * Off-Street Parking Waiver. In the VC District, the Planning Board can waive or reduce off-street parking requirements provided that certain criteria are met. There is no such provision in the UC District.
- * Combining Entrances. In the UC District, the Planning Board may require that entrances be combined to the maximum extent possible. There is no such provision in the VC District.

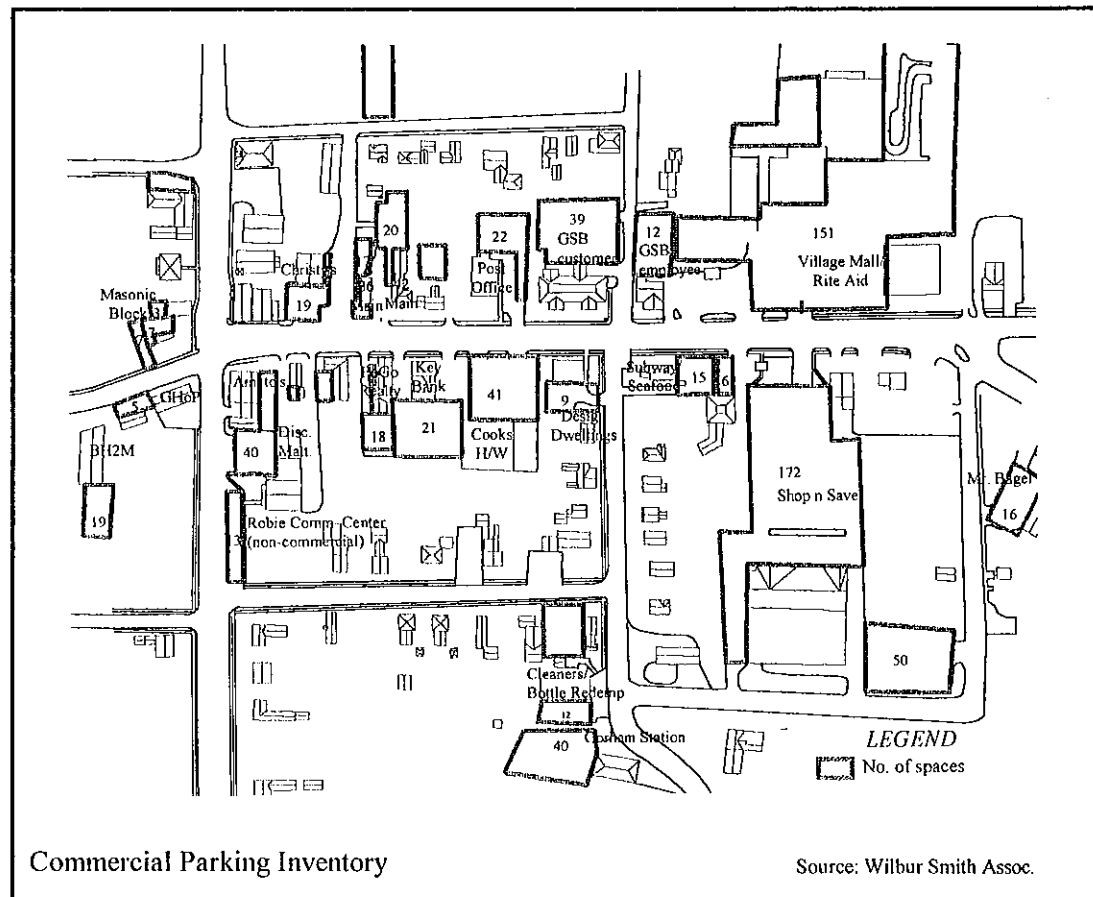
Building Orientation and Style

The following items generally describe the existing configuration and architecture of buildings in the commercial district.

- * The edge of streetscape, as defined by buildings, is not contiguous — large gaps exist.
- * Building setbacks vary greatly (front, side, and back setbacks)
- * Building heights and roof pitches/styles vary greatly
- * Where front setbacks are large and building heights low, the definition of the streetscape is weak
- * In the section of Main Street near New Portland Road, buildings relate to parking lots, rather than to streets and walkways
- * Type of buildings, their relationship to street, and their architectural style vary greatly
- * Orientation of windows and other architectural details varies greatly
- * Numerous buildings have blank facades or modified facades that degrade their quality and pedestrian orientation.

F. PARKING & PAVEMENT

Parking for automobiles is one of the dominant elements along Main Street. Large expanses of off-street parking in front of buildings exist between Elm/Water Streets and New Portland Road. This occurred in response to the zoning that was in place at the time of development of the Village Mall and Shop and Save. Several instances occur west of Elm Street also that degrade the pedestrian environment. Several large parking areas lack good landscape buffering along the street to mitigate its visual impact. The figure below identifies commercial off-street parking and the number of spaces provided.



Characteristics of parking in the Village Center

- * Parking lanes are used as turning lanes and to by-pass turning vehicles (on South Street, the parking lanes are sometimes used as a travel lane)
- * Vast, uninterrupted areas of pavement dominate the streetscape in several areas
- * Paved areas are visible from street and often contiguous with the street
- * Physical separation of streets from off-street vehicular areas is weak, often only a curbed island
- * The streetscape ground plane (area between buildings facing the street) is predominantly asphalt
- * Curb cuts contribute to confused and vague access into and out of parking areas
- * Internal circulation suffers from a lack of order and unclear hierarchy of travel ways
- * Several lots use side street entrances rather than using access along the principal roadway
- * The overall amount of parking appears sufficient, but there are shortages within specific blocks. Shortages occur in the block bounded by Church, School, Main and Cross Streets. A parking demand analysis, based on current parking requirements, is given in Appendix B.