THE SHAPING OF THE SUBURBAN GROWTH CENTER:

A VIEW FROM SPEEN STREET/ROUTE 9.

by

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ABSTRACT

Terms such as "growth center", "urban village", and "growth corridor", refer to a relatively new growth phenomenon that is taking shape in suburbs around the country. These are business, retail and entertainment focal points amid the low density landscape of the suburbs. As the growth center becomes an increasingly dominant force on the American landscape, planning concerns become pressing. In particular, many growth centers seem to have developed in a chaotic manner. The overall purpose of this thesis is to examine the role of planning, in the broadest sense of the word, in the process of growth center development.

The exploration is undertaken through a case study of a growth center often referred to as the "Golden Triangle" in Framingham and Natick, Massachusetts. The thesis is an historical analysis of the Golden Triangle's physical development. Social, political, economic and physical factors which have influenced development are explored. Both the general development patterns and the more specific "middle ground" patterns of physical relationships between places and spaces are emphasized.

This analysis reveals several thematic trends that inform our understanding of planning in the growth center. Specifically, it finds that planning was present, but was narrowly focused in its scope and vision. In addition, planning decisions were highly fragmented, dramatically affecting the physical form. The findings should be informative for those who hope to intervene to make positive changes in the "Golden Triangle" and in other growth centers in the future.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. WHAT IS A SUBURBAN GROWTH CENTER?

A relatively new growth phenomenon is taking shape in suburbs around the country and receiving increasing amounts of attention from planners. Sometimes called an Urban Village, Megacenter or Growth Corridor, centers of intense growth are forming outside our cities. These areas are business, retail and entertainment focal points amid the low density landscape of the suburbs. Often centered around major roadways, retail and office development come together and blossom within these areas, fed by land, location and emerging activity. Christopher Leinberger and Charles Lockwood describe the Urban Village in its ideal form, as a place "where people can live, work, shop and play in close proximity, thereby enjoying many advantages of urban density while avoiding the high cost and problems of the city" (Leinberger 1986). Increasing numbers of the population are working, shopping and finding entertainment within these centers, changing the patterns within which we live and work and changing the balance in the organization of the American metropolis.

1.2 WHY SHOULD WE BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE PATTERN OF GROWTH CENTER DEVELOPMENT?

The Urban Village model of development seems to be a growing

reality, yet in most instances, its potential to enhance the quality of life is not realized. Instead, this new reality seems to have brought with it an array of difficult planning problems. These undermine the growth center's potential for convenient and pleasurable living, working, shopping, and playing, as first envisioned by Leinberger and Lockwood.

A central problem which I will call "no sense of place" embodies many concerns about the growth center which are described by planners and developers such as Leinberger and Lockwood who have studied the phenomenon. The growth center often appears to be a random array of elements that no underlying order that binds them. There is a lack of physical and visual connection between elements, a lack of pedestrian amenity, beauty or unifying elements that could create a sense of "community". In fact, development seems to have emerged with the opposite intentions - defuse, separate, rejecting of the pedestrian, and lacking in attention to aesthetics.

What appears to be a lack of forethought or care about how the growth center works as a system ultimately impacts not only on community character but on many aspects of quality of life. Two examples are infrastructure and housing. Often the growth center's chaotic pattern of intense growth puts an unmanageable and costly strain on infrastructure such as

roads, sewer and water supply. For example, growth center highways and roadways are overburdened by ever increasing amounts of car traffic generated by new growth and commuting patterns. The defuse and unconnected nature of development decreases the feasibility of public transportation, and demands maximum use of the automobile, therefore burdening existing infrastructure and creating demand for new infrastructure. The result is not only gridlock, but also exorbitantly costly solutions.

The convenience and, therefore, use of the growth center depends also upon the proximity of housing. Yet often the only housing that is near is the type which existed before the growth center developed -- homogeneous single family, expensive housing. The exclusivity of the housing stock makes it difficult for segments of the population for whom this housing is inappropriate or unaffordable, to access or work in the center. In addition, often housing production lingers behind job growth, resulting in a housing shortage, and/or increased commuting from other areas, adding to traffic woes.

Planners, architects and public officials are saddled with the question of where to intervene to change the direction of growth center development. As traffic builds, infrastructure costs increase, and community character and physical resources

are threatened. All over the country, planners are studying new models for intense mixed-use suburban development that might be more successful. Yet, we still have little understanding of the rationale behind the development of the growth center, and how and why many have developed with the properties and problems that they have. At a time when emphasis on planning for the future of growth centers is galvanizing, it is critical to develop a deeper understanding of the themes that have guided development thus far. Only in understanding why we have what we do today, can we know what we want for the future, what we don't want, and how to change our approach.

1.3 INTENT OF THE THESIS

The purpose of this thesis is to explore why and how the growth center has developed into the place we experience today, and what role planning, in the broadest sense of the word, has played in the process. The exploration is undertaken through a case study of a growth center often referred to as the "Golden Triangle" in Framingham and Natick, Massachusetts. The thesis is an historical analysis of the factors that influenced and shaped the physical development of the "Golden Triangle". The thesis will examine the social,

political, economic and physical factors that have influenced both the general development patterns and the more specific "middle ground" development pattern of physical relationships between places and spaces. Throughout, the role of planning and its connection to the social, political, economic and physical context will be explored. The study will conclude with an assessment of the most important influences and their policy implications for those who hope to intervene to make positive changes in this area and in other growth centers.

1.4. THE CASE STUDY

Situated about 20 miles west of Boston, and 20 miles east of Worcester, the "Golden Triangle" is the largest regional retail center in New England outside of Boston, and is also a major office and industrial center. The Triangle straddles the two towns of Natick and Framingham, which are located in Middlesex Country, the most populous county in Massachusetts. At the Golden Triangle, four major regional highways - the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90), Route 9 (Worcester Road), Route 30 (Cochituate/Commonwealth Road), and Route 126 (Concord Street) converge. In addition, two others I-95 (Route 128) and I-495 have interchanges within ten miles of the study area. The study area is depicted in Appendices A - F.

The area is known to many as the "Golden Triangle" because commercial and industrial development has emerged in a triangular pattern, roughly contained by Routes 9 and 30 and Speen Street. Modern commercial and industrial development along Route 9 first appeared in the 1940s and 1950s. The area was first coined the "Golden Mile" because of the intensity of early strip development, before it became known as the "Golden Triangle". With the advent of the Massachusetts Turnpike, and other major routes, development began to extend northward, clustering around the major roadways and creating a triangular formation.

The boundaries of the Triangle have been defined differently by many groups, and are used for the purposes of this thesis to roughly define the area of intense, mixed-use development. The boundaries of the Triangle illustrated on the attached maps are those drawn by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in 1987. According to MAPC, the area contains 234 parcels which cover a total area of 34.2 million square feet and have a total building area of 7.3 million square feet. Approximately 68% of the land area and 62% of the building area is located in the town of Framingham, with the remainder located in Natick (Golden Triangle Plan Project, 1990, from "Golden Triangle Build-Out Analysis", 1987).

The "Golden Triangle" was selected as the case study because it is considered to be Massachusetts' leading example of a suburban growth center. Its' composition and its' problems parallel the description of many other growth centers across the country. In addition, it is particularly intriguing because of its intensity and variety of land uses, and its pattern of continual growth and change.

A Drive Through the Golden Triangle

One might approach the Golden Triangle from one of many major roadways from any direction. Traveling west from Boston on Route 9, strip development of low-lying commercial structures begins to increase as the traveler drives through Natick and approaches the Triangle area. A large office development perched above the highway indicates that you have arrived. In front of you is a complex intersection of signs, and ramps that loop over the road, offering more choices of direction than is comprehensible. This intersection is known as the "Beetleback".

Continuing straight ahead on Route 9 one finds shopping malls, retail complexes, restaurants, cinemas and stores lining the road. The intensity of uses increases dramatically as you cross the line from Natick into Framingham. The road

is wide, and parking spans out in front of the low, wide malls and shopping complexes. Bold signs advertising every store create a corridor as far as the eye can see. The amount of visual activity and the variety and intensity of uses is striking. The stores continue for miles, but seem to peak in scale and intensity a short distance from the "Beetleback", around the three major malls of Shoppers' World, the Natick Mall, and the Sherwood Plaza.

If the driver turns off Route 9 at the "Beetleback", the intersection might lead north up Speen Street, toward the Massachusetts Turnpike. Speen Street is the Center's hub of office development. It is a short and awkward span of road that is confusing in its purpose. It widens and thins, and is connected to numerous other different types of roads -that seem to have been attached like bandaids at different times in history. A hotel and shopping complex set back from the street sit next to a mix of gas stations and small warehouse-like stores fronting the street.

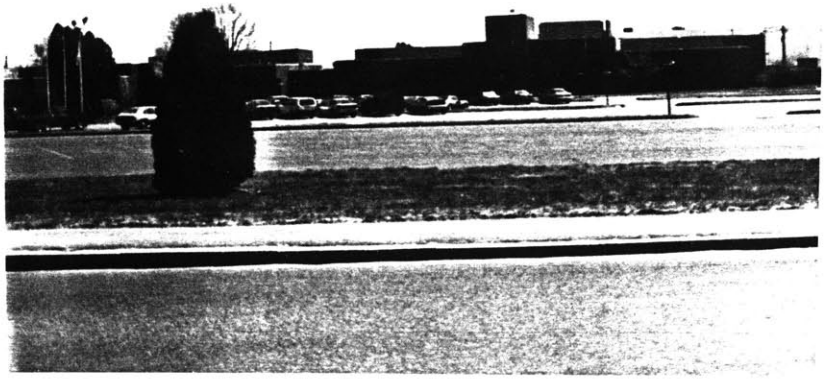
Mid-sized office buildings come into view, spread out along the flat span of road and land. The Massachusetts Turnpike crosses over-head. The office buildings range from an elaborate post-modern pink and grey marble structure to a series of small, angular offices built of concrete. The

buildings vary in siting, scale, character, and are separated by large parking lots, criss-crossing roads and landscaping. Modern, larger-scale office buildings spread out from Speen Street, hugging the triangle of major roadways.

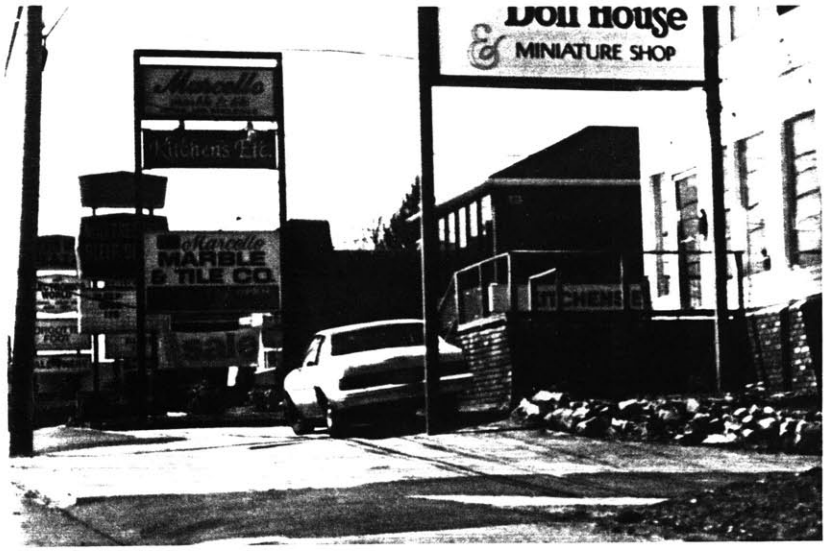
In the unlikely event that you come to the Triangle when traffic is light, spans of concrete make the place feel deserted. When cars fill the roads and lots there is a buzz of activity, as cars drive through on their way to one place or another. There is no place for the pedestrian, little landscaping or attention to aesthetics. The car is king. Each day thousands flock to here to shop, work or find entertainment.

The expanse of Route 9 features road, signs, cars and low-lying stores of every shape and style.

Route 9 stores converted from old housing stock.



The Natick Mall is low and wide, with a huge expanse of parking in front.



Signs beckon the passing car.

Speen Street is confusing in its nature.

Office buildings on Speen Street bare no relation to one another.

Most Modern.

Post Modern.

?

CHAPTER 2: EARLY HISTORY

2. 1. PRE-SUBURBIA

Horse and Wagon Organization of the Towns

In their first years of settlement, Framingham and Natick were traditional, independent farming communities. Land use patterns were largely influenced by the proximity of hills, lakes, ponds and rivers and by avoidance of the most difficult terrain. The town of Framingham was founded as Danforth Farms in 1662 and incorporated as a town in 1700. Natick was the first Christian Indian village in New England. John Eliot, an English missionary, selected the site in 1650 as an independent haven for a settlement of Indians newly converted to Christianity. Natick had fertile grounds, rolling hills and rivers, and a location which was central yet at the same time removed from the competition and progress of the white man in Boston.

That independence did not last long. By 1749 there were 150 houses and only 40 wigwams in Natick. For about 150 years, Natick and Framingham were homogeneous, quiet, agricultural communities of "industrious and frugal farmers" (Crawford 1978, 42). When Harriet Beecher Stowe sought to interpret early New England life and character in the era before the

railroad, "the period when our own hard, rocky, sterile New England was a sort of half Hebrew theocracy, half ultra-democratic republic of little villages," she chose Natick as her setting (Crawford, 1978, 53).

The Worcester Turnpike

Although much of Natick and Framingham remained mostly rural in character until recent years, the towns have flourished economically both as independent entities and as part of the larger economic engine of Massachusetts. Their growth and prosperity has been in large part due to the area's transportation connections and central location between the two historically important towns of Boston and Worcester. This important location and transportation link is earliest marked by the passing through of the first through east-west road between Boston and Worcester, the Worcester Turnpike (Route 9), in 1806-8 (Lovell 1938-41 203). Framingham's first town center was built around this important road (see Appendix B).

The Railroad

Because of their central location between important cities, and abundant natural resources, particularly in land and

bodies of water, the towns quickly followed the country into the industrial era, first with the establishment of mills and small manufacturers. By 1835, the first railroad came through Natick and Framingham. Soon after, the towns became central stops on three lines, sparking industrial growth and transforming the towns from quiet agricultural communities to heterogeneous, bustling , manufacturing centers.

The opening of the Boston to Albany railroad in 1835 brought the shoe business to Natick. Similarly, the railroad stimulated the straw hat and later paper goods industries in Framingham. New technologies and improved, lower cost access and communication through the railroad which allowed the small manufacturer to deal directly with customers in all parts of the country, fostered growth and economic prosperity (Crawford 1978 44). Good business brought many immigrants seeking their fortunes, as well as related residential and commercial development. The populations increased at a fast clip between 1830 and 1900.

Because the railroad was the central mode of access and transportation, industrial development hugged the railroad tracks. Nodes of related residential and commercial growth developed close by. The significance of the railroad is illustrated by the movement of Framingham and Natick's

original town centers to the intersection of railroad tracks. (Appendix B shows Framingham's original town center on Worcester Road and the Central Business District subsequently established around the railroad. Natick's original town center was south-east of the railroad intersection.) The railroad not only attracted the vast majority of development but also drew much of the through traffic which had once made the Worcester Turnpike a busy road. Soon the state took over the Turnpike and made it a "country road" lining its middle with grass and trees (Lovell 1938-41, 203).

The Immigrant

The new immigrants, who came to seek their fortunes in industry, were an important part of the transformation of the area. At first mostly from Ireland, Canada, England, and Germany, immigrants dramatically increased the population and permanently altered the ethnic and religious homogeneity of the towns. The dominance of the immigrant in the nineteenth century can be seen by population statistics at the turn of the century. Out of 8814 people living in Natick in 1895, 3700 native-born residents had foreign-born parents. 61 percent of Natick's people were either first or second generation American.

The nature of the immigrant population is important to Framingham and Natick's developmental history because this population formed the dominant culture of the towns until well into the 20th century. The many ethnic groups tended to cling to their own, marrying into their own culture and forming lively and diverse sub-neighborhoods. Natick's diversity resulted in a broad array of outspoken political opinion both about town controversies and about broader social issues such as slavery. Natick's population held great loyalty to their new found home, and were intensely proud of their town. When Natick's men responded to the outbreak of war with the Southern states in 1861, they refused to take the oath of allegiance because a stranger was to be put over them as captain (Crawford 1978, 50).

By the beginning of the 20th century Natick and Framingham were complex communities. They were lively industrial centers, economically and physically independent, yet highly influenced by their location within the broader region. Development was concentrated in a few areas, influenced by the proximity of transportation routes. Although development had at first clustered around the Worcester Turnpike, the center of town and the majority of development now focused around the dominant force of the railroad. The continually growing

populations were a mix of the puritan and the immigrant who were ethnically and culturally diverse, yet also parochial.

The 20th century saw dramatic changes in the character, economy and physical fabric of Framingham and Natick. Following a regional trend, the shoe and other industries declined, thus ending their careers as leading manufacturing towns. The advent of the automobile opened new possibilities in lifestyle and land use patterns, and linked the area more closely with Boston and surrounding communities. A new wave of immigrants from Boston and elsewhere again changed the character and power base, and added to the cultural diversity.

Framingham and Natick, as before, followed quickly on the heels of a changing world. The mass production of the automobile changed the primary mode of transportation. By 1915, 92% of the vehicles on the road were cars. Buses replaced streetcars after 1924. The automobile made the towns easily accessible to Bostonians, thereby beginning the metamorphoses of these towns from industrial centers into suburban bedroom communities. The area was no longer self contained but became the home for people who worked and/or had roots elsewhere in Massachusetts. In the beginning of the 20th century, both the center and the outskirts of the towns

grew with the influx of new population, although the majority of land still remained undeveloped. A growing housing stock accommodated middle income families.

In the 1930s both towns enacted broad zoning and subdivision regulations, which guided this new development. The regulations had vague definitions and boundaries, and were created for the most part to separate uses and ensure adequate amounts of land around development.

The history of the Natick-Framingham area has been one of extreme localism and also diversity, resulting in a great deal of division within the communities. In addition, its regional connection has made it highly subject and sensitive to trends and forces from outside the community. Therefore, local public investments have come slowly, while major investments and changes in the towns have often been initiated by outside forces. The recent history of the towns reflects these themes in a dramatic way.

2.2. SUBURBIA AND PRE-MALL ERA

In the years after World War II the populations of Natick and Framingham again began to boom, reflecting and surpassing the national trend of post-war suburban development. Between 1940 and 1950 Natick was the fastest growing town in

Massachusetts and Framingham followed closely behind. One might guess that the strong appeal of the two towns over other towns might have stemmed from their location, available and affordable land, economic health, and diversity. Returning veterans came in numbers to settle, accompanied by federal funds to help them establish homes. With suburban living becoming the American ideal, federal funding encouraging housing and infrastructure development, and increasing mobility afforded by the automobile for large numbers of the population, young couples and families flocked from Boston and surrounding areas.

Because there had been a lack of building during the depression, the towns now began to experience a severe housing shortage (Harvard Graduate School of Design 1947, 12). In addition, the increasing presence of the automobile, and the growing population, strained the aging infrastructure which had been allowed to decline throughout the depression and the War. Demands on services such as schools, libraries, garbage collection, police, sewer and water, multiplied, as did the costs of providing them.

Although this growth and strain on infrastructure was not unique to these post-war towns, the level of growth experienced in Natick and Framingham was particularly high.

In addition, tension was created between newcomers and the old-timers, particularly over sources of revenue for service provision (Crawford 1987, 77). A Harvard GSD study of Framingham in 1947 observed that although the town was taking in increased revenue, the money was not being invested in modernizing and expanding the deteriorating "physical assets" of the community (Harvard GSD 1947, 11).

Existing conditions in these towns which had been built for the pedestrian, and the horse-drawn carriage, and not the automobile, were ripe for a change. Most evident on the land use map of 1947 is the relatively small area within which is concentrated most homes, businesses and industry in both towns. Framingham's main commercial center was strung out along the railroad route of 135. This street was the most heavily traveled and congested street in Framingham. The passage of the railroad down its middle added to its congestion. Parking was completely inadequate for the many cars, which were now the common mode of transportation. The stores, like the infrastructure, had not been modernized or expanded to meet changing needs and to keep pace with the mushrooming growth. Studies showed that Framingham's population was spending 42% of its income outside the town (Harvard GSD 1947, 10).

Retail, industry, car lots, commercial activity and residences abutted one another in close quarters. Industrial and commercial space was cramped, with little space for expansion. Building more business in this area to keep up with growing demand would be difficult. Harvard, in touch with visions of the future work place, presented Framingham with a development scenario of a new "lighter" industry dependent on trucks rather than rail, which could spread out and be "clean and airy, provide generous parking for its employees, and have open space around it." They advised that if Framingham did not actively plan to accommodate growing demand, and innovation, new businesses would develop elsewhere and contribute to the further decline of Framingham's Central Business District.

Many large tracts of land around Route 9, however, lay open for development. Years of concentrated development around the railroad had left undeveloped the northern areas of both Framingham and Natick around and above Worcester Road. As the road again grew in importance, small commercial businesses had begun to locate along it. By 1947 the authors of the Harvard study worried that the commercial development growing along the Turnpike was preventing it from performing its function as a through road (Harvard GSD 1947, 11).

The impetus was great for a new kind of commercial/ industrial development, and the timing was right. The towns were not meeting the shopping needs of the increasingly auto-focused families. Therefore, increasing consumer demand was not being met. The increasing demand for revenues to support infrastructure and services was putting pressure on politicians to find a new source of revenue. Route 9 was again gaining importance as a major east-west access, and small businesses were developing along it, illustrating the road's potential to attract commercial and industrial development. Across the country, visions and examples of new airy, spacious and convenient commercial and industrial development, created by planners, architects, and developers were capturing attention.

Adding to these incentives were other conditions that encouraged business expansion. Large tracts of cheap land were available. There were few guidelines or regulations on development. The potential existed for large profits for both business and land owners because there was unmet demand.

Thus, the reemergence of Worcester Road as an important transportation access was soon to cause a third movement of commercial and industrial activity, this time from the railroad back to its original location along Route 9.

CHAPTER 3: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

3.1. 1949-1960. ESTABLISHING AN IDENTITY; FATE, CHOICE AND POWER.

In 1949, Framingham's young dynamic Chairman of Public Works, Anthony Colonna, presented a question to the town Meeting that would change the course of history in Framingham. Controversy was brewing over sewer and water problems. The water supply was unsatisfactory. Worse, a bad odor was rifting from the town's sewer beds which were strained beyond capacity. He made his plea, "Does this town want to grow and prosper, and take advantage of economic opportunity, or do we want to stay exactly as we are?" He saw opportunity in the need to address infrastructure problems. By the end of the evening, the town Meeting had voted to allocate money for growth. Soon, through negotiation and political influence, Colonna had the state's sewerage system extended from Wellesley to Framingham, hooking the town into the state system. With town money, a permanent water supply was created. Town Meeting had chosen a pro-growth stance, one they would maintain for many years.

This story told by Mr. Colonna illustrates several issues central to the story of growth in Framingham and Natick. First, by the late 1940s and early 1950s, it was clear that

Framingham was in a cycle of rapid population growth - the town was in a position to experience the regional trend of population redistribution from city to suburb in an intense way. Second, a critical question loomed, one which the town had little experience to deal with - "What does it mean to be a rapidly growing suburb, and is this what we want for the future of our town?" Third, both political leaders and the Town Meeting, favored and took action to encourage growth. This Chapter attempts to illustrate that the establishment of the "Golden Triangle" as a regional commercial and industrial growth center began early, and was fostered by regional circumstances, but ultimately confirmed by conscious choice.

Shoppers' World Chooses Framingham

As previously discussed, the 1940s brought unprecedented population growth to the communities west of Boston, and Framingham and Natick were in the forefront of growth. Existing conditions, ripe for commercial development, foreshadowed a new period of growth and change. Adding to these conditions, town government was beginning to take pro-growth actions to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the economic cycle. It was at just this time in history, when Colonna and other government officials began to take

decidedly pro-growth actions, that the town entered into negotiations with Allied Stores, one of the nations largest department store chains. Allied Stores was looking for a site for the country's first regional mall, Shoppers' World. At the time, the direction of suburban growth was being accommodated and stimulated by an enterprising man named Martin Cerel. Starting in the early 1940s, Mr. Cerel's real estate company marketed and sold large parcels of land for the creation of subdivisions of hundreds of "slab" houses, almost singlehandedly meeting the demand for affordable housing in Natick and Framingham. By 1950 the population explosion in Natick was evident. Framingham was just beginning to realize and feel the impacts of the growth, perhaps because it is a bigger town than Natick, and because Natick is closer to Boston.

By the mid to late 1940s, the level of population growth already began to inspire Cerel and other entrepreneurs to see that housing development was not the only type of development that could be profitable in the Natick-Framingham area. The elements needed to make commercial and industrial development not only feasible, but potentially very profitable, were in place.

Those who remember Worcester Road in the 1940s, describe a large expanse of land, removed from the core of development. As it became an increasingly well traveled and important road, it began to be spotted with a few local commercial ventures serving the towns and the traveler, including several restaurants and diners, and a night club. Housing, mostly from earlier years, also spotted the road. On a huge parcel of land near Speen Street on Route 9 sat Wyman's Garden Center. It was Wyman's site, on Route 9, that was selected by Allied Stores for the development of Shoppers' World.

The selection of the Wyman site was influenced by another equally crucial factor. At the time of Allied Stores' negotiations with the town of Framingham, the Massachusetts Turnpike was being planned. Although it wouldn't be built through the area until later in the decade, the decision about the general route had already been made, and negotiations over where the exits should be were underway. The positioning of the Turnpike would increase regional access to the area, attracting a greatly expanded market of consumers. Political and business leaders such as Mr. Colonna actively used negotiations over the placement of the Turnpike exit ramp as a bargaining chip to lure and keep the Shoppers' World development in Framingham. John Callahan, the Chairman of

the Turnpike Authority, was convinced of the huge potential of the mall, and wanted Framingham's exit to have direct access into the Mall site. For unknown reasons, Allied Stores rejected this proposal, despite the state's proposition to pay much of the cost.

A Struggle for Direction

In the 1940s and early 1950s, many factors had converged to create the place and time for growth, and that trend was accommodated by the attitudes of both towns. By 1950, as growth mushroomed, a public voice began to emerge in both communities challenging the benefits of growth. There was still time to make choices about the type and scope of growth.

Growth in the 1940s and early 1950s had been a mixed blessing, particularly for Natick. At first, the median family income escalated and new commercial and industrial development increased land values, all adding to the tax base. But municipal costs began a steady increase. By the end of the 1940s the costs of providing services for the growth began to put Natick in debt. Natick's Comprehensive Plan of 1959 tells the town, "residential expansion of the impact type experienced by Natick ... does not pay its way (1959, 37)." The real personal property taxes from these new families fell

"alarmingly short" of revenue required to provide for the increased public services.

In 1950 Framingham had an active and ardent Planning Board, determined to avoid the financial strain that Natick was experiencing, and to deal thoughtfully with the issues of growth which were upon them. They began a process with several other town boards and committees to wrestle with the issues and create a plan for the managing the town's future. There were two issues that dominated the Planning Board's struggle. They worried that,

> 1) "While the trends of growth and the problems to be solved (were) clear, the objectives to be sought in their solutions (were) not (Dodge 1962. II)."
> In addition "there was little or no reference material for a reliable source of advice for what was to become the most controversial question of this decade, namely, the desirability or undesirability or residential growth in a suburban community...", and
> 2) did residential growth have to mean increased taxes, unattractive destruction of natural resources, and other negative effects that the public worried about?

The Framingham Planning Board's efforts concluded early on that growth did not have to mean increased taxes, and that Natick's fiscal crises could, in fact, be avoided in Framingham. Therefore, the Planning Board decided that town policy should be to encourage growth - not to stop it as many citizens wanted - but to guide it thoughtfully, with carefully conceived fiscal policy.

Controlling Growth with Fiscal Policy

No action was taken to inhibit growth. Instead, the town concentrated on fiscal policy in order to ensure that growth would not put the town in debt or result in raised taxes. According to a study documenting the "successful" activities of the Framingham Planning Board between 1950 and 1960, by 1952 the Board had "established a framework for controlling growth". This framework featured the establishment of subdivision regulations that would require the developer, rather than the town, to install most of the public facilities required by new development, including sewer and water connections and the creation of roads. Zoning was altered, with financial considerations in mind. The study states, "one of the major considerations in determining which areas were to be zoned in each lot size was the existence of public

utilities and the ease with which they could be extended by developers rather than at town expense (Dodge 1962, 10)." Another crucial goal of the policy was to encourage the expansion of commercial and industrial development to balance the costs of residential growth.

It is important to note that although the Framingham Planning Board's goal was to have "controlled" growth, their strategies had a somewhat narrow focus of short term fiscal solvency. There is a sentiment which is widely expressed now and which was expressed in this study, published by a member of the 1950 Framingham Planning Board documenting their work. That is, that there was a lack of tools to guide physical design, and a lack of ideas about how to deal with this new suburban growth, particularly having to do with establishing a vision for what the community might be in the future. The Planning Board's document laments that while people were unhappy that the builders constructing houses were creating unattractive subdivisions, "the Planning Board ... was powerless to create aesthetic standards and also realized that government regulation of aesthetics had usually failed in the past (Dodge 1962, IX)."

By 1954, the issue of population growth was still highly controversial in Framingham. Some citizen groups tried to get

town Boards to adopt measures to retard growth. However, the pro-growth stance of town government was not dramatically altered by this popular sentiment. In 1957, "there was almost a complete change in the membership of the Planning Board (Dodge 1962, X)." Despite the change in membership, policies did not change appreciably. The new Planning Board members held to the postures on growth taken by the earlier Planning Board. The earlier Planning Board had laid the foundation for growth by securing zoning changes, including the re-zoning of numerous residential areas to industrial zones, the re-zoning of increasing portions of Route 9 from residential to commercial, and the encouragement of a diversity of housing types including more expensive housing.

Part of the reason that there was no real change in policy despite the public outcry may be that despite the controversy over growth issues, there was no clear mandate. Some powerful groups were for the policies, and many were ambivalent. Different sectors of town government has already become invested in pro-growth action. Powerful public figures, such as Colonna, along with Town Meeting and powerful business interests, had been actively promoting growth since the late 1940s. The results of their actions - water and sewer extensions, Turnpike exits and the Shoppers' World Mall - were

in place. The Planning Board, for their own reasons, had set concrete "infrastructure", in the form of regulations, in place to promote commercial and industrial development.

There was tremendous immediate reward for promoting growth. Town government's pro-growth attitude was fueled by the fast and furious response of commercial and industrial development and by the benefits it brought. With the town's encouragement of both residential and commercial development, growth began to take on a life of its own.

While the unparalleled population growth in Natick in the 1940s had caused a fiscal crises, Framingham had time to consider how to avoid one. This, along with a slightly higher income population in Natick, may, in part, account for a difference in the approaches each town would take toward subsequent growth. Although both towns welcomed residential, commercial and industrial growth, Framingham's attitude has been loose and free, while Natick has been more cautious and discriminating.

The Impact of Choice: The Massachusetts Turnpike

While some forces which shape economic growth seem to be fated beyond, or at least not manipulated by purposeful action, many events significant to economic growth or decline

are assisted by purposeful decisions, whether they were intended to bring about the resulting outcome or not. In the case of Framingham, and to a lesser extent Natick, both types of forces have helped shape their economic growth. The building of the Massachusetts Turnpike is a case in point.

Location, particularly in terms of access, had been key in the past to making Framingham and Natick flourishing economic entities, earliest, as a stopping point on Worcester Road bringing business and population, and later, in nourishing industry in the days of the railroads. In the 1950s Worcester Road had gained back its early importance, but it was the connection to the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) that boosted the Golden Triangle area into a new regional significance. The Turnpike was key to the location of the Shoppers' World Mall, and the newly built exits confirmed the area as appropriate and profitable for commercial and industrial development.

The planning and building of the Turnpike in the late 1940s and early 1950s was a politically charged endeavor. It was clear that the Massachusetts Turnpike could be the bearer of economic opportunity (or conversely of unwanted growth and traffic). Framingham had taken a pro-growth stand. Realizing the potential economic benefit of Turnpike exits,

the town actively sought connection to the new road. More importantly, Anthony Colonna, whose long political career representing Framingham spanned 37 years, had the power and the will to help it happen. He was then Chairman of the Framingham Board of Public Works and a State Representative. As a State Representative, Colonna was House Chairman of the Joint Committee on Third Reading, the influential committee where a bill stops for review before it can continue on to the Legislature. Framingham wanted two Turnpike exits, when only one exit per town was planned.

With the town and the business community behind him, Colonna led negotiations with Callahan, (Chairman of the Turnpike Authority), who was, at the time, highly invested in the passing of a controversial Air Rights Bill which would allow the state the right to build over the Turnpike. The final result of their negotiations was two Turnpike exits for Framingham (which is the only town in the state to have two exits), and the passing of the Air Rights Bill.

Decision-making policies and constraints in the building of the Turnpike affected the area in other ways as well. An important reason for the building of the Turnpike was to increase east west capacity, thereby alleviating through traffic on Route 9 (Central Transportation Planning Staff

1988, 27). The locational policy when building the Turnpike was generally to go through tracts of undeveloped land along community borders, taking the path of least resistance. The Turnpike (I-90) was intended to parallel the general route of Route 9, from Boston to Worcester and beyond. Yet according to a recent Transportation study by CTPS, because of the locational policy, I-90 does not parallel Route 9 closely enough to alleviate enough through traffic from the road. In addition, it does not go directly through Worcester, because the city protested and stopped the Highway project in their area. Because the Turnpike does not provide a close enough parallel of the route from Framingham to Worcester, this section is the least traveled section of the Turnpike today, while Route 9 carries considerable volume from Boston to Worcester (Central Transportation Planning Staff 1988, 27).

Not only did the Turnpike do less than was intended to reduce traffic on Route 9, it also contributed to traffic problems in several other ways. Although the Turnpike did not alleviate through traffic from Route 9, its existence rendered Route 9 a more local road in the eyes of developers, the towns, and the state, further establishing its identity as a commercial center, and making decisions for lights and curb-

cuts which would slow traffic, more acceptable. The construction of I-90 also reduced the priority of upgrading Route 9 to accommodate heavy loads of traffic. Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, the Turnpike increased land values and desirability of the area, setting off the continuing and intense development which brings the traffic troubling the area today.

3. 2. 1960-1974. MANAGING GROWTH; THE REIGN OF THE DEVELOPER

Framingham and Natick blossomed with ever increasing development. In the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, a steady stream of commercial and industrial growth created a strip of development along Route 9 that came to be known as the "Golden Mile". Commercial development of every size and shape found its way to the area. Two more large scale malls, and numerous mini-malls and single stores joined Shoppers' World in a growing strip of development. Major industries such as General Motors moved to the area as well. Land values increased, town revenues increased and kept up with residential growth. The area became increasingly popular for developers and consumers alike. While the fiscal books were balanced, most would agree that land use, design, and general planning issues were only loosely and inconsistently addressed. The result was the reign of the individual developer.

This chapter examines the roles of the developer and the public sector in generating a strip of development that today is considered aesthetically lacking and difficult to maneuver for pedestrian and car alike - a place that is more appealing on the inside than on the outside. We commonly attribute the results of growth to developers; but developers work within

an historic and public framework of consumer demand, social values, and the stepping stones of tools and ideas which have come before. Most significantly for this analysis, they work within a regulatory and development framework set by the public sector.

The Development of the Strip

The planning and design of the Shoppers' World Mall is exemplary of the type of thinking that shaped the configuration of the commercial strip. The Mall was designed to meet consumer demand. As the move to the suburbs had indicated, and as the Harvard GSD study of 1947 predicted, consumers wanted a change from crowded, dirty and noisy conditions of the city and even from the Central Business Districts of the suburbs. The Harvard study emphasized that the consumer wanted a shopping experience that maximized convenience, and convenience meant ease of access to the automobile. Although hindsight tells us that accommodation to the automobile doesn't necessarily mean convenience, the car symbolized the new suburban way of life. Therefore, the Mall was built for the car. Site design mimicked the ideal of the suburban single family home - set back, low and spread out, with trees and open space, featuring its own separate entrance

from the road, and an abundance of parking.

The orientation of new commercial development toward the car had important implications. In the traditional downtown, the consumer, as a pedestrian, demands a mix of interrelated uses close together along a street or a square. Because the traditional neighborhood downtown center is used by local residents and pedestrians; uses such as retail, services, offices and housing are integrally connected together into one center of activity. By contrast, because of the scale of the Route 9 corridor, and its regional nature, the consumer in a car instead selects one complex to enter into for a single purpose. Uses are no longer economically interdependent.

Therefore, the businesses on Route 9 benefit from their distinguishability and accessibility relative to the other businesses lining the street - in effect, their separateness and individuality. Each commercial endeavor sits on an isolated site, with its own curb cut and entrance, and its own large sign. An abundance of parking is always easily seen and accessed.

Because the commercial strip was built for the automobile rather than the pedestrian, the scale of design was geared toward the passing car. Large, clear signs and landmarks lured the shopper, while beauty or architectural detail which

might have attracted the pedestrian was virtually ignored.

The speculative development of Route 9 encouraged the involvement of a large and diverse group of businesses, developers and investors. The planning and design of each site reflected the diverse judgments, standards, and priorities of the many different developers, with little regard for consistency or context. Because there were no consistent design standards or guidelines, each building looked different. Indeed, a development endeavored to stand out, rather than harmonize with its neighbors, in order to distinguish itself.

The developer's goals were to attract and accomodate the automobile, and serve the consumer once inside the store or building. Because of the scale and nature of this new type of suburban development, the incentive to address the larger issues of the experience of the place as a whole outside the individual buildings was lacking. Concern for the physical and aesthetic relationships between buildings, programming of uses, public and common spaces, or traffic, was virtually non-existent. The private sector had little motivation to address these concerns. Therefore, if such provisions were to come at all, they had to come from or be promoted by the vision and regulations set by the public sector.

The Booster Spirit

The 1950s had begun an era of optimism and excitement about commercial and industrial growth. Early on, a Natick newspaper clearly articulated the benefits to the town of a predicted "period of prosperity which... will warrant the name 'boom town' era." It stated, "One of the most important and immediate benefits ...will be the addition of millions of dollars worth of assessable property...available to meet ever-increasing costs of business and government, and to build for the future." It goes on to count the thousands of jobs to be made available through the newest commercial center, and to anticipate the "tremendous amount of business" to be brought to local merchants by those people who are employed by these new businesses (Natick Bulletin 1951).

Fifteen years later, in 1966, newspaper articles still reflected this optimistic glow. One reporter writes, "At the end of World War II, Natick was a pleasant rural community. Fired with creative imagination, its residents have nursed it through its growing pains until it stands today a tribute to the dream and efforts of those who had faith in its potential (Fitzpatrick 1966)."

Some residents felt commercial and industrial development would bring the towns back the prestige and glory they once

had in the mid 1800s as manufacturing centers. For the consumer, new development held an air of innovation - cleaner, quieter and more technologically advanced industry, and "commercial centers" of a scale and openness not seen in the past. Development offered the much desired expansion of services, but most importantly, the luxury and convenience of accommodation to the automobile. The towns were therefore seeking and welcoming commercial and industrial development to meet fiscal and social goals.

A highly positive attitude about commercial and industrial growth, the values of the times, lack of foresight about the rate, scope and impacts of growth, and a lack of appropriate tools all contributed to a public sector approach development that many have called "laissez-faire". However, there is another layer of forces that reveal a perhaps more profound cause for a seeming lack of control or guidance over the area. That is the fragmented and undirected nature of decision-making regarding development. The structure of local government and its decision-making process is exemplary of the cause and nature of this problem.

Attitudes and structure of Local Government

Framingham and Natick's long standing diversity in population and in economy had generated a spirit and fervor

for independence, individual rights, and democracy. This spirit had two somewhat conflicting sides. Historically it both encouraged emerging development, and also contributed to concerns about the threat of over-development on individual property rights. In the early 1950s concern arose regarding how increasing residential growth might lower property values, increase tax rates, and infringe on the "right to exclusivity" of the existing townspeople. Individual rights of people living in the town were paramount, yet the right to develop would have to be controlled to gain those rights. This conflict was also manifested in the form of the town government. The chosen Town Meeting form of government was seen as a cherished, ultimate democracy, with many individually elected members, boards and committees. Yet the involvement and autonomy of the many individuals in town government did not necessarily result in what was best for the community as a whole or for the individual resident.

The structure of municipal government and the decision-making process was characterized by decentralization of power and a plethora of independently elected decision-makers and decision-making bodies. The structure was similar in both towns, and has remained relatively the same over time. Each had a representative Town Meeting form of government with over

200 members. Decisions to be made by the Town Meeting often required a 2/3 vote, in effect the agreement of many diverse interests. Selectmen served as the towns' chief executives, but most of the executive power was distributed among a large array of individually elected representatives, committees, and boards. For example, the boards and committees involved in development decisions included the Planning Board, the Department of Public Works, the Zoning Board Of Appeals, the Town Selectmen, and others.

The priority of ensuring individual development rights dominated over considerations about the implications of developer's choices. Town Meeting was so diverse, that sharp decisions about the town's future were replaced by the individual preferences of many. Town government encouraged growth with little restriction, seeing planning as an infringement on individual rights - both the rights of their own discretion, and the rights of the developer.

While this decentralized form of government gave many people a chance to serve, and allowed air to many opinions, its drawbacks have often been debated through the years. The structure has at times led to, 1) a lack of accountability, leading to the strong representation of special interests and lack of consistency in regulation, 2) a lack of coordination

and cooperation, leading to a lack of comprehensive and coordinated goals, and 3) a lack of agreement leading to a lack of decision-making made and implementation regarding growth and change. There were efforts to plan in both communities, but in different ways for each community, the diffuse structure of decision-making created roadblocks to the quality and comprehensiveness of the efforts, and most significantly, to ratification and implementation.

First, the degree of decentralization and the lack of clear lines of authority make government decision-making less visible and difficult for the average citizen to keep abreast of the activities of many committees. Who but avid political observers could keep track of the best candidates for so many boards and committees? A study commissioned by the town of Natick to assess the organization of its municipal government reported that at the 1968 annual town election, depending on the precinct, the voter was faced with the names of 42 to 56 candidates competing for 32 to 39 positions (The Organization and Management of the Municipal Govt. 1968, 32). Framingham's ballot included even more names. In addition, an average of only 15 - 20% of those registered to vote actually voted in town elections. The very small voting population was therefore not necessarily the voice of the entire community,

but rather of those who voted - those who had enough interest to keep track of a particular Board or issue.

Political influence had clearly contributed to what was characterized as a strong "pro-developer", "pro- growth" stance among many boards and committees influential in development decisions, and in some instances, particularly in Framingham, to an anti-planning attitude. A lack of accountability, and a strong commitment to the business community and development interests had led to a lack of adherence to rules and regulations governing development. Up until recently, business people and developers were the strongest local voice concerned about the area. This group, in favor of growth, and against anything which would inhibit individual rights or make development of the area more difficult, was a forceful and single lobby for many years. Some say that, particularly in Framingham, strong ties to the development community led to decisions favoring a few developers.

Second, having many "departments" each with their own well-defined concept of their specific function, made it difficult for each one to keep track of, or coordinate, related decision- making bodies, and, in fact, fostered competition between them. This also made it more difficult to see issues

within a larger context, particularly as the communities grew and became increasingly complex.

Finally, with so many differing opinions, it at times became virtually impossible to come to a decision or agreement on important or controversial topics, thereby making it difficult to forge ahead with planning strategies that would keep up with the fast pace of change. Small revisions to the zoning by-laws were made piecemeal through the years, but comprehensive planning was rarely undertaken, and virtually never agreed upon. In Natick, two master planning efforts in fifty years, one in 1959, and one in 1970 were attempted. The 1959 plan resulted in revision of the town's zoning by-laws, but the 1970 plan was unwanted by most, and did not survive the rejection of the Planning Board. In Framingham, a 1967 master plan was never officially accepted or used by the town. A second master planning effort begun in 1974 dragged on for a period of seven years, and was rejected three times by the Town Meeting.

Within these efforts, there was never agreement on a vision, never enough of the "powers that be" involved, and always infringed upon someone's property rights or ideals. With lack of agreement, plans never passed the Town Meeting to reach official status.

Although both towns experienced similar problems in decision-making with regard to planning, as described above, there was a difference in attitudes. Natick was more concerned about guiding growth than was Framingham. Through the years the Natick Planning Board had stronger ideas about how to control growth, took more action, and was quicker to implement growth control strategies. However, the efforts were characterized by separate, individual, and sometimes contradictory actions, and plagued by the type of problems cited above. For instance, according to Natick's current Town Administrator, Fred Conley, for many years the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) took a much more lenient stance than did the Planning Board. Because a developer could choose either the Planning Board, or the ZBA, or the Town Meeting for a Zoning variance request, without needing to consult all three, most preferred the ZBA. Consequently, the Planning Board was frequently in litigation with the ZBA over decisions they felt were inappropriate. Interestingly, the Planning Board had been decidedly against master planning efforts, preferring to make decisions independently.

Enforcement

Regulation of development did exist during this period, in the form of zoning, intensity, and subdivision regulations.

These broad rules were generally followed. However, the regulations did not reflect up-to-date guidance appropriate for the area. Framingham's 1939 zoning map, and Natick's 1957 zoning map changed piecemeal over time, and were used for decades. They are only now undergoing substantial revision. Some zoning changes were made over the years to reflect what in fact existed. Some say the towns practiced "fiscal zoning" - making changes to increase revenue, rather than to improve land use patterns. Others describe changes made for less noble causes. Particularly in the 1940s and 1950s, the bylaws were vague in definitions, boundaries, and confusing in their format. Natick's regulations for many years did not include a map, an index, or definitions.

Until recently, intensity and subdivision regulations remained the same in their spirit and capacity, reflecting the early suburban ideals desiring low, spread out landscapes, large setbacks and extensive parking. They were not updated to reflect the needs of the changing landscape. The combination of a lack of vision, a lack of comprehensive, consistent or up to date planning or regulation to guide development, and adherence to regulations set when our "picture" of the suburban was very different, all contributed to the haphazard development that occurred.

3. 3. 1974-1984. THE EVOLUTION INTO REGIONAL CENTER

The identities of Natick and Framingham have historically been tied to their regional location in Massachusetts. Although the two towns have been economically independent, their central location and connection through transportation routes to the rest of the state has made them particularly sensitive to regional and national economic trends. The two towns experienced the impact of regional economic change in a profound way - through the years of industrial progress in the early 19th century, the expansion of the railroad, the decline of industry, the depression, and through the population shift from city to suburbia. In the same dramatic way, the area experienced the impact of the "Massachusetts Miracle", the change from a manufacturing to a service economy, the boom of the high tech industry, and the movement of the office sector to the suburbs.

This chapter will discuss the role that the area's regional connection has had on its development, evident in a number of important ways in the period between 1974 and 1985. In this period, the Triangle became central to the state's economic prosperity and office development boom, ultimately emerging as a regional commercial and employment center, and changing in character and land use patterns. As the Triangle gained

regional significance, the state's role in the development of the Triangle became increasingly important as a provider of infrastructure to the growing center. These changes, among others, finally brought about a new awareness and concern for issues regarding quality of life.

The Change From Local to Regional Center

Early in the decade of the 1970s Massachusetts was moving away from its traditional industrial base toward a service based economy and beginning a period of economic prosperity. Due to this strengthening economy and the changing economic base, office development outside the central city began to blossom. It first began to flourish around the central and accessible transportation corridor of Route 128, just outside of Boston. As development along Route 128 grew increasingly congested, and land values rose, brokers and developers of office space began to look one stop further down the highway at the Natick Framingham Triangle. In the early 1970s the Triangle was a commercial center of growing size and importance to the region, but was still perceived as somewhat local in use and character. Small stores had a strong presence, despite the existence of several large malls. There was a large sector zoned for manufacturing, focused

primarily north of Route 9 along Speen Street, lying directly adjacent to the Turnpike and connecting transportation routes. The industrial area was characterized by large, under-developed parcels, concrete and open space, warehouses and low wide structures (see Appendix F). Because of the rising value of real estate, manufacturing became an undervalued use of the land adjacent to Route 9 and the Turnpike, making large industrially zoned sites a potential location for office development.

The Natick Framingham Triangle was desirable for office development in the same way that it had been for retail. Real estate brokers and developers saw potential demand for office space in the area because of its accessibility to the entire region, its economic health, its large plots of under-developed land directly accessible to transportation routes, and the relatively low cost of land. Importantly, Natick and Framingham were particularly appealing to corporate headquarters and growing companies because the region was convenient and attractive to a critical mass of desired populations. This included an educated and motivated work force of decision-makers and managers living in the surrounding suburbs, and clients and other workers coming from both the east and the west. According to economist David

Birch, who refers to these companies as Gazelles because of their fast rate of growth, it is Gazelles that attract other companies and ultimately create "growth nodes".

The advent of office development signified a new chapter in the history of the growth in the Triangle, changing the area's character, use and scale. First, the attraction of office development generated higher land values, higher floor area ratios and increased densities, both in office and commercial development. Second, it greatly increased the daytime population, and the number of users from all over the state. Third, the appearance of "Gazelles" had the impact of generating the atmosphere of a pioneer area offering high quality employment and creative, scientific endeavors. The level of development, use and interest in the area increased. A number of those people interviewed for this report cited 1974, when the first offices were being built, as the time when the extent of growth and change began to give the area a new demeanor.

According to the South Middlesex Area Chamber of Commerce (SMACC) in its Town Profile for Framingham, "In the six years between 1973 and 1979, Framingham's private sector total employment increased 28% and the number of establishments grew 20% indicating a strong local economy." The pace continued

to increase. "Between 1977 and 1982, sales in the area jumped 58%. Over that same period, the number of retail stores increased by 37% and eating and drinking establishments grew by 57% (Martin, Middlesex News 1985)." By 1984 the MetroWest area, focused on Natick and Framingham, had the largest concentration of retail activity in New England outside of Boston, with more than 2 million square feet of retail space generating approximately $600 million in retial sales annually (Robinson 1985A, 6). Development of increasing magnitude filled the gaps of the wide strip on both sides of Route 9.

The area began to have increasing regional importance as an employment center for the Metropolitan area. A limited number of communities were attracting the majority of commercial and office development, turning a few areas into employment nodes for the region. Between 1967 and 1985, the "Route 9 Region" experienced a 97% increase in employment. In the same time period, regional employment growth was only 42% (CTPS 1988, 40).

While commercial and industrial development continued to grow, residential growth was tapering off. Between 1967 and 1985, population in the Route 9 Region increased by only 7%. This was partially accounted for by a shortage of affordable housing. Land was more scarce and hence, more valuable;

therefore, the single family home became less affordable. A change in the Framingham's Zoning By-law in 1972 prohibiting the development of multifamily units exacerbated the housing shortage. No longer did people live and work in the same town. There was increasing interdependence between towns, and increasing suburb to suburb commutes.

Intensity of Growth Magnifies Problems

The rapid pace of development, and change in character and use of the area began to magnify problems that already existed. Traffic, which had been a problem for many years, became worse. Many more cars were traveling more miles to reach the area due to the increased use of the region, and the decreasing importance of local boundaries for shopping and employment. The new development strained water supplies, and increased the costs of solid waste disposal. Local stores which had given the area a recognizable identity were disappearing, and being replaced by look alikes seen state and country-wide. The visual and physical disorganization of the Triangle increased. The design of the office buildings and complexes exacerbated the isolation of individual uses. Framingham began to appear on the covers of magazines which reproached the negative affects of suburban sprawl. (See

photos on pages 10 - 13 in Chapter 1).

The break down of traditional home/work boundaries between communities, the emergence of some areas as commercial and employment centers for the region, and the aggravation of problems associated with growth, together contributed to make balanced growth a regional issue. No longer were the balance of community functions self contained within each town, and no longer did the negative externalities of growth, such as traffic and pollution, only affect the municipality within which it was concentrated.

The Involvement of the State

In this period of growth, Governor Dukakis claimed, "MetroWest is the driving engine behind the economic revival in the state (Robinson 1985A, 6)." State and local officials joined together in praising the economic gains that this development brought to the state in the form of taxes, jobs and public relations. Along with this economic success came an obligation for the state to deal with the increasing demands of growth on infrastructure. Because Route 9, and other important connecting roads such as Route 30, and Route 126, were state roads, it was considered state responsibility to maintain these roads, and keep them accommodating ever

increasing loads of traffic. Because transportation routes are the core and the lifeline of the Triangle, the state's role was critical, and influential, in guiding both regional and local development.

In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, much effort was put into addressing increasingly complex transportation problems, but only limited solutions were actually implemented. This was primarily the result of two difficult stumbling blocks to transportation planning in the Golden Triangle. First, was the need, yet the inability, to coordinate local and state efforts. Second, was the difficulty of making large-scale transportation interventions in a constantly changing, complex environment not conducive to transportation solutions.

Improving transportation problems required the joint efforts of the towns and the state to coordinate roads with land use and development goals. However, for many years, neither the towns nor the state approached the problem in a coordinated way. The 1960s was an era of large scale transportation studies. State-of-the-art transportation planning focused on new technologies, accident prevention, congestion relief, and efficient investment. The evaluation of alternatives was pictured almost entirely in economic terms. Transportation improvements were to expand the capacity and efficiency of

roads (Dickey 1983, 3). In the 1960s and early 1970s the state of Massachusetts used this approach to address traffic problems in the Golden Triangle. Little effort was made to coordinate state improvements with local action, or to tie infrastructure planning to land use planning. Their many transportation studies in this era concentrated on the technical expansion of capacity. Later in the 1970s, when the state began to see the need to coordinate efforts, local and state interests clashed. The ultimate goal, to relieve traffic congestion, was the same, but their approaches differed. The state interests focused on regaining Route 9 as a through road. In addition, the state felt the towns had a responsibility equal to their own, in limiting development in order to control traffic. The towns felt it was the state's responsibility to accommodate increased demand, and did not want to limit growth. They also felt that Route 9 had been established as a local road, and was no longer a "through" road for high speed traffic. They considered work on other connecting roads such as Routes 30 and 126 equally important. These conflicts still exist today.

The Difficult Task of Transportation Planning

The state's efforts to solve large scale transportation problems in the Triangle, beginning in ernest in the late

1960s, was fraught with difficulty. Having to surmount many obstacles influenced the shape, scope and timing of interventions. In particular, addressing traffic problems was complicated by 1) the fast pace of growth and change - in the Triangle, in Federal regulations, and in the expectations of transportation planning, 2) the scale of most road improvement projects, and 3) differing opinions about the "best" approach. The first major transportation study, commissioned by the Massachusetts Department of Public Works (MDPW) in 1967, focused on the rebuilding of Route 9 to improve its efficiency and expand capacity. The many iterations of this study which followed illustrate the impediments to solving the traffic problems in the Golden Triangle.

The 1967 plan recommends that Route 9 should be partially depressed, and that a directional type interchange be built at Speen Street. The recommended solution was an expensive one, but according to TAMS, the study's author, the cost was justified by greater user benefits. Unhappy with the cost of the TAMS proposal, the MDPW undertook their own study, chose a less expensive plan, only to revise it again to reflect local business concern. Final design work was begun on this plan, but has halted in 1971 because of the excessive increases in

right-of-way costs.

In the early 1970s, it became clear that a more comprehensive study of transportation needs and options would be necessary, the reasons being two-fold. First, intense development and the resulting inflation of land values had significantly changed transportation needs in the Golden Triangle. Second, by this time, federal and state legislation had changed to require an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the road construction project. The EIS would need to reflect a systematic, interdisciplinary approach to planning and decision making, including full investigation of alternatives in respect to their social, economic and environmental impacts.

TAMS was commissioned to undertake a more comprehensive study. This time the report recommended an array of interventions including: provision of additional capacity on most existing roads in the Triangle, an internal road system built to divert some traffic from major roads, a connector road to be built to provide additional north-south capacity, and the development of public transit alternatives. The crowning jewel of the study was the recommended "Beetleback Interchange" at the corner of Speen Street and Route 9, which was, and in previous studies had also been, seen as the focal

point of potential traffic relief to Route 9. This interchange would be the focus of the first round of efforts to improve road conditions. In 1974 a Final Environmental Impact Statement was filed and approved for the "Beetleback".

By 1976, the estimated cost of TAMS proposed improvements was over 60 million dollars. It is no wonder than, that while the Beetleback project was implemented, the other aspects of the plan were put on hold. In fact, some who remember the project say that it took political influence to get even the Beetleback project implemented.

Subsequently, many more studies were commissioned. Between 1967 and 1986, 15 transportation studies of Route 9 were undertaken by different offices of the state, 6 on the Speen Street intersection alone. These studies show the importance of the problem to the state, the diversity of jurisdictions involved, and the diversity of effective solutions. It took years for improvements to take place, and those that were implemented were limited in scope, both because of the difficulty of the task, and the lack of coordination between the state and the towns.

Some transportation problems were aggravated by the limited approach of the solution. Also, by approaching the problem as one of the need for additional capacity, growth was again

encouraged to expand to fill it.

The nature of the project unwittingly, although maybe inevitably, contributed to a change in the character of the area from local strip to regional megacenter. In 1978, during the construction of the Interchange, a local newspaper lamented the loss of localness of the area, both literally and in spirit: "More old landmarks are disappearing every day, as a bulldozer roams the Beetleback construction site, ripping up vegetation, splintering trees and knocking down buildings. Herbert's Candy, Bickfords Pancake House, and Carvels Ice Cream are being reduced to rubble (Breed 1978)."

By the early 1980s, a sentiment began to emerge among residents that the rate and scope of growth in the Triangle was beginning to be a threat to the quality of life. Traffic was beginning to impact on residential streets that had once been enough removed from Route 9 to hide in their own little world. Development was getting larger and more out of hand, and there was no end in sight. Slowly, a new voice, questioning the benefits of growth, began to be heard.

3. 4. 1983 - PRESENT. THE CALL TO MANAGE GROWTH

In the period between 1974 and 1984, the town of Framingham spent a great deal of time attempting to create a "master plan" to guide growth. But a list of town actions compiled in 1984, documenting the ten years of work, shows a conflicted community, not ready to make a commitment to planning (DiMarino, 1984). The effort to "plan" was initiated in 1974 by a newly created Planning Department, that was established in Framingham primarily for the purpose of obtaining Federal monies that had become available for community development and urban renewal. Therefore, the initiative came from a Department with at best tentative authority and support.

A committee was formed consisting of the Planning Board and a Zoning Study Committee composed of town officials, the Chamber of Commerce, and numerous other professionals. This committee met 55 times between the years of 1974 and 1977 to draft a new zoning by-law and land-use maps. In 1978 after 23 meetings between the Planning Board and the Planning Department, a revised draft of the proposed zoning by-law was issued. More meetings and hearings were held. Finally in 1980, an article proposing the new by-law was placed on a Town Meeting Warrant, only to be "referred back for further study" as recommended by the Planning Board. When a revised by-law

was again brought before the Town Meeting later that year, it was referred back "for a year of further study" by the same Planning Board. When the Town Meeting rejected the by-law for the third time, it was decided that the total by-law would never be approved, but that pieces of it might be if they were brought back separately at another time.

The town's persistence with the effort shows some investment in the idea of planning. Yet, the town government found it impossible to agree on a comprehensive approach. Some say the clearly "anti-planning" sentiment of the Planning Board was evident in this sequence of events, and that their "referring back for further study" was only a technique to suppress the issue. Others describe the lagging effort as one that had no urgency. Without urgency, the difficulty of the task retarded its progress.

Finally, the 1980s brought a change in Framingham's attitude and actions regarding growth and planning. In keeping with other phases of developmental change in the Triangle, many factors came together to change the political tide and to begin to turn planning goals into reality. The decade was characterized by active planning efforts. However, the efforts of the 1980s were not separate from past conditions and attitudes. Their scope and content were constrained by

the beliefs, actions and institutional system of the past.

The planning struggles of the 1980s illustrate the particular difficulty of taking a comprehensive approach, when managing growth is physically, economically and politically complex. The fragmented nature of the many jurisdictions responsible for growth-related decisions, both within the towns and regionally, along with apprehensive and uninformed attitudes about planning, made comprehensive planning extremely difficult. Throughout the efforts of the 1980s, the existing political and institutional constructs obstructed the creation of a vision for the future, or a comprehensive system-wide approach to managing growth. However, as the towns continue their attempts to plan, they move closer to this goal.

A Change in Attitude and Approach to Planning

Just as the population explosion in the 1950s prompted residents to organize politically over growth-related issues, there came a point in the early 1980s when people again began to question the benefits continued rapid growth in the Triangle. The negative externalities of growth were reaching beyond such confined quarters. Throughout the state rumblings of concern over the fast, and for the most part

unguided, growth resulting from the "Massachusetts Miracle" could be heard.

There were a number of conditions that converged at the time which set the stage for a change in attitudes and action regarding planning. Increases in the scale and intensity of growth had brought its negative impacts closer to residential neighborhoods. One resident describes the early 1980s as a time when residents began to meet traffic on the way out of neighborhoods that formerly had been immune to the hectic whirl of the Golden Triangle.

Traffic, noise, pollution, and in particular the building of several large office developments on neighborhood borders that prompted neighborhoods to begin to organize. one example, the Centros House office complex, was built on the edge of an Old Connecticut Path neighborhood, just outside the perimeter of the Triangle. Residents experienced first hand the impacts of large scale development, and were angered by what they felt was an insensitive and destructive approach to their neighborhood. They began to discover that many of the aspects of the development that they objected to were actually promoted by Framingham's land-use regulations. For example, the Centros House Building faced its back like a wall to the neighborhood, its front to the highway. Because growth such

as this began to have broad reaching effects, a new group of citizens, with different priorities than the traditional business interests, now took a major interest in the development of the Triangle.

Neighboring municipalities were also becoming concerned about the increasingly broad implications of growth. Decisions made in other communities were beginning to affect their own. In addition, some issues, such as traffic, environmental concerns, and balanced growth, clearly needed regional solutions. Even Framingham's business leaders, including the Chamber of Commerce, were becoming concerned about Framingham's ability to accommodate growth, and were beginning to look toward regional solutions for answers.

At the same time, a crucial change in town government was taking place. A "new guard" was entering the political arena, replacing some of the long time political trend-setters. This "new guard" was younger, more professionally oriented, had fewer ties to political constituencies, and less investment in "business as usual." There had been an "old guard" which dominated Framingham politics for several generations, whose roots were firmly entrenched in Framingham history, politics and in their ethnic communities. For the most part Italian and Irish, most were working-class, had

close union ties, and favored growth (Robinson 1985, 18). The "new guard" of political activists were more progressive and interested in planning and changing the way the town dealt with growth.

While the years had brought a new mix of people to the area, they had remained for the most part out of politics. According to Sue Bernstein, a community activist and Town Meeting member, it took some time for this segment of the population to feel committed enough to the community to fight for the political positions of those who had extensive roots and connections in the town. It also took an important reason to get involved.

Rick Tainter who, for several years had worked in Framingham's Planning Department, was appointed Planning Director in 1983. Tainter moved with the tide, pushing for comprehensive planning for the town. He had submitted, among other proposed changes to the zoning by-law, traffic impact and site plan review articles giving the town more discretion and leverage in reviewing development proposals. In the first few years of the 1980s, these ideas for change were turned back by the Town Meeting.

Increased attention to the issue of managing growth state-wide was laying the groundwork for efforts in Framingham and

the MetroWest area, thus validating and making more feasible the growing desire to plan for and control growth. State agencies such as the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and others, were beginning to develop new and innovative tools to guide growth.

Amidst this growing rumble over growth-related issues, in 1983 Melvin Simon and Associates, a development firm from Indianapolis, Indiana submitted an Environmental Notification to the state announcing their intention to renovate and expand the Shoppers' World Mall. The firm proposed not only to double the size of the Mall, making it the largest shopping facility in Massachusetts, but also to build a "village complex" of office towers, theatres and a hotel. This proposal fueled the flickering flame of concern about quality of life in Framingham, Natick, and surrounding communities. It was in 1983, just after the Shoppers' World proposal was submitted, that tangible action began to move the lagging planning efforts of the past into gear. All of these circumstances combined to activate interest in planning. Progress came in small steps, each one building on the one before. The timing of this planning movement was crucial to the extent of its success. Planning ideas had been proposed for many years in Framingham, but were never really taken

seriously. Even in the early 1980s as attitudes began to change and the support for planning increased, it took worsening traffic conditions, a change in political representation, a change in the regional climate toward planning, several dramatic development proposals affecting neighborhoods, and an active and committed planning director to set the stage for lobbying efforts to move land use regulations forward in Framingham.

A Regional Planning Effort Begins

In 1983, leaders of the communities of Ashland, Framingham, Natick, Southborough, Sudbury, Wayland, Wellesley, and Weston began discussing the need to work together to manage growth. As a result, that year the Southern Middlesex Chamber of Commerce, selectmen from these communities, and the state's regional planning agency, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) hosted a series of meetings to discuss the communities' similar and interrelated problems. Their goal was to examine growth related issues which spanned the boundaries of the individual towns, and to begin to address problems such as traffic, water, sewer and housing in a cohesive, comprehensive manner.

Because of their interrelated problems, MAPC designated the communities the "MetroWest" region. A MetroWest Working Committee was formed. Their first effort was to support a MetroWest Growth Impacts Study by MAPC. Over a period of one and a half years, the MAPC and the Working Committee examined the effects of growth on MetroWest's transportation, water supply, wastewater disposal, and solid waste disposal system. Upon completion of the Study, the Working Committee and the MAPC agreed to formalize the planning effort. A Memorandum of Agreement was drafted and signed by all eight communities, creating the MetroWest Growth Management Committee (MGMC). The Committee would work together to solve regional problems in a comprehensive manner. The Committee was comprised of two representatives, a Planning Board member and a Selectman, from each town, and the Executive Director of the MAPC.

The MetroWest/MAPC study made recommendations that fueled thought on potential solutions to a range of problems. The Committee itself has proven to be a forum for sharing ideas, and increasing the awareness of Committee members to problems and potential solutions by serving in an educational and advisory capacity to the MetroWest communities. As will be discussed later in this report, it also has spawned more

focused efforts in some MetroWest communities. While the "MetroWest" committee recognized the need to work collectively, their ability to do so has been limited by several factors.

First, while the problems facing the eight MetroWest communities are similar, each town has different characteristics and different histories, resulting in different priorities and approaches to problem solving. For example, some of the communities felt that the MetroWest region should slow down and plan carefully for development in order to limit its impact. On the other hand, some of the larger communities, particularly Framingham, were interested in planning to accommodate growth. In particular, Framingham hoped the group would primarily deal with the regional transportation network and traffic improvement strategies.

Second, the Committee had a lack of formal power. While they were free to share ideas, and research and create growth management strategies, they held no formal power or ability to implement them. Any strategies generated by the Committee would have to be approved by the individual political processes of each affected community, and often required the abandonment of strong home-rule attitudes. This made implementing region-wide solutions extremely difficult.

A third problem was the difficulty and expense of addressing region-wide problems. As evidenced by the multi-million dollar improvements recommended by the MetroWest Study, interventions were costly and complex. Regional planning had to address problems which had already reached crisis proportions, and whose solutions might therefor necessitate major land use upheaval.

Citizens Unite for "Organized Growth"

At the same time that the MetroWest Growth Impact Study was being compiled, a group of Framingham residents joined together to form the Citizens for Organized Growth (COG). This group of residents proposed a two year building moratorium that would stop any new commercial construction, to slow the fury of development while town planners examined Framingham's zoning by-laws and made them more stringent.

According to the group, the purpose of the moratorium was to ensure that the town of Framingham had "an opportunity to develop comprehensive plans and to issue recommendations to lessen traffic congestion and to control the impact of non-residential development in the town." The group was concerned about the rapid pace of continued development, angry about the negative effects that rapid growth was having on the

community, and unhappy with the lenient and outdated planning policies of the town. One member of the Coalition summed up their feelings stating, "our town is an example of what planning is not about (Robinson, 1985, pg 12)."

The Citizens for Organized Growth found the implementation of its goals difficult. COG lobbied hard for the moratorium. Reaction in the town was mixed. Some opponents of the measure agreed that traffic was a problem, but that a moratorium was too radical a solution. Others felt the freeze was too late to change the character of the area, and likened it "to closing the barn door after the horses have escaped (1985, pg 12)." The business community and elected town officials, including the Planning Board and the town Selectmen, lobbied strongly against the moratorium, predicting financial disaster. The effort was held back by fear, financial pressure due to proposition two and one half, misconceptions about planning, and perhaps by the naivete of COG's approach.

In January 1985, the moratorium was voted down by the Planning Board, and overwhelmingly defeated by Town Meeting, 133-33. However, similar to MetroWest, their efforts raised awareness about the need to address quality of life issues through more control over growth. In addition, the proposed moratorium pushed powerful political opponents toward more

moderate positions on planning, and forced them to propose alternatives.

Under existing regulations, local boards could only review projects on the basis of strict compliance with specific regulations, such as the required number of parking spaces. In place of the growth moratorium, the Planning Director proposed and Town Meeting adopted Traffic Impact Review. Soon after, a three times rejected proposal for a Site Plan Review by-law was voted into regulation. These amendments to the zoning by-law, and other amendments which were subsequently passed in the 1980s, gave town boards increasingly more discretionary power to regulate the impacts of development, and to require mitigation.

Although significant progress was made in the mid 1980s in raising awareness about the importance of planning, in thinking pro-actively about the town's long term physical future, and in devising creative strategies to manage growth, no decision about the direction of future growth was made. The barriers to taking a more comprehensive approach were many, including the diffuse decision-making structure, existing attitudes, fears, cost and the sheer complexity of problem solving.

Instead, incremental steps were taken, broadening ideas and tools, but still leaving decisions about development to be made reactively, and through the discretion of individuals holding political power. For example, COG wanted a moratorium in order to take a comprehensive approach to guiding development. Instead, individual amendments to the zoning by-laws were gradually adopted, which allowed those departments and committees that have control over planning decisions progressively more leverage and discretion in negotiating proposed development. This put more flexibility into the system but did not give guidance to the flexibility.

Current Planning Efforts

New efforts of the late 1980s, which continue today, are increasingly successful in their attempt to be comprehensive and pro-active. However, it is clear that change does not happen in great leaps, and that these efforts are again connected to the area's past. Two efforts illustrate the direction of progress in planning, and the limits still present. The first is the Golden Triangle Plan Project, sponsored by the MetroWest Growth Management Committee, and the second is the town of Framingham's latest comprehensive planning effort.

The Golden Triangle Plan Project

In 1988, Natick and Framingham, through the MetroWest Growth Management Committee, applied for a grant from the state to create parallel and consistent zoning regulations to guide development in the Triangle. For the first time, the two interdependent communities would work together to achieve a unified development character in the Triangle, and avoid procedural conflicts. The grant was received, and a consultant (Framingham's former planning director Rick Tainter, now working for a private firm), was hired to work with a Steering Committee of Framingham and Natick public officials and private sector representatives.

The stated intent of the Plan was to "manage the intensity and quality of design along the highway corridors, to protect the public health, welfare and safety (Golden Triangle Plan Project, 1989, pg 1)." A zoning overlay would be created to achieve four goals, 1) to limit congestion, 2) to preserve environmental qualities, 3) to improve vehicular and pedestrian circulation, and 4) to provide for mitigation of the adverse impacts of development. The Plan articulates use, intensity and dimensional regulation, and open space and landscaping requirements, and proposes a system of development incentives, in the form of density bonuses, to promote further

achievement of their goals. The Plan also creates two separate districts, one in the core of the Triangle, and one along the Route 9 corridor, promoting increased density in the core, and decreased density along the highway.

While the Plan makes progress toward looking at the Triangle comprehensively by presenting distinctive ideas on making the Triangle a better, more appealing and efficient entity, it still does not provide an urban design vision, or specific land use recommendations. For example, it is not explicit about a scheme for the functioning of the Triangle as a whole, and does not specifically guide the form of improvements. A development may achieve a density bonus by providing facilities such as pedestrian paths or improved automobile circulation, but the Plan does not present a scheme for pedestrian circulation, or for traffic improvements for the area as a whole, by which a developer would be guided.

The Plan also does not articulate how the relationship between infrastructure and development should be addressed. The plan was supposed to be coordinated with a state transportation study. Because the state study was delayed, the Triangle Plan was does not make essential connections between growth and infrastructure. Without such guidance, the plan fails to promote a holistic approach to development.

Rick Tainter, the Project consultant, explained that the Committee was uncomfortable creating a land use plan, and did not want to get into specifics about how and where proposed improvements should be made. He posited several reasons for the generality of the Plan - 1) that the Committee did not want to infringe on property rights by being directive, 2) the Committee was uncomfortable with their own expertise, and 3) the Committee felt that with so much development already in place that a land use or design plan would be of limited value.

The Plan has yet to pass the most important hurdle of being approved and implemented by each community. The fact that the Committee, whose members in general are supportive of planning, was conservative in their effort, may well indicate that the towns would not approve a more radical approach. Certainly, history tells that the town governments have been slow to feel comfortable with comprehensive planning. While feedback about the Plan has been generally positive from both communities, the slowing of development and the state's current fiscal crisis, make approving the Plan a lower priority, less urgent, and more risky. The towns again are concerned that a plan might discourage development.

Framingham's Current Comprehensive Planning Effort

Framingham's current comprehensive planning effort is indicative of the concerns that business-people and town officials have about planning, and the importance of being in touch with the pulse of the community. Both the town and the Chamber of Commerce contributed to funding the effort, with slightly different motives. The town, particularly the Planning Department, and increasingly, the Planning Board, was interested in a comprehensive approach to guiding growth, while the Chamber is interested in ensuring the town can "accommodate" growth.

The planner hired to undertake the study took a special interest in the Golden Triangle and its unmet potential. With great enthusiasm, he presented the town with his vision of what the area could be like. He proposed an area with mixed-use, compatible and related structures, lining a grid pattern of streets, with a center and a community identity symbolized by specific design features.

The community responded with great skepticism, concern, and even anger. People felt he was unrealistic, and that his scheme was attempting to make the Triangle into a place that it was not. They felt that he had not listened to the voice of the community, but had come in with his own fantasy. In

addition they saw the bold steps and massive changes as infringing on property owner's rights. People were concerned with the fiscal and physical feasibility of his plan, and the burden it might place on the individual developer. They understood his scheme in a highly concrete way, for example, seeing the concept of a grid pattern as specific roads that would plow through existing stores.

Town planners and others involved in the process that rejected these plans say that the planning consultant's attitude, presentation style, and lack of respect for influential political people in the community condemned his plan as much as the scheme itself did. Although he had presented a vision, he had created his own rather than the community's vision. People were threatened by the extent of the changes proposed. There is a general sentiment that, if he had helped the community generate its own vision, by involving people more thoroughly, listening more carefully, and communicating more effectively, a more appropriate vision would have been generated and accepted by the community. People were willing to participate in the planning process, and a growing number of them were interested in a comprehensive approach, as evidenced by the progress of previous efforts, slowly changing views about planning, and

the attitude of the new guard increasingly powerful in Framingham politics. Residents have become more involved and invested in the future of the Triangle, business-people and public officials have become more aware of the need for planning to guide development, the political "old guard" is changing, and entities that were once working separately are beginning to recognize the need to work together. Because of this, progressively more pro-active, bold and comprehensive approaches to planning are finally becoming possible. However, planning is supported by a political will that is tenuous - by individuals in town government who will be replaced, and by individuals who want change, but who may soon turn their minds to other priorities if a crisis is overcome. Without institutionalization of planning goals, and empowerment of the planning process, the efforts may fade. Most importantly, without an institutional system that supports coordinated and collective decision-making, and which recognizes the essential relationship between economics, land use and infrastructure, successful implementation of a plan will remain impossible.

CHAPTER 4: LESSONS LEARNED

4.1 ANALYSIS

The Success and Limitations of Established Goals for Growth

In reviewing the patterns of history in the Natick Framingham area, lessons can be learned about how to approach planning in growth centers such as this one in the future. I began this project by asking the question, "were there goals, values and directed actions that shaped the development of this seemingly chaotic place?" Indeed, I have found that the Golden Triangle is not the result of randomness or of uncaring communities, but the result of conscious choices and priorities about the direction of development. However, the decisions about the direction of growth have been primarily programmatic ones, while an agreed upon physical vision for the Triangle and the necessary comprehensive planning to implement it have been elusive. Consequently, the physical form of the Triangle has been highly influenced by fragmented and uncoordinated decisions. The outcome has proven to be problematic.

Framingham and Natick were both politically active communities committed to improving the quality of life and creating a better future for their towns. There was continual

debate as to how to achieve this improved future. Beginning with the surge of growth in the 1950s when it became clear that the towns were changing in character, there was a lack of understanding or agreement, about what rapid suburban growth would ultimately mean for the character and quality of life in the towns. There were few examples. As a result, particularly Framingham, chose to focus on the economic health of the community, deciding to encourage commercial and industrial growth to balance the fiscal burden of continued residential growth, and provide jobs. Many had the vision of growth as progress and prosperity, and hoped to harness economic energy to reach the regional renown they once had in the days of the industrial revolution, as a vital commercial and industrial center. Decisive action was taken for many years to encourage commercial and industrial growth in the Triangle, to keep residential tax rates low, to keep competitive within the region, and to create jobs.

Goals for physical design were much more vague. The towns encouraged modern development that would provide spacious shopping and cleaner airier work places, more variety, and particularly, convenience to the automobile. They envisioned an atmosphere different from the city and more in keeping with the spacious low densities of the suburbs. General standards

such as required number of parking spaces, height limits, and building code standards were set to foster these suburban qualities. However urban design and land use patterns were not addressed. They were therefor guided by programmatic goals such as fiscal solvency. For example, zoning, subdivision regulations, and infrastructure, all of which guide physical form, were used primarily to ensure ease of development and high land values.

Given the goals set by the towns, programmatically and architecturally, the Golden Triangle was a huge success. Commercial and industrial growth flourished beyond expectations. The area created jobs, and became the employment center for the region. Property taxes remained stable, and town services have been maintained at an excellent standard. Commercial development accommodated every shopping need. Architecturally, the Shoppers' World Mall and the Natick Mall were considered innovative and exemplary for their time. The majority of the rest were of adequate standard. More recently, some of the area's office developments have even received architectural acclaim. Through active intervention, the towns have been successful in achieving these goals.

Although the towns have achieved and surpassed many of the goals they established, a current look at the Triangle illustrates the limitations of past development policy. When all is told, insiders and outsiders both agree that the Golden Triangle has not realized the potential of the "urban village" pictured by Leinberger and Lockwood, "where people can live, work, shop and play in close proximity, thereby enjoying many advantages of urban density while avoiding the high cost of problems of the city." In fact, the Triangle has taken on many of the negative features of the city we strove to avoid - for example traffic, noise and air pollution - without the positive features, for example, of "close proximity" between places, which allows for the convenient interaction of different daily activities. Even the suburban amenities of clean air, nature and space are diminished. In character, the Golden Triangle has neither the excitement and diversity of the city, nor the natural beauty or aesthetic appeal of a more rural setting. Therefore, in some ways the Triangle is a success, particularly in meeting the goals that were actively pursued, while in other ways, in areas where goals were not formulated, it is not a success.

It is true that the goals of one generation have changed over time, with hind-sight, a changing population and a

changing world. Some aspects of development in the Triangle which were thought to be an asset when first formulated are now seen differently. For example, when the Natick Mall was built, it was thought to be architecturally exemplary, while today many find it uninspiring. Often values change, needs change, and our understanding of the facts change. When the Triangle was first emerging as a center in the 1950s and 1960s, it seemed that the more space created to accommodate the automobile, the more convenient and easy a working and shopping experience would be. Now we are having to reconsider this notion, as we find more cars lead to traffic, pollution and ugliness, and take away our choices, for example, for those who can not afford cars, or for the pedestrian who would like to walk from one place to another.

While our criteria for evaluation of our environment can be expected to change, Natick and Framingham could not hope to meet goals for a desired environment in any era, because no goals were ever made explicit. Without a vision and comprehensive plan for the Triangle, development was guided by piecemeal planning and outside forces. Therefore, the Triangle became a conglomeration of parts, with no planned system for functioning or character to reflect community goals.

In addition, because of the manner in which the market has responded to certain properties of the growth center, such as, the large scale of development, the accommodation to the automobile, and the prominence of high-speed roadways, separation and difference, rather than coordination between uses, has become the most profitable mode of development. This further adds to the improbability of the growth center functioning efficiently.

Why the Lack of Comprehensive Planning?

The case study of the "Golden Triangle" sheds light on several reasons why there has been an absence of concrete and comprehensive planning to guide the future form and functioning of this important area. Many of these reasons are most likely generalizable to other growth centers around the country. First, the phenomenon of large-scale commercial and industrial development in the suburbs was completely new. Ideas about the future come from experiences of the past. Because there were few examples of large-scale mixed use suburban development, a vision of the future was difficult to conceptualize. In addition, the nature and pace of growth and change in the Triangle was not anticipated, making it difficult to anticipate or keep up with changing needs.

For many years there was little urgency to changing the towns' approach to growth. There were many positive aspects of growth, such as, prosperity, innovation and jobs, as well as plenty of land to accommodate it. Although through the years there was concern about the implications of the scale of growth and the emerging negative effects of growth, residents were for the most part removed from the area, and business and political interests had a strong desire not to tip the scales of business as usual, thereby threatening the continued economic growth.

The existence of divergent, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting jurisdictions and interests in the planning process has had a profound effect on the towns' ability to develop an identity for the Triangle, and the towns' ability to plan. As with many fast growing communities, growth has meant increasing diversity within the towns - cultural and economic diversity among residents, diversity among economic and business interests, between business and residential interests, and differences between old-timers and new-comers. Differences have stemmed from truly divergent needs, as well as similar goals but different understandings of how they could be achieved. These differences have led to competing values about what the goals of "planning" and should be, and

about how the goals should be achieved.

The sheer number of interests involved in decision-making have made a coordinated and comprehensive approach even more difficult to achieve. For example, the multiple ownership pattern of businesses within the Triangle, and fragmented governmental authority brought many voices to the decision-making table. The variety of boards and committees of town government, and the number of people involved in voting on important issues, created competing interests, a lack of coordination of issues and agendas, and inability to reach consensus.

There was a separation of interests and control not only within the communities, but also from the outside. The Triangle borders two towns, Framingham and Natick, both with different governments, values and decision-making styles. While development on one side of the Triangle impacted the functioning of the other side, decisions were made completely separately. In addition, as the Triangle became an increasingly regional center, and boundaries between communities diminished in importance, decisions made in one MetroWest town impacted the others. Yet there has been no attempted coordination between these interests until recently.

Finally, the state has also been involved in making

decisions and implementing projects that directly impact the Triangle. Their efforts have, for the most part, been separate from local action, and again, often raise conflicting goals, or certainly conflicting priorities. The layers of differing interests, diffuse power both within the towns and between them, and a lack of coordination among power brokers has led to many views of the future that have left it easier to make small and uncoordinated decisions, or no decisions at all than to plan in a comprehensive and coordinated way.

The difficulty in planning and reaching consensus was exacerbated by the attitudes of many of the special interest groups - particularly, developers, business-people and politicians. Developers at first had free reign to build in whatever manor they chose. Planning, that would guide growth, was seen as limiting the developers freedom. Rather than being seen as an aid to developers, both business-people and politicians saw giving physical direction to growth as a possible impediment to progress - as something that would inevitably make developing more difficult and more expensive. For many years, it seems that developers and politicians alike have been committed to "business as usual." For developers, this meant no surprises and no additional requirements to consider in development. To politicians, it meant maintaining

their power and decision-making authority, and continued revenues to pay town bills.

Part of the reticence to plan also seems to come out of a real reservation about investing in a "community" for long-term, larger gains. One might guess, that the many smaller developers and land owners in the Triangle would be more fearful than would larger developers, of short-term investment for long-term gain, which planning often demands. It seems that with the diminishing importance of spatial boundaries, the market puts less of a priority on a sense of community or investing for the common good. This is particularly true in an area represented by business interests who are removed from the quality of life issues of great concern to residents. Planning often requires investment in the greater whole of the community, investment in the future, and investment in features with benefits less tangible than immediate monetary ones. Today's growth center, represented by many small, independent businesses, isolated from a sense of community, or a need for community, have little incentive to invest in this type of planning.

There have been many misconceptions and fears about planning, first and foremost, that planning is financially infeasible because it raises the cost of development, and

therefore inhibits it. This belief has surfaced partially because planning often requires investment in benefits that are not immediately tangible, and also because planning has often been used as a tool by those who desire to limit development. In addition, there is a lack of knowledge about the potential of planning.

This reasoning, that planning places an unreasonable financial burden on businesses and community alike, is questionable. Framingham put the financial burden of infrastructure onto developers in the 1950s, and today both towns exact a great deal of money from developers for mitigation and amenities. Neither of these have inhibited development. Instead, because of lack of planning, these exactions are more randomly taken and used, and less directed than they could be.

4.2. CONCLUSION

A place, wherever the boundaries might be drawn, is a complex system of buildings, infrastructure and activity. Its functioning is dependant upon how the parts of the system work together to support the whole. The individual and the institutional constructs that have influenced growth in the Golden Triangle have not recognized the holistic nature of

development. Instead, they have put a premium on individual rights, and the separation of jurisdictions and powers. The result has been the separation of planning decisions that are inextricably connected. What on one level appeared to be each man's individual gain has resulted in net loss.

In order to change the current pattern of development, and to create a place that fulfills our goals, there must be two fundamental changes in our approach, which are interrelated and inseparable. First, we must create a comprehensive vision and plan for the future of the Triangle, and from this, a concrete policy must be established to achieve the agreed upon goals. Second, we must create an institutional system that functions across internal and external jurisdictional boundaries, which will allow a holistic approach to the continual guidance of development.

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March 12, 1990

Herr, Phillip B. - Adjunct Professor of City Planning, MIT. Thesis Advisor

Herrigal, Joanne - Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Metro Plan 2000.
February 15, 1990

Lamb, Rick - SWA, Architect worked on buildings on Speen Street
January 16, 1990

Landow, Steven - Metropolitan Area Planning Council.
February 8, 1990

Margolis, Karen - Senior Planner, Town of Framingham.
February 13, March 24, 1990

Scheffels, Eric - Leggett, McCall, major developer in area, Member Golden Triangle Steering Comm.
March 13, 1990

Stasiowski, Kent - Metropolitan Area Planning Council and "Growth Center" Planner.
February 15, 1990

Tainter, Rick - Former Director of Framingham Planning Department; Consultant hired to direct the Golden Triangle Project Plan.
Febraury 27, April 10, 1990

Wallis, Allan D. - Research Analyst, Harvard Kennedy School of Government.
January 18, 1990

Warner, Sam Bass Jr. - Professor of History, Boston University.
Thesis Reader

Welles, Virginia - Former Project Manager, Metrowest Growth Management Committee; CTPS Planning Staff.
March 1, 1990, May 2

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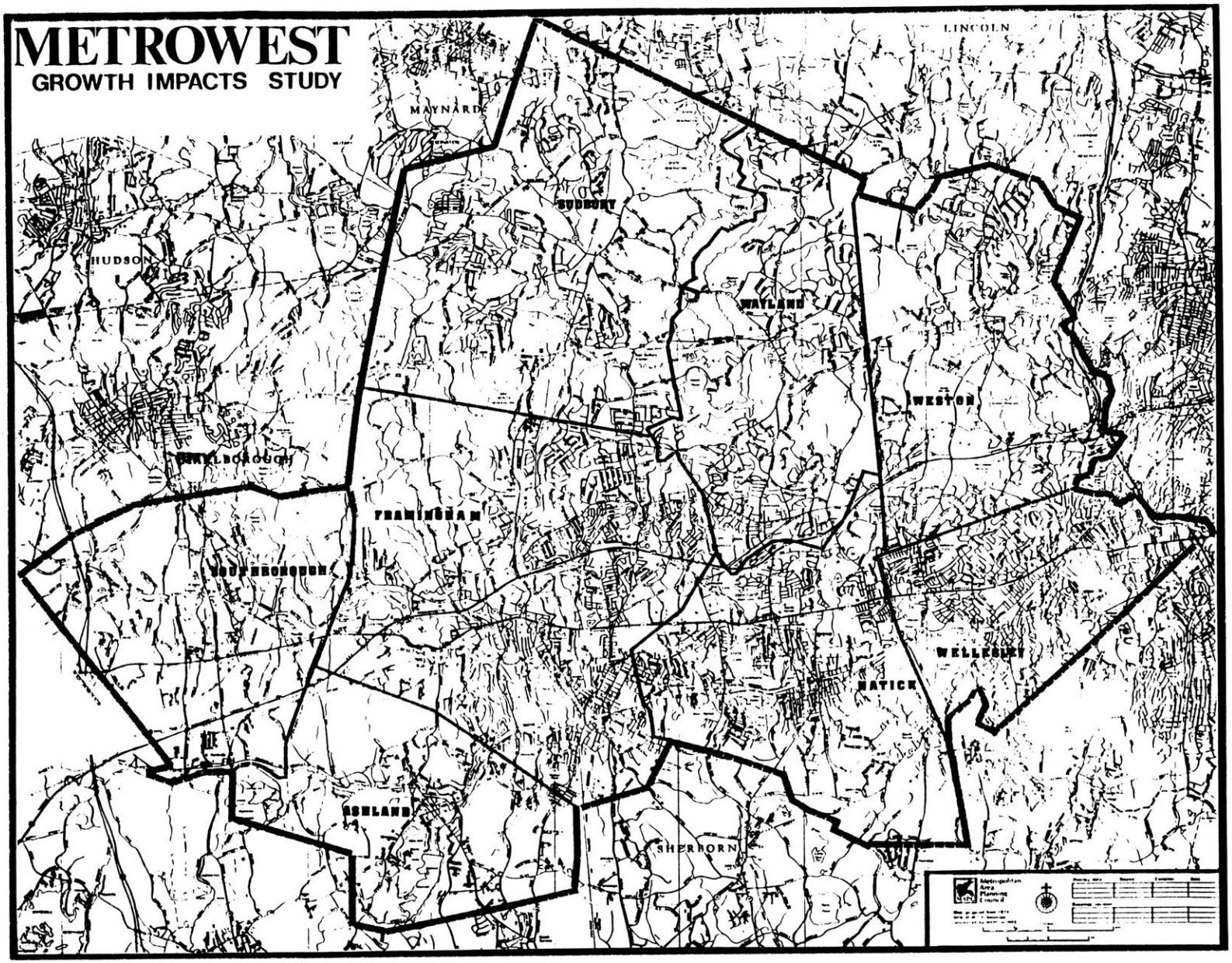
MAP OF THE REGION

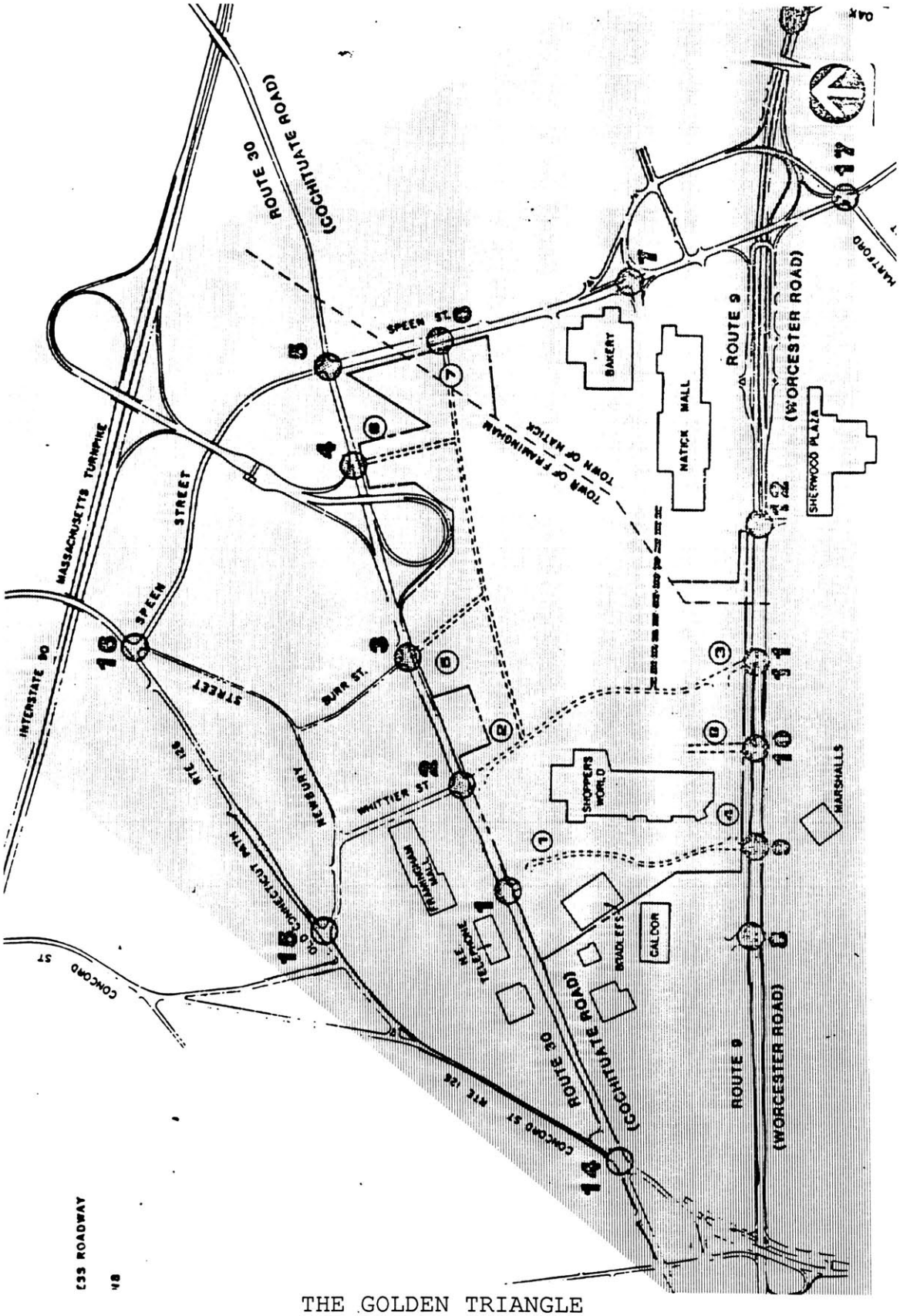
APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B


METROWEST
GROWTH IMPACTS STUDY
LINCOLN
MAYNARD
SUDBURY
HUDSON
WAYLAND
WESTON
MARLBOROUGH
FRAMINGHAM
SOUTHBOROUGH
WELLESLEY
NATICK
ASHLAND
SHERBORN

THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE, NATICK/FRAMINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

APPENDIX C



THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE
APPENDIX D

AERIAL VIEW OF THE TRIANGLE, MID - 1980s

APPENDIX E

LOW-LYING INDUSTRIAL STUCTURES OF THE EARLY 1980s

APPENDIX F