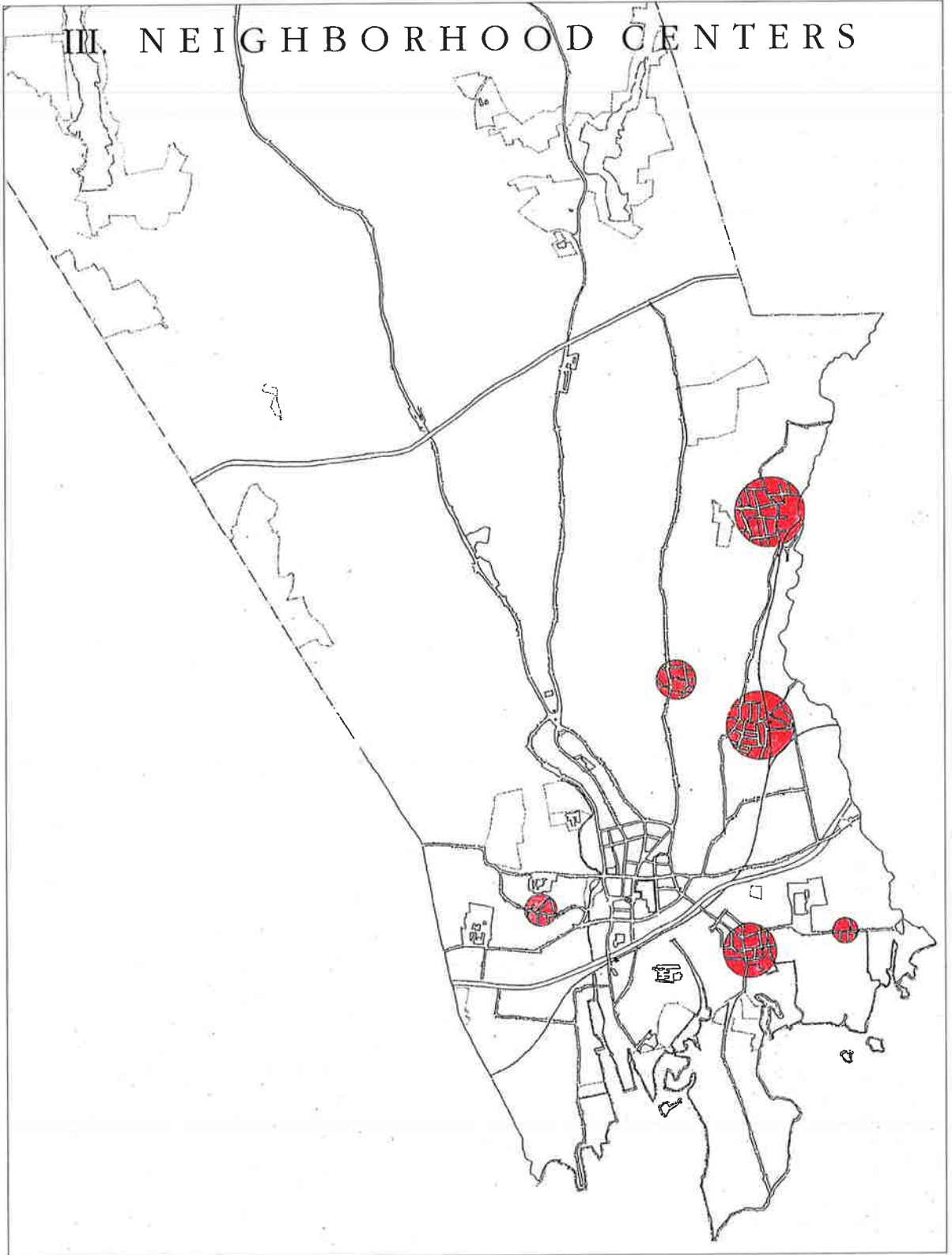


III. NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS



NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

If, at the scale of the entire city, downtown must remain the focus of future development, then at the scale of the neighborhood, the local neighborhood centers must be the focus of future development.

Neighborhood commercial areas were described in the previous master plan under Category 6 - Commercial: Local or Neighborhood Business. This master plan now makes the distinction between “Commercial - Arterial” and “Commercial - Neighborhood” in order to recognize that there are some areas that will always have an orientation towards the automobile, and other places that have the potential to be true “main streets” with a unified appearance and distinct identity.

BUSINESS CORRIDORS

Master Plan Category #7: Commercial-Arterial

There are a number of commercial corridors which will continue to have a strong orientation towards the automobile. In part, this is a result of the way these roads function in the larger citywide roadway and traffic network. This is also a result of past development practices – of creating stand-alone buildings surrounded by parking. Finally, it reflects the fact that these commercial areas are not integrated with the surrounding neighborhoods in the way that the other “main street” commercial centers are.

However, this does not mean that the design of the business corridors is unimportant. Precisely because these places are on major roads, they are the gateways to Stamford and their appearance is a big part of the image which the City projects. There are also pedestrian safety and traffic incident issues created by poorly organized access. Finally, the true development value of the land is squandered on the low-coverage, automobile-oriented uses attracted to these corridors.



3.01 Design intervention on a suburban commercial strip, before and after (simulation)



3.02 Urban infill, before and after (simulation)

A variety of improvements are suggested, not with the goal of transforming these areas wholesale into new “main streets”, but to balance the needs of the automobile with the needs of pedestrians and to create a clearly organized and attractive area:

- Consolidation of curb cuts through cross access agreements
- Relocation of parking areas to the sides and backs of buildings
- Redesigning the edges of parking lots
- Promoting new development where it can help define important intersections
- Landscape and sidewalk improvements to create a unified design

In Chapter 2, these principles are illustrated for portions of East and West Main Street and for the northern end of High Ridge Road.



3.03 Neighborhood revitalization, before and after (simulation)

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

Master Plan Category #6: Commercial-Neighborhood

The neighborhood centers must accommodate the automobile, but they are first and foremost pedestrian environments. “Main Street” is the metaphor that is most appropriate, and a local model for this might be Main Street in Darien.

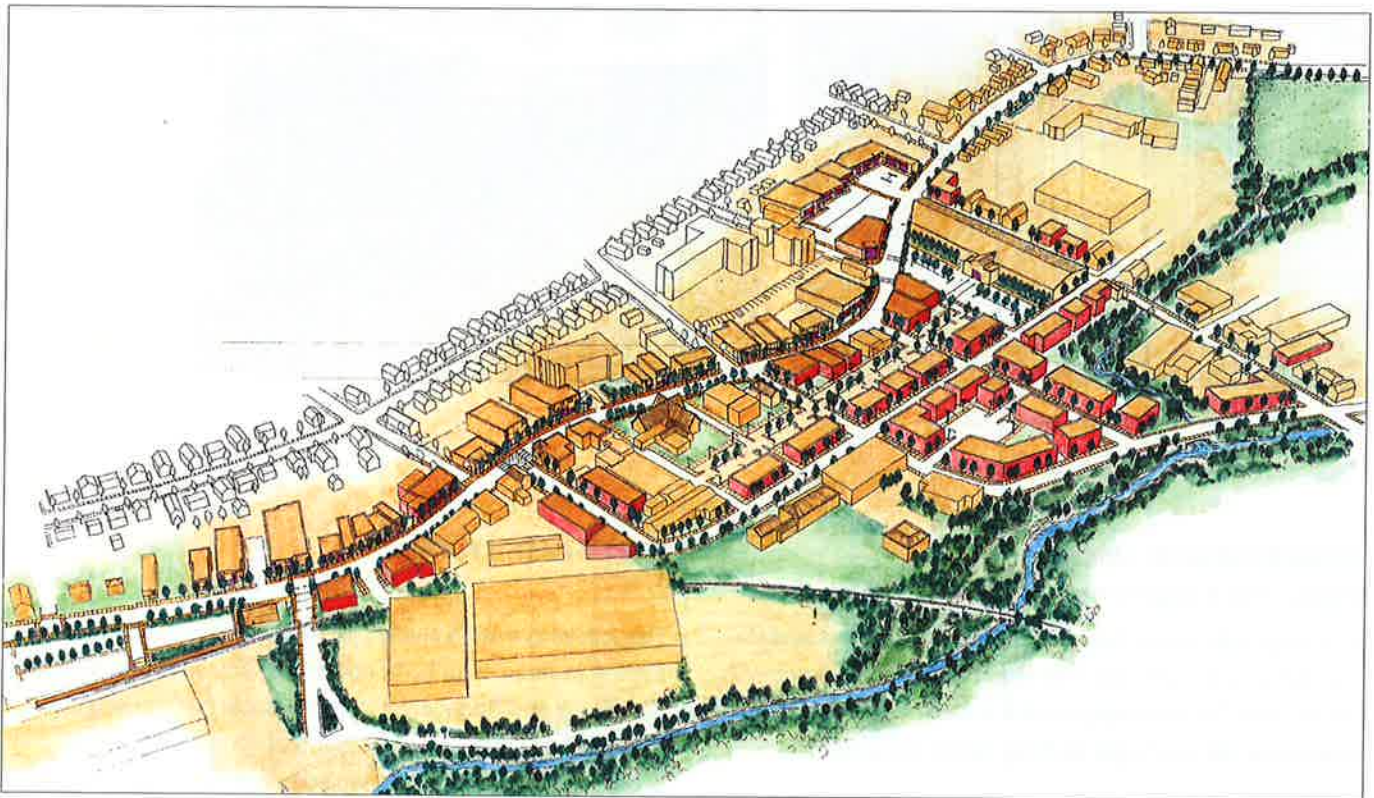
The elements of this “Main Street” idea create a safe and coherent pedestrian experience. Interventions include (1) street trees, pedestrian scaled lighting, benches, bus shelters, and other pedestrian amenities; (2) mandates and incentives for ground-floor shops with window displays and frequent entries; (3) prohibitions against ground-floor garage space and other design features that kill public enjoyment of public spaces; (4) pedestrian linkages to nearby residential neighborhoods; and (5) traffic calming—such as neck-downs at crosswalks—to reduce vehicular/pedestrian conflicts.

THREE CASE STUDIES

The following design studies illustrate these principles as applied to three neighborhoods in the City. In two of these, Glenbrook and Springdale, local residents participated in a community design workshop that produced a vision of a dense, mixed-use area connected to the two stations on the New Canaan branch of Metro North. In the third, Shippan Avenue, local residents, including members of the neighborhood association, expressed their support for a similar vision which would be part of a larger effort to clean up the Magee Avenue industrial area.



3.04 and 3.05 Hope Street

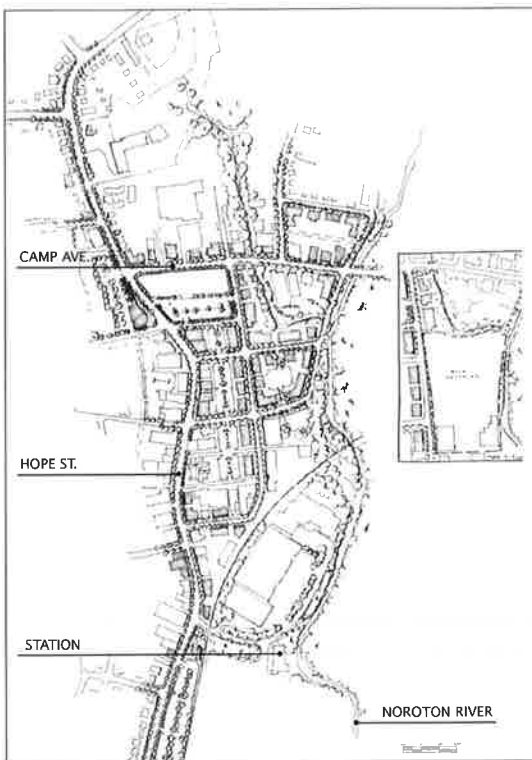


3.06 Aerial perspective view of the Springdale neighborhood center showing a completed "pedestrian-friendly" main street along Hope Street, mixed-use redevelopment in the industrial areas and a Noroton River Greenway (darker buildings indicate redevelopment concepts).

SPRINGDALE CASE STUDY

The major design and land use interventions for Springdale are described in Figures 3.07 through 3.11. The diagrams describe the general disposition of land uses, important new connections and gateways.

- Reinforce the identity of the Springdale "downtown"—(the portion of Hope Street that extends from the railroad station at the south to the little league field and elementary school to the north)—by promoting new, contextual infill development, uniform streetscape and landscape treatments, and façade and signage guidelines.
- Rationalize and interconnect parking lots behind stores
- Repair the discontinuities in the street network between Hope Street and the Noroton River. Extend the existing mix of commercial and light industrial uses into the new blocks and development parcels.
- Complete a "Noroton River Greenway"



3.07 Springdale neighborhood center-illustrative plan

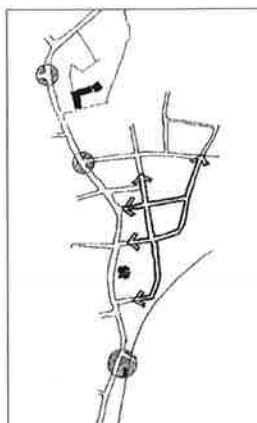


3.08 Springdale neighborhood aerial photograph

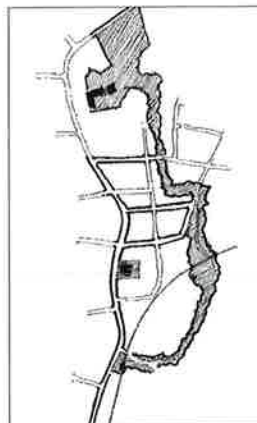
A SPRINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

Proposed Conditions

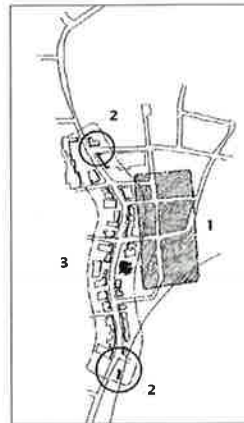
- Complete the street network and connections in the industrial area (fig. 3.09)
- Create a greenway connection between Springdale Station and Drotar Park (fig. 3.10)
- Promote mixed-use commercial and industrial development (fig.3.11)
- Create a Hope Street "main street" from gateways at Springdale Station and at the Hope/Camp intersection (3.11)



3.09 New connections and gateways



3.10 New greenway



3.11

3.11 Redevelopment concepts

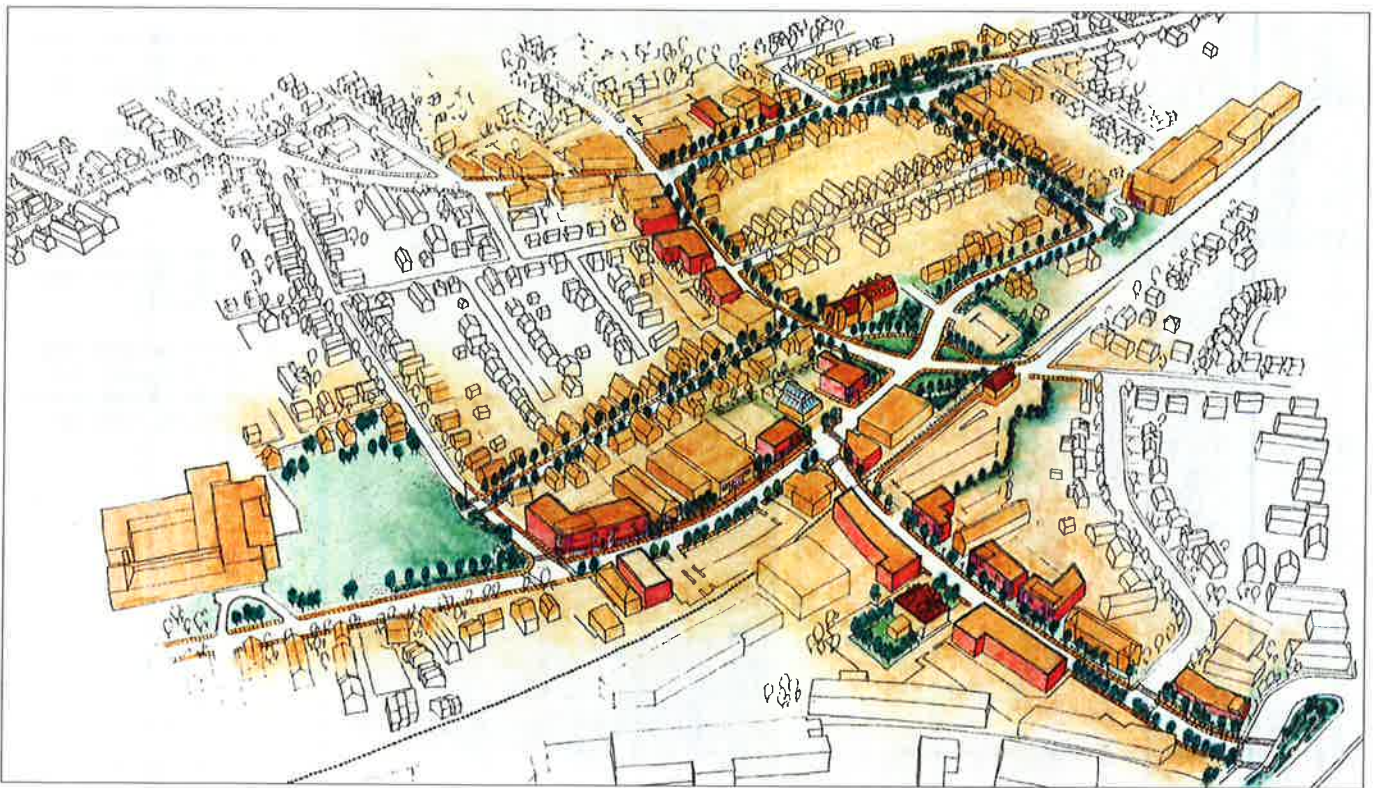
1. Mixed-use commercial and industrial area
2. Gateway
3. Hope Street "Main Street"



3.12 Crescent Street



3.13 Glenbrook Road



3.14 Aerial perspective view of the Glenbrook neighborhood center showing a completed "pedestrian-friendly" main street along Glenbrook Road, centralized mixed-use redevelopment along Crescent Street and Church Street, and a new station and public space at the Church Street / Glenbrook Road intersection (darker buildings indicate redevelopment concepts).

GLENBROOK CASE STUDY

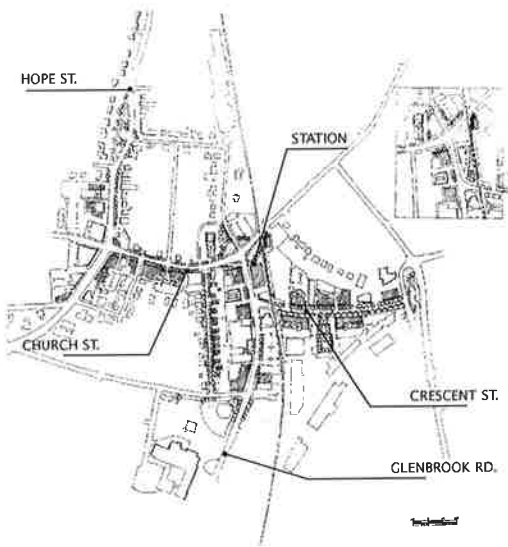
The major design and land use interventions for Glenbrook are described in Figures 3.15 through 3.19. The diagrams describe the general disposition of land uses, important new connections and gateways.

- Create a visible station area with a clear identity by opening up the platform to Glenbrook Road and relocating the Signal Department storage facility in the parking lot.
- Re-establish Glenbrook Road, from the school to Church Street, as the neighborhood "main street" by promoting new contextual in-fill development and implementing streetscape, landscape and façade improvement programs.
- Create an east-west link, with the station at the mid-point, from Courtland Avenue to Hope Street, by promoting contextual mixed-use development along Crescent Street and Church Street.
- Consolidate the residential character of Parker Avenue.

A GLENBROOK NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

Proposed Conditions

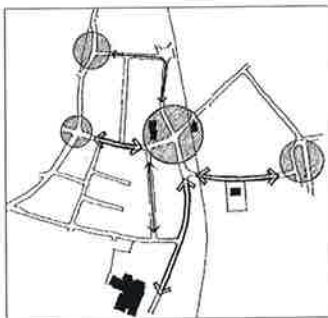
- Link open spaces (3.18) and create gateways (3.17)
- Reinforce existing neighborhoods (fig. 3.19)
- Redevelop mixed-use corridors along Crescent and Church Streets (fig. 3.19)
- Reinforce a Glenbrook "main street" (fig. 3.19)
- Redesign the Hope Street commercial corridor (fig. 3.19)



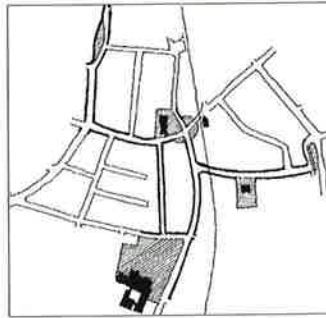
3.15 Glenbrook neighborhood center-illustrative plan



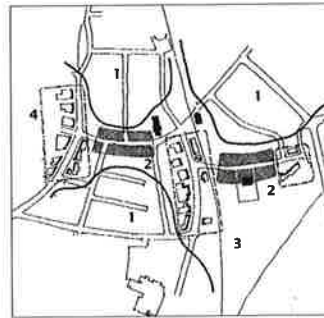
3.16 Glenbrook neighborhood center-aerial photograph



3.17 New connections and gateways



3.18 Open space connections



3.19 Redevelopment concepts
 1. Neighborhoods
 2. Mixed-use area
 3. Glenbrook Road "main street"
 4. Hope Street commercial area



3.20 Magee Avenue



3.21 Shippan Avenue



3.22 Aerial perspective view of the Shippan neighborhood center and Magee Avenue industrial area (darker buildings indicate redevelopment concepts).

SHIPPAN CASE STUDY

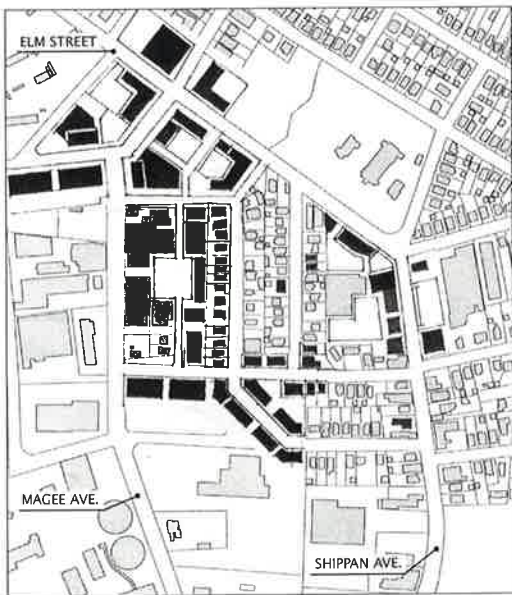
The major design and land use interventions for Shippan are described in Figures 3.23 through 3.27. The diagrams describe the general disposition of land uses, important new connections and gateways.

- Reinforce the "main street" portion of Shippan Avenue (the portion that extends from Cummings Park to the intersection with Elm and Cove Road) by promoting new contextual in-fill development and implementing streetscape, landscape and façade improvement programs. The design of Shippan Ave should reflect its role as part of a larger sequence of spaces that extends from Cummings Park to the downtown by way of Elm Street, one of the important radial corridors discussed previously.
- Repair discontinuities in the street network between Shippan Avenue and Magee Avenue. Clarify and consolidate the residential and industrial uses in the Halloween Boulevard area.
- Organize the industrial uses along Magee Avenue using the model of a modern "industrial park," with more clearly defined edges, improved frontage along Magee Avenue and transition at the mid-block to the residential uses along Halloween Boulevard.
- Consider connecting Halloween Boulevard to Elm Street as a way of consolidating the residential area around the Shippan Avenue shopping area. This will also ease the awkward intersection at Halloween, Magee and Jefferson which will be under more pressure after the Urban Transitway is completed.

A SHIPPAN NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

Proposed Conditions

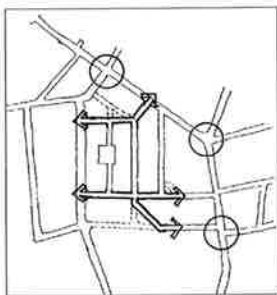
- Complete street network (fig.3.25)
- Create a Shippan Ave. "main street" (fig 3.27)
- Upgrade Magee Ave. "industrial park" (fig. 3.27)
- Gateway redevelopment at Jefferson/Elm intersection (fig. 3.27)



3.23 Shippan neighborhood center—existing and potential new buildings



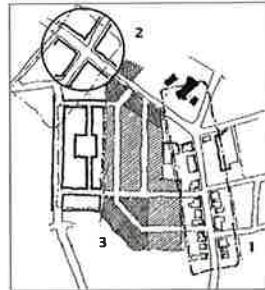
3.24 Shippan neighborhood center aerial photograph



3.25 New connections and gateways



3.26 Open space connections



3.27 Redevelopment concepts
 1. Shippan Avenue "main street"
 2. Gateway
 3. Industrial area

A NOTE ABOUT NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

The community-based planning process that generated the neighborhood-specific plans for Glenbrook and Springdale demonstrated that neighborhoods are willing to talk about new development if the residents themselves have shaped the vision and if the new development supports their goals for neighborhood and community revitalization.

Even in the recent period of economic expansion, the neighborhood centers saw little redevelopment due to the comparative difficulties of building on small infill sites. Thus there are two prerequisites for the neighborhood center visions described here:

1. Levels of growth somewhat in excess of the Trend Scenario will be required. The Glenbrook plan would absorb about five or six percent of the Trend Levels of growth.
2. Pro-active participation of residents, the City and developers in creating redevelopment plans will be necessary to make infill sites available and to smooth what is otherwise an uncertain and time-consuming approvals process.