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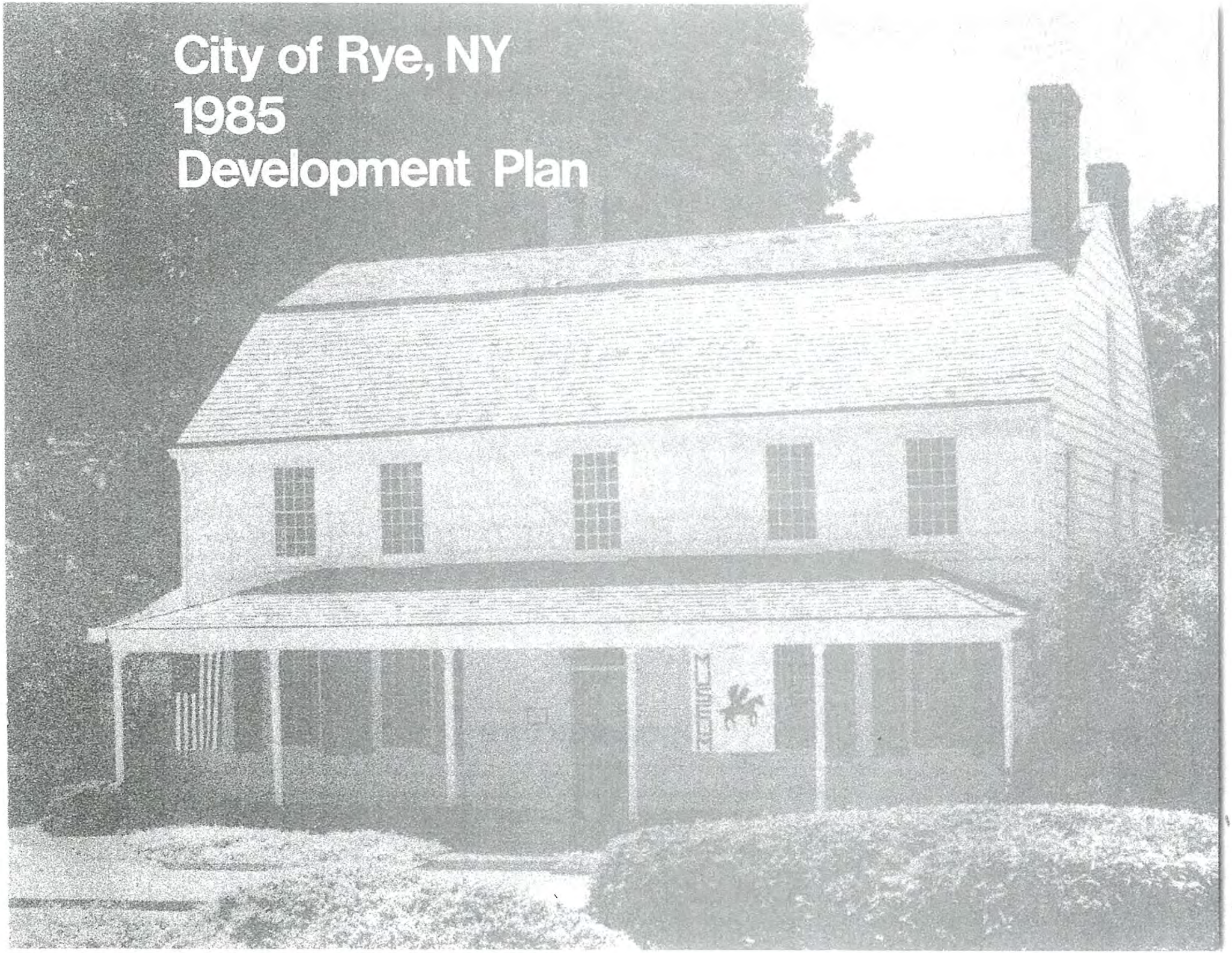
# City of Rye, NY
# 1985
# Development Plan



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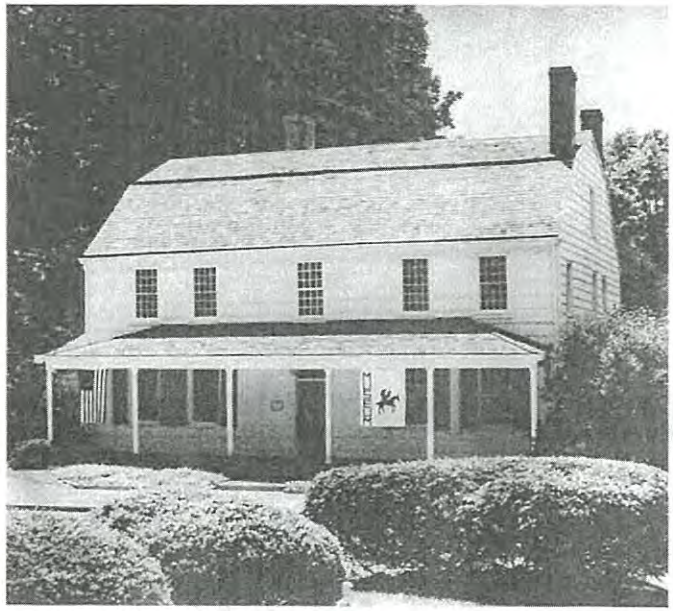

# City of Rye
# 1985
# Development Plan

City of Rye Planning Commission
Westchester County, New York

with the technical assistance of:
RPPW Inc.
Planning Consultants
Tarrytown, New York

## Acknowledgements

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April 23, 1985

Mayor and Council
City of Rye, New York

Dear Mayor and Members of the Council:

I have the pleasure of transmitting herewith, for your information in land use decision making in the years to come, the 1985 Rye City Development Plan. The plan has been prepared in compliance with the City Charter and the General City Law, and shows the Planning Commission's recommendations for development of the City over the next 10 to 20 years. We anticipate an increasing effort to transfer planning and zoning controls from individual localities to the county and state. Recognizing the importance of local familiarity and the resulting benefits in terms of understanding, maintaining, and protecting our environment, we strongly feel that future land use decisions for the City of Rye should remain with the City.

The Planning Commission contracted with Raymond, Parish, Pine & Weiner, Inc. (RPPW), to perform a variety of important technical tasks on this plan, including detailed surveys of certain areas of Rye, mapping and studies of development patterns, issues and opportunities in Rye. The consultants also prepared an initial set of plan recommendations for our consideration and assisted in writing drafts of this plan. This was done primarily by Deborah Parriott and Stuart Turner of RPPW to whom the Planning Commission is in a great debt of thanks. The Commission must note with equal appreciation the ever present assistance and good advice of the City Planner, Frederick Zepf and his assistant, Pam Conway.

It has been said that prediction is only difficult when it involves the future. The Commission, with its many consultants, has sought to be as accurate as possible in predicting trends and future needs for Rye, but it recognizes, as must the readers of this plan, that many trends are very difficult to foresee. Thus, while we hope that many parts of this plan will continue to be pertinent for the next 10 to 20 years, we recognize that our successors on the Commission will often be faced with situations where the goals and policies of the Plan must be modified to face a new situation.

Respectfully submitted,

John Carolin, Chairman
for the Planning Commission

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## INTRODUCTION

This Development Plan is a long range statement by the City's Planning Commission about its goals and policies for the use of land within the City for a projected period of time, in this case until about the year 2000. The Plan is also a set of recommendations for implementation of the Commission's goals. It does not change the City's zoning ordinance or map; that can be accomplished only by the City Council. The Plan does, however, provide to Rye's citizens and potential developers information as to what Rye regards as its most important assets and how it intends to protect and develop them. The Commission intends this plan to be a framework for future zoning and development decisions in the city.

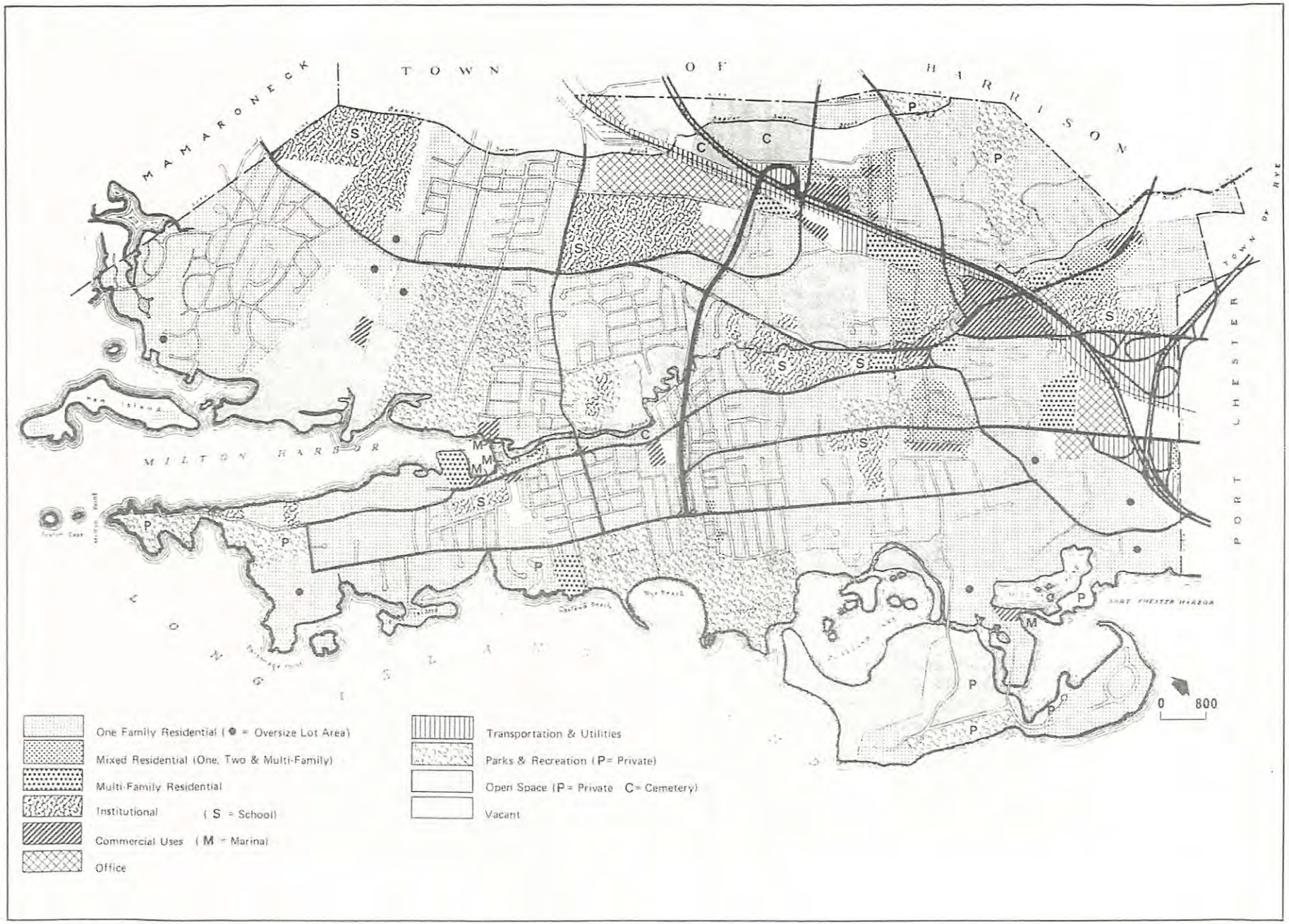
The Development Plan includes a text supported by the Land Use Plan map. The Land Use Plan map (part of this report) is not a proposed rezoning of Rye. It is the broad view of the Commission about the present status of land use and development in Rye and the desirable uses and growth for various areas. The accompanying text includes a written description of the Plan categories, the goals and policies of the Plan, and recommendations for various actions which can not be mapped.

The Development Plan presented here is part of a planning process begun many years ago in Rye. In 1929, the Village of Rye adopted its first master plan. In 1945, *On Our Way: The Rye Development Program* was adopted by the City Council as City policy. This Plan was updated in 1963, when the *Rye City Development Plan* was produced. In these previous plans, the maintenance and enhancement of Rye as an attractive single family residential community was a primary goal. The City remains committed to this goal today. Other goals pertaining to the environment, historic preservation and business are considered to be of increasing importance.

This master plan is not a static document to be followed without regard to changing conditions, but rather should be viewed as a dynamic policy instrument to be reviewed periodically and revised as necessary. Implementation will be a continuous process.

The current master plan effort began three years ago with a series of meetings with other City agencies and Rye citizens and analytical memoranda prepared by the Planning Commission. Since that time, work on the plan by the Commission, its staff and consultants, Raymond, Parish, Pine & Weiner, Inc., has focused on summarizing the planning factors highlighted in the Planning Commission memoranda and those addressed in further studies, identifying issues and opportunities, exploring various planning and zoning options and finally on creating the Development Plan itself. This report is a discussion of the City's recommended Development Plan, including the various factors, issues, development trends and philosophies that influenced the planning decisions and recommendations. The more detailed background studies are included in a separate volume of the Plan; on file in the Office of the City Planner.

# Generalized Existing Land Use Map 1



ever, preclude future development at a greater density than exists today, especially through the subdivision of larger lots. Development pressures on sensitive waterfront properties (including present beach clubs), on many Post Road properties and in other undeveloped areas will be intensified because of the lack of easily developable land. Thus, the future use of many of the City's sensitive areas is of concern.

**Organization of the Plan**

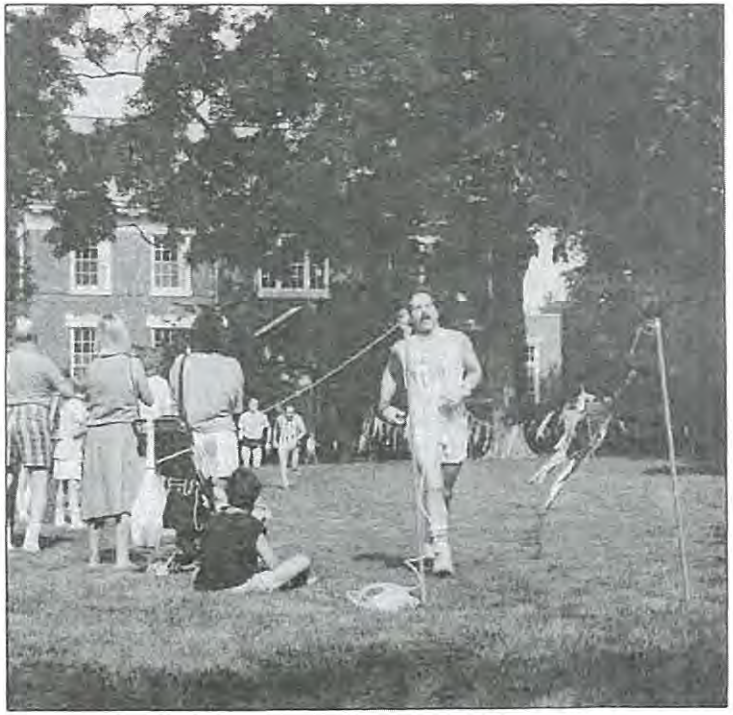
The various land uses and planning issues in Rye have been divided into ten sections, which form the division for consideration in Part II. While there is some overlapping between the various areas, each section represents a focus on a subject of importance to Rye.

Within each section of Part II, the major goals and policies of the Planning Commission (pertaining to that section) are set forth, followed by a text discussion. The text is divided into a background evaluation of the present situation and past happenings, and then a series of recommendations. Where pertinent, special maps and tables are included.

Part III of the Plan summarizes the changes recommended by the plan. These are divided into those which can be accomplished only by new zoning districts; those which would call for some revision of existing zoning or other City laws, those which can be accomplished by changes to the zoning map, and those which can be effected presently by direct action.

The Appendix summarizes the research and recommendations on three neighborhood areas in Rye which were studied because it was felt that they were in need of change. Various other studies of somewhat more tangential interest, along with statistical support, have been gathered into a second volume of papers, not made a part of this plan but available for consultation. These include the following memoranda:

1. Analysis of Population and Housing Characteristics
2. Analysis of Parks and Recreation
3. Analysis of County and Regional Development Trends and the Impact on Rye
4. Traffic Analysis of the Playland Parkway/Old Post Road/Theodore Fremd Avenue Area
5. Analysis of Central Business District Parking
6. Analysis of High Density Option
7. Historic Resources List (Landmarks Advisory Committee)



## Description of Existing Development Patterns

Rye is a City of approximately six square miles situated in the eastern part of central Westchester County on Long Island Sound. The western border of the City generally parallels Beaver Swamp Brook, while the eastern border is formed by Milton Harbor and the Sound. Blind Brook traverses the City from the northwest corner of Rye to Milton Harbor at the southern end. The Village of Port Chester is to the north of the City, the Village of Mamaroneck to the south and the Town/Village of Harrison to the west.

The New England Thruway (I-95) cuts across the northwestern part of the City, and merges with the Cross Westchester Expressway (I-287) at the City's northern boundary. Thus, vehicular access to and from other parts of the New York metropolitan area is excellent. In addition, Rye is served by the Metro North Commuter Railroad. Boston Post Road (Route 1) is the City's major north-south artery, while Theodore Fremd Avenue, Purchase Street, Milton Road, Midland Avenue and Forest Avenue are important collector routes (see Map #4). As in much of central Westchester, east-west access in the City is made difficult by the topography. Playland Parkway is the major connection between I-95 and Playland Park (by the Sound). Other major east-west routes include Osborn Road, Oakland Beach Avenue, Locust Avenue and Grace Church Street.

Most of the City is characterized by attractive single-family residential neighborhoods, with densities ranging from approximately six units per acre to less than one unit per acre.* The City's residential areas are separated by numerous open space areas, water bodies (e.g. Blind Brook, Milton Harbor and Playland Lake), wetland and marshes, topography and major roads. Several areas have historic houses and estates, particularly the southern Post Road area, Grace Church Street, Milton Road and Sound View Park, a proposed historic district. Two and three family houses are found in the Maple-High Street area, the northern Purchase Street area and the Grapal Street-Cedar Place area. Apartments are for the most part located in the areas surrounding the Central Business District, although some newer multi-family developments are found on the waterfront.

A major attraction of the City is the large amount of open space and recreation land. Among the major open space and recreation areas are the Marshlands Conservancy, Rye Golf Club, Rye Nature Center, the Apawamis Club, Playland Park, the Damiano Recreation Center and Recreation Park, Disbrow Park, Rye Town Park and numerous beach clubs in the Milton and Manursing areas. Much of the City's Long Island Sound waterfront is occupied by open space and recreation areas owned by various private beach clubs or by Westchester County.

The City's Central Business District (CBD) is located on Purchase Street in the northern end of the City south of the railroad and I-95. The locally designated Village Green Preservation District, containing the City Hall/Library/Square House complex, is situated at the CBD's southern edge. The surrounding areas on Purchase Street (north of I-95), Theodore Fremd, Locust Avenue and the Post Road include a mixture of garden apartments, one-two family houses and small offices. Major office developments are located near the I-95 and I-287 interchange and south of the I-95 and Playland Parkway interchange. Areas for the expansion of major office developments are limited by the lack of undeveloped parcels in the City. Pressures for increased office development have focused in the Theall Road area and the southern Post Road area. The City has two relatively small concentrations of light manufacturing activity, one located between the Thruway and Maple Avenue on Nursery Lane and the other on Cedar Place, where the light manufacturing uses are detrimental to the adjacent residential neighborhood.

Rye contains a variety of environmentally significant areas. Numerous tidal and freshwater wetlands are found near the waterfront and brooks. The Milton Harbor area (including the Marshlands Conservancy and Rye Golf Club), Disbrow Park and the Manursing area contain the most extensive wetlands in the City. In addition, substantial areas near the Sound, Milton Harbor, Blind Brook and Beaver Swamp Brook are within the 100 year flood hazard area, and thus subject to potential flooding. While many of these areas are preserved as open space, others are either presently developed or subject to potential future development.

With the exception of a few large estates on lots much larger than required by zoning ("oversized" lots) and the few remaining vacant areas, Rye is completely developed. This does not, how-

*As used in this report, the term "density" means the number of dwelling units (house, condominium or apartment) per acre.

# II

# The Development Plan

*The principal goal of the Development Plan is to maintain Rye's present character as an attractive single family residential community, which is served by a central commercial core, a full range of public facilities, a high quality educational system and extensive recreation facilities and open space areas, all within a setting that maximizes the City's historic and architectural amenities and its natural assets, particularly its coastal location and extensive marsh lands.*

# Land Use Plan

Map 2

City of Rye, NY • Master Plan 1985

**Residential**

- Low-Density (1-2 DU/Acre)
- Low-Medium Density (2-6 DU/Acre)
- Medium Density (8-14 DU/Acre)
- High Density (Over 14 DU/Acre)

**Business**

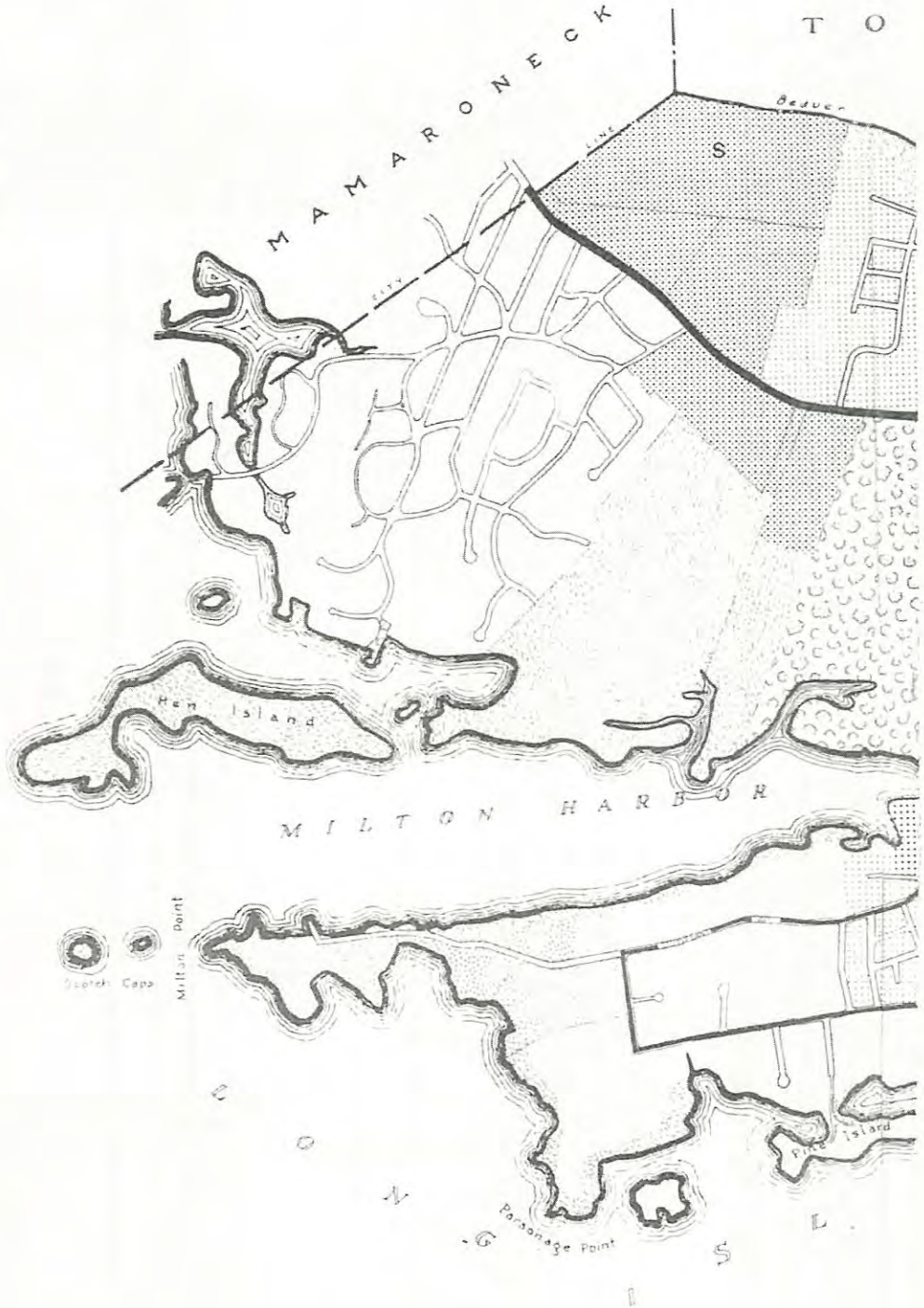
- Central Business District
- General Commercial
- Light Manufacturing / Warehousing
- Neighborhood Business
- Office
- Office / Residential

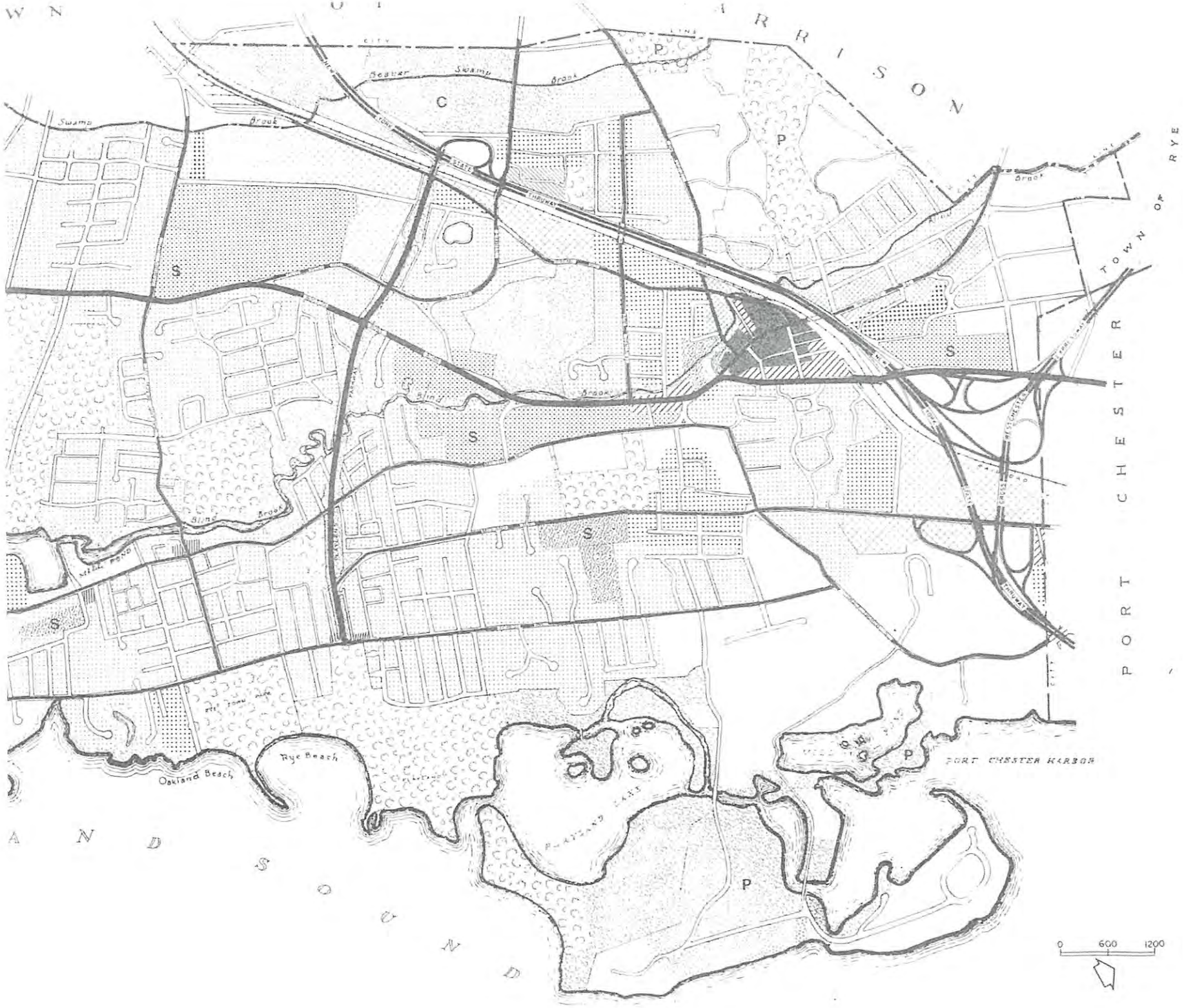
- Post Road Residential / Institutional (low-medium density)(S=school)
- Institutional (S=school)

**Recreation and Open Space**

- Parks and Rescreation (P=private)
- Natural Open Space (P=private, C=cemetery)
- Waterfront Recreation/Development
- Transportation and Utilities

- Major Highways
- Arterial Streets
- Collector Streets





W N
O
A R R I S O N
Beaver Swamp Brook
Swamp Brook
C
P
S
Blind Brook
Blind Brook
MILL POND
Rye Beach
Oakland Beach
PORT CHESTER HARBOR
TOWN OF RYE
PORT CHESTER
A N D S O U N D
0 600 1200

# 1

# Residential Development

*GOALS AND POLICIES*

*Goals*

- *Maintain Rye's present character of predominantly single family housing surrounded by open space.*
- *Preserve the physical quality and character of Rye's large, old houses and estates.*
- *Protect residential neighborhoods from commercial, industrial and office encroachment.*
- *Provide an opportunity for the development of housing of various types, sizes, and costs to meet the needs of people at various stages of the life cycle, income, age levels and household compositions, without compromising the integrity of Rye's single family residential areas.*

*Policies*

- *Maintain to the extent practical the existing housing stock through steps which encourage rehabilitation, exterior maintenance and increased energy efficiency.*
- *Adopt new zoning with flexible provisions allowing limited multiple family conversion and clustering to encourage the preservation of large, old homes and lots; particularly those of historic or architectural quality.*
- *Identify areas of substandard housing in the City and creat incentives to improve the existing housing or replace it with new housing or more appropriate uses.*
- *In certain areas of the City, permit accessory dwelling units, two-three family housing units and apartments in order to meet societal commitments to provide adequate dwellings in the City to disadvantaged people, including senior citizens and handicapped persons.*
- *Maintain ratios of at least twice the number of owner-occupied units as rental units, at least twice as many single family units as multiple dwelling units.*

## BACKGROUND

Population and household characteristics in Rye have changed substantially since the 1960's.* In 1963, it was expected that Rye would reach an optimum population of 17,500 by the early 1970's. While the City's population increased 11% between 1960 and 1970 (14,225 to 15,869), it decreased approximately 5% between 1970 and 1980 (15,869 to 15,083). In 1984, however, the Westchester County Department of Planning estimated the City's population to be approximately 15,321, an increase of 1.5% over 1980. According to Westchester County population projections, if the trends of the past fifteen years continue, the City's population should level off at approximately 13,500 by the year 2000. (However, it should be noted that population projections can be unreliable, since they are based upon changing circumstances.)

Over the past two decades, the number of households in the City increased by 25%, from 4,062 in 1960 to 5,060 in 1980, close to the 5,200 projected in the 1963 Plan. The nature and the average size of households in Rye also changed a great deal over the past 20 years. In 1963, it was expected that the 1960 median household size of 3.4 persons and the type of households in the City would not change. However, by 1980 the median household size had fallen to 2.6, reflecting the smaller size of the average family (which now includes one or two children instead of the three or four common in the 1960's), an increase in single person households (from 12% of the City's households in 1960 to 18% in 1980), an increase in senior citizen households and an increase in single parent families.

The City also has a greater proportion of senior citizens (age 65 and over) than 20 years ago. The senior citizen population increased by 12% between 1970 and 1980, compared to a 5% decrease for the population as a whole. Further, while senior citizens comprised approximately 12% of the City's population in 1980, households headed by a senior citizen comprised approximately 20% of the City's total households.

Rye's housing stock has increased slowly over the past twenty years. In 1960, there were 4,267 units in the City, by 1970 there were 4,854 year-round units (an increase of 13%), and by 1980 there were 5,197 year-round units (a 7% increase). The proportions of owner-occupied and single family units have remained relatively constant during this period. In 1980, single family units comprised approximately 70% of the City's housing stock, while 69% of the City's units were owner occupied. Approximately one-half of Rye's housing stock was built in 1939 or earlier. Further, nearly 90% of the City's rental units were built before 1960. The limited number of rental units built in the City between 1960 and 1980 reflects both the County-wide decline in construction of rental housing over the past two decades and the lack of suitable development areas in Rye, since the City was substantially developed by 1960.

This has made it increasingly difficult for people, particularly younger and older (senior citizen) residents, to find affordable housing in the area.

Housing values and contract rents* in Rye are relatively high, reflecting both high income levels and a healthy demand for housing in the City. The median value of owner occupied units in 1979 was almost $125,000; approximately $40,000 higher than that for the country as a whole.** Further, in the past five years, housing prices in Rye have risen dramatically, not only in keeping with the trend in Westchester County and the country as a whole, but undoubtably in excess of the County-wide median. In this short period of time, average house prices in Rye have increased approximately 50%. It is becoming difficult to find a house that sells for under $200,000 in the City. Contract rents in 1980 in Rye were also high when compared to the County figures ($369 compared to $268 per month). Discussions with real estate brokers indicate an increase in rents over the past five years in proportion to that of housing prices.

The relatively high current housing costs no doubt result from the combination of the City's special attractiveness, particularly to "young professional" households, and the scarcity of houses for sale in the area. While a healthy sign for the long term economic strength of Rye, this upward trend has had the effect of magnifying what was already a problem in Rye — that of the provision of homes at a variety of cost levels so that persons with relatively limited incomes can live in the City. The Planning Commission believes that Rye should strive to maintain a stock of housing in a wide

*The Analysis of Population and Housing Characteristics memorandum in Background Studies volume of the Development Plan contains a more detailed discussion of demographic changes between 1960 and 1980. This report is on file in the office of the City Planner.

*The contract rent is the rent specified in the lease agreement.

**"U.S. Census of Population and Housing," 1980.

range of price levels. Approximately one-third of the City's owner households and over 40% of the renter households paid 25% or more of their income for housing in 1979 (figured on a monthly cost basis). This was particularly true of households with low and moderate income levels.

These recent population and housing trends have resulted in unanticipated housing and social service needs, throughout Westchester County, as well as in Rye. There is an increasing need to provide housing for senior citizens who no longer are able to (or wish to) maintain a home; as well as a need for smaller housing units for the smaller families of the 1980's.

As the City is almost totally developed, available land for development is scarce. Assuming that extensive demolition and redevelopment will be unacceptable because of desired low density levels, the high cost of property in Rye and preservation goals, the potential residential development is limited to the undeveloped portions of the City's large estates, the subdivision of oversize lots, the construction of accessory apartments and the development of the few remaining vacant areas (see Map #1). Therefore, it is expected that the future population of the City will not exceed the 17,500 level projected in the previous plan, even if all of the various use changes suggested here were adopted. Because a population in excess of this figure would stress capital facilities, the Planning Commission views this figure as the maximum desirable population for the City. An increased above this figure will necessitate major improvements, and thus would require a review of the City's Development Plan.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The intent of the policies and recommendations is to preserve the existing residential character of Rye, except in specific areas where higher density residential uses now exist or would be appropriate.

### The Land Use Plan: Residential Use Categories

In order to examine the current residential usage of land in Rye and to illustrate residential plans and policies that should be worked toward, the Planning Commission has divided the residential sections of Rye into four main categories (one with two parts), ranging from the least dense (one dwelling unit per acre) to the most dense (15 or more units per acre). The residential areas are shown on Map 2. The residential areas have been classified according to density in order to encourage the flexibility necessary to allow methods that can preserve Rye's large older homes, provide housing for senior citizens and younger residents and preserve important open space and environmentally sensitive lands without disrupting the single family character of the City.

The way in which these categories compare with the present residential zoning categories is explained in the text which follows. The four categories utilized here are not proposed as new residential zoning for Rye. They will, however provide the framework for the designation of single-family, two-three and multi-family areas on the zoning map, within the desired density ranges. (Uses will continue to be controlled by zoning.) These broader planning categories are relevant in terms of understanding and implementing the Commission's goals for housing in Rye.

The categories are as follows:

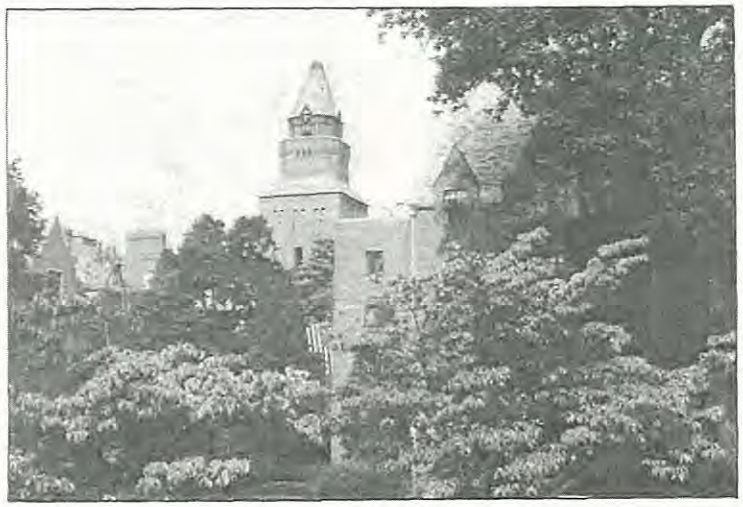
**Low Density Residential** (1-2 dwelling units per acre). The low density category includes the large lot single family areas in the southern and northern portions of Rye, on Milton Point and in the Apawamis area. These largely developed areas have a number of potentially subdividable lots, ranging in size from two acres to estates of 15-20 acres. In order to protect the low density residential character of these areas, preserve valuable shoreline portions of the City and preserve the character of architecturally significant areas, future densities should remain low. Clustering of buildings, at this low density, on the larger waterfront parcels to preserve waterfront access should be encouraged. Permitting accessory apartments, in existing out buildings (such as carriage houses or garages), will also help maintain large properties and provide housing as well.

**Low-Medium Density Residential** (2-6 dwelling units per acre). This category includes most of the City's single family residential areas and is divided into two sub-categories. **The Low-Medium Density "A"** category includes areas with densities of 2-4 units per acre, while the **Low-Medium Density "B"** category includes areas with densities of 5-6 units per acre. Present zoning categories within this area range from one-half acre to one-quarter acre lots (R-2 to R-4) in the "A" category and 7,500 to 6,000 square foot lots (R-5 and R-6) in the "B" category. While the bulk of the areas in this category are single family in character, clustered developments at low-medium densities should be encouraged on larger vacant parcels to preserve environmentally sensitive areas and open space.

**Medium Density Residential** (8-14 dwelling units per acre). The medium density category includes residential areas with two and three family houses, garden apartments and condominium complexes with densities of less than 15 units per acre. Grapal Street, Cedar Place, part of Maple Avenue and the western portion of Central Avenue, are neighborhoods of two-family houses included

in this category, in addition to most of the City's existing garden apartment and condominium developments. The densities permitted in this category are intended to encourage the use of existing buildings, rather than redevelopment in currently developed areas; and the development of low rise (2½ story) garden apartment and condominium complexes in vacant areas.

**High Density Multi-Family Residential** (15 or more dwelling units per acre). The high density category would permit densities over 14 dwelling units per acre in certain key areas of the City, particularly where redevelopment may be desirable. The Plan shows two areas in this category: New Street-Elizabeth Street and the proposed senior citizen housing development on Theall Road. The New Street-Elizabeth Street area includes houses in blighted



condition, and appears to be appropriate for multi-family development because of its location near the apartment and office buildings on Purchase Street and its proximity to major roadways (i.e. the Thruway and Post Road), the railroad and the Central Business District. Many of the City's older apartment complexes also fit into this high density category. The desirable density for new multi-family developments will depend upon a number of factors such as aesthetic appeal, site characteristics, traffic generation, road capacity, adequate utilities, required parking and neighborhood scale.

The Planning Commission also considered the possibility of applying the high density category to Cedar Place and the area south of it. The Commission undertook to study the type of density increase required to induce owners to change from current commercial uses to residential use. The result of that study is further discussed in the appendix. The finding was that the major increase in density required in order to encourage residential redevelopment through strictly private sources, was not desirable at this time.

### The Post Road Residential/Institutional Area

The Post Road corridor in Rye has a special character created by large estates, historic structures, institutional uses (schools, churches, etc.), stone fences and wooded areas that border much of its length in the City. In order to preserve that character, the large unsubdivided land tracts along the Boston Post Road have been placed in a special Post Road Residential/Institutional category. Areas within this category include the Sloan-Kettering vicinity, the Alensten (Jay mansion) and Parsons (Lounsberry) estates, Rye Golf Club (Whitby) (all part of the Post Road Historic District), the Osborn Home, the Church Row Historic area and Rye Country Day School.

This area is envisioned as a mixed use area blending in with surrounding residential areas. Permitted uses would be a variety of residential uses and densities, institutional uses serving the community (schools, churches, etc.), museums, and uses of similar character. Major commercial uses, such as office parks or shopping centers, should not be permitted in this area. The density of residential development would be in the low-medium density range and regulated by performance standards established in the zoning ordinance.* Clustering of development would be encouraged as a means of preserving the special features which give the corridor its unique character.

*Performance standards are based on the effects or characteristics of a use. In zoning, this approach might describe permitted uses by the impacts on traffic generation, visual quality, water consumption, sewage effluent, environmental and cultural resources preservation, etc.

The performance standards used to regulate both the permitted densities and uses should be based upon the following factors:

- the maintenance of the unique character of the Post Road;
- the compatibility with adjacent residential uses;
- the capacity of the road network;
- the presence of historic resources;
- the presence of sensitive environmental features.

### Clustering of Residential Development

The objective of clustering is to preserve open space. Clustering involves placing the number of residential units ordinarily permitted on a property under conventional zoning on a portion of the property, leaving the remainder open. Clustered developments can be single family, semi-detached or townhouse in character. When used on large properties, clustering can preserve specific features such as wetlands, floodplains, scenic areas and vistas, woodlands and shorelines. In Rye, most vacant or underdeveloped properties contain one or more of the features mentioned above. Thus, clustering is a most appropriate technique for use in the City. New York State law (Section 37 of the General City Law) now permits municipalities to require clustering of development in order to preserve special features.

In Rye, clustering could appropriately be used in the following areas if and when they are developed:

- **Properties containing wetlands, floodplains or waterfront land.** Many of Rye's large properties (oversize lots and estates) contain wetlands or floodplain areas or are on the waterfront. Clustering should be used to preserve wetland and floodplain areas as perpetual open space. As development along the shore occurs, clustering should be used, in combination with public access provisions where possible, to preserve the beach and waterfront for recreation.

- **The Post Road Residential/Institutional Area.** The Post Road corridor is among the City's most scenic areas. The combinations of old estates, historic buildings, stone walls and wooded areas create a unique quality that should be preserved. Clustering of development can be used to insure the preservation of the wooded buffers and historic buildings that give the road its character.

- **Recreation areas that may be converted to other uses.** The City's many private recreation areas, including beach and country clubs, and the County-owned facilities (Playland and the Marshlands Conservancy) are integral parts of Rye's park and open space system. Yet their continuation in recreation use is not assured. If these areas are ever developed, clustering should be required to preserve the maximum amount of open space possible.

### Accessory Units in Existing Single Family Homes

The idea of permitting accessory apartments of limited size and occupancy in Rye's single family areas is suggested as a solution to a number of housing problems. The benefits of such an approach include:

- **The maintenance of existing housing and the promotion of neighborhood stability** through enabling the repair and rehabilitation of large, older dwellings that are too expensive to maintain as single family residences.

- **The creation of affordable housing** for both senior citizens and young persons who wish to live in Rye.

- **The provision of economic support for existing homeowners**, particularly for older residents on fixed incomes.

- **The provision of housing for extended families** who wish to maintain an amount of separation, yet wish to share a dwelling.

- **The legalization of existing illegal accessory units which conform to the required standards**, thus allowing the regulation of units in terms of City standards and safety considerations.

Some of the City's neighborhood's may be appropriate for accessory apartments. Minimum requirements for lot size (to insure adequate off-street parking, while maintaining a single family appearance) and building size should be used to define areas where accessory units can be constructed. The minimum lot size should be larger than 1/3 acre while a minimum principal dwelling size of 2,000 square feet is desirable. The maximum size of the accessory unit should not exceed 30% of the principal building. Out buildings, such as garages or carriage houses, are particularly suitable for accessory unit use. The principal dwelling unit must be owner-occupied.

The success of such a program depends upon the controls placed on the creation of accessory units. An approach based on performance standards appears to be the most successful one. Requirements should include:

- owner occupancy of principal dwelling
- adequate off-street parking, arranged so that the single family character is maintained
- single front entrance (if accessory unit is in principal building)
- no external additions or changes
- small apartment with one or two bedrooms
- inspection every year or every other year
- minimum size of building, lot and accessory apartment
- maximum size of accessory apartment (as a proportion of total building)
- accessory units permitted only in dwelling built prior to ordinance adoption

The use of special permit approach, created by the City Council, would be the best way for the City to exercise the maximum control over accessory apartment conversion. Under this approach, accessory units would be permitted upon issuance of a Special Permit, renewable every two or three years.

**Converting Large Homes into Condominiums**

Another important method for preserving Rye's stock of large, old homes is to permit the conversion of such single family houses into a number of dwelling units. The units created by such conversions should be in common ownership, since owner occupancy of the units would help to insure high quality building maintenance. The benefit of permitting these internal subdivisions would be the preservation of the home and its large lot by giving the owner an alternative to seeking land subdivision. Numerous forms of control could be imposed, including condominium form of ownership, requiring minimum sizes of homes and lots, requiring minimum size of units, limiting the applicable districts, ensuring that the building exterior remain the same, and preventing any subdivision of the land as long as the house is divided. Special permit provisions can be used to regulate conversions.

# 2

# The Central Business District

*GOALS AND POLICIES*

*Goal*

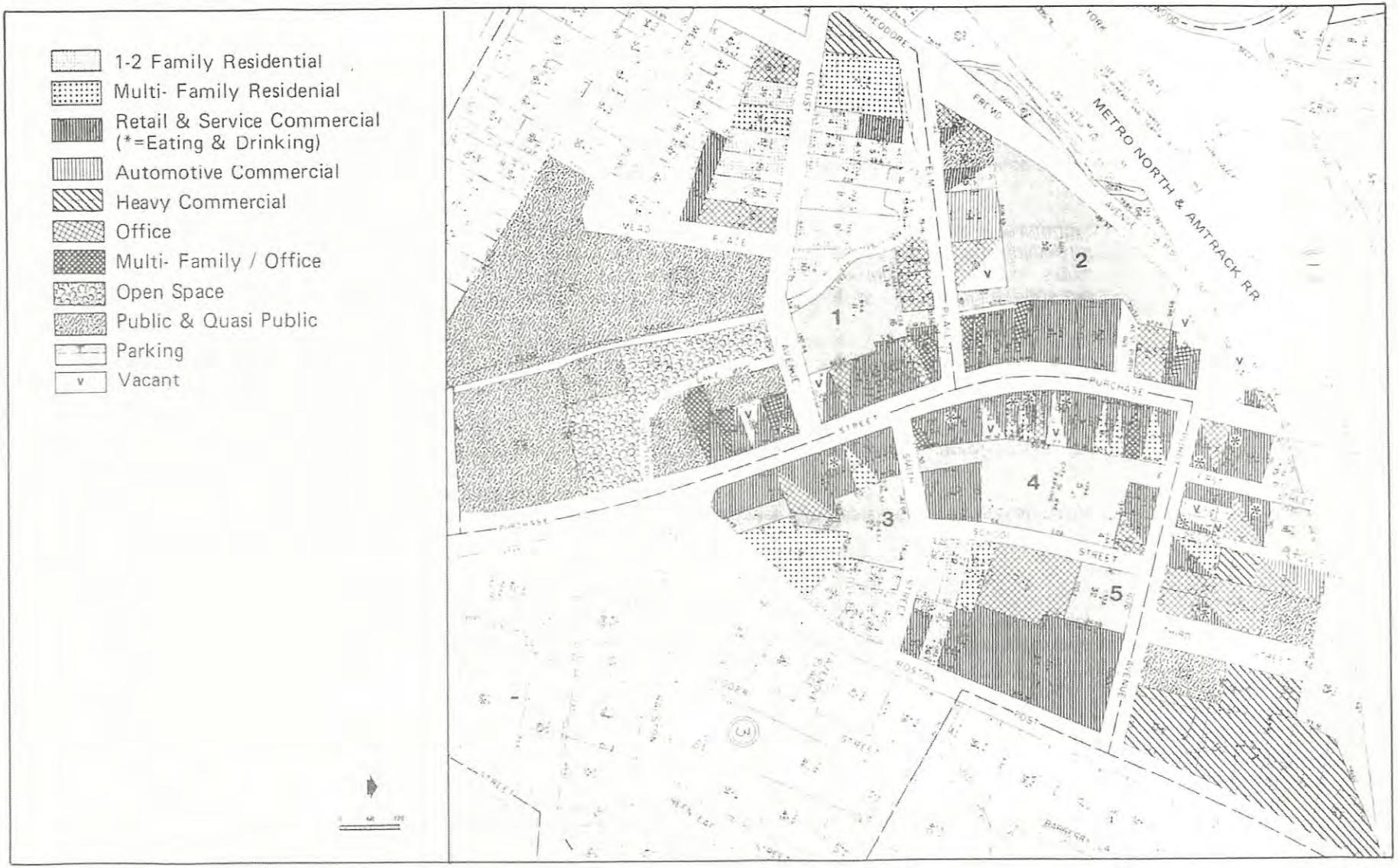
- *Maintain the present quality and character of the CBD as an attractive, compact, and active local shopping and service center primarily for the use and convenience of Rye residents, and as a key component of Rye's special community identity and sound fiscal base.*

*Policies*

- *Encourage street level retail uses in all buildings on Purchase Street as a means of maintaining the retail continuity of the street frontage.*
- *Encourage, through a combination of incentives, regulations and public improvements, the continuation and improvement of retail and service facilities in the CBD.*
- *Permit residential uses in the upper stories of CBD buildings (consistant with fire code requirements) to encourage greater use of the available space in the CBD and provide housing for senior citizens, young couples, and persons with limited mobility.*
- *Seek to preserve the character and improve the general appearance of the CBD through the establishment of design standards and incentives to guide exterior renovations, signs, landscaping, access walks, etc., and through the encouragement of high standards of upkeep for all CBD stores, shops and buildings — both front and rear, and through the maintenance of public ways.*
- *Improve the parking facilities in the CBD and at the railroad station for the convenience of Rye residents, but not to encourage a major expansion of the CBD.*
- *Assure that the CBD is easily accessible to Rye residents with good traffic flow and ample short term parking.*

# Existing Land Use Map 3A

## Central Business District



## BACKGROUND

The Central Business District (CBD) is Rye's shopping and community center. The heart of the CBD is on Purchase Street, between the Village Green and the railroad. Portions of Locust Avenue, Elm Place, Smith Street and Purdy Avenue also have commercial operations; however, retail uses are for the most part concentrated on Purchase Street. The Boston Post Road forms the extreme eastern border of the business district, although uses on the Post Road are of a general commercial type (gas stations, car dealers, etc.). The CBD can thus be divided into two areas: 1) the core area, encompassing Purchase Street and the closer portions of the intersecting streets, and 2) the peripheral area, encompassing the parking areas, and portions of the Post Road, Locust Avenue and Elm Place (see map 3A).

Major concerns regarding the Central Business District focus on maintaining the existing character and scale of the area, protecting the retail continuity on Purchase Street and providing sufficient parking.

### Character and Scale of the CBD

The following points sum up the factors that can influence the character of the CBD:

- The ultimate land area of the CBD is limited by physical boundaries, such as the Post Road, railroad and Village Green complex. However, the extent of the retail core within these bounds has been a matter of debate. Options include maintaining the existing retail core with its emphasis on Purchase Street or permitting the continued expansion of this area to the side streets and eventually Post Road.

- The extent of the building space within the CBD is also a factor in determining its character. The core area presently contains approximately 274,000 square feet of space, 160,000 square feet of which is first floor space. Under present zoning (which permits a floor area ratio* of 2.0), there is a potential for a total of 414,000 square feet in the core area — a potential increase of approximately 140,000 square feet. This type of increase would undoubtably change the character of the district, since buildings would be larger, uses would be intensified, and much more parking would be required (see Table 1).

- The character of the CBD is also influenced by the types of stores and the extent of the market area. Currently, Rye's CBD is essentially a local shopping center, containing specialty shops, local service establishments, and restaurants. An objective of the City Planning Commission is to encourage the continuation of this policy.

- In the previous Plan, it was felt that apartments over stores in the CBD were out of place and thus undesirable. More recently, however, these units are felt to be a benefit to the City in that they provide some "life" (and therefore increased security) in the CBD after business hours as well as provide much needed rental housing. The presence of apartments above the stores contributes to the character of the shopping district, as well.

*Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is the ratio of floor space to the lot area; i.e. 10,000 square feet of floor space on a 5,000 square foot lot has an FAR of 2.0.

- The styles of the area's buildings, the signs, pavement and vegetation (principally street trees) contribute a great deal to the character of the business district. Many of the buildings in the area retain much of their original architectural character, while others have been "modernized" in manners incompatible with the original structure. The CBD's buildings include a variety of architectural styles, heights and materials, yet together form a pleasing and harmonious street scape.

### Retail Continuity

The vitality of retail commercial streets depends upon a continuous row of retail establishments which can draw pedestrian shoppers along the street. Thus, a growing concern to the Planning Commission has been the growth of first floor office uses on Purchase Street. Areas occupied by non-retail uses can interrupt the flow of shopping pedestrians and impair retail activity. The City's measures to limit first floor office uses through parking requirements have only been partially successful. These can be strengthened through the use of zoning techniques that encourage or require first floor retail use.

### CBD Parking

Parking in the CBD is provided by a system of five parking lots and on-street spaces. The lots (shown on Map 3B), with approximately 500 parking spaces*, and the on street spaces with approximately 120 spaces, are currently considered by some merchants to be inadequate for shoppers and restaurant patrons of the CBD.

There are several options for improving parking capacity. The two considered most feasible at present are:

- Creation of a new lot on Locust Avenue adjacent to the CBD, which would provide approximately 90 new spaces, was considered. However, the location of several possibly significant buildings in this area may make this option less viable.

Table 1

City of Rye

Potential Square Footage of Space in the CBD

(see text)

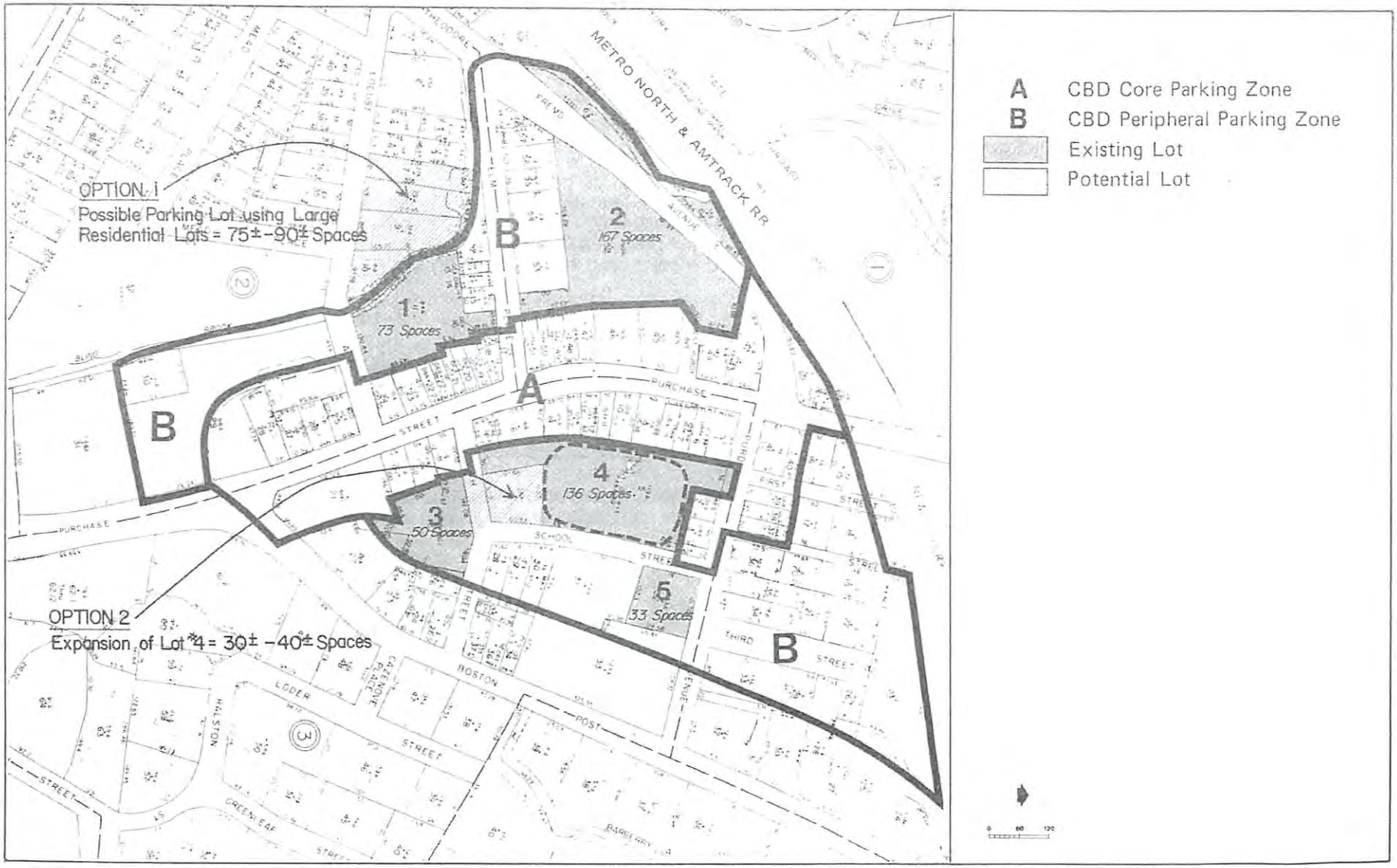
| | Existing Buildings | | | | | Theoretical Maximum Development With Adjusted Floor Area Ratio | | | | Theoretical Maximum Development Under 1984 Zoning (FAR=20) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | FAR = 1.7 | | FAR = 1.5 | | | | | |
| | Total Lot Area (sq. ft.) | Existing Square Feet: First Floor | Existing Square Feet: Upper Floor(s) | Existing Square Feet: Total | Existing Floor Area Ratio | Potential Square Feet (Total) | Additional Square Feet | Potential Square Feet (Total) | Additional Square Feet | Potential Square Feet (Total) | Additional Square Feet: First Floor | Additional Square Feet: Upper Floor(s) | Additional Square Feet: Total |
| "A" Zone[1] | 207,000 | 160,000 | 114,000 | 274,000 | 1.3 | 352,000 | 78,000 | 311,000 | 37,000 | 414,000 | 47,000 | 93,000 | 140,000 |
| "B" Zone[2] | 142,000 | 77,000 | 36,000 | 113,000 | .8 | 241,000 | 128,000 | 213,000 | 100,000 | 284,000 | 65,000 | 106,000 | 171,000 |
| TOTAL | 349,000 | 237,000 | 150,000 | 387,000 | 1.1 | 593,000 | 206,000 | 524,000 | 137,000 | 698,000 | 112,000 | 199,000 | 311,000 |

[1] "A" Zone = Core CBD Parking District. The "A" zone includes Purchase Street between the Village Green and the railroad and Purdy Street between Purchase Street and School Street. In this zone, the provision of parking or payment of a fee in lieu of parking is not required for first floor retail uses.
[2] "B" Zone = Peripheral CBD Parking District. The "B" zone includes the CBD area immediately surrounding the "A" zone.

*This includes approximately 40 new spaces created in 1984 when lot 4 was restructed

# Parking Analysis & Options Map 3B

## Central Business District



- Expand and connect the existing lots on the east side of Purchase Street to provide approximately 40 new spaces. This would involve the City's purchase of property.

The implementation of either or both of these options could help to ease the parking problem. This in turn would help to insure the continued success and viability of businesses in the CBD. At the same time, the relatively modest expansion of parking would serve to retain the present scale of the CBD, since a substantial increase in spaces might only increase use by out of town shoppers.

The Commission has also devoted considerable attention to proposals that one or more of the current parking areas, such as those at the train station, behind Purchase Street or across from Highland Hall be decked. At the present time, the cost of creating a parking structure, balanced against the additional parking which would be provided, makes the cost per space prohibitive. With a change in costs or greatly increased demand for parking, however, decking might become feasible in the future, although consideration of the aesthetics and scale of the CBD would be essential.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for the Central Business District focus on maintaining its present character as a local shopping and service center, while improving the area's appearance and providing the parking necessary for continued economic health. Recommendations include:

1. Maintain the present boundaries of the CBD and the Purchase Street/Purdy Avenue retail core area, as a means of encouraging a tightly knit retail center and preserving the present scale of the area.

2. Reduce the permitted floor area ratio in the City's zoning ordinance from 2.0 to 1.5. This would decrease the maximum allowable development, thereby maintaining the existing scale of CBD buildings.

3. Encourage the uninterrupted retail and service commercial use of Purchase Street, while at the same time, promoting non-retail commercial uses on the CBD's side streets, in order to most effectively reinforce the retail continuity of Purchase Street and thus attract incidental shopping and browsing. This can be accomplished through the City's zoning ordinance.

4. Prohibit ground floor office uses in the Purchase Street/Purdy Avenue core area, but encourage them on the side streets. Upper story offices and residences should be encouraged in the core area. As with recommendation 3, this can be accomplished through changes to the City's zoning ordinance.

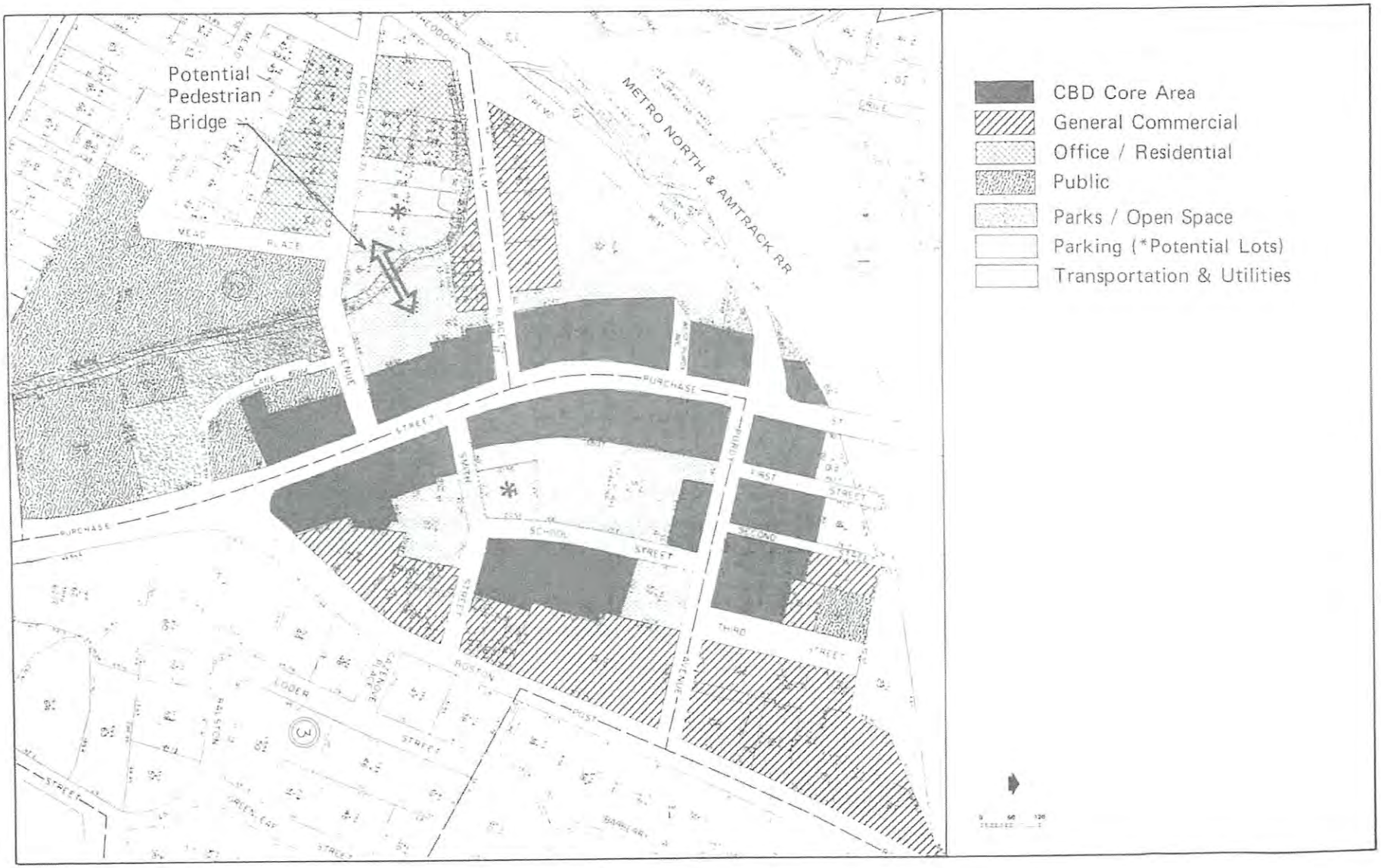
5. New parking lots could be created on Locust Avenue and between lots 3 and 4 east of Purchase Street, to satisfy the need for additional parking.

6. Develop basic design standards for the preservation and/or rehabilitation of buildings along Purchase Street from the Square House to the railroad station, with the cooperation of the Chamber of Commerce, the Landmarks Advisory Committee and the Board of Architectural Review.

7. Encourage small, professional office development in the CBD's periphery through allowing combined office/residential use near the CBD, particularly on Locust Avenue and the northern extension of Purchase Street. Retail uses (presently permitted by zoning) should be prohibited in these areas. (See the section on Business Development for a more detailed discussion).

# Proposed Land Use Plan Map 3C

## Central Business District



# 3

# Business Development

*GOAL AND POLICY*

*Goal*

- *Maintain the City's existing economic base without making substantial changes in scale.*

*Policy*

- *Limit retail uses outside the CBD to neighborhood business areas in order to preserve the residential integrity of the neighborhood and the retail strength of the CBD.*

## BACKGROUND

The great pressure in Westchester County in recent years to build corporate office buildings has had an impact on Rye in many ways. First, it has led to the erection of several large corporate buildings in the City, on the few lots which can accommodate them. Second, it has led to pressure by builders for the rezoning of Rye land from residential to commercial; pressures which thus far have been unsuccessful. Third, such corporate parks in Rye or in neighboring towns put burdens on Rye through increased traffic, restaurant use and demand for housing.

Commercial development outside of the Central Business District since the 1963 master plan has consisted mainly of the construction of office buildings, as allowed by the zoning ordinance (office buildings on a minimum of 7 acres). Under this zoning (B-4), several large office buildings have been built (the maximum size of building for a seven acre parcel is 90,000 square feet). Office building has been concentrated in two areas, both accessible to Interstate 95: the Theodore Fremd/Theall Road area (Cowperwood and ITT-Continental Bakery) and along Midland Avenue (Avon Products and Interstate Plaza). The most notable development has been the Avon building, at Midland Avenue and Peck Avenue, which has the permission to expand to a maximum of 967,000 square feet under the B-5 Interchange Office Building District. The extent of existing office development in the City, as well as the growth potential of areas presently zoned for office use, is shown on Table 2.

In the past twenty years however, there has been little business and commercial development of manufacturing, general commercial uses or other businesses. Small pockets of mixed commercial/light manufacturing uses continue to exist on Nursery Lane, Cedar Place, the Post Road (near the CBD) and the northern end of Purchase Street. Small neighborhood commercial areas are located on Milton Road and at the intersection of the Playland Parkway and Forest Avenue.

There also has been a slow but steadily increasing demand in Rye for small office space, for use by professional persons, insurance and travel agencies, physicians, etc. This has led to the conversions of homes to offices where the zoning allowed such a change (business zones).

Rye has little remaining space which could be rezoned for development of office or business use. In land use competition between residential and commercial, residential use has generally won out in the past. This has, indeed, been the long-continuing philosophy of the Planning Commission, and is carried over into the present land use plan.

**Table 2**

**Evaluation of Existing Major Office Parcels (B-4 and B-5 Zoning)**
**Existing Development and Growth Potential Under Zoning**

| Site | Lot Area (acres) | Existing Development (square feet)[1] | Maximum Potential Additional Development (square feet)[1,2] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Continental Baking | 19.2 | 110,000 | 141,200 |
| Cowperwood Osborn | 11.5 | 110,000 | 40,800 |
| Ard-Rich | 7.0 | 59,500 | 32,000 |
| Dictaphone/Vacant | 7.0 | 0 | 91,500 |
| Dictaphone | 7.0 | 43,400 | 48,000 |
| Avon Sites 1&2[3] | 14.8 | 162,200 | Phase I — 0 |
| | | | Phase II — 499,800 |
| | | | Phase III — 305,000 |
| Avon Site 3[3] (vacant) | 4.9 | 0 | 320,800 |
| IBM Interstate | 7.8 | 281,000 | 68,000 |
| TOTAL | 79.2 | 513,200 | 1,547,100 |

Source: Rye City Planners Office, December 1984

Notes: [1] Figures rounded to nearest 100.
[2] Excludes existing square feet
[3] B-5 zone (Interchange Office Building Development).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### The Land Use Plan: Business Use Categories

The Land Use Plan includes six business categories which are neither existing or proposed zoning but reflect the variety of commercial uses and areas within the City. These categories include the Central Business District (discussed in the preceeding section), General Commercial, Heavy Commercial and Warehousing, Neighborhood Business, Office and Office-Residential. In general, aside from neighborhood convenience stores, the addition of scattered retail uses throughout the City is discouraged in order to maintain the strength of the Central Business District and to protect the integrity of residential areas. Areas classified as Neighborhood Business have been limited to those with existing neighborhood convenience stores, while other existing retail commercial areas outside the CBD have been designated as General Commercial. Other business categories, including the heavy commercial/warehousing and office classifications, will be limited to areas near the Thruway and railroad. The office-residential category, as planned will encourage non-retail business expansion that is compatible with residential uses on the streets near the Central Business District. A description of the categories (with the exception of the Central Business District) follows:

**General Commercial.** This category includes a broad range of commercial activities, including service and light automotive uses (e.g. gas stations and automotive sales), offices, and restaurants. Although retail uses may exist in these areas, in the future it is desirable to discourage retail uses in general commercial areas as a means of encouraging concentration in the CBD. General commercial areas are located on the Post Road adjacent to the CBD and south of the City Hall area.

**Light Manufacturing and Warehousing.** This category includes distribution services, heavy automotive uses (e.g. repair garages), warehouses, heavy commercial uses and limited light industrial activity. The existing warehousing/light manufacturing area located on Nursery Lane, adjacent to the Thruway is proposed for this use.

**Neighborhood Business.** This category includes local convenience stores (food, drug stores, etc., and services) serving a nearby residential neighborhood. Existing neighborhood business centers occur at the intersections of Playland Parkway/Forest Avenue and Oakland Beach Avenue/Milton Road. No new Neighborhood Business areas are proposed.

**Corporate Office.** The office category includes major office building developments. Areas designated for office development are near the I-95 and I-287 interchange and the Theodore Fremd/Playland Parkway area.

Other than several lots already zoned for major office buildings (B-4 or B-5) or subdividable into conforming B-4 or B-5 lots, Rye has virtually no land at present suitable for major office development. Therefore no recommendation is made in the plan for additional office parks. Should, however, the area along Theodore Fremd Avenue presently occupied by Con Ed become vacant, it should seriously be considered as a potential site for an office building. Such a development, nonetheless, would require a complete traffic impact survey, presenting satisfactory solutions to area traffic problems since there is no ready access to Interstate 95.

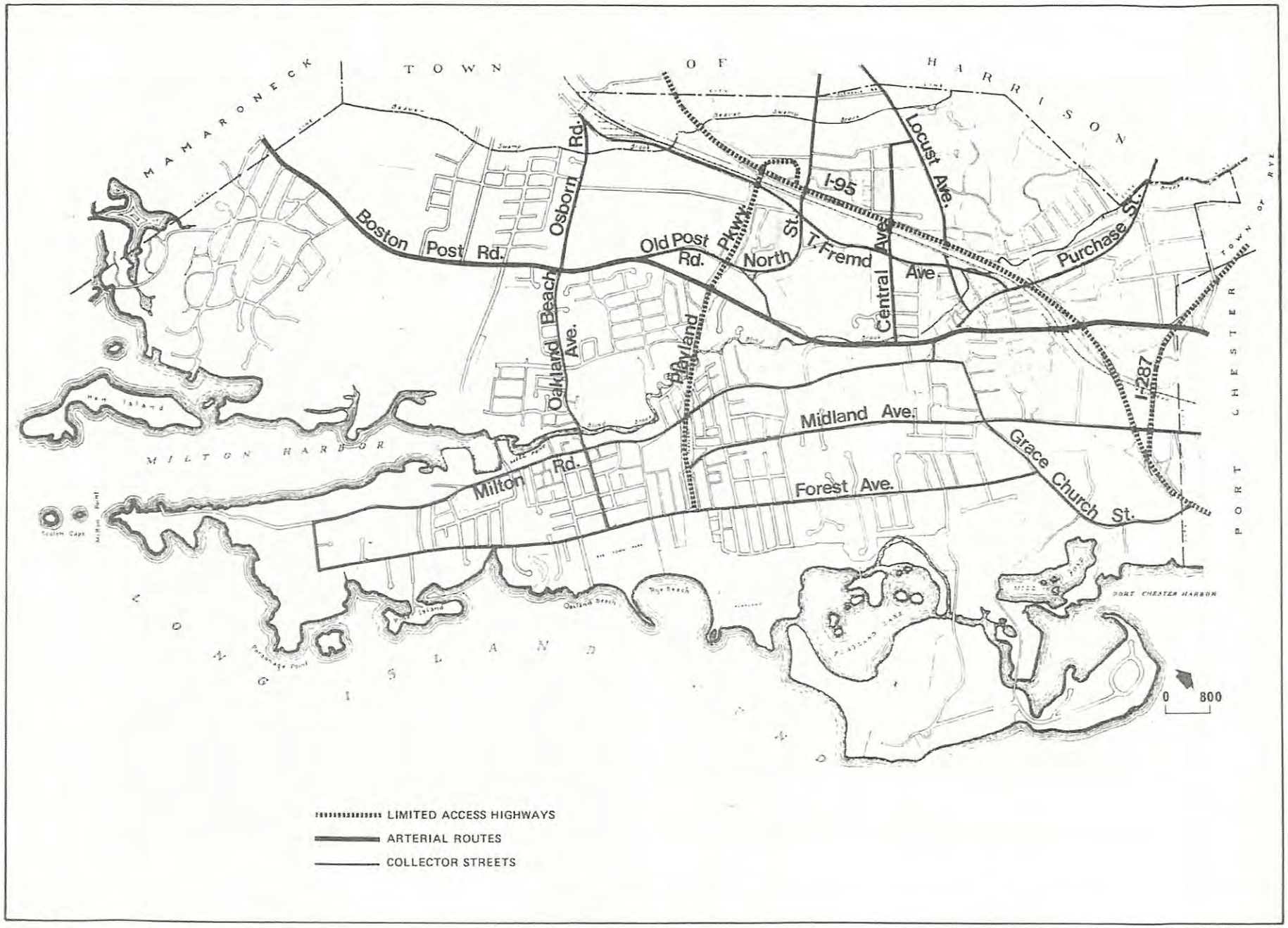
The existing Avon building is the first of three phases of expansion which have already been approved in the B-5 zoning district. At present, its use consists of approximately 600 employees arriving and departing in approximately 490 vehicles. Phase II of the expansion would involve the construction of approximately 500,000 additional square feet of space, involving an estimated 1,400 additional people and a total of 2,410 vehicles. Phase III will add another 300,000 square feet of space. The total project will have approximately 967,000 square feet of space. The total of 2,000 workers and 2,400 vehicles arriving and departing. Avon is obligated under its 10 year site plan approval to provide all of the necessary traffic and roadway improvements, including traffic signals and road widening, needed in Phase II and III of its development at its own cost in accordance with guidelines and standards which were made part of the site plan approval. With adherence to these established standards and requirements, Avon traffic should not over burden the system.

While it may add to the tax base, major business (office) development can bring with it increased burdens for the City. These include increases in traffic, stormwater run-off and sewer use, plus a loss of "green" open space. Every new office or other major business proposal, therefore, must be carefully evaluated in terms of its environmental impact; especially as to the impact on traffic movement. This is of particular importance in the Old Post Road/Playland Parkway/Theodore Fremd area.

Full development of the existing office (B-4 and B-5) zoned parcels will create a need for traffic improvements. The Circulation System section contains a more detailed description of the potential traffic problems and solutions for this area.

**Office-Residential.** This category primarily includes older residential areas near the CBD or along major arteries which are appropriate for or which have been experiencing office development or conversions, and which do or can have a residential function as well. Residential as well as small office uses should be encouraged. The existing buildings in these areas should remain, and exterior appearance compatible with residences would be required. In addition, offices would be required to have on-site parking, situated and landscaped in such a way as to be compatible with the general residential character of the area. The proposed office-residential areas would be ideal for small support and professional offices, as well as two-three family housing units. This type of development can create support for the business area while retaining the character of these older neighborhoods. Appropriate areas include Locust Avenue (between the railroad and Blind Brook), High Street (between Clinton Avenue and Summit Avenue) and the northern part of Purchase Street (from Highland Road to Hillside Road). These areas are shown on Map 2.

# Major Streets Map 4



# 4

# The Circulation System

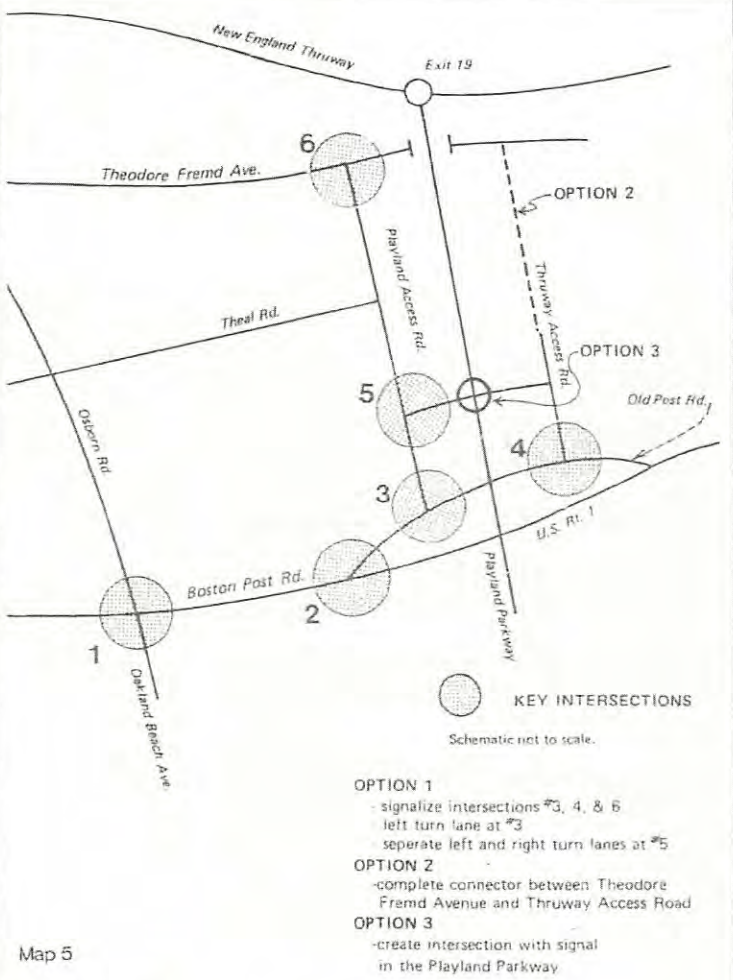
*GOAL AND POLICIES*

*Goal*

- *Insure that Rye's streets, roads and pedestrian facilities provide safe and convenient circulation within the community and to other locations.*

*Policies*

- *Minimize to the extent possible adverse impacts on residential neighborhoods of traffic moving to and from expressways and arterial roadways.*
- *Discourage further construction of major highways, within the City, particularly the potential extension of I-684 and construction of a Long Island Sound Bridge.*
- *Promote the use and improvement of public transportation.*
- *Limit the intensity of land development to levels of traffic generation which can be adequately handled by collector and arterial streets, without necessitating major alterations.*
- *Provide pathways and bike lanes for school children and others.*




Map 5

Post Road/Playland Parkway Area
Key Intersections &
Potential Improvements

2. **Playland Parkway**

Currently, there is traffic congestion on Playland Parkway east of the Post Road, largely as a result of high volumes of traffic during summer months (particularly weekends), when Playland Beach and Amusement Park are heavily used. Intersections with the Parkway at Milton Road and Forest Avenue are frequently jammed, making north-south movement difficult, and resulting in higher levels of pollution from car exhaust fumes.

## Recommendations

1. **Theodore Fremd/Old Post Road/Playland Parkway Area**

Three possible improvement options were investigated for their potential for relieving traffic congestion. These are as follows:

**Improvements to the Existing Network.** The least costly and simplest alternative involves the placement of traffic signals at the intersections of Old Post Road and Playland Access Road, Old Post Road and Thruway Access Road, and Playland Access Road and Theodore Fremd Avenue. In addition, a left turn lane at the Playland Access Road and Old Post Road intersection, and separate right and left turn lanes at the intersection of the Parkway off-ramps with Playland Access Road, would be needed.

**Creation of a Connector Road.** A connector road between Theodore Fremd Avenue and the Thruway Access Road would relieve the congestion at the Old Post Road intersections. Separate left and right turn lanes at the Playland Parkway off ramps at Playland Access Road would be needed even with the new road. The major problem with this option is the narrow right-of-way between Fremd Avenue and the Thruway Access Road. However, making the connector one-way east bound might enable its construction as a narrower on-ramp to the Parkway. In addition, traffic signals might be needed at the intersection of Old Post Road at Playland Access Road and the intersection of Playland Access Road at Theodore Fremd Avenue.

## THE STREET SYSTEM

Rye is served by a variety of streets and roads including limited access highways, arterial streets, collector streets and minor streets (see map #4). The City is at the intersection of the New England Thruway (I-95) and the Cross Westchester Expressway (I-287), which are limited access highways. The third limited access highway in Rye is the Playland Parkway, which runs from the Thruway east to Playland Amusement Park. In Rye, the only arterial route is the Boston Post Road (Route 1), which runs from the Mamaroneck border in the south end of the City to the Village of Port Chester north of the City. Collector streets connect local streets with one another or with the arterial road. These are shown on map 4. The remainder of the City's streets are local streets, which provide access to residences and other local uses. These streets are usually narrower and not designated for higher traffic volumes.

### Problem Analysis

At present, traffic conditions are generally good within the City. Rye's street system is for the most part adequate for the current types and densities of development, with a few notable exceptions. Most of the existing or anticipated traffic problems in Rye occur or will occur on Playland Parkway and in the Theodore Fremd Avenue vicinity as additional development occcurs. Plan discussions and recommendations have thus focused on these areas.

Streets or areas of special concern are described in more detail below:

1. **The Theodore Fremd Avenue/Old Post Road/Playland Parkway Area**

   The Old Post Road, Playland Parkway and Theodore Fremd Avenue vicinity is of special concern because of the area's development potential. There are a number of sites in this area where additional development can occur, including most of those designated for potential office development by the City. A detailed traffic study which focuses on the development potential of the major vacant and underutilized land parcels, and the resulting impact on traffic, is included in the Background Report, which is on file in the Office of the City Planner.

   Currently, the major intersections in the Old Post Road/Playland Parkway vicinity are operating at 70-80% of their capacity (designated level of service C) during the peak hour, when traffic levels are highest.* (See Map 5 for locations of the major intersections.) However, problems will increase as development of the vacant and underutilized parcels in the area occurs.

   If no new development occurs in the area, the key intersections should continue to function at level of service C in the future. However, if the major parcels (7 acres or more) in the area are all developed according to existing (1984) zoning, several intersections will experience problems. Of particular concern would be various intersections at the Playland parkway access roads during the afternoon peak hour (see following table).

**Key Intersections: Levels of Service**
AM and PM Peak Hours

| | 1984 (present conditions) | | 2000 (no major new development) | | 2000 Under Existing Zoning (development of major parcels) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | AM | PM | AM | PM | AM | PM |
| 1. Route 1 at Oakland Beach Avenue | C | (C) | C | (C) | C | (C) |
| 2. Route 1 at Old Post Road | C | (C) | C | (C) | C | (C) |
| 3. Old Post Road at Playland Access Road | C | (C) | C | (C) | C | (F) |
| 4. Old Post Road at Thruway Access | C | (C) | C | (C) | C | (E) |
| 5. Playland Access Road at Playland ramps | C | (C) | C | (C) | C | (D) |
| 6. Playland Access Road at Theodore Fremd Avenue | C | (C) | C | (C) | E | (F) |

Note: Level of Service C indicates C or better.
Intersection numbers refer to map 5.

*Level of service is the traffic engineering measurement of the relative quality of traffic operations on a particular road or intersection. It reflects the ease of driving and the conditions which the driver is likely to encounter, taking into consideration factors such as travel speed, delays, waiting time, utilization of available signal time, and traffic volume relative to capacity. Six levels of service, ranging from "A", totally free flow, to "F", failure or forced flow, have been established. The upper limit of level of service E is equal to the capacity (the maximum volume of traffic which can be accommodated under ideal conditions). Roughly, level of service E covers the range from 90 to 100 percent of capacity, level D from 80 to 90 percent of capacity, and level C from 70 to 80 percent of capacity. Level of service F represents jammed condition. Level of service D is generally regarded as acceptable for peak hour urban traffic conditions.

**Creation of an Intersection on the Playland Parkway.** Creation of an intersection on Playland Parkway at the access drives would permit vehicles to travel northbound or southbound on the parkway from either access drive. A traffic signal would be required at this intersection. A portion of the existing median would be removed and long cable wires would be needed to span the wide intersection. Traffic would be rerouted, eliminating the necessity to signalize the intersection of Playland Access Road at Old Post Road, and Thruway Access Drive at Old Post Road. A traffic signal at Playland Access Road at the Playland Parkway ramps would be needed. This signal would be coordinated with the Playland Parkway signal to allow a smooth flow of traffic between Playland Access Road and the Playland Parkway. Additionally, a signal at Theodore Fremd might be warranted, depending upon traffic volumes.

2. **Playland Parkway**

Measures which may help to alleviate traffic problems on the Parkway are limited because of potential costs. Realistic solutions include traffic signal retiming during summer months and the adoption and enforcement of "grid lock" prohibitions. These options should be pursued with the County.

3. **Thruway Noise Levels**

Noise levels from the Thruway have been a constant problem in Rye. It is therefore recommended that noise levels be monitored to determine the extent of the noise pollution. The City should encourage the funding for sound barriers on the Thruway as part of the proposed rehabilitation of the highway.

4. **Major Developments and Generated Traffic**

When a major development occurs, the developer(s) should be required to assume the costs of improvements to the street system necessitated by the development; either by direct payment or by special assessment.

## MASS TRANSPORTATION

Rye is served by both railroad and bus lines. The New Haven branch of the Metro North Commuter Railroad connects Rye to New York City. Bus service, connecting Rye with other Westchester communities is provided through the Westchester County Transportation Department.

Mass transit system in Rye would be improved by the addition of shuttle bus service to serve senior citizens, commuters and non-driving age people. This would be valuable for the following reasons:

- The senior citizen population has increased over the past decade and is expected to continue to grow. This group would greatly benefit from the provision of this type of more localized service (see paragraph three of page 12).

- Public parking in the CBD has become increasingly congested. The addition of new spaces will only partially alleviate the problem. A shuttle bus service connecting the CBD with the City's neighborhoods could partially solve this problem.

## PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

The need for safe and pleasant sidewalks and paths has long been recognized in the City. In recent years, the increased interest in jogging, biking and walking as recreational activities make the provision of walkways even more important.

The City's major collector and arterial streets should have a walkway on at least one side of the street. Similar requirements should apply to local streets in apartment, recreation or business areas. Specific areas which lack walkways but should have them include:

- Milton Point (Stuyvesant and Forest Avenue)
- Kirby Lane
- Manursing Way
- Glen Oaks Drive
- North Street

The construction of the Blind Brook trailway system, which has been proposed for a number of years should be given top priority. This trailway would parallel the Brook from the Central Business District to Milton Harbor. A number of scattered parcels have already been acquired for the trailway. However, further acquisition will be necessary for the trailway to be continuous. In addition, the design and placement of the proposed trailway must be carefully planned. The design and construction of a waterfront walkway and trail system should be pursued as part of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.

# 5

# Parks, Recreation and Open Space

*GOAL AND POLICIES*

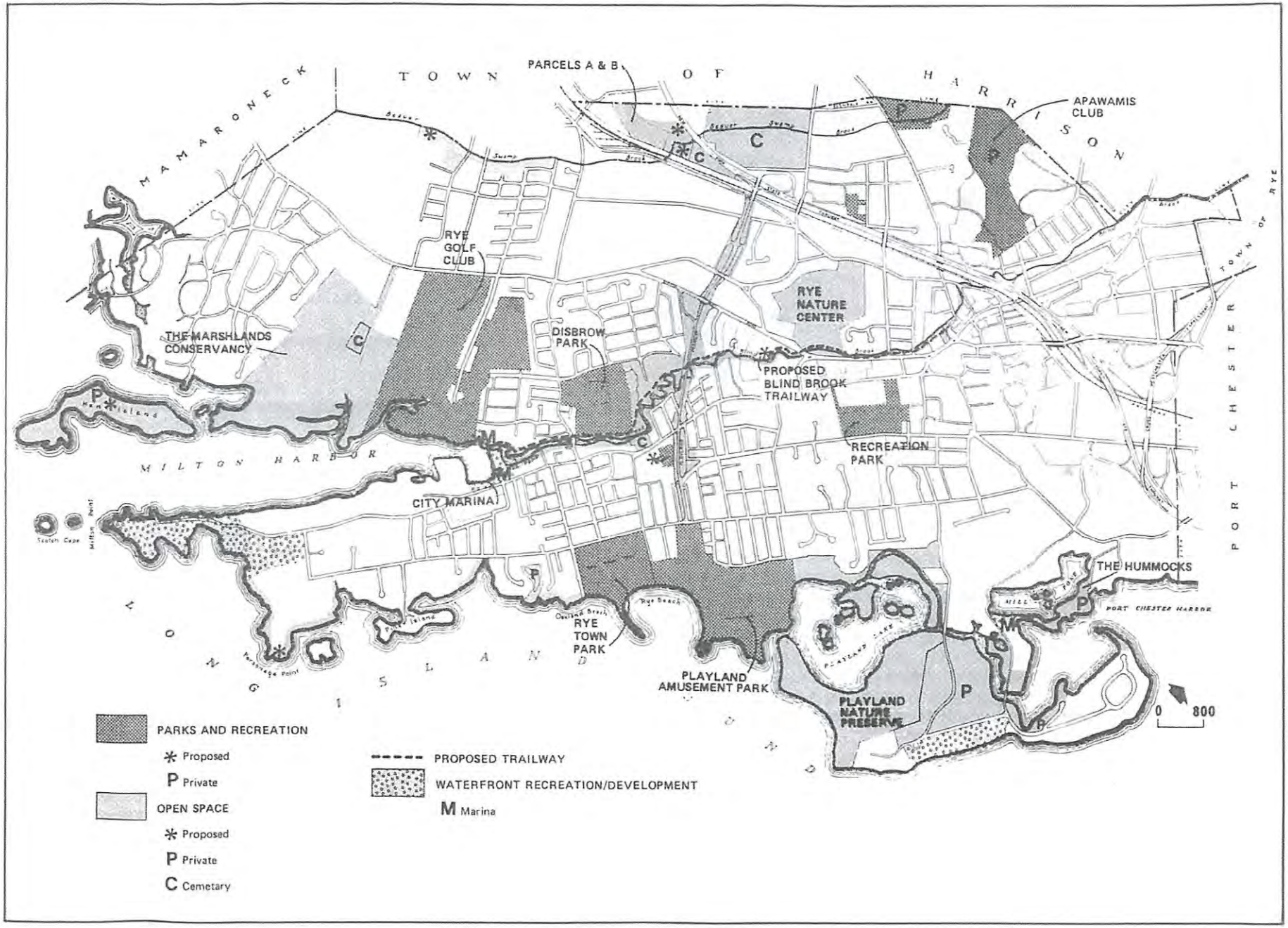
*Goal*

- *Provide an open space and recreation system, including both active and passive facilities, that is accessible and adequate in size to accommodate the varied recreational tastes and needs of Rye's citizens of all ages.*

*Policies*

- *Emphasize the use, upkeep and improvement of existing active and passive facilities and the recreational use of underutilized public lands to fulfill recreational needs.*
- *Continue to reserve the maximum amount possible of subdivision land for park and open space and conservation purposes.*
- *Maintain the continued public ownership and use of Playland Park and the Marshlands Conservancy.*
- *Insure that if major portions of private and non-municipal recreation areas are sold for private development, they remain in recreation use with public access.*

# Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan Map 6



## BACKGROUND

Recreational facilities of all types are readily available to the public in Rye and are among the major attractions of the City. Rye has approximately 70 acres of public parks used for active recreation owned and operated by the City.* The Rye Town Park beach and the County-owned Playland Amusement Park and beach are also within the City limits. Public natural areas (passive recreation) in the City preserve large amounts of open space and include the Rye Nature Center, Playland Nature Preserve and the County's Marshlands Conservancy.** In addition, there are approximately 17 acres of undeveloped City-owned open space areas (mostly small parcels) scattered throughout the City.

The importance of Rye's parks, open space areas and recreation facilities to the City's low density character and its attractiveness as a residential community can not be overstated. Large open space areas, such as the Rye Nature Center, Rye Golf Club and the Marshlands Conservancy do much to maintain the City's open quality, while other facilities offer residents of all ages a wide variety of active recreation opportunities.

The City's recreation areas and facilities can be grouped according to seven general categories:

### 1. Public Parks: Active Recreation Areas

Areas that fall under the active recreation classification include City or County-owned open space equipped with active recreational facilities such as basketball courts, tennis courts, ballfields, playground equipment, swimming facilities, etc. and are open to the public. The major active recreation facilities are Recreation Park (17 acres), Disbrow Park (51 acres), Gagliardo Park (2.5 acres), Rye Town Park (27 acres) and the county-owned Playland amusement park and beach (299 acres).

In addition to active recreation opportunities in the area's parks, the City's Recreation Commission provides programs for all segments of Rye's population. Sports activities in the parks are scheduled through the Recreation Commission. Facilities used by the programs include Recreation Park, Disbrow Park and Gagliardo Park, in addition to school facilities (particularly ball fields and playing fields) when not in use for school activities.

With the everyday use of the parks by the public as well as the scheduled activities, the City's active recreation areas are currently used to their capacity. Heavy usage results in part from the increased interest in active recreation of the adult population. In addition, greater numbers of children participate in organized recreation activities than in the past. Thus, in spite of a decline in the number of children in the City, the demand for recreation space has grown. Estimates by the Recreation Commission point to continued pressure during the peak spring, summer, and early autumn seasons, while existing facilities for late fall and winter sport activities should remain adequate.

*Active recreation uses include such facilities as basketball and tennis courts, ballfields, playgrounds, skating rinks, golf courses, swimming pools or beaches, etc.
**Passive recreation uses include trails for walking and nature study, sitting areas, etc.

### 2. Public Parks: Passive Recreation Areas

Parks within this category include both City and County-owned areas developed and used for passive recreation or designated as nature preserves. The major facilities are the 47 acre Rye Nature Center, the Village Green, the 137 acre Marshlands Conservancy (county-owned), and the 180 acre Playland Nature Preserve (county-owned). In addition, the 7½ acre area known as Parcels A and B (between the railroad tracks, Thruway, and the Harrison Town border), offers nature study on a more limited basis. The large passive parks within Rye City protect environmentally sensitive areas, offer educational facilities and programs and preserve valuable open space areas. These areas are also discussed in the Environmental Protection section of the plan.

### 3. Public Open Space Areas

This category primarily includes small City-owned open space parcels that are not presently developed with active recreation equipment or for passive use (e.g. nature centers, nature trails, sitting areas, etc.). The areas include wetlands, floodplain parcels and small subdivision parks which were never developed for active use. In addition, a portion of the Milton Harbor is currently in a designated underwater park for the purpose of protecting it from future filling and inappropriate development. Of primary importance to the City are the numerous parcels which have been acquired within the Blind Brook and Beaver Swamp Brook flood plains for flood control purposes.

### 4. School Facilities

The City's public school fields and gyms are available during non-school hours for recreation activities, under the direction of the Recreation Commission. The cooperation between the Recreation Commission and school administration has been extremely beneficial, and is necessary for the continuation of this most successful program.

### 5. Public Club

The City-owned Rye Golf Club maintains a membership charge for the use of its facilities. Membership is open to the public without the limitations of private clubs. The Club's facilities include a golf course, and swimming pool.

### 6. Private Clubs

In Rye, there are three private beach clubs on Milton Point and another two with beaches on Manursing Island, in addition to the Apawamis Golf Club on the City's western border.

### 7. Other Recreation Facilities

This category includes commercial marinas, neighborhood association parks and beaches and other facilities which do not fit easily into the preceding categories. Association properties include the Hummocks, a valuable natural area near the Mill Pond, and two association beaches in the Greenhaven area. There are four marinas in the City; three commercial and one public. As with many developed shoreline communities, marina and mooring space is insufficient to serve residents, yet opportunites to increase these facilities are rare. The City's need for marina space, as well as public access for fishing or simply enjoying the waterfront must be given priority, since potential usable land areas are likely to decrease with time. The Local Waterfront Revitalization Program addresses this issue.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### The Land Use Plan: Recreation and Open Space Categories

The Land Use Plan presented here includes three recreation and open space categories: parks and recreation, natural open space and waterfront recreation and development. The latter is discussed in the Coastal Resources section. The Parks and Recreation category includes areas used for active recreation purposes (e.g.

playing fields, golf courses, public beaches, playgrounds, etc.), while the Natural Open Space category includes the many passive recreation and natural areas within the City, in addition to the numerous small floodplain parcels that line the brooks. Since the recreation and open space areas have been classified according to use rather than ownership, both public and private areas are included in each category. (See Map 6 for the location of existing and proposed recreation facilities.)

**Parks and Recreation**

Recommendations for the City's recreation system focus on preserving existing facilities (both public and private) and expanding City-owned active recreation facilities, especially playing fields and beaches.

1. Rye should pursue the development of additional playing fields and recreation areas. Despite the large amount of open space and recreation land in the City, utilization of Rye's active recreation facilities is nearly 100% with no allowance for periodic maintenance. The active recreation areas in the City – including the Rye Golf Club, Recreation Park, Gagliardo Park and Rye Town Beach – should be maintained and improved, where necessary, and additions to the system given top priority.

   Disbrow Park, which includes an area occupied by the former City landfill, offers some prospect for expansion of active recreation facilities. The landfill area should be capped and redeveloped for open playing fields, while the remaining wetlands should be maintained as passive open space. Although not large enough for an adult ballfield, the capped landfill could be used for children's activites. The advantages of using Disbrow Park for additional active recreation facilities are that the Park is currently City-owned, is centrally located and has other recreation facilities in place. A second potential area for active recreation expansion is a vacant parcel at the southwest corner of the intersection of Playland Parkway and Milton Road. The possibility of using this parcel for future active recreation use should be considered.

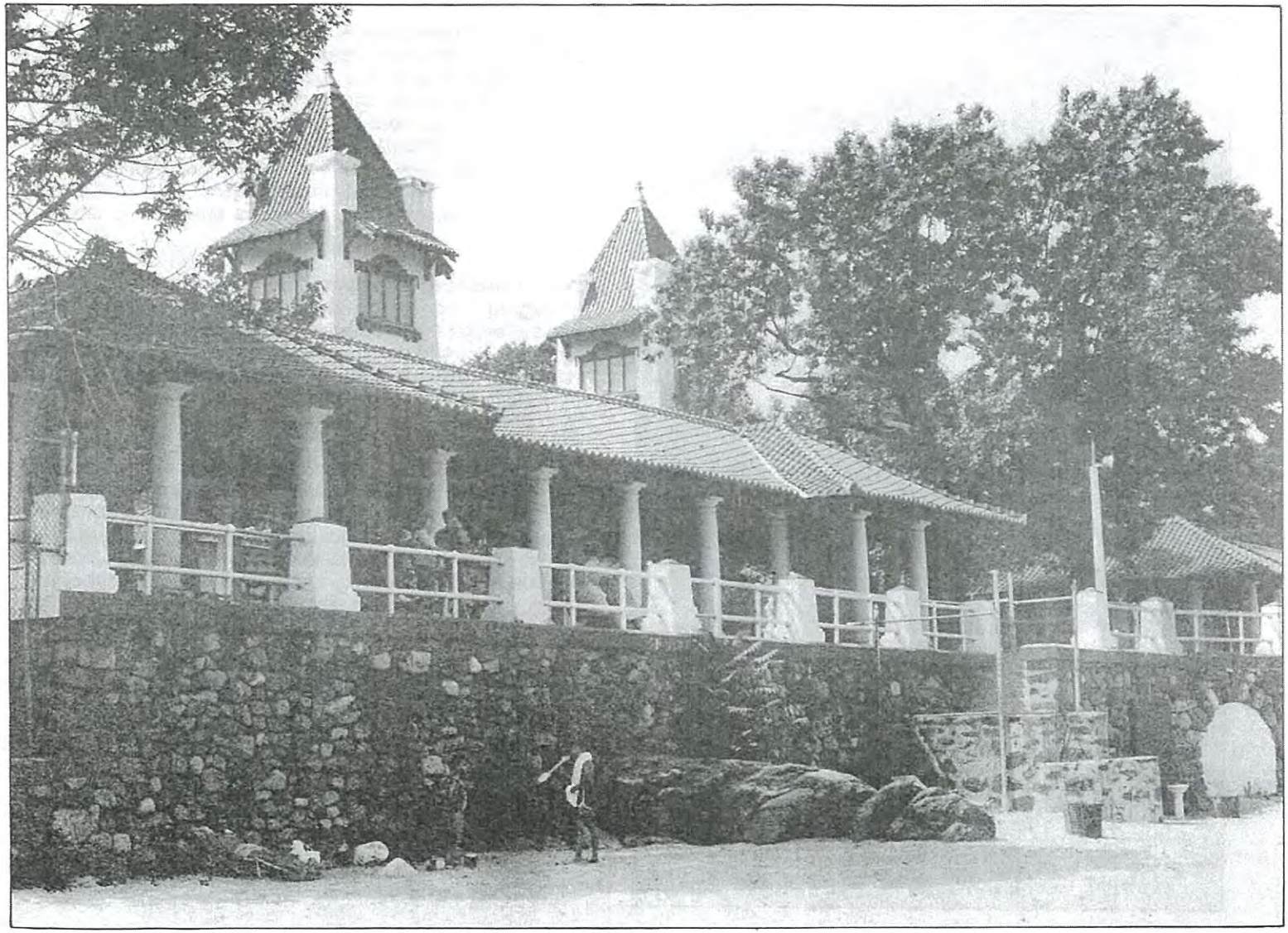
2. The City should be aware of opportunities that may arise for adding to its municipal waterfront. Although City residents have the use of the Playland and Rye Town beaches, there are no beach or swimming facilities available for the use of citizens of Rye alone. Potential opportunities include obtaining access as part of the development process of remaining waterfront land, or the eventual acquisition of waterfront club property if club operations are terminated.

3. The County-owned Playland Park is one of the largest non-city owned recreation areas in Rye. In spite of the Park's public ownership and National Register of Historic Places listing, there is concern that the County may eventually consider selling part or all of the facility. The Development Plan's primary recommendation for Playland is that it remain in public ownership for recreational use (both active and passive). The nature preserve area of the park should be formally designated as a nature preserve, and a small boat launching ramp should be developed. All possible efforts to insure this goal should be employed. If the park should for some reason become available for development, the following should be required:

   - the lowest residential density (under 2 units per acre)
   - public access to the beach
   - designation of the lake, marshlands and wildlife sanctuary as a public nature preserve
   - clustering of development to ensure the preservation of the maximum amount open space and beach land.

4. The privately owned Apawamis Club, on the western side of the City, should continue to be used for recreation. However, as this is a private facility, its continued use for recreation is not assured. Thus, while recreation is the primary recommendation, in the event that such use may cease, the following should be required:

   - the lowest residential density (under 2 units per acre)



- clustering of development to ensure the preservation of the maximum amount of open space land possible.

**Natural Open Space**

The extensive open space system in Rye is seen by most residents as one of the major benefits of living in the City. The preservation as open space of existing passive recreation and other natural open space areas is thus given high priority in the Plan.

1. The major passive recreation areas in Rye – the Marshlands Conservancy, the Playland Wildlife Conservation area and the Rye Nature Center – must be protected in terms of use as well as ownership. Any development of the county-owned Marshlands or Playland preserve in particular which would be detrimental to the natural environment must be opposed by the City. In addition, the smaller Parcel A and B area must be preserved as a natural area.

2. The City should pursue the acquisition of available floodprone parcels along Blind Brook and Beaver Swamp Brook, using the 100 year flood plain and floodway maps as guidelines. As part of this, a trailway system along Blind Brook from the Central Business District to Milton Harbor should be developed.

3. Additional open space areas, most of it presently in private ownership, which should be preserved in the future include the City's cemetaries, the Hummocks (near Mill Pond), Hen Island and the marshes on Manursing Island. Although private ownership is expected to continue where it presently occurs, these areas should be preserved by public means if private preservation fails. Further, as properties containing sensitive features (e.g. wetlands, waterfront areas, beaches, etc.) are developed, clustering should be employed to preserve an optimal amount of open space.

# 6

# Environmental Protection

*GOAL AND POLICIES*

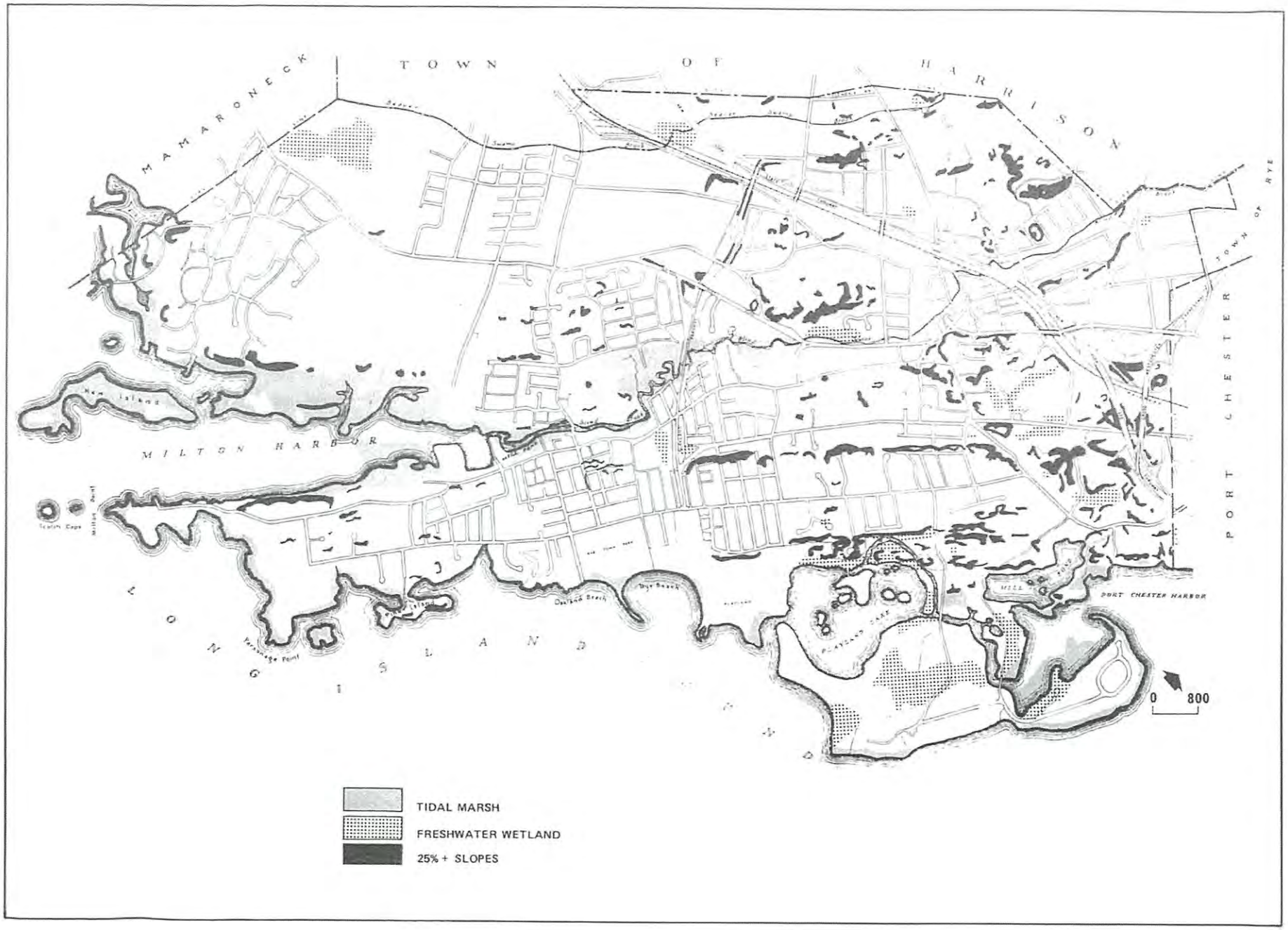
*Goal*

- *Promote conservation of Rye's natural environment including preservation and protection of Rye's coastal shoreline, inland tributaries, and adjacent wetlands (including both designated preservation areas and ecologically significant undesignated areas); as these unusually beautiful natural areas give Rye its unique character and are among its most treasured assets. Recognizing the role which Rye's natural environment plays as part of a larger ecological system, conserve and manage the City's natural areas for the benefit of Rye and the region, with full consideration given to both their passive recreational and ecological importance, as well as their role in drainage and flood control.*

*Policies*

- *Prohibit development in wetlands, tidal marshes and beaches.*
- *Allow only future development that is responsive to sensitive features such as areas with steep slopes, high erosion hazard, flood hazard, sensitive coastal features, and scenic quality.*

# Natural Resources Inventory Map 7



## BACKGROUND

Environmental resources in Rye include both tidal and freshwater wetlands,* steep slope areas (grades in excess of 25%), the 100 year flood hazard area and associated floodway. Environmentally significant resources in Rye are identified on the Natural Resources Inventory map (map #7). Wetlands and marshes in the City are extensive and are responsible for much of the City's scenic quality. Tidal marshes are found on the western shores of Milton Harbor, along Blind Brook and along other portions of the City's shoreline, while freshwater wetlands are found near the brooks and in the Manursing area. Many of the City's major resource areas are currently in public ownership, while others are maintained as private open space areas.

During the past two decades there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of environmental conservation in Rye. Neither the 1963 Development Plan or the previous document address environmental conservation as a planning policy for several reasons:

- These documents predate the environmental "movement" when it became clear that important elements of the natural environment were being severely damaged;
- Discussions of "passive" use lands were included only in the "Recreation" section of the previous Development Plan; and
- Since the importance of many of Rye's environmentally significant properties (particularly wetlands) was not recognized, it was generally assumed that these areas in private ownership would eventually be filled and developed.

However, since the 1963 Development Plan, Rye has made notable strides in environmental protection. During this period two major areas were added to the protected lands in the City. Ten acres were added to the Rye Nature Center in 1965, and the 137 acre Marshlands Conservancy was created when a portion of the Devereaux Estate was deeded to Westchester County in 1967.

Other actions which have furthered the cause of environmental conservation in the City include the formation of a Conservation Commission/Advisory Council in response to the enviornmental movement and to the growing need for environmental protection in Rye; the promulgation of the New York State Freshwater and Tidal Wetland Acts (placing most of Rye's wetlands in protected categories); and the defeat of the proposed Rye/Oyster Bay bridge in the State Legislature in 1974. (The bridge was to have been routed through some of Rye's most ecologically fragile areas and would have had an unfortunate impact on the environmental quality of Rye.) In 1975 the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) was promulgated. The purpose of this act is to require the examination of the environmental consequences of development proposals and to allow a community to assess its own planning priorities and determine the place of conservation in this sequence. In addition, in 1978 Rye joined the Federal Flood Insurance Program, thus furthering the protection of properties along its brooks and coastlines.

Although some of these events have had the effect of removing environmental decisions from the local community's jurisdiction, in most instances, land preservation is in the hands of the local community, and subject to the community's priorities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The development plan's recommendations concerning Rye's environmentally sensitive areas are closely related to those concerning passive recreation, coastal resources and flood protection, considered in other sections of the report. Most of the City's environmentally significant resources are within areas designated as Natural Open Space on the Plan map (Map #2). Areas within this classification include current conservation areas, such as the Rye Nature Center, the Marshlands Conservancy, the Playland Wildlife Sanctuary and the Hummocks, as well as areas proposed for future conservation; primarily undeveloped waterfront, floodplain and wetland areas not in public ownership. Specific recommendations concerning present conservation and open space areas are included in the Plan's Recreation and Open Space section.

General recommendations for the preservation of the City's

*Wetlands are defined by the City zoning ordinance as being lands other than watercourse generally covered or intermittently covered with fresh, brackish or salt water, including but not limited to thatch meadow, salt marsh, salt meadow, marsh, swamp and bog.

environmentally sensitive areas are as follows:

1. Retention as open space of City-owned properties with significant features (e.g. wetlands, marshes, floodplains, beaches, scenic views and vistas).

2. Development of privately owned property containing environmentally significant features must be regulated to insure that sensitive features are preserved and not adversely affected. The use of clustering of development and conservation easements should be required to preserve sensitive areas. Other regulatory methods, including site plan review, environmental impact statements and zoning, should be diligently employed to insure preservation as well as high quality development.

3. Acquisition of flood plain and floodway parcels and easements along Beaver Swamp Brook and Blind Brook should continue as part of the flood control measures in the City. The City should not sell off parcels that have already been acquired for flood protection purposes.

4. Conservation measures which prevent illegal discharges into the sound and brooks, prevent dumping in wetlands and marshes, create and maintain vegetative buffers between environmentally sensitive areas and developed areas and control of stormwater runoff should continue to be vigorously employed in the City.

5. Preservation of the Marshlands Conservancy as a public natural area must be given high priority. The City should monitor any possible sale or more active use by the county.

6. Preservation of the Rye Nature Center as a public natural area and environmental education center.

# 7

# Flood Control

*GOAL AND POLICY*

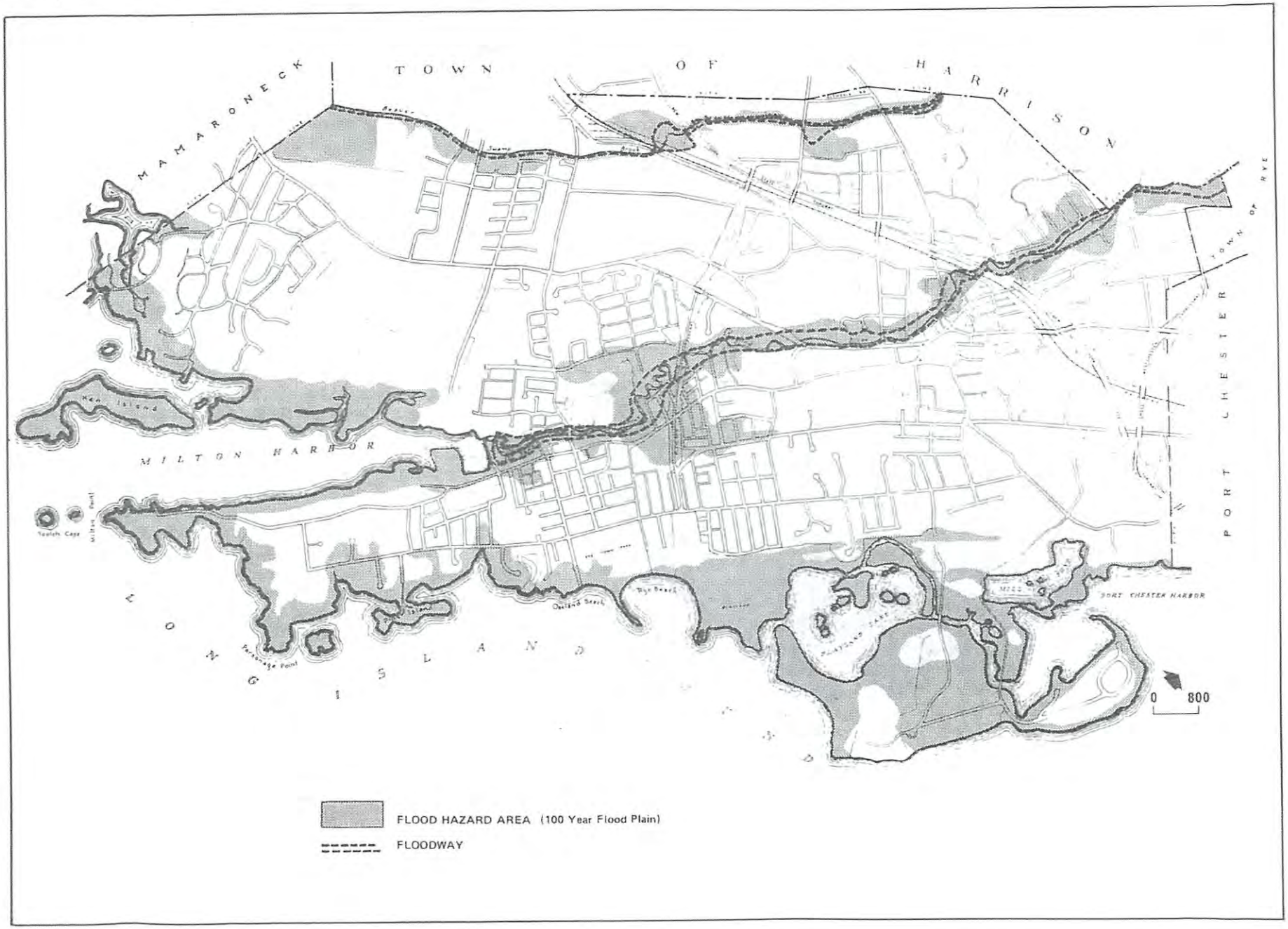
*Goal*

- *Minimize risks to people and damage to property due to flooding in the Blind Brook and Beaver Swamp Brook watersheds and along the coast through the enactment and enforcement of appropriate flood control measures.*

*Policy*

- *Prevent development in the designated floodways and discourage development in the 100 year flood plains of Blind Brook, Beaver Swamp Brook and the coastal areas through the use of land acquisition, regulations and flexible forms of zoning (e.g. clustering).*

# Flood Hazard Area Map 8



## BACKGROUND

Significant portions of Rye's Long Island Sound and Milton Harbor coastlines and of Blind Brook and Beaver Swamp Brook are within the 100 year flood hazard area.* Areas subject to coastal flooding (see Map 8) include undeveloped areas (e.g. the coastal portions of the Marshlands Conservancy and the Playland Nature Preserve) as well as residentially developed areas. Flooding can occur along the coast as a result of unusually high tides associated with hurricanes and other major storms.

Blind Brook and Beaver Swamp Brook are subject to periodic flooding which causes considerable damage to structures and contents of residential, commercial, and public buildings, to lawns and yards, and to roads and bridges. Major thoroughfares can be obstructed, leaving parts of Rye out of vehicular reach. Flooding, with its ensuing damage is far more significant along the Blind Brook watershed than it is along Beaver Swamp Brook and thus has been the subject of most of the flood control studies and implemented measures. Along the upper reaches of Blind Brook, flooding is caused by freshwater run-off, while along the lowest reaches of the Brook, flooding is tidal. During the most severe storms, the area around Playland Parkway can be subject to flooding from both sources. Many storms also produce backup of sanitary sewers onto the streets and into homes. This has been a significant problem in the Beaver Swamp Brook watershed, as well.

By 1963, Rye had begun to acquire land for flood control purposes along both brooks. Blind Brook had been dredged and, most significantly, the Bowman Avenue dam and reservoir had been constructed. However, since 1963 flood prevention activities have been in the nature of planning, studies and administration, and no new structural measures have been implemented. The activities since 1963 include:

- In 1965, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed a floodplain information report for Blind Brook and portions of Beaver Swamp Brook which identified flood hazard areas.

- In 1975, Rye gained entry into the emergency phase of the National Flood Insurance Program. Homeowners within the

designated 100 year floodplain, both along the coastal and the brooks, became eligible for low cost flood insurance.

- In 1976, the New York State Tidal Wetlands Act was enacted. This Act has prevented building within certain segments of the floodplain.

- In 1976, the City became involved in the Blind Brook Watershed Plan, administered by the Soil Conservation Service (U.S. Department of Agriculture) pursuant to Blind Brook Watershed eligibility for federally funded flood control under Public Law 83-566 (PL 566). As planned, the project will consist of two large retention structures in the Purchase section of Harrison, and three dikes along the middle reaches of Blind Brook in Rye. The projected cost in 1977 was approximately $3.7 million for design and construction, relocation payments, and a percentage of

*The 100 year flood plain is the land in the flood plain subject to a 1% or greater chance of flooding in any given year. The area marked as the Flood Hazard Area on Map 8 in the 100 year flood plain.

ongoing administration. The City of Rye, as a member of the sponsoring agency (the Blind Brook Small Watershed District), will be required to pay its share of costs for land rights, construction, administration, ongoing project maintenance and relocation payments.

Other less controversial alternatives were also considered. Most of these would be less effective in terms of flood control, as well as more costly to the community. Specifically, the alternatives would have to be funded locally, would require less construction and would only mitigate the damages produced by less severe storms.

- In 1978, Rye adopted flood plain zoning which goes beyond Federal Insurance Administration (FIA) guidelines, and thus qualified for full flood insurance coverage under the National Flood Insurance Program.

- In 1984, the Beaver Swamp Brook Watershed Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives from the City of Rye, Town of Harrison and Village of Mamaroneck was formed to study Beaver Swamp Brook flooding problems. This committee has the assistance and support of the County Soil and Water Conservation District.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Flooding continues to be a major problem within the flood plains of Rye, especially within the Blind Brook watershed. Governmental reviews and litigation of the Soil Conservation Service project have been going on for five years and, at this time, implementation of this project remains questionable. Further, the project, even if executed, does not address tidal flooding. At some point, Rye may be forced to conclude that the Soil Conservation Service project may not become a reality, and will then need to explore other solutions, both structural and non-structural. As previously mentioned, no locally financed solution could address itself to the 100 year storm, but certainly could offer a good measure of relief from the kinds of storms and flooding which Rye has been subject to.

Flood control in Rye has been in a holding pattern awaiting the outcome of the challenges to the Soil Conservation Service project. There are other hurdles to overcome prior to implementation of this project. Rye will have to assess the consequences of assuming the major portion of local costs, and will also need to determine how to equitably raise the required revenues. Due to the nature of flooding, Rye can become lulled at times into a false sense of security when, for an extended period of time, major flooding does not occur.

Local flood control measures are essential, with or without implementation of the Blind Brook Watershed project. Flooding on Beaver Swamp Brook, in low-lying coastal areas, and the tidal portion of Blind Brook must be addressed by the City in either case. Both non-structural and structural solutions should be employed to alleviate flooding in Rye.

### Non-Structural Solutions

Non-structural solutions have the widest applicability to all flood-prone areas in the City. They should be encouraged with or without the Blind Brook Watershed project.

1. Individual property owners should be encouraged to provide flood control measures, such as exterior floodproofing and installation of gate valves or check valves on either the house side of house sewers, or on the lowest plumbing fixtures. Rye's aim should not be to deal only with 100 year storms, but also with storms of lesser intensity.

2. At this time the Westchester County Soil and Water Conservation District cannot effectively protect Rye from flooding caused by upstream development because, while its guidelines are very much to the point, the board is presently mandated as an advisory body only, and lacks the legal means to control the critical watershed. If the Westchester Soil and Water Conservation District Board becomes a regulatory board, its guidelines would then become law. The problem of upstream monitoring as it relates to flooding in Rye might then be solved. Whether this oc-

curs or not, Rye should assign the task of monitoring upstream development to an existing board, or to a board newly formed for this purpose.

3. Rye should continue, wherever possible, to acquire lands in the flood plains which can be put toward the dual purposes of flood control and passive recreation.

4. Rye should continue to lobby for flood control programs eligible for State funding, as well as continue to urge the implementation of the Blind Brook Watershed project.

5. Rye should employ flexible development regulations, including clustering and easements to insure that the undeveloped portions of the 100 year flood plain, and especially the floodway* remain undeveloped.

6. Rye's flood warning system should be improved by placing rainfall guages, which would activate the public alarm systems, in strategic positions along the brooks to provide earlier warning.

**Structural Solutions**

Structural solutions are more costly, and in some cases may be unnecessary if the Blind Brook Watershed project is pursued. The City would certainly need to retain an outside expert for most structural alternatives.

1. Rye should embark on an ongoing program of public works improvements, including the replacement of its storm sewers, widening of culverts, etc. The County should be petitioned to improve its sewers within the community. (Sanitary sewers are further discussed in the Community Facilities section.)

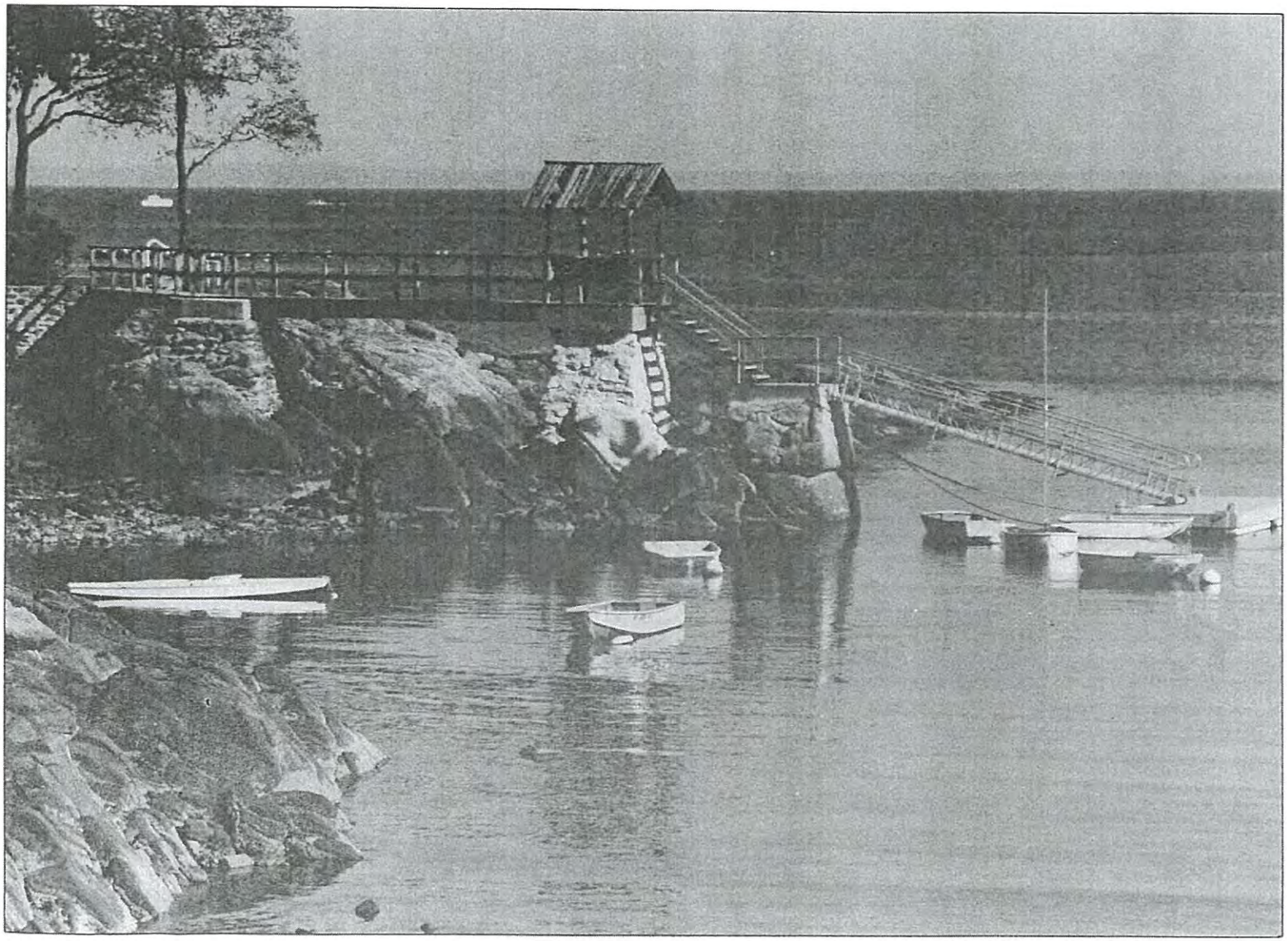
2. The construction of tidal flood gates on Blind Brook at the Oakland Beach Avenue Bridge has been suggested. This solution would require the rebuilding of the bridge itself so that it would not block the Brook's floodway. The flood gates would be closed when flooding on the Brook was purely tidal. During stream flooding cause by heavy rainfall, the gates would be closed during high tide, utilizing the large open marsh directly upstream for rain water retention. The gates would then be opened when the tide went out, no longer opposing the gravity flow of the Brook toward the Sound.

   Installation of pumps, in conjunction with the above proposal, north (upstream) of the Oakland Beach Bridge would abate flooding due to freshwater runoff. The pumps, operating with the flood gates closed, would increase the rate of flow of the brook, and would lower the flood peak elevation for characteristic storms. This proposal should be considered if the Soil Conservation Service project does not occur.

3. The Bowman Avenue dam should be expanded or heightened if the Soil Conservation Service project is not pursued. This solution addresses flooding from upstream, and would mitigate the effects of flooding in Indian Village and most downstream reaches.

4. Various parts of the Blind Brook should be dredged, as should the mouth of Milton Harbor, to facilitate storm water runoff.

*The floodway is the channel of a stream plus any adjacent flood plain areas that must be kept free of encroachment for the 100 year flood to be carried without substantial increases in flood heights. Buildings and other structures in the floodway can block the flow of flood water, thus increasing the area flooded. The floodways for Blind and Beaver Swamp Brooks are shown on Map 8.



# 8

# Coastal Resources

*GOAL AND POLICIES*

*Goal*

- *Encourage appropriate use of coastal areas in a manner that protects sensitive environmental features and maximizes waterfront access for the City's residents and area residents where consistent with local planning objectives.*

*Policies*

- *Promotes water-related recreation uses in appropriate waterfront areas; i.e., those areas not within wetlands or tidal marshes, with sufficient access and buffered from residential areas.*
- *Expand marina facilities.*
- *Insure physical and visual access to scenic vistas and waterfront areas, while permitting development in appropriate locations.*
- *Expand beach facilities for the use of City residents.*

## BACKGROUND

Rye's location on Long Sound and its extensive and varied waterfront which includes valuable marshes and wetlands, beaches and natural harbors; make it a most attractive and desirable community.

Interest in Rye's waterfront and coastal areas has increased greatly during the past 20 years, as the continuation of waterfront access and uses has become less assured. The environmental movement of the late 1960's and the 1970's led to a renewed interest in the Country's coastal areas. The waterfront revitalization process was started by the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972. In 1981 New York established its own program with the enactment of the New York State Waterfront Revitalization and Coastal Resources Act and the Coastal Erosion Hazard Areas Act. The State Waterfront Revitalization program is structured to encourage communities to formulate their own programs. Once approved by the State, they become part of New York's coastal policy, and thus can be a powerful planning tool for the participating locality. In 1984, Rye obtained a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program grant and began developing a local program.

Rye's waterfront includes a number of private beach clubs and natural areas, in addition to the public facilities of Playland, the Marshlands (both county-owned), Rye Town Beach and the Rye Golf Club. Private recreation facilities on the waterfront include three beach clubs on Milton Point, two beach clubs on Manursing Island and the Hummocks area near Mill Pond. A large proportion of Rye's waterfront is in Westchester County ownership (the Marshlands on Milton Harbor and Playland on the Sound) or Town ownership. There are four marinas in the City; three (including the City Marina) are located in Milton Harbor, while the fourth is near the Mill Pond at the northern end of the City. Marina space is limited, resulting in shortages of docking space and mooring problems in Milton Harbor.

In spite of the extent of waterfront without buildings, the high proportion of land in private or county ownership has led to concern about the future use of many waterfront areas and the need to assure public access to the water. In addition, portions of the coastal area are subject to flooding. This problem is addressed in the previous section. For these reasons, among others, Rye will

be developing a more detailed Waterfront Revitalization Plan as an extension of the City's master plan.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The preservation of waterfront access and recreation is of prime importance to the City. Much of the City's waterfront is used and designated in the Plan as park and open space. Existing conservation and recreation lands (discussed in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space section of the Plan) should therefore be preserved. Other waterfront lands should be added to the open space system as development occurs through the use of techniques such as clustering of development and easements.

The continued recreational use of Rye's private beach clubs and marinas (which currently or potentially provide much of the City's access to the waterfront) may not be assured in the future. For this reason, a new **Waterfront Recreation/Development** category in the Plan has been created as a means of preserving waterfront access and use and insuring that future development will be appropriate for the waterfront. The purpose is to insure the preservation of waterfront access and recreation for Rye residents, while permitting appropriate residential development, if the clubs should cease operation. Besides beach and boat clubs, this category also encompasses other marine uses, including the City Marina, and waterfront commercial uses, such as related shops and restaurants. Areas included in this category include the Milton Point and Manursing beach clubs, the City Marina and private boat clubs and marinas (See Map 6). A category based on these guidelines should be developed as part of the City's zoning ordinance.

Specific recommendations for the waterfront area are as follows:

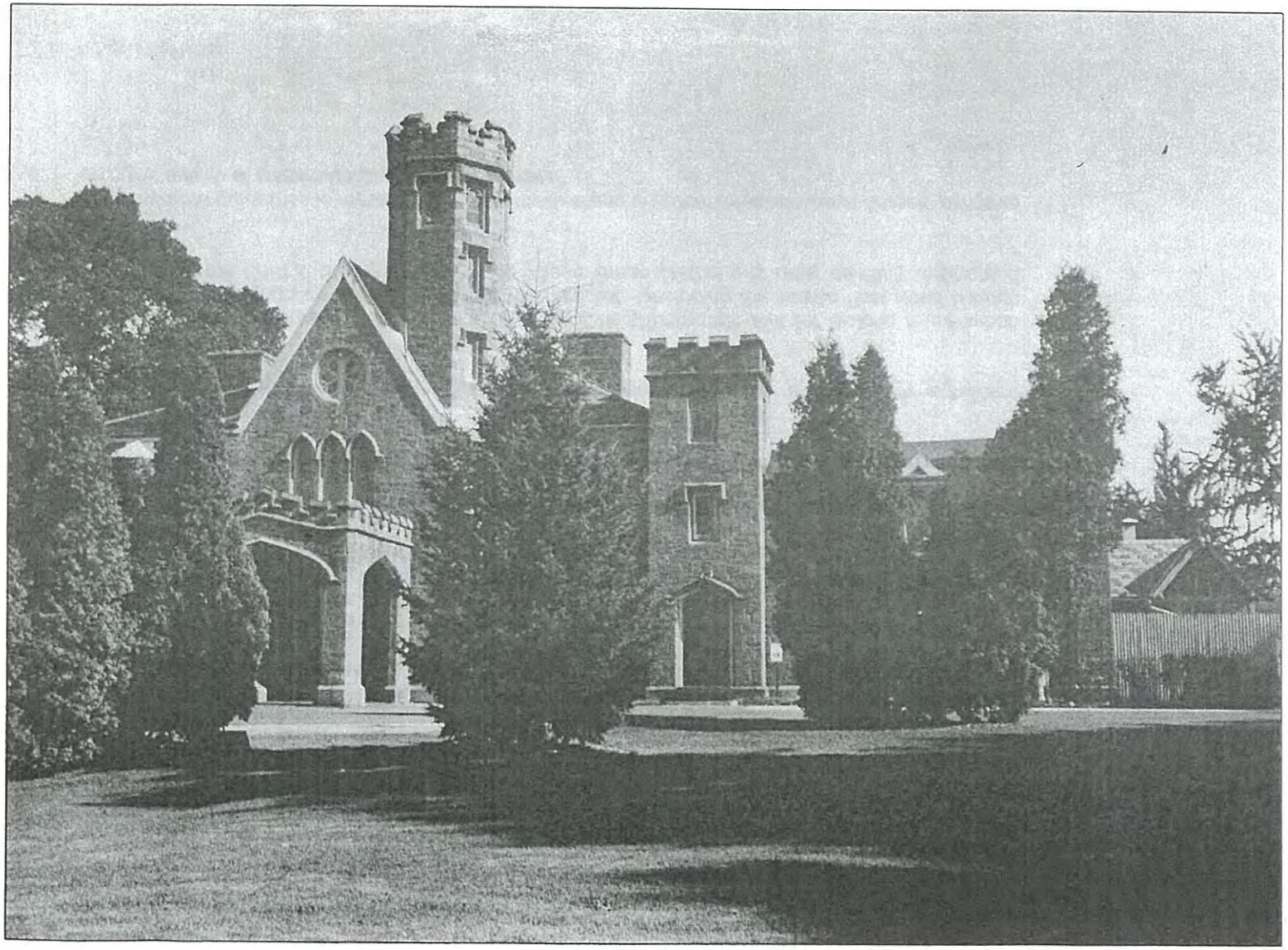
1. The Nichols boat yards should be acquired by the City and developed (with appropriate limits on traffic) to expand the City Marina. This action will increase the capacity of the marina and provide additional waterfront access for City residents. Consideration should also be given to the acquisition of the Mill Pond boat yard. Rye's limited waterfront land in City ownership has lacked a facility for fishing or simply relaxing, and the addition of docks or piers as part of these projects would alleviate much of this need. The expansion would also result in much needed winter storage facilities.

2. The Milton Harbor channelway must have a regular program of dredging to maintain a channel deep enough to permit passage of deep keel boats. A practical way of achieving this may be the formation of a consortium of sound shore communities to provide periodic dredgings for all involved communities.

3. Rye should pursue the possibility of obtaining a City-owned beach and small boat launching ramp for the use of City residents. The City should be prepared to acquire appropriate land, should it become available.

4. Rye should actively pursue any opportunity which may arise to allow its citizens to walk to the waterfront, be it on the sound or the harbor. At present, for all of the public property on the water (Town and County owned), there is virtually no pathway for walking to the water. Development of such a pathway would allow people access to the waterfront to enjoy the vistas it provides, but would not permit active use (such as boat launching, swimming, etc.) of the waterfront. Such a walkway could be created as part of the subdivision of sizeable properties on the water (for example, the creation of 5 or more lots), by the reservation of a narrow strip of land leading to the water, which would be open to the public. (No parking would be allowed at the point where the strip met the roadway.) To accomplish this, the City could encourage donation of the land or the granting of an easement over the land in exchange for supervision of it. This donation could be negotiated as part of the development review process.

   In addition to the creation of physical access to the waterfront, attention should also be given in the development of subdivisions to the creation and preservation of scenic vistas from the street.



# 9

# Historic Preservation

*GOAL AND POLICIES*

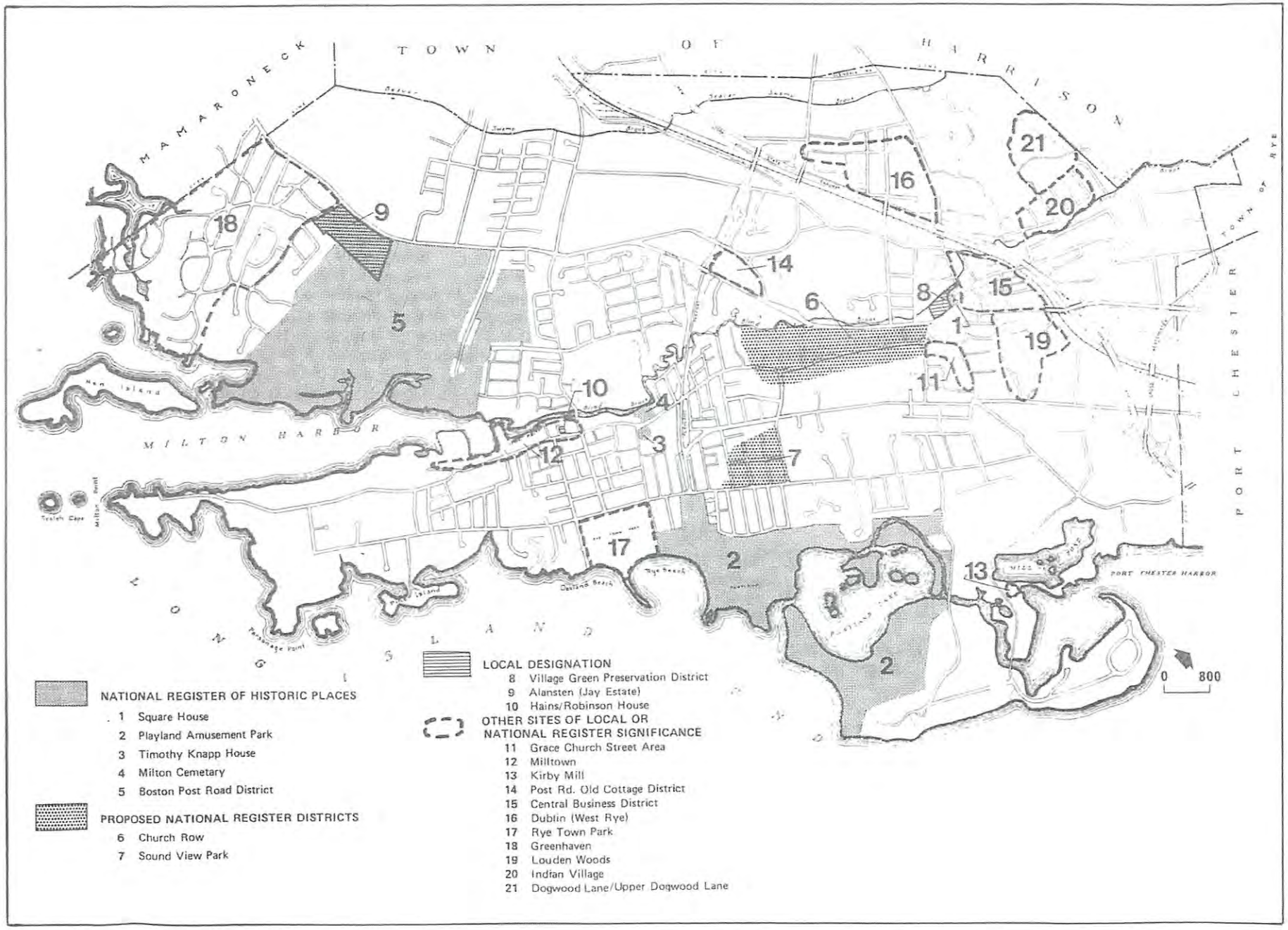
*Goal*

- *Preserve and maintain the valuable historic, cultural, architectural and archaeological heritage of Rye, for the benefit of the City's present and future residents.*

*Policies*

- *Preserve Rye's many buildings of extraordinary beauty and the visually cohesive districts that contribute to the City's strong aesthetic and cultural image.*
- *Encourage the designation of landmark buildings and historic districts by the City.*
- *Encourage appropriate maintenance and rehabilitation of historically and/or architecturally significant buildings.*
- *Encourage preservation, through adaptive use of historically and/or architecturally significant properties.*
- *Encourage the preservation of those districts or neighborhoods that for historic preservation purposes possess an identifiable, cohesive character – including the Boston Post Road Historic District, the Central Business District, the Village Green District and other carefully designated areas.*
- *Establish guidelines to regulate exterior renovation and adjacent development in order to preserve the quality of historic buildings and properties.*

# Historic Resources Map 9



## BACKGROUND

Rye posesses a rich architectural and historical heritage dating from the 17th century to the present. Buildings of extraordinary beauty and visually cohesive districts contribute to Rye's strong aesthetic and cultural image. The value of these resources in establishing Rye as a desirable place to live, as a source of community pride, and as a living testimony to this region's history cannot be overemphasized.

The City of Rye is facing increasing development pressures on its architecturally significant properties. Several historic older homes have already fallen victim to the current pressures of increasing land value, of a favorable market for smaller homes on subdivided lots, and of the increasing inability of current estate owners to maintain their properties as single family dwellings. However, since the 1963 Development Plan, the value of historic and cultural resources to the community has gained increasing recognition. Further, the desire to preserve these resources, as well as the methods to do so, has resulted in an effective preservation movement in the City.

The authority in New York State to accomplish historic preservation goals through zoning is derived from Section 96-a of the General Municipal Law which provides that a municipal corporation may regulate ". . . the protection, enrichment, perpetuation and use of places, districts, sites, buildings, structures, works of art, and other objects having a special character or special historic or esthetic interest or value." The passage in 1980 of the New York State Historic Preservation Act established a state Register of Historic Places and greatly expanded the role that municipalities may play in local historic preservation. It was under Section 96-a that the City of Rye in 1977 enacted a local preservation ordinance, Chapter 117 of the City Code, entitled *Landmarks Preservation*, and established the Landmarks Advisory Committee.

Since the 1963 Development Plan, preservation related activities in Rye have included:

- The inception in 1980 of the City-wide architectural resources survey under the auspices of the Rye Historical Society. Every building in the City was surveyed according to approximate date of construction and preliminary assessment of National Register significance was determined in consultation with the New York State Historic Preservation Office. The complete list of historic buildings and sites is included in the Background Studies volume.

- The listing on the National Register of Historic Places of the following landmarks (see accompanying map):

  - Square House (1974)
  - Playland Amusement Park (1980)
  - Timothy Knapp House, the oldest structure in Westchester County (1982)
  - Milton Cemetary (1982)
  - Boston Post Road Historic District (1982)

  In addition, the Sound View Park and Church Row historic districts are in the process of being nominated to the National Register.

- The local designation, under Chapter 117 of the City Code, of the Village Green, Alansten Preservation District and the Hains-Robinson House.

- The completion of The Boston Post Road Historic District Preservation Planning Study funded in part by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and sponsored by the Westchester Preservation League.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The increased awareness of the value of historic resources has led to the current approach favoring preservation and restoration.

The preservation and maintenance of significant properties enhances Rye's image, protects the environment, and strengthens the real estate market. Planning tools that encourage historic

preservation, without being overly restrictive should be employed. The following actions are recommended:

1. Nomination, of appropriate buildings, sites and districts to the National Register of Historic Places. The completion of the architectural resources survey should result in the identification of appropriate buildings and districts.

2. Local designation under Chapter 117 of significant properties and districts identified in the survey.

3. Adaptive reuse of historic structures, in a manner consistent with architectural character should be encouraged as a means of perserving significant public and private properties.

4. Adoption of guidelines for the rehabilitation of historic properties in accordance with The Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation; Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* by the City's Board of Architectural Review and Landmarks Advisory Committee.

   It should be pointed out that the Secretary of the Interior's Standards incorporate guidelines for new construction in proximity to historic structures and districts.

5. Use of development techniques that encourage the restoration and maintenance of historic buildings and grounds, permitting sympathetic development of these properties. These techniques include:

   - clustering of development on a portion of the property;
   - permitting accessory units in residential buildings or out buildings;
   - allowing appropriate conservation easements and historic preservation easements; and
   - permitting condominium ownership of large estates in order to preserve the large lots intact.

6. Creation of an "overlay" historic district* in the City's zoning ordinance where the above development techniques would be employed.

7. Reuse of significant properties through the application of current preservation techniques, including lease-back arrangements for municipally owned property and use variances.

8. Submission of Rye's local landmark ordinance for certification by New York State Historic Preservation Office, thereby qualifying locally designated properties for current benefits, which can include tax credits, grants, and low rate loans.

*An overlay district or zone involves a set of zoning requirements that is described in the ordinance text, is mapped and is imposed in addition to those required of the underlying district. Development within the overlay zone must conform to the requirements of both zones or the more restrictive of the two.

# 10

# Community Facilties

*GOALS AND POLICIES*

*Education*

*Goal*

- *Provide a full spectrum of high quality, accessible educational facilities and services to meet the needs of all segments of the community.*

*Policy*

- *Continue to pursue the coordination of public and private efforts to provide a range of cultural and educational opportunities for all age groups.*

*Utilities*

*Goal*

- *Maintain, improve and expand where appropriate to accommodate present and future development, the water supply, sanitary sewer, storm drainage and solid waste disposal systems in order to maintain and protect a healthful living environment, a viable economic base and the natural environment.*

*Policies*

- *Promote the rehabilitation and improvement of the storm and sanitary sewer systems in the Mamaroneck Valley and Blind Brook Sewer Districts.*

- *Encourage actions that will result in the elimination of infiltration and inflow into sanitary sewer lines.*

## SCHOOLS

In the past 20 years the school situation has changed considerably, both in Rye and across the country. During the 1960's, the continuing growth of the "baby boom" generation necessitated the expansion of school facilities to serve the City's children, as well as the designation of additional school sites for what was viewed as the inevitable need for expansion. However, the large enrollments of the 1950's and 1960's declined during the next decade (total enrollment in all Rye City public schools peaked in 1972 at 3,100 pupils) resulting in excess school space rather than the anticipated shortage. This trend resulted in the sales of the Midland School annex, the proposed Locust Avenue school site and a portion of the Milton school property. Because of declining enrollments, the City's Board of Education has contemplated the closing of the Milton School.

The Rye City school system encompasses the entire City except for the Greenhaven area, which is part of the Rye Neck School District. The Rye City School District has three elementary schools (Midland, Milton and Osborn), a middle school (grades 7-8) and high school (grades 9-12). Current enrollment projections (through 1994) indicate that the District's schools have ample space to meet present and future enrollment needs.

Enrollment projections through 1994 are the result of studies and school censuses by the Rye City Schools administration in coordination with the New York State Education Department.

Enrollment in all grade levels is expected to generally decline through the mid 1990's. Enrollment in the lower grades is expected to decline more gradually as a result of an earlier increase of children in Grades K through 4 in the mid-1980's. The projected decline in Grades 9-12 is due to anticipated transfers of students to private schools.

Projections of enrollment from 1985 thru 1994 by two year intervals are as follows:

| | 1984* | 1985 | 1986 | 1988 | 1990 | 1992 | 1994 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Enrollment | 1984 | 1899 | 1831 | 1720 | 1668 | 1640 | 1620 |
| K - 6 | 924 | 923 | 898 | 876 | 861 | 852 | 852 |
| 7 - 8 | 308 | 273 | 284 | 277 | 270 | 265 | 256 |
| 9 - 12 | 752 | 703 | 649 | 567 | 537 | 523 | 512 |

Source: Rye City School District, October 1, 1984.

*Actual enrollment.

Present population and enrollment projections indicate no need for additional school sites. Nor should the changes proposed in the Development Plan result in dramatic increases in the school age population.

The Greenhaven section of the City is within the Rye Neck School District. The Rye Neck High School is located in the southwestern corner of the City. As enrollments have declined, discussion be-

tween the two districts have focused on their possible consolidation or at a minimum, the potential sharing of services. This may be desirable in the future if the variety of courses and programs offered at present are to be maintained in the face of declining enrollments.

In addition to the City's public schools, the City is also the site of Rye Country Day School (grades Kindergarden through 12), Resurrection School (grades Kindergarden through eight), and Resurrection Academy (grades nine through twelve).

Public, private and parochial schools in the City have been designated as Public or Post Road Residential/Institutional on the Plan Map. In the event that school facilities are eliminated in the future, sites in the Post Road area should be governed by the requirements in that area, while those designated as public should be incorporated into the surrounding uses and density. In this event, existing playgrounds and open space areas should be preserved as neighborhood parks.

## UTILITIES

The City is served by two sewer districts. Most of the City is within the Blind Brook Sanitary Sewer District, which uses the Blind Brook Sewage Treatment Plant (located in Disbrow Park). The western portion of the City, within the Beaver Swamp Brook watershed, is part of the Mamaroneck Sanitary Sewer District. Neither plant is capable of processing all sewage during heavy rainfalls, causing sewage back-ups in the Beaver Swamp Brook watershed and sections of the Blind Brook flood plain and the discharge of untreated material into the Sound.

A rehabilitation program in the Blind Brook District is currently underway. A similar program for the Mamaroneck Sanitary Sewer District is in the planning stages. These efforts must be supported by the City. In addition, flood control measures (discussed in a separate section) must be employed in both the Blind Brook and Beaver Swamp Brook vicinities to help minimize the impact of storm water runoff.

Rye's water is supplied by two major water companies. The residents of the Greenhaven section of Rye are supplied by Westchester Joint Waterworks (quasi-public), while the remaining City residents are supplied by the New York-American Water Company (private). Neither company anticipates problems in supplying future developments in their areas. However, because of the high cost of water service in the City, alternatives and options for different sources for water service are being investigated.

# III

# Next Steps

Implementation of the policies and recommendations of the Plan, as set forth in Section II, will necessitate a combination of regulatory and action-oriented strategies. Techniques for Plan implementation include zoning revisions, the use of other regulatory measures (e.g. floodplain, wetland and historic), and the use of various programs for the implementation of specific proposals.

## PROPOSED ZONING CHANGES

The primary means of implementing the Plan is the City's zoning ordinance and map. Three types of changes to implement the plan are proposed: the addition of new districts, changes to existing zoning provisions and changes to the zoning map.

### Proposed New Districts

The Plan includes a number of provisions which require the creation of new zoning districts. The proposed districts include:

- **Post Road Residential/Institutional District**

  This zone would apply to these areas designated as Post Road Residential/Institutional on the Land Use Plan map (Map #2). Permitted uses should include residential uses in the 2-6 unit per acre range, institutional uses, museums, and other similar uses. Clustering of development to insure the preservation of the unique character of the corridor should be encouraged. (See page 15).

- **Waterfront Recreation/Development District**

  This zone would apply to those areas designated as Waterfront Recreation/Development on the Land Use Plan map. Permitted uses should include recreation (beaches, etc.), boat clubs and marinas. Other uses include residential uses and waterfront commercial facilities, perhaps permitted by special permit. The provisions of the zone should be structured to insure the continued recreation or marine commercial use of waterfront property. (This would replace the present "waterfront business" category in the ordinance.) (See page 57).

- **Office/Residential District**

  This zone would apply to those areas designated as Office/Residential on the Land Use Plan map. A mixture of residential and small professional office uses would be permitted in existing buildings. The ordinance should require that the exterior appearance of the buildings be compatible with nearby residential uses. (See page 30).

- **Open Space District**

  This zone would apply to *public* areas designated as Open Space and Recreation in the Plan. Permitted uses would include parks, recreation facilities, nature preserves, and other public facilities, etc. The zone would be structured to insure the continued public use of existing recreation and open space areas. (Areas in private ownership would not be suitable for this category.) (See page 40).

### Proposed Changes to Existing Provisions

Several changes to existing ordinance provisions are also suggested to implement the plan's policies. These include:

- a provision allowing **accessory apartments** in certain residential districts (minimum size lot should be larger than 1/3 acre) (see page 16);
- a provision allowing three-family uses in the two family (RT) zone by special permit based upon a sufficient size of building unit and lot (see page 14);
- the inclusion of **clustering** provision (both mandatory and optional) in residential districts (see page 16);
- modification of the Central Business District zoning provisions to

encourage **retail continuity** on Purchase Street (see page 24);

- the limiting of commercial uses in the Neighborhood Business District to local service and retail operations (see page 29);

- the possible division of the existing General Business zone into two separate categories: 1) **General Commercial** including automotive uses, offices, restaurants, and services and 2) **Light Manufacturing** including wholesale facilities, warehouses, contractor's yards, and limited manufacturing operations (see page 29);

- the creation of an **historic overlay district**, regulating uses and building appearance in designated areas of the City (see page 62);

- changes in multi-family zoning provisions to permit **high density residential** development in specific areas (see page 15).

An additional recommendation concerning the City's zoning ordinance would be the elimination of the "Beach Business" and "Waterfront Business" categories, as they would no longer be applicable.

The Commission further recommends that the City Council grant to the Planning Commission certain powers which state law permits the Council to pass on, as set forth in section 37 of the General City Law. This includes the power to make reasonable changes in the applicable zoning law as it applies to a plot being subdivided. The exercise of such a power could be conditioned on approval or vote by the Council.

### Proposed Changes to the Zoning Map

The Zoning Map should be revised to incorporate the land use changes recommended in the Plan. The major changes proposed include:

- designation of land within the proposed districts described earlier (i.e. the Post Road Residential/Institutional District, the Waterfront Recreation/Development District, the Office/Residential District and the Open Space District (see Map 2 for locations);

- changing the New-Elizabeth Street Area from medium density multi-family (RA-2) to high density multi-family;

- changing the eastern side of Cedar Place from business (B-6) to two family residential (RT);

- changing the peripheral CBD areas on the Post Road and Elm Place from neighborhood business to general commercial.

### OTHER ACTIONS WHICH SHOULD BE USED FOR PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

- Revisions to the nonconforming use provisions of the City Code should be made for the purpose of eliminating nonconforming uses and buildings and encouraging conformity through the use of an amortization provision for a period of between 5 and 10 years.

- The City has the option of developing a Waterfront Revitalization Program as part of the State's Coastal Program. This would give the City increased control over activities in its coastal area, as well as open the door for a variety of funding programs. Specific projects which could qualify for design funding assistance may include the expansion of the City marina and the creation of Blind Brook and waterfront trail systems.

- The Blind Brook Watershed project should be encouraged by the City, since this project would alleviate many of Rye's flooding problems.

- Westchester County has proposed the improvement of the Mamaroneck sewer system, which includes the Beaver Swamp Brook portion of Rye. The City should encourage this program.

- Traffic improvements in the Playland Parkway/Theodore Fremd Avenue area should be required if further office development in this area occurs. This may involve a more detailed analysis of the options, including the anticipated costs.

- Rye has recently joined the Westchester Urban County Consortium, making funds available to City projects and joint City and private redevelopment and rehabilitation projects. Most recently, the City has applied for funding to make street improvements in the Cedar Place and Maple Avenue areas, for improving City buildings to provide access to the handicapped and restoration of Whitby, a National Register of Historic Places designated landmark, which serves as the clubhouse at the Rye City Golf Club.

- In all instances involving both the Planning Commission and the Board of Appeals, applications must first be reviewed and acted upon by the Planning Commission and the Planning Commission should be designated lead agency for the purposes of environmental review quality.

# Appendix

# Neighborhood Studies

## INTRODUCTION

Most of Rye's residential neighborhoods are pleasant, economically viable areas with few of the problems often associated with older residential areas. However, there are three small areas in the City where blighted conditions and rundown buildings do exist. These include the Cedar Place-Midland Avenue area, the High Street-Maple Avenue area and the New-Elizabeth-Purchase Streets area. Because of the problems in these neighborhoods, including substandard housing conditions and lower income levels, it is necessary to look at them more closely than other areas of the City.

## CEDAR PLACE - MIDLAND AVENUE

### Existing Uses

The Cedar Place-Midland Avenue Neighborhood is bounded by Manursing Avenue on the north and Midland School on the south (see Map A1). The streets contain a hodgepodge of uses, including one-family residences, two-family houses, multi-family buildings, a bus garage, a contractor's yard, a door sales company and a parking garage. One and two family residences are found in the Grapal Street area to the east of Midland Avenue and on Cedar Place. Multi-family uses are located primarily on Midland Avenue; most are older houses which have been converted to apartments. The non-residential uses are primarily located on the east side of Cedar Place, although two retail establishments are found on Midland Avenue.

The Cedar Place area and adjoining Grapal Street area comprise one of the City's few two-family areas. For the most part, the area is self-contained, separated from other areas by steep hillsides on the east, north and west and by Midland School and Recreation Park in the south. Generally, the area (particularly the Grapal Street portion) is a sound, well-maintained neighborhood which offers a type of housing much needed in Rye.

### Zoning

Current zoning in most of the area is two family residential (RT), while the eastern side of Cedar Place is zoned for general commercial uses (B-6). It is worth noting historically that the commercial zoning was placed here in 1957 to move business uses from the present CBD car parks. With the exception of the multi-family and commercial uses in the RT zone, the area's uses are generally consistent with the present (1984) zoning.

### Building Conditions

Building conditions (exterior only) in the area were rated according to three categories: good, fair and poor. Buildings rated as "good" are in sound structural condition, and need no repairs or only such repairs as might be made during the course of ordinary maintenance. Buildings rated as "fair" are basically sound, but require repairs beyond those usually undertaken as part of normal maintenance activities. Buildings rated as "poor" require extensive repairs, which may not be economically feasible without some sort of financial assistance.

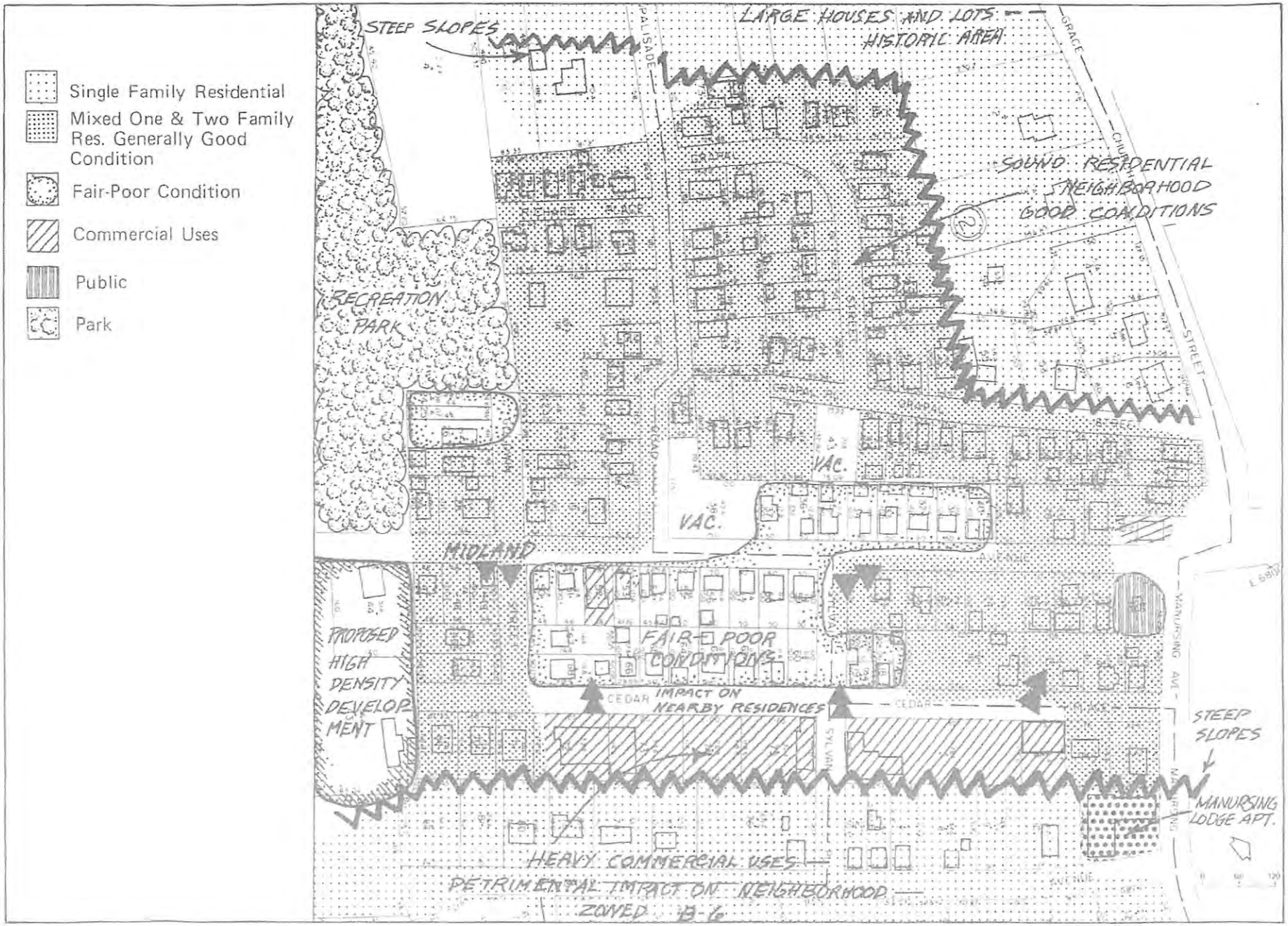
Conditions in the area are mixed. Buildings in the Grapal Street/Palisade Road area are generally in good condition, with a very few exceptions. The buildings on Cedar Place are generally in mixed fair to good condition, although there are a couple of buildings in poor condition. The worst conditions in the area are found on the east side of Midland Avenue between Goldwin Street and Sylvan Places. Many of the buildings in this stretch are in poor and fair condition. A second pocket of deteriorating buildings is found on the west side of the Avenue between Palisade Road and Manursing Avenue. It should be noted that the buildings in fair and poor conditions are usually found in clusters or pockets, indicating the potential effect of one rundown building upon its neighbors.

### Planning Issues and Factors

Problems in the Cedar Place area stem from two sources. The first is the cluster of commercial and heavy commercial uses on the eastern side of Cedar Place. Resulting problems include higher traffic generation, higher noise levels and the impact of these uses on the adjacent residential neighborhood. A second problem occurs on Midland Avenue (and to a lesser extent on Cedar Place) where a number of multi-family dwellings, many in rundown

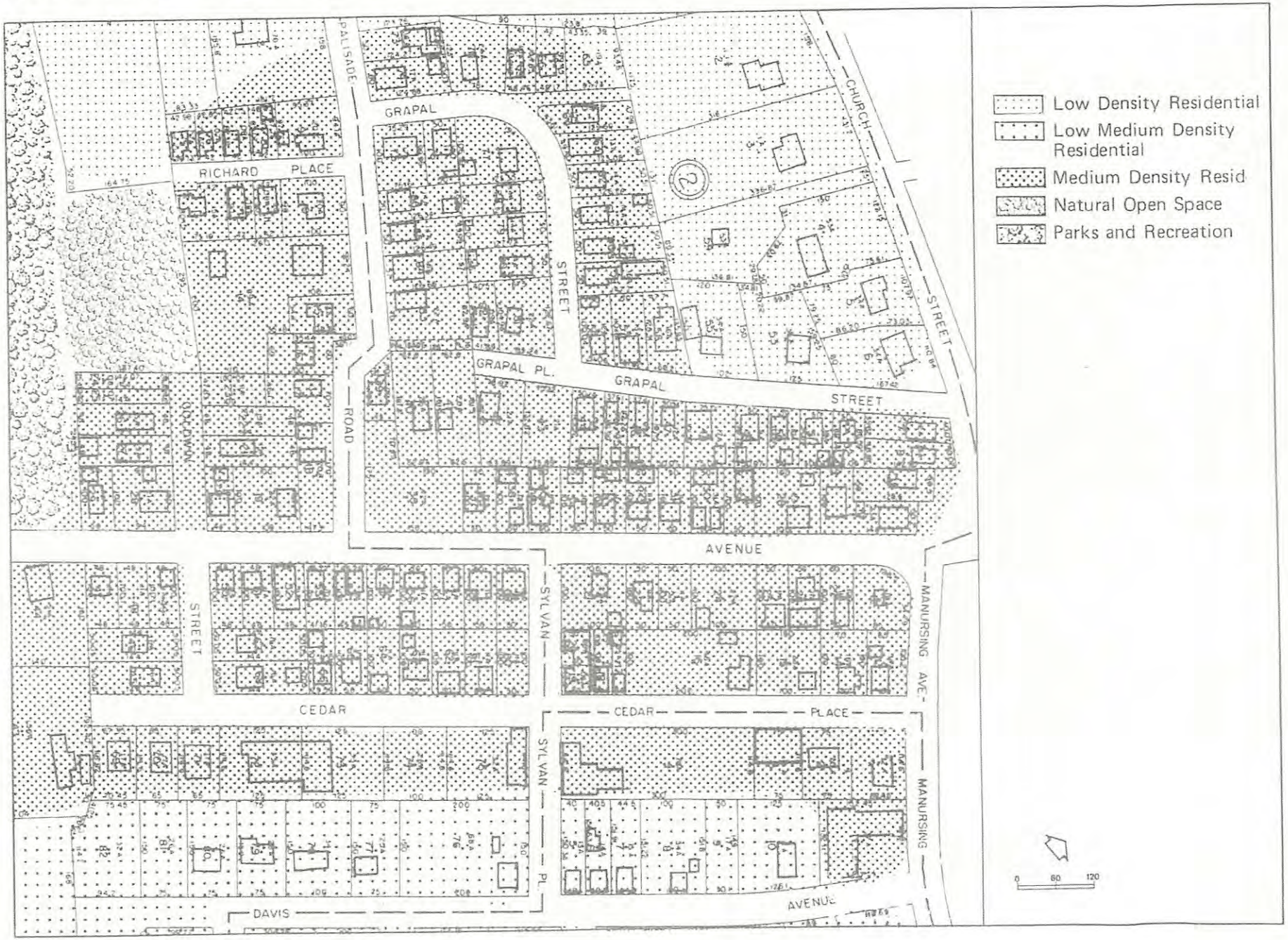
# Planning Factors & Issues Map A2

## Cedar Place Neighborhood



# Proposed Land Use Plan Map A3

## Cedar Place Neighborhood



condition, have been allowed to occur (in spite of the zoning limitations to two families per dwelling). Resulting problems include a negative image and the growth of substandard housing units. There is a negative impact on nearby uses, since few property owners wish to invest the money necessary to maintain their buildings if they view the area as deteriorating. This type of deterioration begins with one or two buildings and expands outward. At the same time, units in the deteriorating buildings are substandard, creating a hardship for families who must live in them.

**Recommendations**

The primary needs in the Cedar Place - Midland Avenue area are to improve the area's existing substandard housing, prevent the current deterioration from spreading, and encourage the continuation of the larger area as a sound, attractive two-family residential neighborhood.

The Planning Commission, with the help of economic analyses prepared by Raymond, Parish, Pine & Weiner, studied a variety of zoning changes and their potential ameliorative effect upon the problems in the Cedar-Midland area. The data appears in the background report which is in the Office of the City Planner. The study indicates that in order to create enough inducement for residential developers to buy property in the area and redevelop it, it would be necessary (at today's costs and interest rates) to permit the construction of apartment or condominium buildings with a density of 30-35 units per acre. Such a development would be comparable in density to the Community Gardens apartment complex.

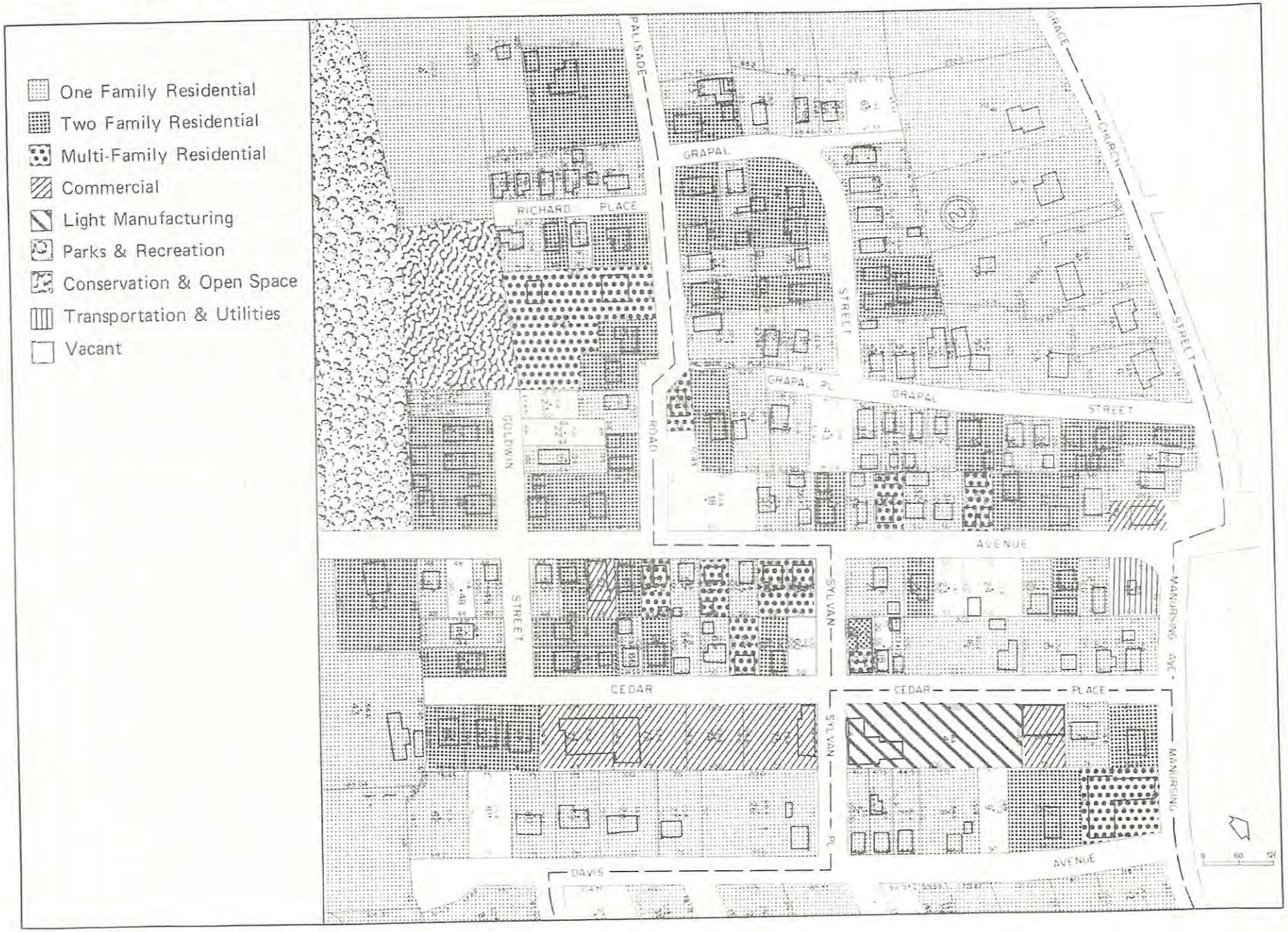
In the view of the Commission, converting the current uses in the area to high density residential use at the present time (even if builders could be induced to do so), would only be trading one set of problems for another. While this would be too high a price to pay, the Commission believes that the appropriate long run goal for this area would be to eliminate the commercial uses on Cedar Place, and move toward a medium-high residential density (in the range of 12-14 units per acre). New residential development, combined with improvements to existing housing, would in turn have a desirable effect on surrounding properties.

The Commission is aware that a two acre parcel of land at the west end of Cedar Place bordering on the Midland school property (now known as the Roman property) has been proposed for extremely high density use. In accordance with our general conclusions about the Cedar Place/Midland Avenue area, we regard such a development as being too dense for the area, given the problems it would create in terms of parking and traffic, as well as the bulk of such a structure.

The two family (RT) zoning in the Midland Avenue area should be enforced. Future illegal conversions to multi-family uses should be prohibited. The rehabilitation of substandard buildings should be encouraged through code enforcement measures. In addition, local banks and civic groups should be approached about the possibility of providing grants and low-interest loans to property owners who cannot otherwise maintain their buildings. ■

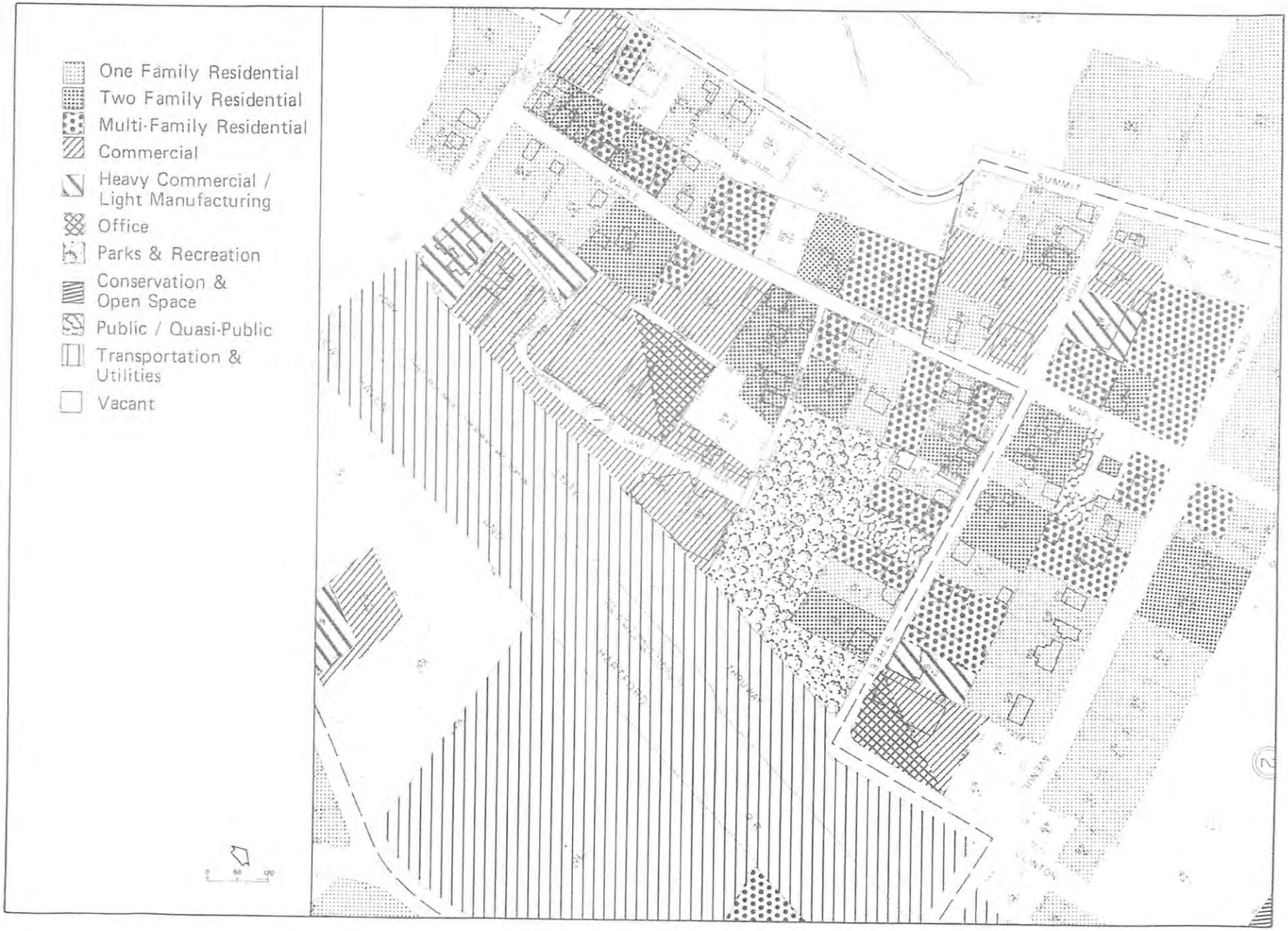
# Existing Land Use Map A1

## Cedar Place Neighborhood



# Existing Land Use Map A4

## High Street Neighborhood



## HIGH STREET – MAPLE AVENUE

### Existing Uses

The High Street-Maple Avenue neighborhood is bounded by the New England Thruway on the east, Central Avenue on the north, Summit Avenue on the west and North Street on the south (see Map A4). Uses in the area are a mixture of residential, commercial and light industrial.

The primary light industrial/heavy commercial area is located on Nursery Lane, between the Thruway and the back of the lots on Maple Avenue. This area is physically separated from the remainder of the neighborhood, as it is at the foot of the steep hillsides paralleling Maple Avenue.

High Street and Maple Avenue are primarily residential in use, with a mixture of one, two and three (or more) family buildings. A few commercial/office or light industrial uses are found on High Street between Summit and Maple Avenue and at the corner of Clinton Avenue. Gagliardo Park is behind High Street, and separates it from the commercial uses on Nursery Lane.

Uses on Central Avenue are residential; the eastern portion is single family, while the remainder is mixed density.

Summit Avenue is separated from the bulk of the neighborhood by topography. The southern and northern portions of the street contain mostly single family residential uses, while the central portion (including the street itself) is undeveloped.

### Zoning

The zoning in the area is largely business. The Nursery Lane area is zoned for General Business (B-6). High Street and Maple Avenue are zoned for Neighborhood Business (B-1), although most of the uses in these areas are residential. It should also be noted that the existing commercial uses are not typically neighborhood commercial uses. Central Avenue is zoned for two-family (RT) and one family uses.

### Building Conditions

Conditions in the area are mixed. The Nursery Lane commercial buildings are generally in good condition, as are the residential uses on Central Avenue. Uses on Maple Avenue are generally good, with two exceptions: the first is a pocket of housing in poor-fair condition near the southern end of the street, the second is a pocket in fair condition near the intersection of High Street. Conditions on High Street are generally fair (with occasional structures in poor condition) between Maple and Clinton Avenues.

### Planning Issues and Factors

The most striking image of the area is formed by the interesting stone buildings (constructed between 1850-1910) that line Maple Avenue and High Street. Although a number appear to have been stuccoed over, they retain an intriguing appearance that give the area a unique quality.

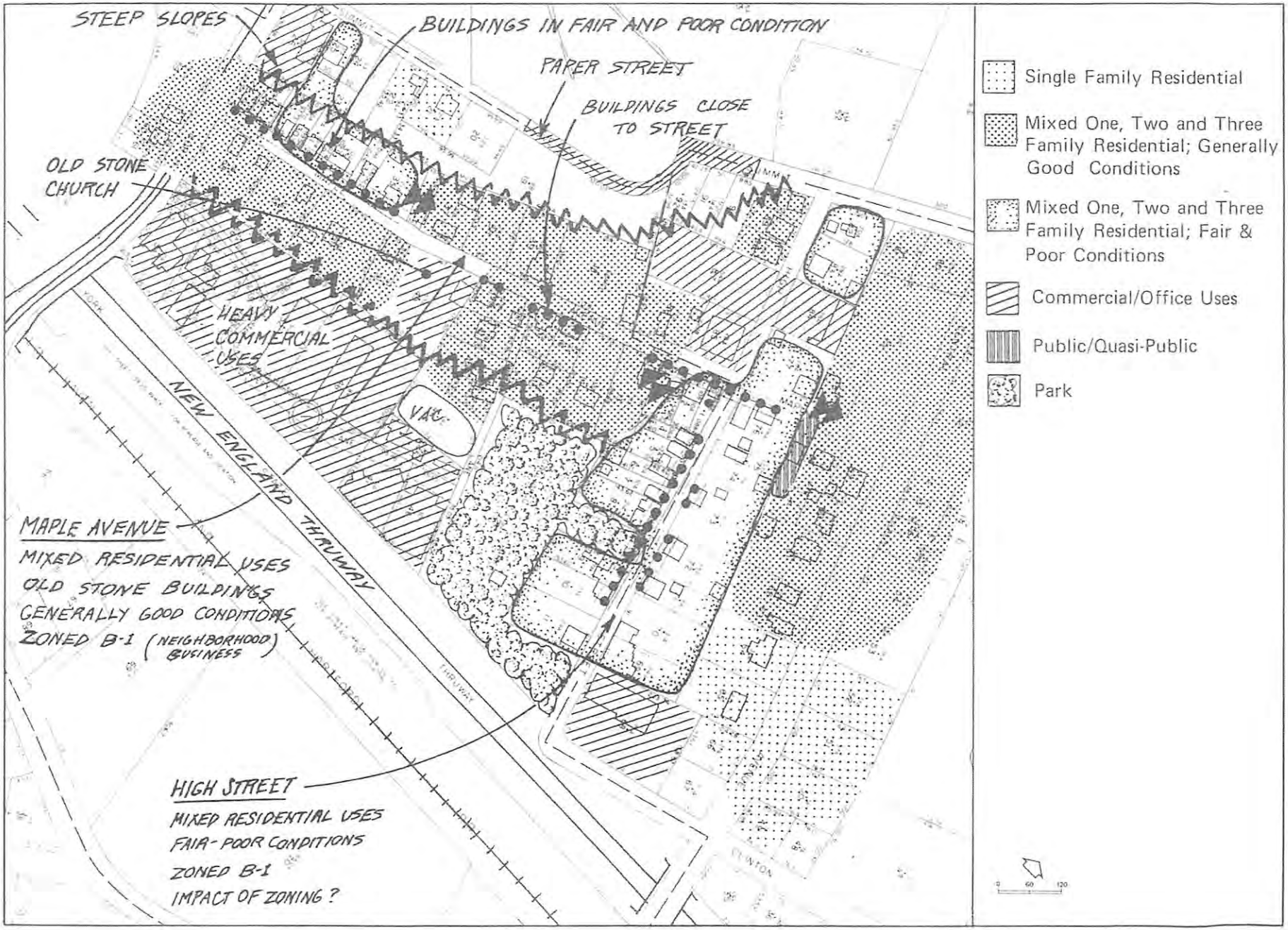
Most of the buildings on Maple Avenue are well maintained, although two blighted pockets, one near High Street and the other near North Street threaten the stability of the remainder of the street.

Two other aspects influence the nature of the street: an old stone church, which has been converted to a plumbing supply operation and the closeness of many of the buildings to the street. In many cases buildings have little or no set back from the sidewalk.

The eastern part of High Street has much the same character as Maple Avenue – i.e. old stone and stucco buildings situated close to the street. However, maintenance has suffered here, resulting in blighted conditions. The impact of the B-1 zoning on these two streets may be to discourage the maintenance and upkeep of the residential uses. Yet the area is largely residential in character. Further, the narrow streets combined with the lack of direct access make the area inappropriate for intensive commercial use.

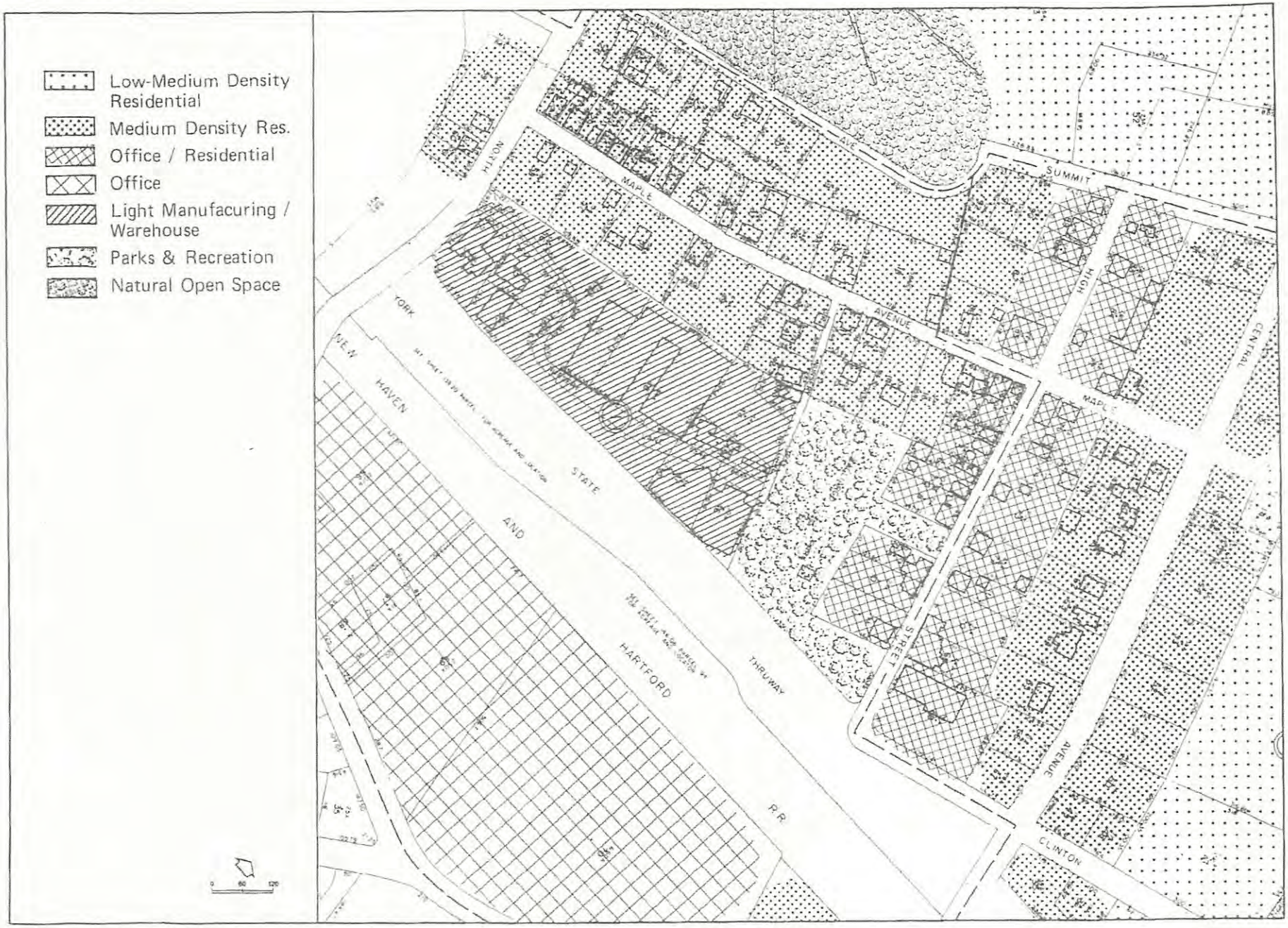
# Planning Factors & Issues Map A5

## High Street Neighborhood



# Proposed Land Use Plan Map A6

## High Street Neighborhood



### Recommendations

The High Street/Maple Avenue area is characterized by both residential and commercial/office uses. The Plan's recommendations are structured to preserve and encourage the viability of **both** uses. Specific recommendations are as follows:

1. **Designate High Street as Office/Residential in the Plan**, and rezone accordingly. The uses on High Street are neither strictly residential nor neighborhood commercial. Rather, the street contains commercial office uses as well as one, two and three family residential uses. The designation of the street for office/residential use (which encourages reuse of existing buildings) will hopefully encourage the improvement of existing residential uses, by assuring property owners that nearby buildings will continue to be used in a compatible manner.

2. **Designate Maple Avenue as Medium Density Residential** (8-14 units per acre). Maple Avenue is almost entirely a residential street and should be treated accordingly. The current neighborhood business zoning should be replaced by a multi-family category that permits two or three units in a building. In this way, property owners will be assured the continued residential use of the area, and will thus hopefully be encouraged to invest money in improving their buildings.

3. **Designate the Nursery Lane area as Light Manufacturing/ Warehousing**. The Nursery Lane commercial area functions well and has limited impact on the adjacent neighborhood. Further, the proximity to the Thruway eliminates the potential for residential uses. The existing types of uses should be encouraged, as suitable areas for heavy commercial uses are limited in Rye.

4. **Preserve and improve Gagliardo Park** Gagliardo Park is the only public recreation area in Rye on the western side of the New England Thruway. It not only serves area residents, but forms a buffer between the commercial Nursery Lane area and the nearby residential uses on High Street.

5. **Employ regulatory and available financial methods to upgrade residential buildings in the area.** Code enforcement should be used to require proper maintenance of buildings. Methods of obtaining grants and low interest loans for area residents wishing to improve their properties should be pursued.

## NEW-ELIZABETH-PURCHASE STREETS

### Existing Uses

The New, Elizabeth and Purchase Streets area is generally bordered by the New England Thruway on the south, the Rye Country Day School on the east, Purchase Street on the west and Hillside Avenue on the north (see Map A7). The area contains a variety of uses. Purchase Street contains a mixture of high density apartments and offices between the Thruway and Natoma Street, a mixture of one and two family houses and apartment buildings in the next block and a mixture of office, residential and commercial uses north of Blind Brook Lane.

New Street is east of Purchase Street in the southern end of the area. Uses are largely one and two family residences: those on the west side of the street occupy very small lots (1,200-3,000 square feet), while those on the other side occupy larger lots (¼ to ½ acre). A professional office building occupies the corner of New and Cedar Streets. Elizabeth Street is to the north of New Street and connects Purchase Street with Evergreen Avenue. This short winding, and steep street is lined with small one, two and three family dwellings on small lots.

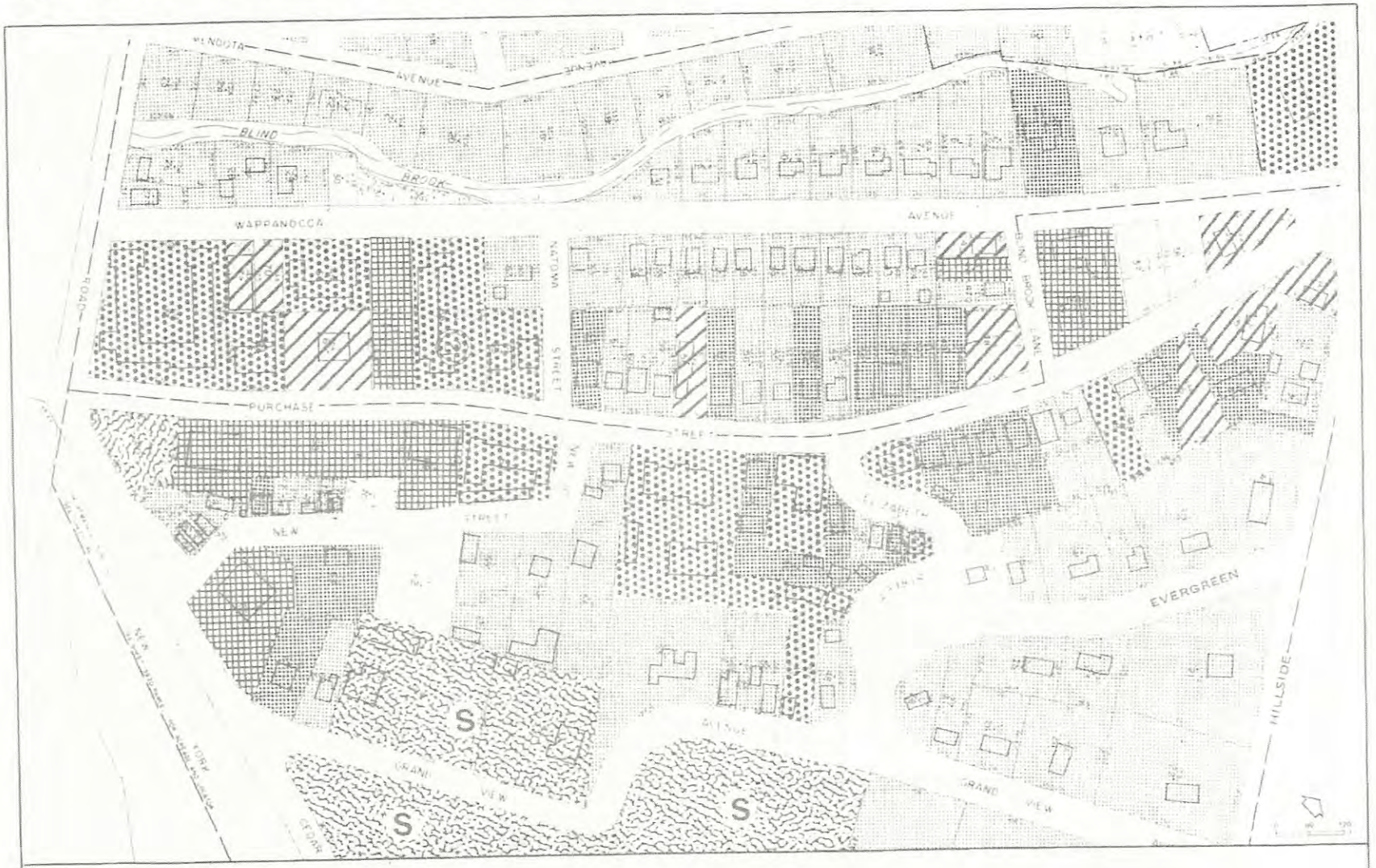
### Building Conditions

Conditions on Purchase street are generally good, with an occasional building in only fair condition. The large apartment and office buildings are all in good condition. New Street generally exhibits a mixture of good and fair conditions, although a couple of buildings in poor condition are found at the north end of the street. Conditions on Elizabeth Street are generally fair to poor, and the buildings crowded.

# Existing Land Use

Map A7

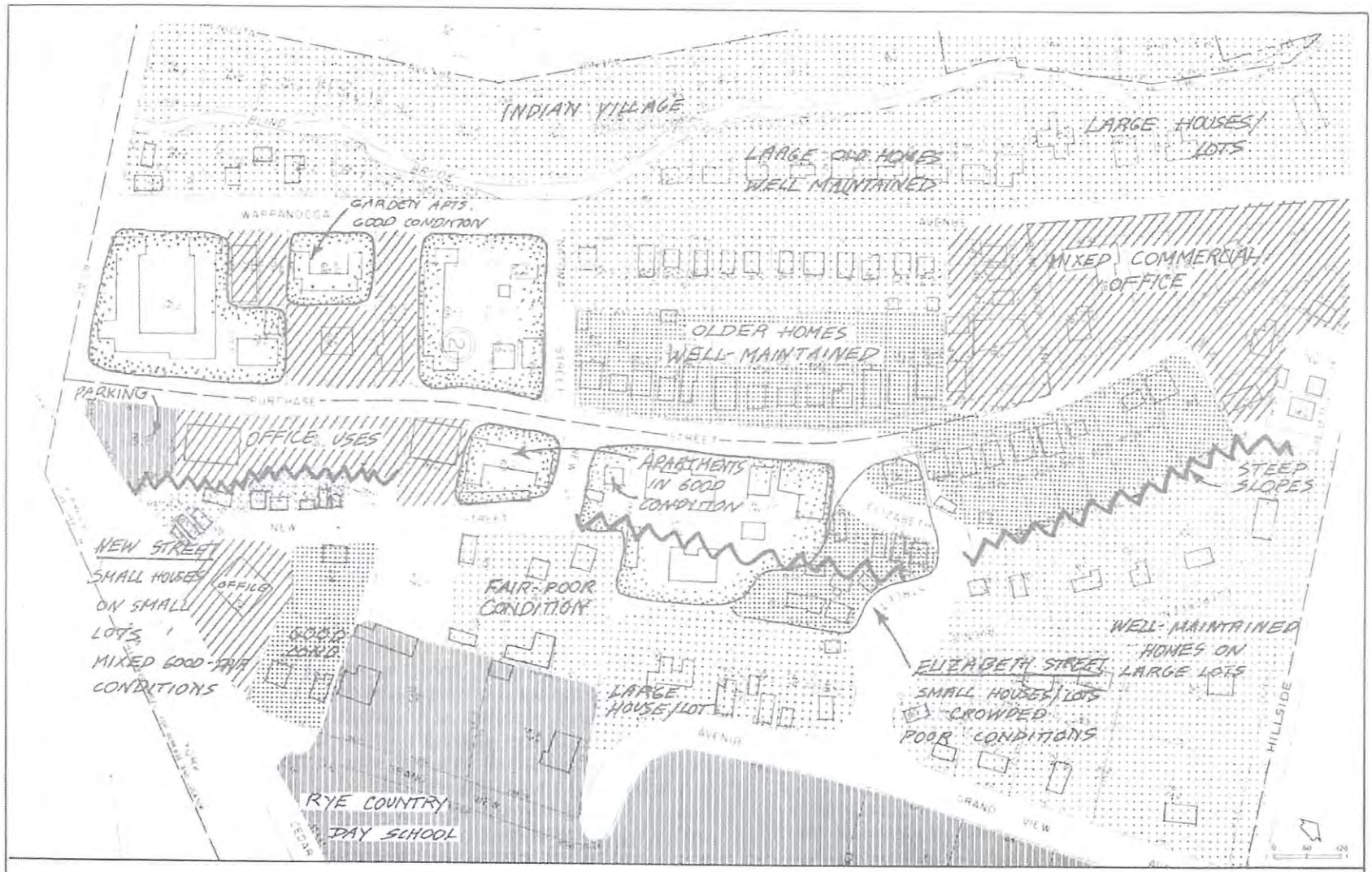
## New Street / Purchase Street Neighborhood




One Family Residential
Two Family Rrsidential
Multi-Family Residential
Commercial
Office
Public / Quasi-Public / Schools (S)
Vacant

# Planning Factors & Issues Map A8

## New Street / Purchase Street Neighborhood




Single Family Residential

Mixed (one-two) Family Residential

Multi-Family Residential

Commercial / Office Uses

Public / Semi-Public

### Planning Issues and Factors

The lower Purchase Street area is heavily influenced by the proximity of the Central Business District immediately to the south. The pressures for commercial expansion are expected to continue northwards, since buildings within the Central Business District are seldom vacant and rents are high. The mid-portion of Purchase Street is characterized by attractive older homes (one-two family) and a few apartment buildings. There are pressures on this area for conversion to commercial use from both northern and southern ends of the street. The growth of commercial, particularly retail, uses is not desirable in this area because of the desire to preserve the strength of the Central Business District as the City's retail center, to avoid strip commercial development and to preserve the attractive character of the area.

The New Street area exhibits a variety of characteristics. The older small houses (and lots) at the foot of the street are for the most part well maintained. The mid-section of the street, however, contains large underutilized lots and buildings in deteriorating condition.

The Elizabeth Street area presents additional problems, in that the buildings are in deteriorating condition, the lots are small and the houses crowded. A ridge traverses the area from north to south, physically separating the western half of the street from the eastern half.

### Recommendations

The New, Purchase and Elizabeth Street area is an excellent area for the medium and high density housing so needed in the City. The base for development of higher density housing already exists in the apartments and two-three family dwellings on Purchase Street. The Plan recommends that this base be expanded upon.

Specific recommendations include:

1. **Designate the Purchase Street Office/Residential in the Plan.** Retail commercial uses should be excluded from this stretch of Purchase Street in order to preserve the integrity of the CBD. However, the area is highly suitable for small professional offices (which need to be close to the business district and major highways) as well as multiple family housing. The zoning necessary to implement this designation should encourage the use of the existing houses on the street, and require that exterior renovations for office use maintain the residential character of the buildings.

2. **Designate the New and Elizabeth Street areas high density residential** (30-35 units per acre). Because of the proximity to major highways, railroads, the Central Business District and the existing apartment developments in Purchase Street, and the need for improvement of sub-standard housing it is recommended that the New and Elizabeth Streets area be redeveloped for higher density housing. ■

# Proposed Land Use Plan Map A9

## New Street / Purchase Street Neighborhood

- Low Density Residential
- Low- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Office / Residential
- Post Road Residential / Institutional
- Open Space