

A Place for Us: the Territory of the Quotidian in Suburban Downtown
Redevelopment—Needham, Waltham, Watertown

by

Kelly J. Houston

BA in Landscape Architecture
University of California at Berkeley (2002)

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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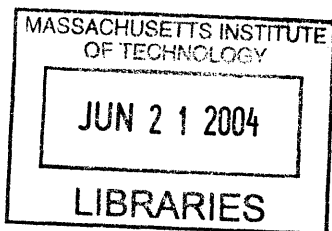
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ABSTRACT

In recent years, planners, architects, and developers alike have all begun to look to suburban downtown redevelopment as a strategy for economic development, housing development, and for creating a social and cultural amenity for town residents. Suburban downtown redevelopment holds the promise of increased employment opportunities that could reduce commute times for residents, improved economic conditions that could provide tax revenue for fiscally strained municipalities, downtown housing that could help alleviate the affordable housing crisis, and the creation of a social amenity that could help build community and social capital.

Since many visions of the contemporary redevelopment of suburban downtowns appear to modeled on early nineteenth century downtowns, three case-studies with historic downtown districts were chosen for study. The downtown districts' businesses were tabulated by type, compared over time and analyzed through the framework of contemporaneous planning and development trends. There was a clear trend towards the loss of locally-oriented businesses such as retailers of staples and household goods concomitant with the development of businesses that catered to the non-local. During the same time-periods, there were attempts by local planners and businesspeople to court the regional market, sometimes to the detriment of the local market, and many times to the detriment of the physical environment downtown.

This thesis seeks to understand the relationship between downtown development and the vision and experience of downtown for residents. Rather than a specialized district visited on occasion, a locally-oriented downtown is a place for quotidian needs, a place to engender regular visits by permanent residents. There is evidence that downtowns have historically been just such places, and that, if the historic downtown is to serve as a model, that the territory of the quotidian must be considered. If the downtown is to become the social and cultural amenity popularized in the literature, it must be attractive to the local social and cultural milieu.

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Biographical Note

Kelly Houston attended City College of San Francisco from 1996 to 2000, where she completed four semesters of classes towards a Certificate in Landscape Design and Construction (1996-1998) as well as transfer requirements towards admission to the College of Environmental Design at UC Berkeley (1998-2000). During her tenure at CCSF, she was awarded the Garden Club of the Peninsula Scholarship (1997) and two California Building Industry Foundation Scholarships (1999, 2000). She attended UC Berkeley from 2000 to 2002, and graduated in 2002 with a BA in Landscape Architecture with Highest Honors. At Berkeley, she was awarded a Gadsby-Trudgett Scholarship (2001), UC Berkeley Landscape Architecture Departmental Citation (2002), ASLA Award of Merit (2002), UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design Alumni Association Professional Promise Award (2002), and won second place in the 2002 San Francisco Garden Club Design Competition (open only to UC Berkeley Landscape Architecture students). During her long academic career, she has been variously employed as a Landscape Gardener (McCrosky Landscaping, Janet Moyer Landscaping, 1997), Class Reader/lab assistant (Plants in the Landscape: UC Berkeley, 2001), Design Intern (A Living Library/Lifeframes, Inc., 2001), ADA Accessibility Surveyor (UC Berkeley Capital Projects Group with MIG, 2001), Research Assistant (Event Places, Digital Media City: MIT, 2002-3), Housing Intern (City of Newton, 2003-4), and waitress (various restaurants, 1990-2002). She is the second person in her family to receive a bachelor's degree and the first to receive a graduate degree.

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Introduction

Until the last decade or so, most post-industrial redevelopment efforts prioritized the revitalization of our depopulated, declining, and deteriorating inner cities. While many redevelopment efforts continue to focus on the complex problem of the urban core, it has also become clear that the low-density, sprawling development of suburban towns, which to some extent are responsible for the deterioration of the city, will not reverse, that the automobiles that make contemporary suburban lifestyle possible will continue to dominate personal transportation, and that there is as much need to find solutions to the complex problems of the suburban perimeter as there is to address the problems of the urban core.

Perhaps as a response to the revival of urban downtowns, a vision for the suburban downtown has emerged in recent years, a vision of an urbanistic business district on a suburban scale, a potential solution to the centerless morass of much of suburban land use. Indeed, the lack of cohesive, symbolic and actual centers is one of the perceived problems with suburban life. Residents of older, inner-ring suburbs often lament the decline of their historic business districts, while residents of newer suburban towns suffer from the anonymity of an environment ordered only by the location of highways and arterial roads. Anecdotal accounts are filled with stories of “soccer moms” shuttling their children between school and home and play, stories of workers who spend nearly as much time commuting to work as they spend with their families, stories of increasing social, economic, and racial segregation. With the common disassociation between home and places of work, shopping, education, and recreation, suburban Americans may well yearn for a way to anchor their dispersed lives, to yearn for a place to call a center.

As I discuss at length in Chapter 1, contemporary suburban redevelopment efforts routinely model themselves after an idealized early 20th century form: the initial focus of this thesis was analysis of the conflict between that form and contemporary uses. However, preliminary map analysis and research revealed that, while historic forms might inhibit or prevent contemporary development, it was not at all clear that there were significant morphological barriers to development in historic downtowns. The three towns considered in this thesis had all energetically addressed off-street parking issues by the 1950’s and even permitted the large floor plates typical of contemporary retail development—yet parking lots continued to operate below capacity and large buildings

remained vacant. Evidently, the revitalization of an historic town center is not entirely dependent on accommodating contemporary development forms.

This realization reframed the problem of downtown revitalization. Development needs are only half of the equation, an equally important part of the success or failure of a business district is its attractiveness to consumers. Admittedly, development needs are often based on businesses analysis of what will attract consumers, but market analysis is not an exact science, and it seems possible that planners and developers alike have been missing something important. On a very basic level, I am trying to help answer the question of what makes the idea of an historic—or historic-appearing—district so attractive to people. What are the expectations of a town’s residents from such a district? What do they think it means to have a vibrant and successful downtown? What is it about the historic form people find so charming? Or is the use perhaps as important as the form? If so, what uses make a suburban downtown attractive to a town’s residents?

It is important to note the bias in this research towards considering the perspective of the resident population. Many towns have created economically successful downtowns by marketing themselves as tourist destinations, but the kinds of businesses attractive to tourists are not always the same kinds of businesses locals find attractive. If a business district is to become a centering or anchoring point in a suburban town, it must do so for the residents of that town—it is the daily interaction of the permanent population that creates the community benefit for a town’s residents. It is my belief that it is the opportunity for recurrent, unstructured social interaction that many American suburban residents yearn for when they gaze so longingly at the downtowns of decades past, an interaction unlikely to materialize in a district of transient nonlocals.

In order to better understand the business environment of suburban downtowns, and its relationship with town residents, it is important to understand both the kinds of businesses and the kinds of users downtowns have seen since the early 20th century. These are both difficult to accurately assess. By tabulating the numbers and kinds of businesses in the cases from town directories, I hoped to better understand the business atmosphere of each town at each index date. However, knowing the kind of business is not a guarantee of knowing the markets those businesses targeted: in the absence of more detailed data, it was necessary to make some rather gross assumptions. While this does mean that I can not assert incontrovertably that certain types of businesses targeted certain markets, I do feel that it is possible to make some generalizations based on the findings. In addition,

demographic data on class is, as described in Chapter 2, based on census data that varied from decade to decade, both in its breadth and categorizations, making it possible to make some broadly general statements about class, but not any incontrovertible claims.

In additions to variations between town directories and census years, the availability of data was not by any means perfect. Watertown, in particular, was a difficult case to study due to the limited availability of records—most specifically the town directories. This resulted in incomplete data for the business environment in Watertown, with missing data for the post war period and limited data from an alternate source for the post-industrial period. In addition, census data was not reliably available for the districts evaluated: data for the entire towns has been substituted. These problems point to what may be an important general problem: whereas large urban areas have been studied and analyzed by both state and federal research projects, there is a strong likelihood that particular suburban towns have not been well studied, making the researcher largely dependent on the capacity and functionality of towns' archives or libraries. With the increasing suburban population and its concomitant social, political, and economic impacts, it is becoming ever more important that these resources be retained, created, and/or restored.

Suburban development has come to symbolize much of what we find unpleasant about contemporary life. Characterized by terms such as “sprawl”, “McMansion”, “snout-house”, and “slurb”; associated with mediocrity, selfishness, and boredom; suburbs have nonetheless become both ubiquitous and persistent. In spite its many flaws, suburban forms have become permanent parts of our developed landscape: if those flaws are to ever be addressed, it will have to be within the confines of the existing form. While suburban downtown development cannot independently correct the myriad of problems created by the dispersed, auto-oriented, place-disassociated lifestyle of contemporary suburban development, it might become a strategy for mitigating some of those problems. At best, an active, vibrant, commercial district has the potential to engender an active, vibrant community district, creating an opportunity for the civic and social engagement that forms the glue of a democratic state. At worst, an economically successful downtown could create an increase in proximal goods and services, reducing driving distances by providing a local shopping alternative to regional shopping centers while increasing municipal tax revenues. In either case, the effects could go beyond the borders of an individual town, benefitting both local populations and society at large.

Chapter 1

Suburban Infill and Downtown Redevelopment

A Solution to Contemporary Suburban Challenges

Since many older, inner-ring suburbs are reaching build-out, some suburban towns have looked to their business districts as a source of new housing and economic development: they see underutilized places that could accommodate multi-family housing and storefront activities without encroaching on the pastoral single-family districts that make up most suburban development. Many communities have used the prospect of downtown redevelopment to envision a return to the age of the “traditional” main street, with multi-family housing alongside retail establishments, densities supportive of transit, and an active, community-oriented and pedestrian-friendly environment.

Suburban downtown redevelopment efforts are often characterized by increases in building density that yield multi-use districts with housing, retail, and other commercial development, often on the same parcel. These plans often use a series of regulatory and design strategies to realize the optimistic vision related above. These strategies include: changing zoning ordinances to allow multi-family housing and mixed-use development, providing density bonuses and design guidelines to encourage development that promotes a pedestrian-oriented environment, and programming public spaces with events that bring the community together and activate the district. Often, however, development is slow to respond.

Many factors could be responsible for the limited success of redevelopment plans in suburban business districts: contributing factors may include insufficient development incentives, limited public funding for infrastructure, the lack of favorable political conditions, or an urban morphology that inhibits contemporary development needs. While any (or all) of these factors could have a dramatic effect on the attractiveness of a business district to investors and developers, it is also true that the business district’s ability to attract customers—as much as developers—will determine its viability.

In recognition of the importance of creating a business environment attractive to shoppers, redevelopment plans often include beautification schemes as well as improvements in efficiency and convenience. Tree planting, façade standards, and broad

sidewalks all appeal to the eye, while crosswalks, traffic management, and parking development all create an environment of convenience. Yet, aesthetic appeal and convenience do not guarantee a robust customer base, perhaps because they do not take into account the vision of a downtown as anything more than a shopping district. In addition to functioning as a place to shop, a suburban downtown of the type described above also functions as a place to work, a place to live, a place to be entertained, and as a place to engage socially. This combination of shopping, living, working, entertainment, and socializing all combine into what Jane Jacobs has described as a sort of urban ballet,¹ a complex interaction of functions that create more than the sum of their parts.

Part of the interaction between a business district and its users can be characterized as a feedback loop: certain types of businesses attract certain types of consumers or clients, which in turn create a social environment that makes the district more attractive. For example, a small ethnic market could attract an immigrant clientele, who can begin to create an environment—through language, dress, and customs—comfortable to people of similar ethnic background. At the same time, the perpetuation of a single group may serve not only to create an environment attractive to that group, but also to exclude other groups. It is the rare elite who feels comfortable in a district that caters to the working class just as it is the rare working class person who feels comfortable in an elite shopping district. Tourist districts can become uncomfortable or unpleasant for locals while some insular local business districts might be unwelcoming for non-locals.

Downtown redevelopment plans are sometimes sold to town residents as a device to create a place for associating with other residents and interacting socially with one's neighbors—the development of social capital as described by Robert Putnam.² For this strategy to be successful, logically, the downtown must be attractive and comfortable for the town's residents, whoever they are. This means striking a balance between the comfort of various potential constituent users of the district and the viability of businesses to create an inclusive and economically stable downtown. This means generating an environment activated by the daily use of residents and diversified by the potential markets of the non-local.

The literature related to the redevelopment of suburban downtowns tends to frame the problem in terms of economic development that may generate a social side effect. In this thesis, I hope to explore the explicit relationship between the business and social environment by framing the two as an interrelated whole. By tracing the history of

several downtowns through that lens, and by following the evolution of the business environment—and the inferred social environment--through the decades of downtown decline seen in the post-World War II era, I hope to better understand the social significance of the downtown business environment.

An Historic Vision for the Contemporary Suburban Downtown

Developers and planners alike have used the forms and uses of the nineteenth century industrial small town downtown as a template for contemporary development and historic preservation. The influential proponent of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and other “smart growth” strategies, Peter Calthorpe, heralds his work as a rediscovery of planning traditions that bases its tenets in the livable, walkable communities of the past, in particular the “traditional American town.”³ Images of busy, active, historic business districts dot the pages of the National Association of Realtors publication, “Creating Great Neighborhoods: Density in Your Community,”⁴ and are featured in the margins of “The Coming Demand,” a report on the increasing demand for dense, mixed use development published by the Congress for the New Urbanism.⁵ A caption under one of the photographs claims, “As Americans have rediscovered street life, historic cities have regained their prosperity.”⁶

In addition to the trend among developers, some government agencies have promoted and incentivised the redevelopment of traditional business centers. In Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative provides information resources for the revitalization of town centers. (Although they do not overtly promote historic form, all of the pictures used to illustrate the website are of historic centers.⁷) The National Trust, with a more overtly historic preservation ideology, manages the very popular “Main Streets” program, through which states and towns can get funding and guidance for commercial district revitalization.⁸

The contemporary vision of historic form is often interpreted in a series of nearly iconic elements: compact commercial development at street-level that creates a continuous yet diverse façade; a mix of small offices, restaurants, and retail stores that attract shoppers and provide employment; housing, preferably affordable, located above the shops; and attractive tree-lined, awning-covered sidewalks punctuated by pockets of outdoor seating at quaint cafes. It is a powerful image, one that creates places that, in one researcher’s words, are successful because the public “enjoys” them. In his paper for the Lincoln

Institute about compact mixed-use development in Boston, James C. O’Connell writes:

Downtowns offer the independent stores and eating places that you cannot find at chain store-only shopping malls. Suburban restaurants and coffee houses are booming, as suburbanites figure out that you do not have to travel to downtown Boston to find a good meal or and evening out. The growing popularity of town centers illustrates the trend of people gravitating to “third Places,” community-oriented places beyond home and work...Suburban downtowns are being redeveloped not because of some “smart growth” fiat, but because the public enjoys these places.⁹

Legitimate functional justifications for the form abound: increased employment prospects could provide local residents income opportunities without the need for long commutes; apartments and flats above storefronts could help ease the affordable housing shortage; higher densities could support transit, which would help reduce traffic congestion; increased economic activity could raise tax revenues, helping to relieve what has become a general municipal funding crisis; and, lastly, the draw of the place could attract community residents, increasing interactions among neighbors and helping to strengthen and build social capital.

However, the historic commercial district form developed in a way that addressed the needs and values of the early twentieth century town: the need for compactness and diversity within the pedestrian-dependent environment; the social acceptance of higher density housing; and, in towns outside of the big cities, the need to accommodate and provision a proximal workforce. The traditional downtown also provided a place of regular face-to-face interaction among neighbors, a place for groups to be entertained and to gather, and generally provided a locus for the formation of community—in short, the form of the traditional downtown created the opportunity and the stimulation for the formation of social capital. The traditional form may have had its genesis in economic rationality, but it also fulfilled important social functions, whether through intention or accident.

Arguments for the contemporary revitalization, restoration, or even ground-up creation of the traditional Main Street downtown form are made compelling through the emphasis that is often placed on the social structures and interactions that many believe to have characterized the form. Whereas the economic and capitalistic functions that the traditional downtown business district fulfilled in the early twentieth century are now

provided for in regional shopping malls and industrial and office parks, the contemporary emphasis on the restoration of the traditional Main Street form indicates the possibility that present-day, regionally oriented forms are either functionally or socially inadequate. There is some limited evidence that regional shopping malls may not retain their economic viability indefinitely; however, there is compelling evidence that social capital in suburban areas has declined dramatically in recent decades.

In his controversial book, Bowling Alone, Robert Putnam asserts that social capital has been declining steadily over the last several decades. He attributes this trend to a number of factors, including the spatial reorganization associated with suburban sprawl. Putnam identifies two kinds of social capital, bonding and bridging. Bonding capital is defined as the exclusive kind of socializing of associations, clubs, and even races and nations. Bridging capital is of the inclusive kind of socializing associated with face-to-face interactions with strangers.¹⁰ Michael Brill identifies similar concepts as “community life” and “public life.”¹¹ Each author points to the decline in such interactions and identifies spatial configurations that might encourage the strengthening of community and/or social capital. Each author places a special emphasis on the need for the daily interactions with strangers for such community building to take place.

It is interesting to note that Putnam’s book was controversial enough to spawn a book of critiques of Bowling Alone, but that those critiques, for the most part, addressed the scope either of his findings or his analysis of the causative factors of the national decline in social capital. ¹² Putnam notes also the belief in the loss of social capital, finding that, in a 1992 survey, seventy-five percent of those interviewed said that “the breakdown of community” and “selfishness” were “serious” or “extremely serious” problems in America.¹³ Putnam points specifically to shopping habits as one factor in the decline of social capital, “Rather than at the grocery store or five-and-dime on Main Street, where faces were familiar, today’s suburbanites shop in large, impersonal malls.”

Putnam’s indictment of shopping malls is interesting in the economic context: shopping malls are designed to be comfortable places where people will want to linger and spend money. Shopping malls often have many of the characteristics of a town commercial center: narrow storefronts, small scale, a diversity of business types. Early malls even had civic functions such as post offices and community centers.¹⁴ If a shopping mall can fulfill the shopping, social, and civic needs of Americans, why is there so much support for the revitalization of historic downtowns? On the other hand, if shopping malls are

functionally inadequate why do they continue to succeed? Peter Rowe comments on this:

Throughout this account, the underlying cultural model has been that building form follows social dictates. In order to appeal to the consumer public, retailers must conform to that public's sense of a responsible retail commercial sector and mass consumption. There is considerable merit to this type of interpretation; it explains much about the shape and appearance of suburban retail realms. But it largely ignores reciprocity between form and social response, especially the processes by which that might take place. ¹⁵

Rowe goes on to note that the shape, appearance, and identity of suburban retail environments have persistently referenced the traditional European and early market street, with a plaza or green adjacent to a complex of small-scale retail storefronts with urbane levels of density. Even enclosed shopping malls incorporate these elements.¹⁶

Shopping malls, although they fulfill many of the same functions as a traditional Main Street, and mimic many of its forms, fail in one important aspect—they are not truly public spaces. It can be argued that the shopper is not readily cognizant of the fact that a shopping mall is owned by a single entity, one that owns every footpath, parking space, loading dock, and storefront; however, the shopping mall, unlike Main Street, has a distinct opening and closing time. This fact of “opening” and “closing” indicates a power greater than that of the collective power posed by the “public”. Main Street does not “open” at a certain time in the morning, or “close” at a certain time at night.

This identifies the second way in which a shopping mall does not function as a traditional Main Street: the life of a shopping mall is directed by the needs of the retail establishments. Shopping mall hours are tied to shopping, not to entertainment or production functions. To go to a restaurant in a shopping mall is to go to the place of rest from shopping; even mall-based cinemas seemed designed as magnets for shoppers. Main Street may serve a primary function as a shopping district, but it retains a sense of ownership by the community because it is a truly public space, one where diners are not pressured to be shoppers, and a coffee shop can serve commuters at six a.m. as well as at shoppers at noon. On a public street, there is a sense of control over the space—one can walk around and NOT shop, and be as much an integral part of the functioning social space as a shopper, or diner, or bus rider, or worker.

This sense of ownership or territory is embedded in many of the aspects that we associate with historic commercial districts. Locally owned shops are indicative of the proximal community, while chain stores indicate distant decision-making and capital movement. Shops for quotidian needs such as food and hardware indicate a local focus while shopping targeted at tourists or regional shoppers does not. Small-scale buildings reflect the ownership and territory of the tenants, whereas large-scale buildings indicate an anonymity disassociated from the local.

In her book Built for Change, Anne Vernez-Moudon discusses the relationship between building form and the sense of territory in residential districts. She notes that the disassociation of the size of a building from the intelligible space of inhabitation makes it difficult for residents to relate to their environments. She goes on to note that the distribution of space in more intelligible units “suggests that the relationship between the owner and the inhabitant can be simple and direct,” lending a sense of control, or territory to the inhabitant.¹⁷ If the residential environment is so profoundly influenced by the symbols of ownership and control embedded in their forms and uses, it stands to reason that the downtown environment could also be strongly affected by such symbols.

This line of reasoning could explain why the historic downtown is beginning to be perceived as such a desirable amenity. Not only can such a district provide the many economic benefits associated with a strong small business environment, but the forms of historic districts are often imbued with an intelligible scale that communicates a territorial message. But scale alone does not communicate this message: as noted above, the uses and ownership associated with the district also communicate territory. A retail environment with a non-local focus creates, at best, an anonymous territory that is difficult to establish a relationship with, while a locally focused retail environment has the potential to create a territory for the local inhabitants—a place-based environment instead of (or in addition to) an economically-based environment.

Since people form connections with other people, it seems logical that environments where investment groups or developers or other corporate entities overtly control the environment—as in shopping malls or chain stores or even large development projects—would have a limited ability to retain the attention of, or create a comfortable place for a town’s residents. An environment characterized by locally-owned shops in buildings of a size it seems that someone knowable makes the decisions about; and of shop-owners who sell services and products that address the local need—an environment of this sort may

very well engage its users in a way that could explain part of why, in O'Connor's words, people find the historic model of downtown so "enjoyable."

The Boston Context

In the early nineteenth century, New England, including Massachusetts was rapidly industrializing. Ideal for water-powered industries, the Northeast's fast rivers and ready access to Boston's harbor combined to create a region of industrial dominance. With riverside factories appearing at nearly every natural fall line, there was an enormous demand for labor in the mill towns, filled in the early and mid 1800's by farm workers, most of them women.¹⁸ As the industrial sector continued to grow, those farm workers were supplanted by cheap immigrant labor.¹⁹

The industrial sector in New England at this time was enormous: by 1880, twenty percent of all U.S. manufacturing workers were in New England, and made up eight percent of the national population. Forty percent of the New England population was employed in manufacturing (versus twenty percent nationally). The hub of industrial development in New England was Boston: more than three quarters of the textile manufacturing capacity in New England was located within sixty miles of Boston.²⁰

During the early twentieth century, the expansion of rail and telegraph had unified the national economy, opening up new regions for industrial development.²¹ By the early 1920's, the Boston metropolitan area industrial sector was declining as mills and factories moved to the American South and overseas, where labor was less expensive,²² a decline that continued into the 1970's.

The manufacturing industry that remained became technically specialized, which required a more highly skilled labor force, one that was more managerial and technical than the blue-collar laborers that had characterized the mill labor-force. This drop in low-skill manufacturing jobs was accompanied by an increase in very-low/no skill jobs—custodial, for example—that supported the gradual increase in technical and professional establishments.²³ This increase in skilled labor meant that the Boston area was well equipped to benefit from the revolutions in technology that characterized economic development in the late 20th century. Some accounts show that, by 1990, 69% of workers in Boston were white collar, while only 19% were blue collar.²⁴

This economic and employment shift also generated a spatial shift. As land values rose, wholesale trade moved to cheaper land at the fringes of the metropolitan area, close the interstate. Many offices moved out of the city of Boston and into surrounding suburbs. One economic historian notes, “Most of the growth outside the central city represents the relocation of back office functions as well as the presence of real estate offices, local consumer bank branches, and local insurance agencies—the consumer end of the financial transactions industry.”²⁵ This spatial reorganization was made possible, of course, by the increasing use of private automobiles for transportation. The result of Boston’s recent economic prosperity and spatial reorganization has created its own problems: as in many contemporary metropolises, in 2004, the entire Boston area (including the three cases) struggles with traffic congestion, high housing costs, social and economic segregation, and a shrinking middle class.

Notes

¹ Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York: Random House, 1961). p. 50

² Robert D. Putnam, Bowling Alone : The Collapse and Revival of American Community (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

³ Peter Calthorpe, The Next American Metropolis (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993). p. 23

⁴ Adhir Kackar and Ilana Preuss, Creating Great Neighborhoods: Density in Your Community (Washington, DC: Local Government Commission in cooperation with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and sponsored by National Association of Realtors, 2003).

⁵ The Coming Demand (The Congress for the New Urbanism, 2001).

⁶ Ibid. p.4

⁷ Massachusetts Division of Municipal Development, “Massachusetts Downtown Initiative.”

⁸ National Main Street Center, “About Main Street.”

⁹ James C. O’Connell, Ph.D., AICP, Ahead or Behind the Curve?: Compact Mixed-Use Development in Suburban Boston (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2003). p. 3

¹⁰ Putnam. p. 22

¹¹ Michael Brill, “Problems with Mistaking Community Life for Public Life,” Places 14.2 (2001). p. 50

¹² Scott L. McLean, David A. Schultz and Manfred B. Steger, Social Capital : Critical

Perspectives on Community and “Bowling Alone” (New York: New York University Press, 2002).

¹³ Putnam. p. 184

¹⁴ Peter G. Rowe, Making a Middle Landscape (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991). p. 139

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 143

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 145

¹⁷ Anne Vernez Moudon, Built for Change : Neighborhood Architecture in San Francisco (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986). p.146

¹⁸ Barry Bluestone and Mary Huff Stevenson, The Boston Renaissance : Race, Space, and Economic Change in an American Metropolis (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000). p. 52

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 54

²⁰ Joshua L. Rosenbloom, “The Challenges of Economic Maturity: New England, 1880-1940,” Engines of Enterprise: An Economic History of New England, ed. Peter Temin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000). p. 155

²¹ Ibid. p. 151

²² Bluestone and Stevenson. p. 59

²³ Ibid. p. 59.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 95

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Chapter 2
Cases and Methodology

Cases

The cases were selected based on three primary factors: population size, suburban context, a persistent downtown form, and the existence of both a town center and a secondary, more regionally focused district:

- Population size was important to ensure that the cases would be comparable to one another. Too small, and the downtown would have too few businesses to be representative, too large and the town would likely be too dense to have much relevance to mid-size suburban towns. For these reasons, the range of population sizes under consideration was from 25,000 to 60,000 people.
- Suburban context was defined by the relationship of the town to the metropolis, in this case, Boston. Towns too close to Boston would not have had the independence from the city to be as relevant—in some cases, the towns immediately adjoining Boston could be nearly considered neighborhoods of the city, so strong are the economic and social ties. Nonetheless, contemporary suburban development is characterized by its external economic and social connections, usually several. To retain relevance for contemporary suburbs, towns with strong university presences, such as Wellesley or Cambridge, were excluded due to the strong internal influence students and universities have on the markets, demographics and even form of business districts.
- A final consideration was density: towns within the first ring of Boston's suburbs have very high densities and, in many, a strong urban character, which would again limit the findings' relevance to low-density, more contemporary suburbs. In order to simplify the selection process, the cases were limited to towns that were at least one town removed from Boston.

A persistent, specific downtown form was important in identifying cases because of the trend toward using a specific historic form as a model for contemporary form, as was outlined in Chapter 1. Each case study has parcel and building forms that date from the turn of the nineteenth century, a time before automobiles expanded business districts' potential region of customers. The conflict between this historic form and contemporary uses is an important element of the analysis, and helps isolate the functional aspects of the form from the social and aesthetic aspects. Understanding the specific opportunities and limitations offered urban enhances our understanding of the complex interrelationship of the many factors that affect the success of failure of suburban downtowns.

Lastly, by comparing the downtown or central business district to a secondary district with a more regional focus, factors of market focus may be more easily identified. These secondary districts are peripheral—they have developed at or extended to the physical periphery of the towns—and have evolved in response to the contemporary needs and trends of the regional retail environment. Roughly analogous to the “Stranger’s Path” identified in J.B. Jackson’s essay of that name,¹ these districts are characterized by their regional attraction, although, unlike Jackson’s “Path”, they seem to be conduits for through traffic, and are perhaps the road *out* of town, rather than Jackson’s description of the road *to* town.

Using these criteria, three cases were chosen: Needham, Waltham, and Watertown. Needham is perhaps the most “suburban” of the towns, since its large parcels and low densities in residential areas were shaped by the mid-nineteenth century estates of both local industrialists and wealthy railroad commuters²: many of the town’s residential districts are characterized by curving roads, large parcels, and historic homes. It is the smallest of the cases, with a contemporary population of 29,000, but has a well-defined downtown district in Needham Centre. Needham Heights proper is a business district as old as the Centre, and is centered on Highland Avenue, an arterial road with ready access to the interstate.

Waltham has the largest population of the cases with 59,000 people. Its business districts also date to the nineteenth century, and they were strong regional centers even then. Although often considered a single district, Main Street and Moody Street each have distinct characters that make them unique. Main Street, unlike Needham Centre, is both the civic center of Waltham and the route through. In spite of its civic functions, it has developed a peripheral focus over time as businesses expanded to the west towards the

interstate highway. Moody Street has retained a classic “downtown” character, with less through traffic and smaller scaled buildings. Waltham’s suburban character might have been questioned in the mid-nineteenth century, at the height of its industrial development, but by the early part of the 1900’s, the town had retained enough of its pastoral landscape to be considered suburban.³

Watertown, with 33,000 people, is close in size to Needham, but its central business district traces its roots to the early seventeenth century. In spite of its age, Watertown Square has retained little of its colonial character. Like Waltham and Needham, Watertown was primarily shaped during the mid-nineteenth century. Watertown is an interesting business district because of its location along several major arterial roadways, so that, in some respect, it has become more like the peripheral districts in Needham and Waltham than the central districts. Still, Watertown has its own peripheral district on Arsenal Street. A contemporary shopping area, this district is useful for comparisons between modern retailing needs and traditional downtowns. Watertown, though closer to Boston than Waltham, seems more suburban, and was one of the original suburban enclaves for Boston’s elite.⁴

Taken together, these three cases are similar yet unique. Although each falls within the criteria above, and each saw the genesis of its modern form in the development of the mid-nineteenth century, each has a slightly different combination of similar factors. Needham’s Centre was established as, and has remained, the central business district for the town, while the Heights emerged as a peripheral district. Waltham, with its central and peripheral districts less distinctly separated, has seen its early central district develop many of the characteristics of a peripheral district, while its secondary district has become the effective social center of the town. Watertown, with its business center located along several busy arterials, seems to struggle with retaining its identity as a center at all, and seems to have suffered from the development of its peripheral district on Arsenal Street.

Definitions

Suburb

For many people, the term suburban brings forth images of wide, curving roads fronted by hip-roofed, garage-dominated, split-level houses behind identical, perfect, green lawns. Indeed, it is this stereotypical form that seems to cause the most concern among planners, environmentalists, and health advocates. But suburbs have a long history of

development, from early streetcar suburbs, to affluent railroad suburbs, to the sprawling stereotypical contemporary suburb. For the purposes of this analysis, a suburb is an independent town that nevertheless retains strong ties to a metropolitan district, in this case, Boston. In the solar system of metropolis, the suburb is the planet to the city's sun.

Downtown

As Robert Fogelson notes in his book Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950, the term downtown did not come to mean the central business district of a city until the late nineteenth century.⁵ He notes that the term evolved because of the increasing concentration of businesses in a small core area surrounded by dispersed residential districts outside of that district.⁶ For the purposes of this analysis, the term downtown is used to mean the primary business district of a town, while the term, business district refers to an area where business uses dominate. In the case of Waltham, the distinction of “primary” is ambiguous, so the districts are referred to by name.

Working Class

Working class is used here in the broad, social sense rather than the economic sense. Although income plays a part in the social identity of the working class, it is the social identity of those whose educational level may be somewhere between high-school graduate and community college or vocational school graduate, who have material comfort, but not luxury, who are the “regular folks” of the American self-identity. In a newspaper report promoting Waltham from 1920, it is described as “...men and women of moderate means—producers—the class that forms the bone and sinew of the nation.”

The same document continues with the assertion that Waltham, “...has no ‘classes’ and it has no proletariat. The wage-earners are self-respecting and intelligent. It is a city of societies but not of society.”⁷ While this may or may not have been true for 1920 Waltham, it describes a condition perceived to be positive, a city characterized by the culture of the noble workingman. While it can be debated whether Waltham was a city entirely composed of this class, evidence suggests that a significant proportion of the city was composed of these “producers” for many years, and that, as a class, they were identified as an identifiable cultural cohort.

One of the limitations of historic Census research is the inconsistency across decades of various employment categories. In 1905, it was not recorded whether a “farmer” was a gentleman farmer or a subsistence farmer, or whether a worker in “manufacturing” was a

machine operator, a foreman, or a CEO. For this reason, the analysis of the proportions of working class residents should be regarded as an approximation. Each count was conservative in its assumption of working class categories, and ambiguity that could not be resolved is noted. Blue-collar working class residents were counted if they worked in manufacturing, machining, transportation, as laborers, etc. Pink-collar working class residents were counted if they worked as domestics, office workers, or in sales. This last category is not usually thought of as “pink-collar” but for simplification, it has been included here. For this analysis, blue-collar is the category of producers, pink-collar is the category of low to moderate skill service-providers, and white-collar is the category of decision-makers—managers, educated professionals and the like.

Business types

Business types have been broken down in a series of categories defined more completely in the appendix. Categories were chosen to assist in identifying the market for each business, although this is not always knowable. Any business in a category could have been marketed to either affluent shoppers or bargain hunters—it is the number and proportion of these businesses in the context of other factors that are of interest. The aggregate categories were chosen to differentiate high activity uses such as retail from low activity uses such as offices. Auto and construction related uses are noted because of their lower activity generation, although each of those categories has retail components. Health services are noted separately because it was not possible to determine the actual number of offices generated by these listings: doctors and dentists frequently list themselves individually, although they are often members of a larger practice that could otherwise be listed as a single business. Entertainment uses include restaurants and cafes as well as bowling alleys, theaters, cinemas and the like because they generate similar activity types. Manufacturing and small manufacturing business are also noted separately, as are retail services, which are defined as services that require a storefront or shop, such as hair salons, tailors, and cobblers.

Eras

The eras chosen for analysis were chosen due to their lack of extraordinary circumstances that could have skewed the economic environment of the business district. The late 1890’s was an era of financial instability, including an (1892) economic depression of dramatic enough proportions that it is mentioned in the Massachusetts Census of 1895. 1910 gives fifteen years of economic recovery while avoiding the complicating effects of

the American entrance into World War I in 1917. Following World War I was the Great Depression, which was followed by World War II, eliminating over thirty years from consideration. With the end of the war in 1945, the early 1950's were a time of relative stability. Finally, the post-industrial era was chosen at the halfway point between 1950 and 2004—1978. Because of the vagaries of data availability, each index year had some flexibility, with variations of up to four years, according to the availability of indices.

Methodology

Demographic information was obtained from both US and Massachusetts State Census data. Early (1910) U.S. Census data by town is difficult to access, so the early twentieth century data is culled from the 1905 Massachusetts Decennial Census. As described above, differences in the census data from year to year and from federal to state make comparisons challenging.

Business types were taken from two sources: town directories and reverse telephone directories. Most towns had periodically archived town directories, which are similar to today's Yellow Pages and contained street listings for residents and category listings for businesses. In some directories, businesses were not listed with addresses, in other sources, they were not listed by type. To the extent possible, the lists were cross-referenced to confirm the business type and location, and to eliminate businesses listed under multiple categories. In Needham's case in particular, it was not possible to confirm the addresses of the businesses in the 1910 directory, although the businesses were listed by neighborhood. Each town had sporadically retained these directories, so the dates for each were chosen to correspond as closely to the index years as was practical. In the case of Watertown, no directories were archived after 1938, and, although alternative sources were found for the post-industrial and contemporary profiles, the post-World War II data was not available. All 2003 data was retrieved by compiling a list of all businesses in a reverse telephone directory, then identifying each business type through the Verizon online classified business directory. A few of those listings were either not found in the online directory, or were not classified, and were excluded from the counts.

Notes

¹ J. B. Jackson, "The Stranger's Path," Landscape in Sight: Looking at America, ed. Helen L. Horowitz (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997). pps. 19-30.

² Atlas of Norfolk County, Mass., (New York: Comstock & Cline, 1876).

³ "Waltham Watches but Never Waits," Waltham Evening News Saturday, June 19 1920, p. 1.

⁴ Historic Watertown, Videorecording: 50 Minutes (Cliff Risack, Watertown Dept. of Community Development and Planning in association with Architectural Preservation Associates, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Watertown Free Public Library, 1984).

⁵ Robert M. Fogelson, Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). p. 19.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Waltham Watches but Never Waits."

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Fogelson, Robert M. Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

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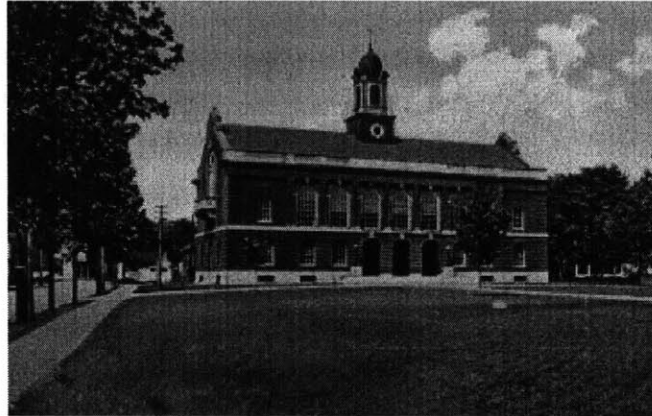
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Chapter 3

Case Study: Needham Town



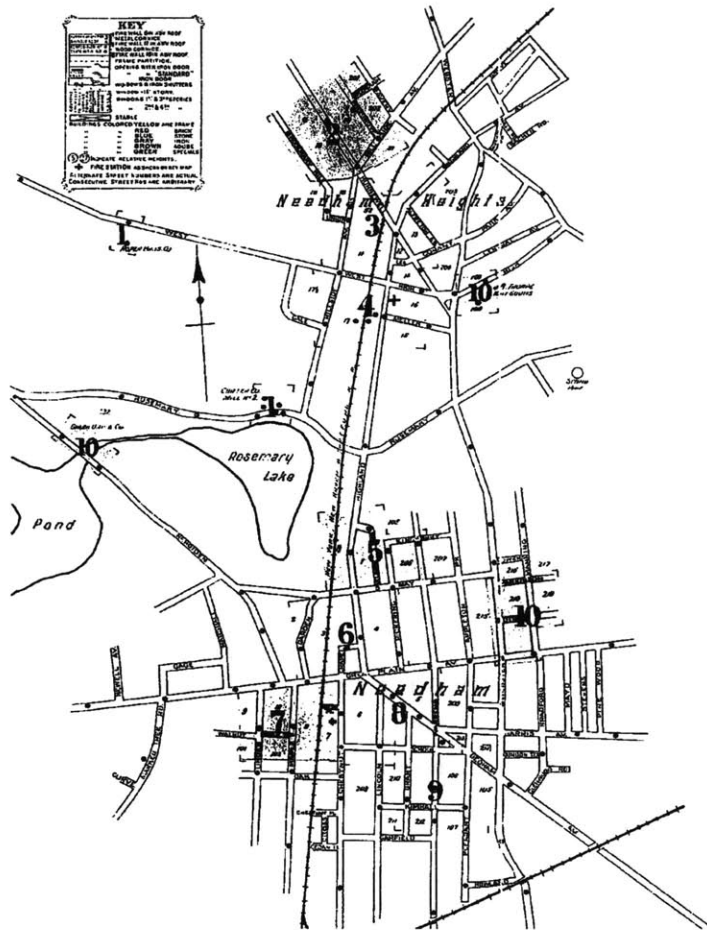
History

Located 17 miles west of Boston along the Charles River, Needham is the most westerly of the cases. Originally a part of the neighboring town of Dedham, the residents of what is now Needham petitioned in 1710 to incorporate as a separate town due to the great distance most residents in this agricultural community needed to travel to attend church and school. After some brief wrangling over the exact location of the town lines, Needham was incorporated in 1711.¹

Although the municipal entity of Needham was created in 1711, the boundaries of the town did not reach their current form until after the Civil War. In 1880, after sixteen previous attempts to secede from Needham, the town of Wellesley finally incorporated, reducing both the population and area of Needham by nearly half.² Wellesley also retained the town hall, requiring the establishment of a new town hall in Needham. So it happened that, although Needham had been an incorporated town for over one hundred fifty years, the current town center was not established until 1880. The new location was chosen logically: not only was it at the geographical center of the smaller town, it was also conveniently the location of a railroad station. The town's political activities took place in leased locations in Needham Center until 1903, when the current Town Hall and common were built.³

Although the economy of early Needham was based on agriculture, early in the nineteenth century the industrial economy began to grow. Paper mills, sawmills, gristmills, and paint manufacturers were prominent along the river. Later, with the advent of steam power, clothing manufacturers—most notably the W. Carter Company—dominated the plains of Needham Heights. Many of these clothing mills were located on

cheap land that had been made agriculturally worthless by the removal of tons of gravel excavated between 1859 and 1870 for use as fill in Boston's Back Bay.⁴ By 1910, the skeleton of Needham's morphology appeared much as it does today: a primary business center was located at Needham Centre, with a secondary business center at Needham Heights; industry was concentrated around Needham Heights and at a few points on the river; Highland Avenue provided road (and streetcar) access north and east to Newton and Boston; while Great Plain Avenue connected the town center to both Wellesley and Dedham. (Map1)



Map 1. Needham overview: 1912
 (Source: 1912 Sanborn Map)

Twentieth Century

By the early 20th century, Needham Centre was a busy commercial district with a variety of businesses and building types. Anchored by the Common and the Town Hall, a few clusters of dense commercial buildings dotted the district. While portions of the district demonstrated the cheek-by-jowl, narrow storefronts characteristic of a pedestrian-reliant transportation system, some of the business blocks retained a nearly residential countenance, with pitched roofs and articulated facades. (Photo 1) This lent the district a friendly, village-like atmosphere, dense in plan but approachable in elevation.

At this time, with a population of 4,284, more of Needham's residents worked in domestic service than in any other employment category. With thirty percent of the workforce, and ninety-eight percent of those employed as domestics female, this means that nearly fifty percent of all female Needham residents were employed as domestics in 1905. Nearly as many working residents—twenty-two percent—were employed in manufacturing, matched by the twenty-two percent of those residents who were identified as “scholars”.⁵

According to the U.S. Census publication, *Historic Census of the United States*, ninety-six percent of those employed in manufacturing in Middlesex County were wage earners. Since wage earners, as opposed to salaried workers, tend to be employed in the less-skilled, lower-paying jobs, the majority of manufacturing workers were likely working-class. In fact, a conservative estimate of the number of blue-collar jobs can be extracted from the census by removing both the industry categories that are certainly not blue-collar (government, professional, and scholars) and those categories that are ambiguous (personal service, trade and agriculture⁶) from the total, which leaves thirty percent of the workforce in blue-collar jobs. (Figure 1) This gives us a very rough, conservative



Photo 1. The Fowler Block, Needham (Needham Historical Society)

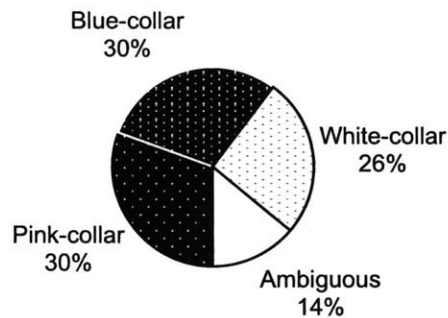


Figure 1. Needham Population profile 1905 (Mass. Decennial Census, 1905)

estimate that sixty percent of the working residents of Needham had working class vocations. With twenty-six percent of residents identified as “scholars” and fifteen percent in ambiguous professions, that proportion could well have been higher.

At about the same time, the business mix in both Needham Centre and Needham Heights reflected the need to support the proximal population. A broad range of services and goods were available in both areas—from drug stores to hardware stores, from clothiers to grocers—most housed in the compact, narrow storefronts typical of the era. There were some important differences between the two districts. First, Needham Centre had significantly more businesses: 187 to Needham Heights’ 106. This is not surprising since the Centre was also the seat of government: it attracted a larger portion of legal and commercial services that required proximity to the courts and offices of government.

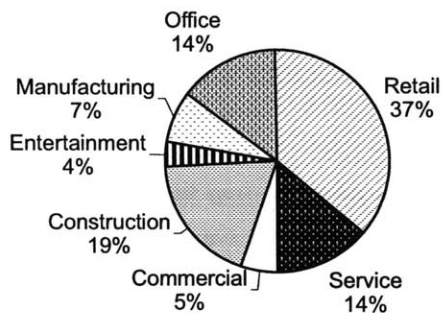


Figure 2. Needham Centre business profile: 1911

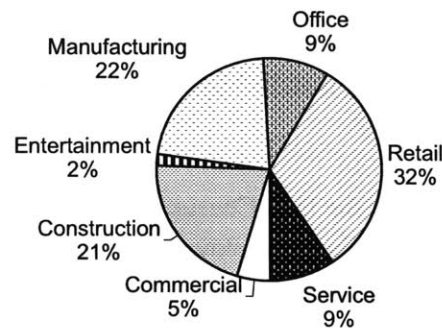


Figure 3. Needham Heights business profile: 1911

In addition, while the businesses in both locations were about thirty percent retail and twenty percent construction-related businesses, the Heights showed significantly more manufacturing firms as well as the expected fewer office uses. (Figure 2, Figure 3)

The retail mix for each area reveals additional differences in markets: whereas the sale of staples (food and fuel) tops the number of businesses in the Heights (Figure 4), Needham Centre had more specialty retail businesses. (Figure 5) Needham Heights had nearly half the proportion of specialty shops that Needham Centre did, with twenty-four percent to the Centre’s forty-two. Considering the number of manufacturing firms in the Heights in 1911, and the limited transportation options for the working class that characterized this era, it is reasonable to expect that many of the residents of the Heights were employed in the nearby mills and factories, suggesting a primarily working class market for the district. It is likely the working class residents of the Heights made up a large portion

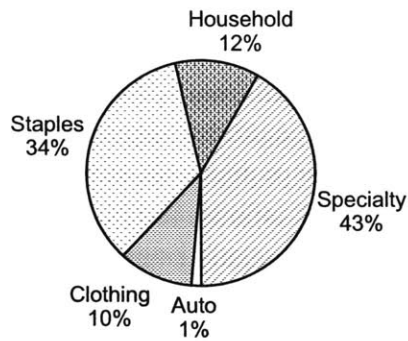


Figure 4. Needham Centre retail profile: 1911

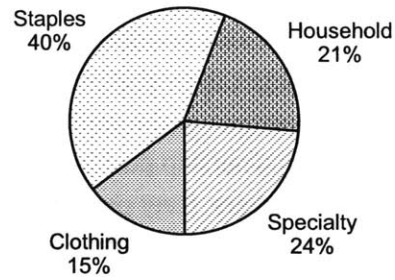


Figure 5. Needham Heights retail profile: 1911

of the consumer base—a base with little disposable income to spare on specialty items such as sweets, flowers, pianos, or phonographs, all of which could be found in Needham Centre, but not the Heights.

While this does not prove that the residents in and around Needham Centre were more affluent than the residents of Needham Heights were, it does indicate a different socioeconomic market in the business district. Since the Centre served as the governing center of the entire town, the predominance of specialty stores indicates a market larger than the immediate neighborhood. With more than three times as many specialty stores making up more than twice the proportion of retail businesses, the Centre must have relied on a broader market than the Heights, a market that included higher income patrons.

Although the markets were different, the experience of being in the business district must have been similar for consumers in either location. The Centre was larger, and, with more businesses, was probably livelier, but each districts had remarkably similar proportions of business types, with a balance of commercial, retail, business, and service functions. Even the Centre, with its high proportion of specialty stores, was equalized with many food, fuel, and service establishments, indicating a business mix balanced between local and non-local, a place where residents could buy their daily necessities while non-locals would be attracted to the specialty shops.

Post World War II

From 1905, to 1950, Needham's population nearly quadrupled from 4,284 to 16,313. Dramatic changes in employment types accompanied this population explosion: thirty-seven percent of the employed population worked in professional, technical, or management/ownership positions, comparable to the rough estimate that, including the ambiguous workers, forty percent of 1905's workers were similarly employed. (Figure 6) Machine operators and laborers had dropped from about twenty-five percent in 1905⁷ to sixteen percent of the workforce in 1950, while "private household workers (comparable with the "domestic workers" of 1905) accounted for three percent of the employed, far less than the thirty percent seen at the turn of the century.

Nonetheless, the combined total of assumed blue-collar employees remained approximately stable at twenty-nine percent.⁸ Pink-collar workers contributed an additional twenty-nine percent of the Needham labor force, bring to fifty-eight percent the proportion of what were probably low to mid-paying, working-class vocations—a very similar proportion to the conservative sixty percent estimate from 1905. However, in spite of the development of the nearby Needham Industrial Center along newly opened Route 128, it also appears that many, if not most, employed Needham residents worked in Boston, unlike many of the workers at the turn of the twentieth century.⁹

With the maturing of the automobile era, the mix of business types saw remarkable changes in both Needham Heights and Needham Centre. Most notable was the drastic reduction in the number of businesses located in Needham Heights, from over a hundred in 1911 to only 42 in 1954. Part of this contraction might be attributable to the variations among data sources: the 1911 business directory contained few, if any addresses, instead

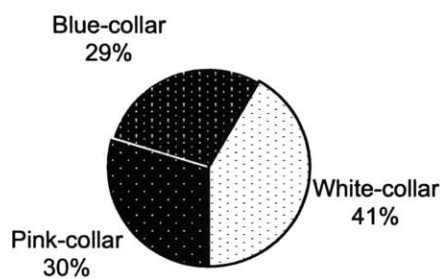


Figure 6.
Needham Population profile 1950
(U.S. Decennial Census, 1950)

referring to the locations of businesses by neighborhood code, with NH referring to Needham Heights, and no notation referring to Needham Centre. For purposes of consistency among the remaining directories, Needham Heights was defined within the specific boundaries described in the appendix.

However, even when adjusted with the addition of eight manufacturers from the area surrounding the commercial core, the Heights continued to show dramatic

business contraction. (Figure 7) This could have occurred because of a number of factors, or combinations thereof, including: the decline of the manufacturing sector—which would reduce the both the daytime population of the district and the number of services that helped support them; increased competition from regional shopping malls—which could have had a particularly strong effect on the Heights given its proximity to the highway and convenient regional shopping centers; and/or the expansion of commuter-reliant employment centers, especially in Boston, making it more convenient for Needham residents to shop near their workplaces or along their commute routes. In addition, the proximity to the highway, and its location along an arterial access to that highway may have made the street less comfortable for pedestrians as traffic increased, while the large scale of the limited commercial buildings further detracted from the pedestrian shopper’s environment. (Photo 2)

The commercial interests in the town were aware of the small size of the Needham Heights shopping area, and even indicated that the district had potential to expand. The 1954 business directory claims that, “[E]nlargement of this shopping center may be a possibility in the future because housing in this section has increased.”¹⁰ Unfortunately, the small number of businesses that remained in the Heights (forty-two) makes a comparison of business mix with Needham Centre less useful than if there had been a more robust business environment in Needham Heights. But it is interesting to note that manufacturing remained prominent, with thirteen manufacturers in Needham Heights to the single manufacturer in the Centre, and that the bare necessities remained—staples, drugs, household goods, and, of course, necessary for the era, auto service stations.

The business mix in the Centre also changed from 1911 to 1954. Although there was some expansion in the number of businesses, given the dramatic increase in

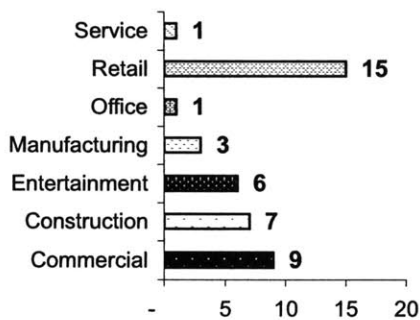


Figure 7. Needham Heights business profile: 1954



Photo 2. Needham Heights in the 1950’s

population, the thirteen percent increase was hardly an explosion of the downtown economy. There was, however, a dramatic shift towards office uses, including doctor's offices, undoubtedly a result of the expansion of the nearby hospital. (Figure 8) In the aggregated profile, retail uses continued to lead business types, followed by services, which remained at fourteen percent. By 1954, commercial services had replaced much of the 1911 proportion of construction-related businesses and, as mentioned above, there was an overall growth in office uses.

Although, as in 1911, retail businesses accounted for about a third of Needham Centre's business mix, by 1954 the retail profile had shifted: instead of ninety percent of businesses falling into three categories (specialty, staples, or household goods), only sixty-five percent of businesses fell into the same three categories in 1954. (Figure 9) Major changes in the types included a more than fifty percent reduction in the proportion of retail staples and a smaller reduction in the proportion of specialty shops accompanied by an increase in auto-related businesses.

The overall shift—towards office-based services and away from construction and retail—combined with the retail shift away from staples and household goods, indicates a shift from a balanced business mix to a mix more focused on regional markets. This is not to assign a causative relationship: rather it is an observation about how the downtown environment was changing. In 1911, a stroll downtown might have revealed a lesser diversity of retail types, but a greater socioeconomic diversity of patrons. It was, after all, an important shopping center for all classes, with groceries and dry goods as well as specialty stores and offices. By 1954, that diversity diminished with the reduction of the kinds of shops and services that serve and employ a wide range of socioeconomic classes, in particular, the reduction by half of retailers of staple goods, in spite of a dramatically increased population.

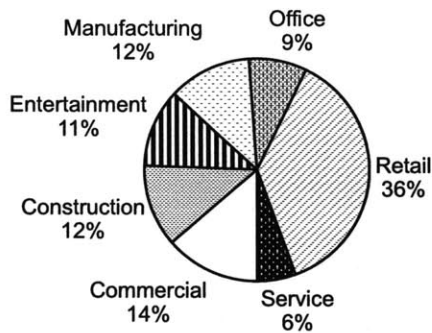


Figure 8. Needham Centre business profile: 1954

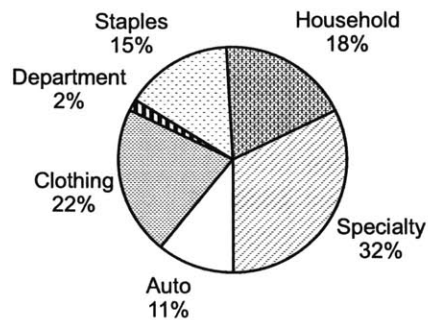


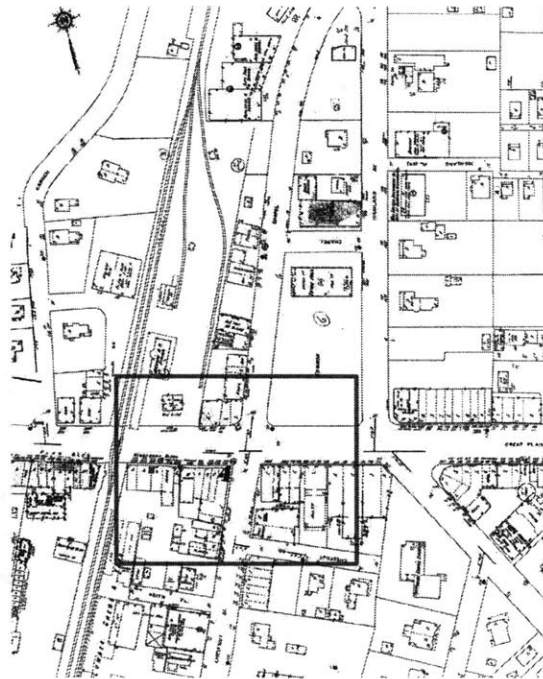
Figure 9. Needham Centre retail profile: 1954

As might be expected from the population increase, the physical form of both Needham Centre and Needham Heights also changed between the early 1900's and the post-war period. Along with an increase in building density—indicated by the increase in the number of buildings per block—was an increase in the size of building footprints. Downtown businesses went from being characterized by individual stores in individual buildings, to larger buildings containing multiple tenants. Storefronts retained their narrow frontages to some extent, and many buildings extended further to the rear of the parcels than shown in the 1905 maps. (Map 2) While this might reveal an increase in volume in some retail categories, explaining the limited growth in the number of businesses, these changes also would have changed the character of the downtown. The assemblage of small, individual shops into single, large structures changed the scale of the district from one of intimate, individually operated properties, to one of large-scale, more anonymous structures with less for the individual shopper to relate to. This effect was mitigated to some extent, however, by the continued operation of individual storefronts within the larger structures, as can be seen in some blocks.

The most dramatic change to the form of Needham Centre was the extension of Chapel Street to the corner of May and Highland, which turned what had previously been an alley-like roadway serving a gristmill and a few small manufacturers into a more direct connection through the town's center, adding a full block of commercial frontage just north of the town hall. (Map 3) This created a district with three through streets, two of



**Map 2. Building changes in
Needham Centre: 1912-1948
(Source: Sanborn Maps)**



**Map 3. Needham Centre: 1948
(Source: Sanborn Maps)**

which converged on Highland Avenue and connected to the highway. Less visible from the ground, but clear in aerial photos, was the high percentage of land area given over for parking. (Aerial Photo) This was seen as essential to the health of the district, which was marketed as a modern, convenient shopping center. The Chamber of Commerce writes, in reference to Needham Centre—which the Chamber refers to as “Needham’s Shopping Center”:

Plans call for additional stores to be built in and near this already highly modern diversified shopping center. The new Industrial Development Center...has a shopping area also. Merchandise of all lines are available at these stores and super markets to supply your needs. Shopping here is made easy by the use of all Modern Merchandising Methods to serve you whatever your selections may be.”

The change in spelling is significant—Needham’s central business district had been spelled in the English manner since 1879, when the railroad changed the name of the stop from “Great Plain Station” to “Needham Centre”¹¹, as the incorporation of Wellesley moved the seat of the town’s government. The chamber seems to have forgone the historic spelling for the modern, as well as referring to the Centre as a “shopping” center, as if no other activities took place there. These forward-thinking businessmen of Needham were also careful to point out the abundance of parking in the “Center”, including an aerial photo in the business directory as evidence.



Aerial Photo
(Source: “Your Town Needham”)

Post-industrial

By the 1980's, the town of Needham had matured into a town of relative wealth. With a median family income one and a half times that statewide, nearly one-half of employed adults in the town worked in higher-paying executive, management, technical, or other professional positions. (Figure 10) The population had continued to grow, from 16,313 in 1950 to 27,901 in 1980, while the proportion of blue-collar labor continued to shrink, from thirty-five to twelve percent. The "pink-collar" employment sector had also continued to grow, albeit slowly—it increased four percentage points to thirty-three percent. The combined proportions indicate that a contraction in the working class proportion, which dropped from sixty percent in 1950, to forty-six percent in 1980.

The early 1980's also saw a return to a more active business district for Needham Heights, at least more active than it was in the fifties. Although the area did not regain the diversity of business types found there in the 1910's, the number of businesses increased from forty-two in 1950 to seventy-eight in 1982. Nearly all of that growth was in office and commercial services, which went from accounting for merely four businesses in 1954, to dominating the business mix with thirty-one businesses—more than one third of the mix. (Figure 11) This was accompanied by a steep drop in manufacturing, continuing the trend seen in previous eras—by 1982, only one large manufacturer remained in Needham Heights, the W. Carter Company.

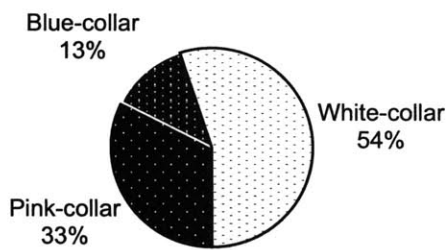


Figure 10.
Needham Population profile 1980
(U.S. Decennial Census, 1980)

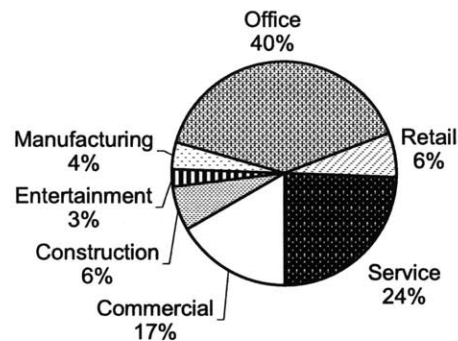


Figure 11. Needham Heights
business profile: 1982

During the same period, Needham Centre continued to show an increase in the proportion of offices, while the remainder of the business type proportion changed little. (Figure 12) A detailed breakdown of the retail mix details the continued trend of increasing specialty retail shops. (Figure 13) From 1954 to 1982, the proportion of specialty shops grew from about a third of the Centre’s retail businesses, to more than half. This increase was accompanied by concurrent reductions in the proportions of both household and staples retailers, the latter by a third. The proportion of retail clothing shops also shrank in this period, from one fifth of retailers to one tenth.

A planning report prepared in 1983 identifies traffic and parking as the primary concerns about what was referred to as “downtown”, as Needham Centre was then referred to, while adopting a “region-serving role” is discouraged.¹² This is interesting since the retail mix seemed to indicate—with the reductions in staples, household goods, and even clothing—a long-term shift away from local needs and towards more regional markets. The report also asserts that “[T]he essence of Downtown is that it is a place where a single auto trip can serve multiple purposes”¹³, an argument used to encourage improving and maintaining the pedestrian environment of the district. It may be useful to have available parking for “multiple purposes”, but, without a multiplicity of retail types to cater to the local market, it seems unlikely there was much reason to linger downtown. At the same time that the pedestrian environment was to be protected and enhanced, parking accommodation was seen as an important part of economic development,¹⁴ similar to the 1954 planning report.

The 1983 report, however, in contrast with the Chamber’s observations of the Centre in 1954, pointed out that the presence of government and other institutions and offices distinguished the Centre from mere “shopping centers”. However, the plan indicated that

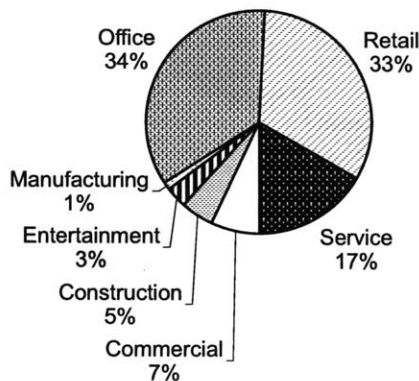


Figure 12. Needham Centre business profile: 1982

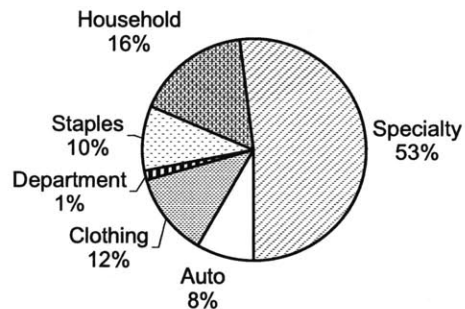


Figure 13. Needham Centre retail profile: 1982

business uses and government uses were to dominate a post-industrial Needham Centre, and housing in and around the district was discouraged, as it would “dilute” the business concentration. As a whole, the district was perceived to be in some decline, and, with its increases in office uses, was likely much less active than it had been in the past.

Twenty-first century

By 2000, the number of Needham’s 28,911 residents who worked in traditional blue-collar industries was very small, down to six percent of employed adults. (Figure 14) Sales, clerical, and related employment remained steady at thirty-three percent, nonetheless translating into a net loss of six percent of residents in working-class jobs. At the same time, residents with higher paying jobs in management, executive, and professional fields increased from forty-nine to sixty-four percent. This change in employment patterns is reflected in the median income levels: in 2000, Needham’s median income was over \$88,000 per household, almost two times higher than the median for the state.

By 2003, the business mix in Needham Centre had changed but little since 1983—offices, specialty retail, and services all remained the highest proportions of the business mix. (Figure 15) However, the proportion of commercial services doubled, and was accompanied by further reduction in the diversity of the retail base, as nearly three-

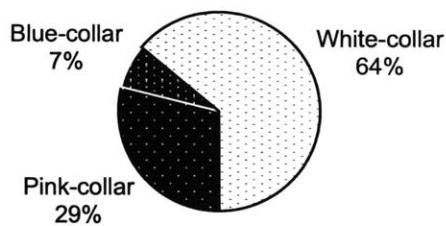


Figure 14. Needham population profile: 2000
(Source: U.S. Census 2000)

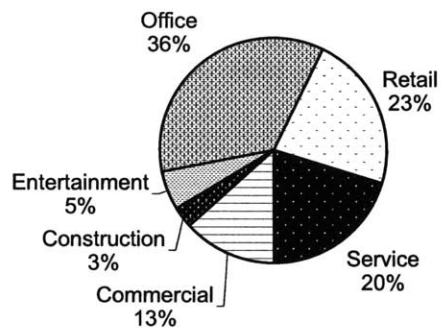


Figure 15. Needham Centre business profile: 2003

quarters of the district's retailers sold specialty goods. The decline in retailers that cater to local residents continued as retailers of staples, household goods and clothing dwindled, but, in the aggregate, the general business mix remained constant. (Figure 16)

Needham Heights also saw limited change in the decades between 1983 and 2003, with the most dramatic changes being a decrease in auto service stations and an increase in specialty stores. (Figure 17) The aggregated comparison shows little change in the proportion of business types, except for an increase in retail, which remained small at fourteen percent of businesses. (Figure 17) While this increase certainly bodes well for the economic conditions of the Heights, the increase in specialty goods has been concurrent with only limited increases in household and staple goods, and would seem to indicate that the retail environment in the Heights is regional rather than local.

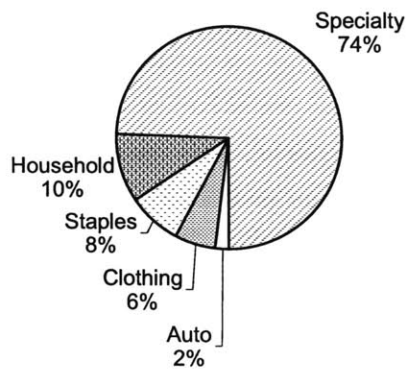


Figure 16. Needham Centre retail profile: 2003

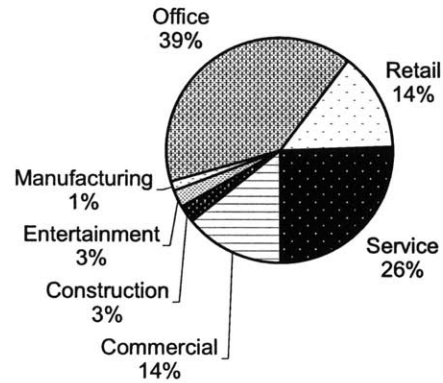


Figure 17. Needham Heights business profile: 2003

As can be expected, over the last ninety-five years Needham has seen significant changes: from the industrial economy of the early twentieth century to the service economy of the early twenty-first century, from an exporter of goods to an exporter of labor, and, in the business districts, from locally-oriented goods and services to a more regionally focused market. The steady decline in the proportion of middle-class workers combined with the steady increase in white-collar workers was accompanied by dramatic shifts in the business district economies as locally-oriented businesses catering to everyday needs declined. (Figure 18, Figure 19, Figure 20)

The change in transportation technology certainly made its mark, from the modifications of Chapel Street to the preoccupation with parking as an economic development tool, influencing both the scope of the business market and the physical environment of the business district. In today's Needham Centre, only the ghost of the diverse "downtown" of yesteryear remains, reflected in the diverse storefronts of the older blocks. Years of parking lot development have left empty, deactivated spaces along the façade line of the primary roadways, while curb cuts and parking frontage limit the walkability of sidewalks. Increases in traffic on Highland, Chapel, and along Great Plain Avenue have been accompanied by road-widening and the narrowing of sidewalks, resulting in a isolated islands of shops accessed only by wide, unpleasant street crossings. Banks buildings dominate portions of Needham Centre, creating an intimidating and unapproachable environment that contrasts with the intimate, approachable forms that characterized the district at the turn of the 20th century. Functionally, both Needham Centre and Needham Heights seem to have become districts of offices, specialty shops, and restaurants, with little to draw the resident on a more than occasional basis. (Figure 21) The Heights remains rather small, and both districts seem to suffer from the dominance of through traffic, which, combined with the deterioration of the pedestrian realm, further removes the districts from the territory of the quotidian.

Notes

¹ George K. Clarke, History of Needham Massachusetts 1711-1911 (Cambridge, MA: University Press, 1912)., pps. 74-76

² Ibid. p. 162

³ Ibid. p. 192

⁴ A. E. Foss & Co., History and Directory of Needham, Massachusetts for 1888-1889 (Boston: G.H. Ware, 1888).. p. 4

⁵ 1905 Massachusetts Decennial Census

⁶ Since agricultural laborers were counted separately in the census, this could have been a count either of landowners or of tenant farmers, or both, making it ambiguous how many working-class workers are represented.

⁷ Counting those employed in the 1905 categories "manufacturing" and "laborers".

⁸ Comprised of the following categories: laborers, private household workers, operatives and kindred, and sales.

⁹ Needham Chamber of Commerce, Your Home Town Needham: A Pictorial Directory (Needham: McIntosh Press, 1956). p. 6

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Clarke, p. 414

¹² Needham Planning Board and Phil Herr and Associates Planning Consultants, Needham Planning Studies 1983, Report. p. 4.1-3

¹³ Ibid. p. 4.1-4

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 3.1-6

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Chapter 4

Case Study: Waltham City



Main Street Waltham, 1897

History

Waltham, a nineteenth century mill town nine miles west of Boston, was established in 1738 after a disagreement about tax dispersment motivated the residents of what was then known as the Western Precinct of Watertown to petition for incorporation. Largely a collection of farms, the town had previously established its own meetinghouse and common, the latter of which remains at the corner of Main and Moody Streets.¹ Main Street, known in the eighteenth century as Great Country Road, was the heaviest traveled road in the area: as the primary connection between Boston and points west, it carried trade, commerce, and stagecoach passengers from the entire state. Some of the earliest business activity in Waltham was located on Main Street in the form of taverns and boarding houses that served travelers.²

Industry came early to Waltham—the first dam and paper mill was built on the Charles in 1779. Through the ensuing two or three decades, Waltham saw steady development of water-powered mills, including the construction of the Boston Manufacturing Company in 1814. Boston Manufacturing, owned by Francis Cabot Lowell, was the first textile mill in the United States to combine all phases of the manufacturing of cotton, from batting to cloth, into a single factory. Boston Manufacturing employed a large labor force, and Francis Cabot Lowell went on to found the cities of Lowell and Lawrence, each built around Lowell's textile factories.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Waltham's industrial base continued to expand, particularly once railroad access routed to serve Boston Manufacturing's mills reached the town in 1843. The Moody Street business district, which had been established to

serve factory workers in the southern district known as Southside, sparsely populated in the early part of the century, was finally connected to the center of town in 1846 with the construction of the first Moody Street Bridge. Southside, also known as the Chemical District (due to the presence of the Newton Chemical Company) was owned by the city of Newton, which sold it to the town of Waltham for annexation in 1849. In 1854, the Waltham Watch Company built what was to become a keystone industry in Waltham—by 1880, the factory employed 16% of the town’s population. By 1884, in response to the pressures of the growing industrial sector and population, the town had incorporated as a city and was reorganized with a mayor and a board of aldermen.³ So confident was Waltham in its identity as a city (rather than a town), it published the “Suburban Waltham Directory” in the early 1900’s, a directory of the towns surrounding Waltham—Weston, Wayland, Lincoln, and Belmont.

The Twentieth Century

By 1910, except for the continued expansion of industry and its concomitant population growth, central Waltham, like Needham, had achieved most of the land use, street and parcel patterns still seen today . Two concentrations of businesses of nearly identical size remained on Moody Street and Main Street, with slightly higher densities on Moody Street. **(Map 1)** With 26,282 people, Waltham was by far the largest of the three cases. In fact, the argument can be made that Waltham does not qualify as a true suburb, since it had a well-established, independent economy by the early part of the twentieth century. Yet, by 1920, Waltham was referring to itself as a suburb, and touting itself as capable of providing both the convenience of city life and the healthfulness of country life. A promotional booklet from that time describes Waltham as a place where “there is opportunity for the workers to be near their daily toil and at the same time enjoy the



Map 1.
Waltham 1911
(Source: Sanborn Map)

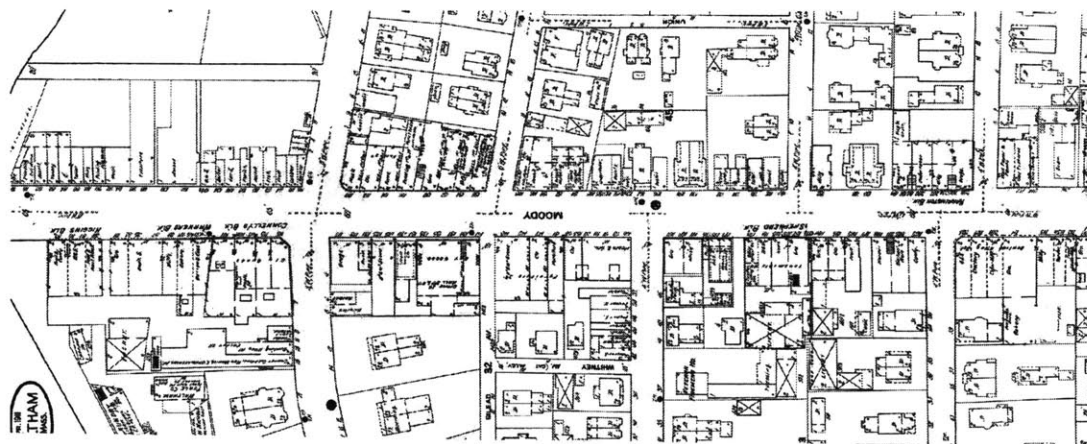
advantages of a home in the suburbs, open spaces, fresh air, country scenery and room to turn...”⁴

By the early twentieth century, Waltham’s business districts were quite vibrant and successful. In a Boston Edison profile written in 1909, the author describes:

In the thoroughfares near the center of the city are numerous business buildings in which are stores of various kinds in which all household supplies and personal necessities are obtainable. In the business buildings, which in design, size and construction would be, creditable structures in any city are the offices of many individuals or corporations devoted to important undertakings while professional services of any nature are within proper command.⁵

Each district’s buildings were characterized by both narrow-fronted, individual shops and larger “block” buildings containing multiple businesses. These larger buildings often had articulated facades that minimized their mass, sometimes appearing at first glance to be an agglomeration of small buildings rather than one large one. These large buildings accommodated both large and small floorplates for a diverse range of uses. Groupings of small shops at the street level in some cases were topped by social halls or churches that used most of the the upper floors. (Map 2)

With more than 200 businesses in each district, Waltham’s self-identity as a city rather than as a suburb seems justified. Each district provided an enormous variety of goods and services, with slightly different profiles that seemed to complement each other. On Moody Street, surrounded by worker’s housing yet connected to the Main Street



Map 2.
Moody Street, 1911 (Source: Sanborn Map)

thoroughfare, businesses were dominated by retail, which accounted for forty-two percent of businesses on the street. (Figure 1) This contrasted with Main Street, which was also dominated by retail, although to a significantly lesser extent at twenty-eight percent of the mix. Both offices and service businesses made up a significant proportion of each district. In both districts, staples dominated the retail mix, making up well over half of the retail on Main Street. (Figure 2) Moody Street, on the other hand, had a greater diversity of retail types, with significant proportions of retailers of clothing, specialty, and household goods. (Figure 3)

Considering the strength of Waltham's industrial base, it is no surprise that in 1910 30% of the workforce was employed in manufacturing. (Figure 4) As in Needham, domestic services accounted for nearly as much employment as manufacturing—twenty-seven percent—employing forty-two percent of all female residents. Using the same criteria

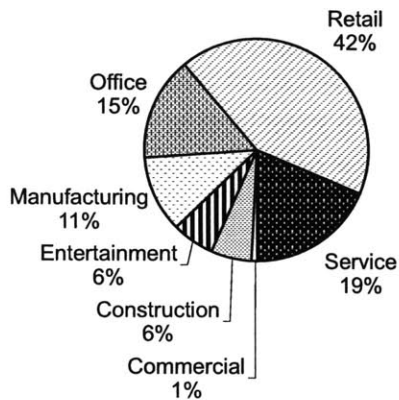


Figure 1. Moody Street business profile: 1910

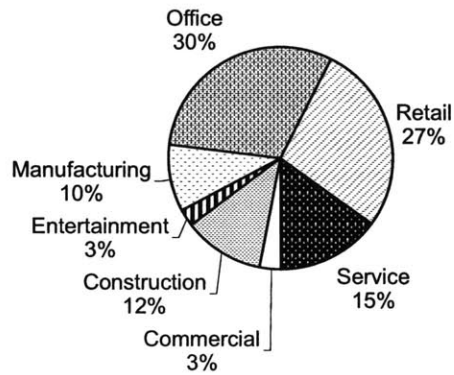


Figure 2. Main Street business profile: 1910

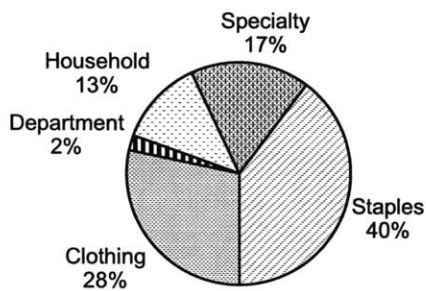


Figure 3. Moody Street retail profile: 1910

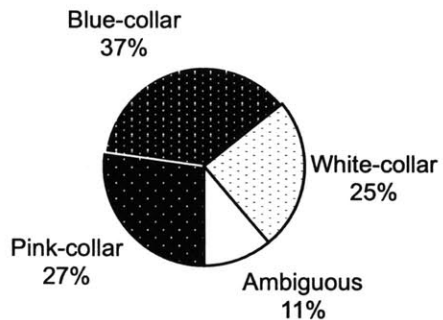


Figure 4. Waltham population profile: 1905
(Source: Mass Decennial Census, 1905)

as used for the Needham analysis, counting separately the Massachusetts State Census categories that were likely to be primarily blue-collar (manufacturing, transportation, laborers, apprentices and the like) with domestic labor, a rough but conservative proportion of working-class residents can be inferred. In this case, working class residents probably accounted for about sixty-five percent of the work force. Given the need for proximal goods and services, it appears that both Moody Street and Main Street served both local (working class) and regional markets. Moody Street’s specialty shops likely were targeted to regional shoppers, while the office services that dominated Main Street—such as law offices, accountants, and manufacturer representatives—likely targeted a regional business clientele. Both districts also had high percentages of retail shops selling staples and household goods, categories of goods generally marketed to the local population.

Post World War II

By 1950, Waltham boasted a population of 47,187, an eighty percent increase from 1905’s population of 26, 282. A slight increase was seen in the proportion of working class workers over the previous forty years: the aggregate proportion was seventy-two percent, although domestic service had dropped to about three percent. (Figure 5) The difference was made up in the “pink-collar” sector, made up of clerical and other office support workers, and in the sales sector, each of which accounted for from twelve to fourteen percent of employed residents. Laborers, machine operators, and craftsmen made up the remaining forty-seven percent. Although the basic profile remained constant, the types of work did not, as evidenced by the near disappearance of domestic workers. Given the enormous changes in industry, technology, and transportation, this is not surprising.

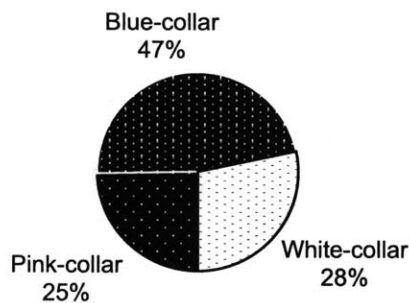


Figure 5. Waltham population profile: 1950
 (Source: Mass Decennial Census, 1950)

In spite of an eighty percent increase in population, there was a contraction of business along Moody Street, which dropped from 275 businesses to 239. Main Street, on the other hand, saw dramatic growth, gaining ninety-five businesses for a total of 321—a forty-two percent increase. Most of this increase was in office-based businesses, which increased to thirty-six percent of businesses from 1910’s seventeen percent.

(Figure 6) Moody Street, on the other hand, saw very little change in the proportions of business types, with only slight increases in retail, office, and services. (Figure 7)

While each district remained fairly stable in the proportion of the top few aggregated categories, but it is interesting to note the loss of small manufacturers on Moody Street, and the loss of construction-related businesses on Main. With office uses increasing and manufacturing and construction decreasing, the daytime population of the districts—made up of workers at these kinds of businesses—would have shifted as the demographic shifted from blue-collar to more white and pink-collar professions. Although overall business types changed little between 1910 and 1953, the retail mix showed significant shifts: both districts saw dramatic drops in retail staples—by three quarters on Moody Street and by more than half on Main Street. But Moody Street saw a dramatic increase in both the number and proportion of retail clothing businesses: in 1910, there were

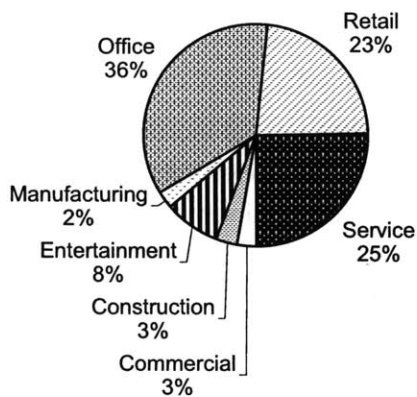


Figure 6. Main Street business profile: 1953

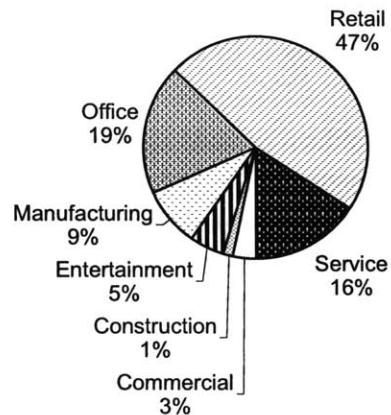


Figure 7. Moody Street business profile: 1953

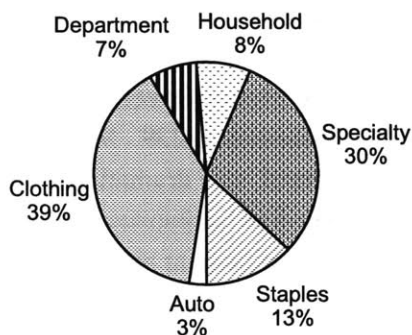


Figure 8. Moody Street retail profile: 1953

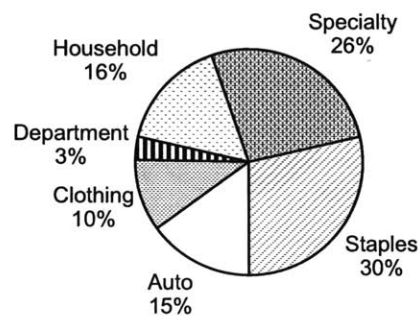
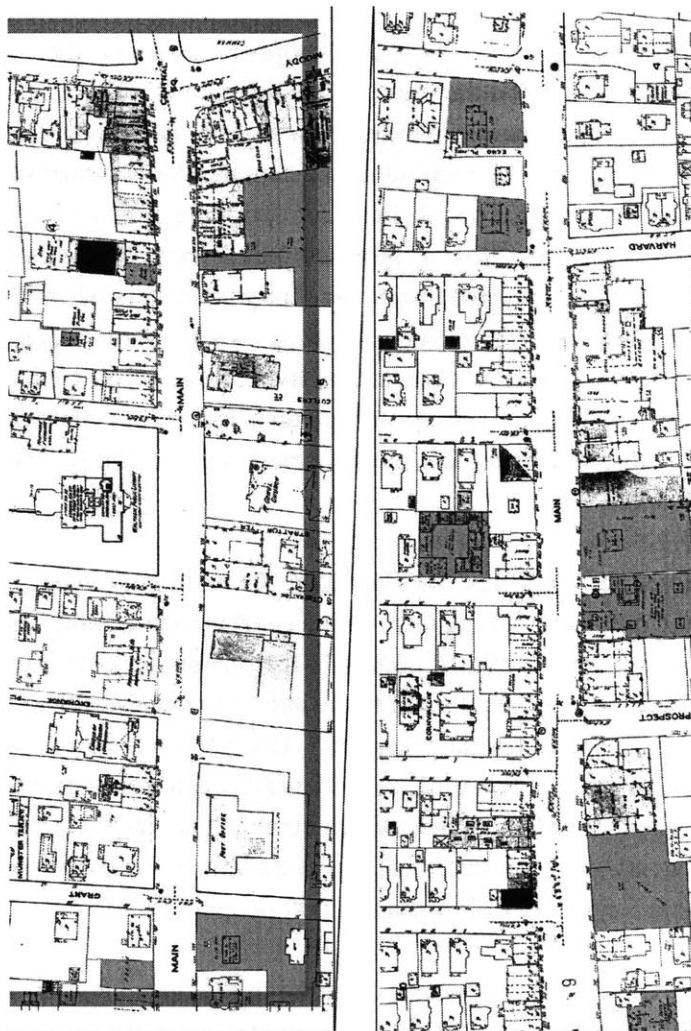


Figure 9. Main Street retail profile: 1953

twenty-five clothing retailers making up twenty percent of the businesses, while in 1953, forty-five clothing retailers made up nearly forty percent of businesses. (Figure 8) On Main Street retail staples were still dominant, but had fallen to only 30%, while specialty shops increased to a quarter of the retail mix. (Figure 9)

The increasing dominance of automobile transport is clear from the fact that automobile-related uses made up fifteen percent of Main Street's businesses. A map of Main Street clearly shows the changing land use along the street, as service stations and other auto-related businesses spread to the west. (Map 2) This pattern may be explained by both the availability of undeveloped parcels at the western end of Main Street and the increasing traffic on Main Street with the opening of Route 128.

Map 2.
Main Street's expansion in the post-war era: gray areas show auto-centric uses (map reads left to right and top to bottom)



The loss in both locations of other locally oriented businesses like hardware, household goods, and furniture, along with the loss of retail staples, indicates that the districts were reacting to or seeking a regional market rather than a local one. With the opening of Route 128 in 1951, Main Street had become an even more important connection to the west, since it terminates at the highway. At the same time, a sort of reverence for the flow of traffic emerged amongst the city's planners. In the parking plan of the Waltham Master Plan of 1954, the planner notes emphatically that curb parking should not interfere with traffic flow. "The function of the street is vehicular movement and this must not be sacrificed in order to be able to find room for private automobile parking."⁶ In fact, the 1954 Master Plan devotes ten full pages to identifying and arguing for the need for parking, concluding with, "[F]ailure to recognize the parking problem and to meet it, will be disastrous. Waltham must adjust to the automobile age—must plan for the shopper on wheels or disintegrate."⁷

However, it was not only the "shopper on wheels" that so interested Waltham's planners—it was the *regional* "shopper on wheels" that caught their attention. The 1954 plan began the parking plan with the admonition that Waltham had great retail trade potential that would not be captured without parking reform and development, and inferred that people had been shopping elsewhere as a result.⁸ The economic development portion of the document reiterated this assertion, claiming that regional neighbors are turning to newer shopping centers where there were adequate parking facilities and where "there are shops where merchandise techniques are used which cater to the income level, standard of living and shopping habits of the people of the area."⁹ This, combined with the conspicuous lack of any mention of the local market, seems to indicate a belief that the only market that could succeed in Waltham was a regional market.

Even the section of the Plan titled "Civic Improvement" deferred to the opinion of the non-local, noting that, unlike nearby towns, Waltham lacks a distinctive colonial atmosphere, rather "it impresses the traveler as an ordinary overgrown industrial town."¹⁰ It did not seem important to the author to note how the local Waltham resident finds the atmosphere, only the "traveler." This non-local focus was also prevalent in the business community at this time, as evidenced in a series of bulletins printed by the Waltham Chamber of Commerce, which claimed that Waltham's trade served 454,000 people in twenty-nine communities, with a trading area that covered a radius of fifteen miles.¹¹ All that for a town of less than 50,000 people.

Several physical changes occurred in Waltham between 1910 and 1953, in addition to the new highway. A fairly consistent trend towards lot assemblage and large building

footprints can be observed on Moody Street, in particular the Walter Cronin Department Store, which dwarfed surrounding shops. (Map 3) Many of the other consolidated buildings retained narrow frontages for individual retailers, and, as at the turn of the century, housed several businesses in each building rather than separate buildings for each business. Main Street did not see such consolidation; rather it accommodated its growth by expanding westward. Many new business buildings were added to the western portions of Main Street between 1911 and 1953: some were narrow-frontaged in the old style, while a conspicuous number were larger in scale and were offset by parking frontage. As was noted above, there was a significant increase in auto-related businesses.

As in Needham, post-war development trends changed the character of the business district, increasing both building density and scale, but the sheer volume of businesses on Moody Street meant that the periodic construction of large-scale buildings were mitigated by the large proportion of smaller buildings that remained. Other than the few, very large buildings at the fringes of both Main and Moody, small-scale buildings provided a transition between the large scale and the pedestrian realm, with the end result that the larger buildings had less impact on the character of the street than was seen in Needham, where there were fewer businesses to begin with.

Map 3.
Moody Street 1910-1950
Changes in building foot-
prints
(Source: Sanborn Maps)



Post-industrial

By 1980, Waltham's population had grown a modest twenty-four percent to 58,200. (Figure 10) Only fifty-six percent of the working population remained in working class professions, down from a high of seventy-two percent in 1950. Blue-collar workers were reduced by nearly half, while clerical and sales workers had increased only slightly. Clearly, the working class character that had been the hallmark of Waltham had changed. And yet, the impression of Waltham remained that of a working class city. In a special 1981 supplement profiling Waltham, Scott Campbell of *The Monthly* writes,

...Waltham is strictly blue collar. It is, in fact, so purely blue collar that some Washington pollsters use Waltham to find out what is going on in the minds of working-class America. It is the kind of town where gangs of kids with custom vans spend summer evenings hanging out at the Common, showing off their latest air-brushed fantasy side-panels and shag carpet linings.¹²

Ironically, Waltham was less blue collar than it had ever been in the past. Yet, with a median income at 105% of the state norm, it seems likely that Waltham's socioeconomic profile was not dramatically different from many other parts of the state.

The intervening decades had seen some changes to the businesses on Moody and Main Streets as well. By 1977, Moody Street had thirty percent fewer businesses than it had in 1954, while Main Street had 14% less, although changes to the overall mix of business types was limited. (Figure 11, Figure 12) Office uses continued to dominate, with slightly smaller proportions of both retail and services. The retail mix in both districts showed a continuing trend in the loss of staples, which, by 1977, accounted for less than one tenth of the retail businesses in both districts. (Figure 13, Figure 14) With more than half of the retail businesses, the retail environment on both streets became dominated by specialty stores, and, although Moody Street's proportion of household goods retailers

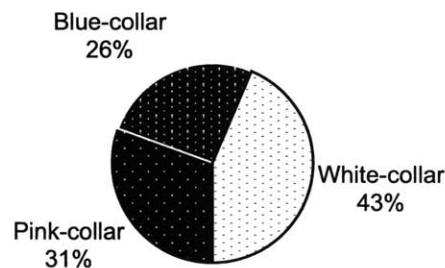


Figure 10. Waltham population profile: 1980
(Source: U.S. Decennial Census, 1980)

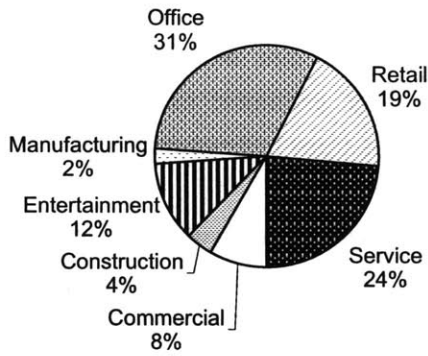


Figure 11. Main Street business profile: 1978

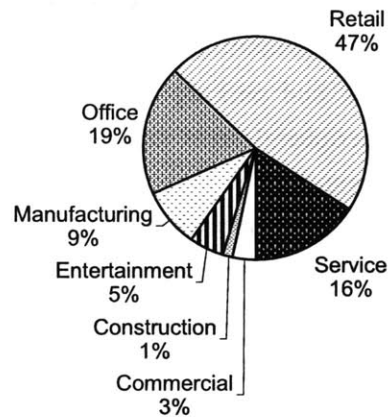


Figure 12. Moody Street business profile: 1978

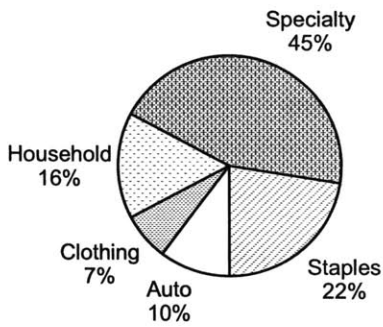


Figure 13. Main Street retail profile: 1978

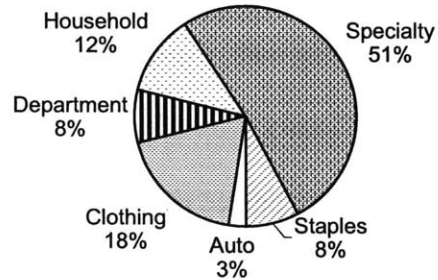


Figure 14. Moody Street retail profile: 1978

increases slightly, the proportion of clothing retailers plummeted from nearly forty percent to less than twenty percent of the retail mix.

Moody Street’s decline was of particular concern to the city, and, by 1977 had been for at least a decade. The Waltham General Plan of 1968 addressed it explicitly, claiming that traffic has been one of the primary causes of the district’s decline.¹³ The report goes on to state that Waltham’s status as a regional retail center had declined because of shopping mall development along the highway.¹⁴ Over the ensuing five years, the Moody Street “problem” continued to plague the city’s planners, resulting in the development of the Moody Street Redevelopment Plan of 1973. The author of the Plan was openly critical in his descriptions of the problem with Waltham’s business environment:

“Waltham’s previous strategic position in business and commerce in the

Western Metropolitan Area of Boston has waned during the past two decades. This deterioration is from a combination of factors; age, obsolescence, traffic and parking congestion and inaccessibility, economic expansion in peripheral areas and a general lack of interest from businessmen and citizens.”¹⁵

The planners’ solution to the problem? A superblock and pedestrian mall, with 1400 parking spaces in three underground floors and 235,000 square feet in two commercial floors above. The plan included the recommendation that “declining” businesses be removed to make way for parking,¹⁶ further illustrating the belief that accommodating vehicles was so important that increased parking capacity was worth the loss of a portion of the shrinking business base. While the small scale of much of Moody Street could withstand the occasional lot zassemlage and large-scale construction of the early 20th century without entirely sacrificing its historic charm and street character, such a large project would have threatened the street by creating an environment reminiscent of a regional shopping mall, without diversity, character, or charm.

Twenty-first Century

Waltham has seen limited population growth in the last twenty years. In 2000, the U.S. Census counted 59,226 people in Waltham, merely two percent more than the 58,200 counted in 1980. (Figure 15) The proportion of blue-collar workers has continued to shrink—from twenty-five percent in 1980 to thirteen percent in 2000—while the clerical and sales sector continued to grow—from thirty-one percent in 1980 to forty-four percent in 2000. By 2000, forty-five percent of workers residing in Waltham were white-collar professionals, managers, or executives. With increases in the clerical/sales “pink-collar”

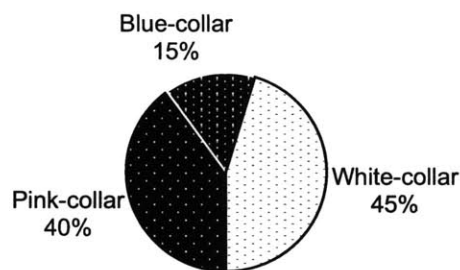


Figure 15. Waltham population profile: 2000
(Source: U.S. Decennial Census, 2000)

employment category, the working-class proportion of residents remained nearly constant at fifty-seven percent.

Waltham has also seen a renaissance of sorts on Moody Street. As the result of a concerted plan that included parking, housing, and street improvements, by all accounts the street has begun to recapture some of the atmosphere of years past, when it was both a regional and local shopping center. As James O’Connell writes in his analysis of Massachusetts suburban downtowns, “Waltham’s Moody Street is a poster child for revitalization in an older industrial city. It is crammed with restaurants, pubs, furniture stores, ethnic groceries, and other independently-owned shops.”¹⁷ Nonetheless, as of 2003, both Moody and Main Street each have fewer businesses than in 1980, if only by a few (Moody is less ten and Main Street is less six). On Moody Street, retail uses dominate, although office uses have increased. Notably, entertainment uses—largely restaurants and cafes—have increased significantly, from thirteen businesses in 1980 to twenty-one in 2003. (Figure 16) Main Street retains a high proportion of office uses, while there have been slight declines in service and entertainment uses. Retail uses have also declined on Main Street: from nineteen percent of businesses in 1977 to eleven percent in 2003. (Figure 17)

The overall number of retail stores in both locations has dropped significantly over the last two decades—Moody Street lost thirty-two retail businesses, while Main Street lost twenty-six. For each district, that was a loss of about 40%. Since part of the Moody Street redevelopment plan was the inclusion of housing downtown, it is surprising that there has not been an increase in retail businesses geared to serve the newly expanded local market. Both hardware and household goods retailers have declined in both districts

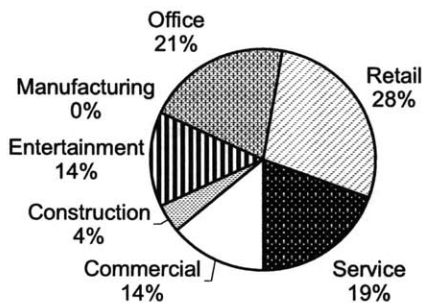


Figure 16. Moody Street business profile: 2003

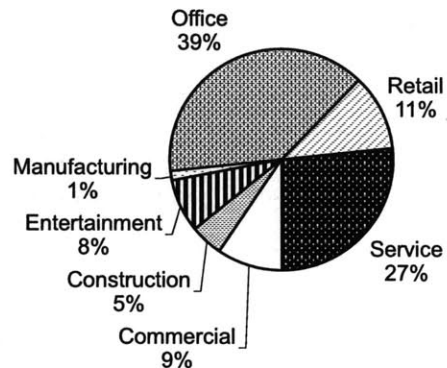


Figure 17. Main Street business profile: 2003

since 1980. Retail staples have remained constant in each district, although the largest proportion of each street's retail businesses are specialty shops. (Because of the small remaining numbers of retail establishments in each district, the proportional comparisons are not relevant.)

As in Needham, over the last 95 years Waltham has seen a gradual change in both demographics and economy. Waltham retained much of its working class social base longer than Needham did, but eventually reflected the region-wide changes in the economy as manufacturing jobs were replaced with technical and service jobs. These demographic changes seemed to have interacted little with changes in the Main Street and Moody Street business districts, except perhaps the replacement of manufacturing and trade functions with office-related functions.

The form of Waltham's business districts has changed little since the turn of the century. The city is fortunate to have retained large proportions of its historic commercial building stock on both Moody and Main Street. Main Street, now a four-lane, very busy access to the west, suffers from the constant sound, smell, and sight of the volume of through traffic. Towards the western portions of the street, where the historic building types make way for more modern development, the district becomes little more than a strip of auto-dominated uses, dotted by filling stations and occasional low-rise office buildings. Here, the anonymity of the nonlocal predominates, and few pedestrians can be observed here, even on a lovely Saturday afternoon. (Photo 1) Moody Street, with its smaller-scale roadway, retains some of its turn of the 20th century charm, but, even with recent improvements to the district, it remains less populated than it could be, and barely holds



Photo 1.
Main Street looking
west from Moody Street

its own against the influence of through traffic. The new project at Cronin's landing has added a residential element to the district, although this is not apparent from the street, and, even though the project retains a portion of the old department store's façade, it contributes little to the local street environment either physically or functionally.

(Photo 2)



Photo 2.
Moody Street: Cronin's Landing

The prevailing wisdom of the mid-century seemed to indicate the need to compete at a regional scale, even more so here than in Needham, and this is reflected in the change of business mix from locally-oriented, daily shopping needs to regionally draws such as specialty stores and restaurants. (Figure 21, Figure 22) Even with Moody Street's recent revitalization, businesses continue to cater to the regional. It remains to be seen if this will become balanced by locally-oriented businesses in a way that makes the district welcoming both to residents and to visitors.

Notes

- ¹ Scott Shurr, “Key Dates in the History of Waltham Massachusetts,” Waltham Community Homepage March 15, 2004.
- ² Waltham Museum, “Waltham through Time,” Waltham Museum Homepage March 15, 2004.
- ³ Shurr.
- ⁴ “Waltham Watches but Never Waits,” Waltham Evening News Saturday, June 19 1920. p. 1
- ⁵ Boston Edison (Edison electric illuminating co.), Waltham (Boston: Boston Edison, 1909).
- ⁶ Nord W. Davis and Waltham Planning Division, Master Plan: City of Waltham, Massachusetts (1954, 1963).p. 59
- ⁷ Ibid. p. 70
- ⁸ Ibid. p. 59
- ⁹ Ibid.p. 114
- ¹⁰ Ibid. p.132
- ¹¹ Waltham Chamber of Commerce, Statistical Review: Waltham, Massachusetts (Waltham Chamber of Commerce, October 1, 1952).
- ¹² Scott Campbell, “Watch on Waltham,” The Monthly 1981.
- ¹³ Fleissig and Associates/Planning Consultants Candeub, General Plan, Waltham, Massachusetts (1968). p.1
- ¹⁴ Ibid. p. 8
- ¹⁵ Waltham Redevelopment Authority and CE Maguire Inc Planners, “Moody Street Redevelopment 1973,” (Waltham Redevelopment Authority, 1973). p. 1
- ¹⁶ Ibid. p. 7-8.
- ¹⁷ James C. O’Connell, Ph.D., AICP, Ahead or Behind the Curve?: Compact Mixed-Use Development in Suburban Boston (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2003).

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Waltham Redevelopment Authority, and CE Maguire Inc Planners. "Moody Street Redevelopment 1973." Waltham Redevelopment Authority, 1973.

"Waltham Watches but Never Waits." Waltham Evening News Saturday, June 19 1920: reprinted booklet.

Chapter 5

Case Study: Watertown



History

In 1630, at the site of what is now Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge, a group of Englishmen traveling up the Charles founded the original settlement of Watertown. It was at a point further west, however, at the location of contemporary Watertown Square that the village of Watertown began to grow. The village began to emerge at the convergence of three, long-established travel routes: from Boston to the west, from the north and south of the Charles, and along the Charles itself to the harbor. The route to the west eventually became Main and Mount Auburn Streets, or State Route 20, while the northern and southern routes—today’s Galen and Common Streets, or State Route 16—converged at this low point in the river, which was the only fordable point for miles. Falls just upriver made the river unnavigable and required boat travelers to portage around them. This convergence of the two overland travel routes with the river to Boston’s harbor, along with the water-power potential of the nearby falls, meant that Watertown was naturally situated to become an important gateway for commerce, trade, industry, and travel.¹

At its founding, the settlement of Watertown included the what are now the towns of Weston and Waltham as well as large portions of contemporary Cambridge, Lincoln, and Belmont. As one of the largest colonial settlements of its time, it became an important site of trade and commerce, and, for many years, was larger even than the settlement at Boston². Initially settled by farmers and cattlemen, Watertown’s first mill was built in 1638—a gristmill—and was located in what is now Watertown Square. The canal that powered the mill remained part of the Square until 1906.³ Soon after the gristmill was

constructed, a bridge was built over the Charles at what is now Galen Street. For many years, this was the only place to cross the river on the way to Boston from the west and north.⁴

As with many New England towns, Watertown saw consistent industrial growth throughout the nineteenth century, first with water-powered mills, and later with steam-powered factories and mills.⁵ In the early 1800's, the town had become both a summer retreat for wealthy Bostonians and an industrial center, with numerous textile, paper and dye mills. By mid-century, the growing population outgrew the old meetinghouse, and, in 1846, built a new town hall. Soon after the hall was completed, the land directly behind it (on the north side of Main Street) was platted in the gridiron form still evident today. In the same year that the town hall was built, a railroad station was established, becoming an important transfer point for cattle headed to slaughterhouses to the east, and creating yet another transportation connection in the town. Watertown's easy access to several transportation routes, including access to Boston Harbor along the Charles, influenced the U. S. Navy's decision to build munitions factories and warehouses in the southern portion of the town in 1860, creating the Arsenal complex of buildings that would later become an industrial district, and, even later, a series of shopping malls.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the town's political and business leaders, influenced by the popular "City Beautiful" movement, drafted and published a plan to revitalize and enhance Watertown Square. Published in 1898, "The Ideal Watertown" called for, among other things, the clearing of what were seen as obsolescent buildings to create an open clearing in the center of town. "The Delta" was the result. A roughly



**The "Delta" in the 1920's
(Watertown Historical Society)**

triangular plot of land containing a statue and lawn that overlooked the Charles, it signified Watertown's forward-looking spirit and modernity. Located between the convergences of the main routes through town, any traveler passing through—by foot, boat, streetcar, railroad, stagecoach, or automobile—passed by this monument to the pride of Watertown.⁶ However, as with most public projects involving multiple landowners, the Delta's development was delayed by acquisition costs and opposition

from affected tenants. It was not until after World War I that the last remaining buildings on the Delta were acquired and demolished, finally completing the project.

Twentieth Century

By 1905, Watertown had a population of 11,258 and was bustling with activity. With 186 businesses in Watertown Square—eighty-three of them retail—it was, by all accounts a busy place.⁷ The crossroads in the center of Watertown Square was surrounded by dense, small-scale commercial buildings to the north and east, and the Lewando’s factory to the west. The delta, which still had a few buildings on it, formed an open space in the center of this activity that commanded the square, overlooking the Charles and acting as an organizational nucleus. The square had a very readable geometry—it was a place of arrival and departure as well as a crossroads.

The early 20th century town’s residents were, as they were in Needham and Waltham at this time, mostly working class. With thirty percent of working residents employed as domestics, and thirty-one percent employed in blue-collar positions, sixty-one percent of the town’s working adults worked in working-class level jobs. (Figure 1) The high proportion of domestics was dominated by women here too: forty-nine percent of Watertown’s female residents were employed as such. As in Needham and Waltham, about a quarter of those employed seem to have been in white-collar positions, leaving approximately fourteen percent unaccounted for.

According to Frank Lightbody’s account in the 1975 film project Watertown Oral History, not much had changed in the Watertown of the 1910’s since the late 19th century.⁸ There were a number of block buildings in Watertown Square: most notably the Spring Hotel,

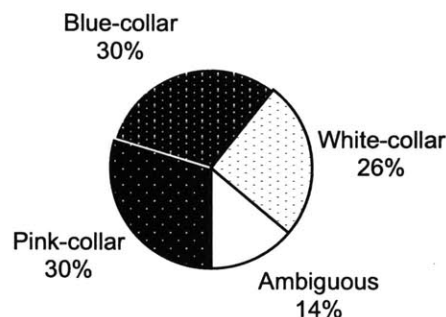


Figure 1. Population profile, Watertown: 1905
(Source: Mass. Decennial Census, 1905)

the Otis Building, and Merchant’s Row. The business mix was well balanced between retail, service, office, and construction uses. (Figure 2) Mr. Lightbody reminisces about this era in Watertown, and describes the Square as a place of both work and play. He recounts how the entire town was woken every weekday morning by the whistles at the mills, most of which started the workday at seven in the morning. During the day, the square was always populated with people, and Mr. Lightbody remembers the activities important to the child he was: the confectionary where ice cream, chocolates, and penny candy could be purchased, the old nickelodeon on Galen Street, the stationery store for comic books, the passenger train stopping to drop off newspapers, shuttling them out of the cars and to the newsstand before the passengers had finished boarding.⁹ The retail environment supports these reminiscences: the retail environment was dominated by grocers, butchers, bakers, and other staples with over half of the mix; followed by specialty shops of various types; and rounded out with household goods and clothing retailers. (Figure 3)

Post World War II

The post-war business environment is difficult to judge quantifiably in Watertown, given the dearth of data on the businesses there. Mr. Lightbody gives some insight, pointing out that a number of derelict wood buildings were demolished between the 1920’s and the 1940’s as an effort to improve the Square. On the north side of the Square, the old Spring Hotel was removed, along with the Bernard Block, as was Merchant’s Row to the west. (See Map 1) There was an increase in automobile traffic, and, Mr. Lightbody asserts that, “...as time went on, property passed out of the hands of local people into the

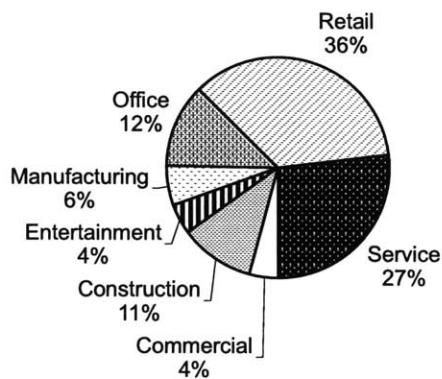


Figure 2. Watertown Square business profile: 1912

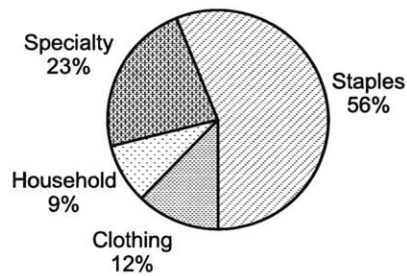


Figure 3. Watertown Square retail profile: 1912



Map 1. Watertown Square 1954
(Source: Sanborn Map)

hands of out-of-town owners, speculators, and chain store operators like Woolworth's, McLellan's, and Grant's."¹⁰

With a 1950 population of 37,329 Watertown certainly had changed in the years between 1905 and 1950—in those 45 years, the population grew 230 percent. This rate is comparable to that of Needham, which, in the same time frame, saw its population increase 280 percent, but much more dramatic than Waltham's eighty percent growth. In Watertown, the proportion of working-class adults seemed to remain stable, climbing slightly from sixty-four to seventy percent in 1950, and, like Needham and Waltham, Watertown saw a nearly complete replacement of the proportion of domestic workers with a similar proportion of clerical and sales workers. (Figure 4)

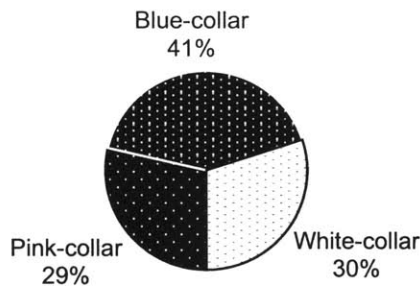


Figure 4. Watertown population profile: 1950
(Source: U.S. Census 1950)

In the video Views of Change: a Study of Watertown’s Square, which was taped in 1984, an unidentified member of Watertown’s planning staff states that towns were advised in the 1950’s to accommodate automobiles. This meant taking measures to handle traffic more efficiently through engineering roadways and intersections, and tearing down buildings to accommodate parking that, in the planner’s words, “no one used”.

Historically, Watertown seems to have been less than hesitant to embrace modernity—not only were old buildings demolished to make way for the Delta, but the population growth of the early twentieth century was accommodated by multi-family housing built in sleek, modern styles seen as a less “fussy” than the Gothic and Victorian styles of the past decades.¹¹

Watertown’s strategic location at the convergence of what were now state highways was to begin to become a liability in the post-war era. In the 1960’s, the Delta was reconfigured as a rotary, and the highways were widened. A resident in 1984 comments that the “[1960’s] traffic plan just made things worse.”¹² A series of parking and traffic plans written throughout the sixties and seventies tried to address the automobile problem in Watertown Square, first adding the rotary, then later removing it.¹³ A 1963 plan to revitalize the Square points out that traffic solutions that speed traffic will continue to isolate and destroy the retail function of the Square. In the same plan, those retail functions are emphasized in an economic plan that recommends that Watertown Square compete with neighboring shopping areas such as Newton Corner and Cushing Square.¹⁴

Post-industrial

Unlike Needham and Waltham, Watertown’s population actually shrank slightly between 1950 and 1980, dropping from 37,329 to 34,384, a drop of about eight percent. The proportion of working-class residents dropped to fifty-three percent from seventy percent in 1950, while the proportion of professional, executive, and managerial workers—the white-collar labor force—nearly doubled from twenty-three to thirty-seven percent. (Figure 5) This shift was concurrent with shifts in Needham and Waltham, both of which saw similar changes, although Needham already had an established white-collar

population by 1950 and had seen only slight increase by 1980.

Although no directories are available for Watertown during this period, a planning report written in 1979 includes an inventory of the businesses in Watertown Square.¹⁵

The categories utilized by the research team were remarkably similar to those used in this thesis. They show that the changing business mix in Watertown from 1911-1978 mimics many of the changes observed in

the other cases: an overall contraction in the number of businesses, a steep drop in retail staples, an increase in office uses, and, as was seen in neighboring Waltham, a dramatic increase in entertainment venues (again, mostly restaurants). (Figure 6, Figure 7) In Waltham, the 1953-1977 increase in entertainment venues was concentrated on Main Street, which extends through Waltham from Watertown. Given the large increases in traffic seen on this route over the preceding decades, it seems reasonable to expect that the primary market for these restaurants may have been passing motorists. An additional explanation might be found in the concurrent rise in office uses seen in both Watertown Square and on Main Street in Waltham—a daytime working population of office professionals has both the inclination and the means to dine out during the workday lunch hour.

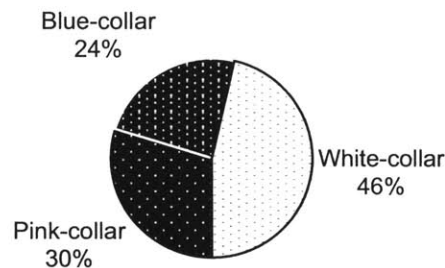


Figure 5. Watertown population profile: 1980
(Source: U.S. Census 1980)

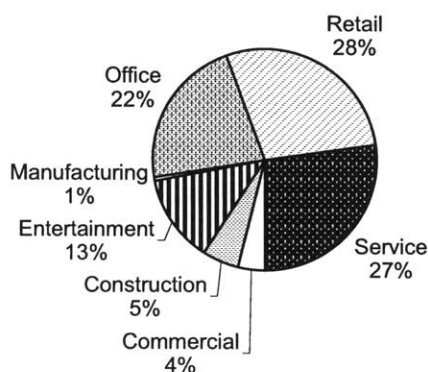


Figure 6. Watertown Square business profile: 1978

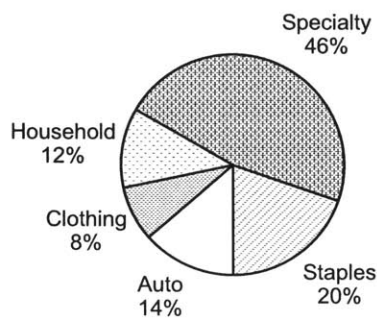


Figure 7. Watertown Square retail profile: 1978

Although it is not possible from this data to isolate the fast food restaurants from the sit-down restaurants or the dinner-oriented restaurants from the lunch counters, accounts of Watertown Square from this time seem to indicate that the area was not a place where local residents felt comfortable. In Views of Change, an unidentified Watertown resident comments, “now (1984) it’s sort of...well...more anonymous, kind of bland, not as interesting,” and, in response to the narrator’s inquiry of how it used to be more interesting, “(There were) such a variety of things there. Not just stores. Not just all these banks, banks, banks. That just doesn’t interest me. I don’t care about banks.”¹⁶ A survey conducted by Brandeis University researchers for a report on Watertown Square found that residents who shopped in Watertown Square in 1979 did so for convenience, spending an average of less than twenty minutes there per trip. There was an overall perception that there were no amenities in the Square, and that the business district around it had no clear boundary. The images “depicted a confusing and boundless area with a focus on roads.”

As in Needham and Waltham, Watertown Square’s businesses seemed to have continued to shift from a local focus to a non-local focus. The business profile in Watertown Square revealed that the primary businesses were office, entertainment, and specialty retail stores. Retail remained the most prominent business type, followed closely by office and service uses. Again, this compares similarly to each of the districts in Needham and Waltham for this time. Needham and Waltham each saw office and retail services top the proportions of business types in 1980. The retail mix in Watertown reveals a potentially nonlocal focus, with specialty retail dominating—but staples and household goods make up nearly one third of the mix. This corresponds with the findings in the Brandeis study that seventy percent of the shoppers they surveyed in Watertown Square were Watertown residents. With the repeated emphasis on the traffic problems in the Square and the numerous parking and traffic studies completed in the 1970’s and 80’s, it seems plausible that, rather than the downtown territory shifting to regional shoppers, by the 1980’s, Watertown’s downtown territory had shifted to regional automobile traffic.

Twenty-first century

According to the U.S. Census, Watertown’s population was 32,986 in 2000, a drop of about four percent from the 1980 population. The proportion of working-class residents dropped as well—from fifty-three percent to forty-four percent—while the white-collar segment increased to fifty-five percent from 1980’s modest thirty-seven percent. (Figure 8) Whereas Needham saw a similar jump in white-collar residents and slight reduction in the working class, in this same period, Waltham had seen very little change in the proportion of working-class and white-collar residents between 1980 and 2000. By 2000, each town’s employment profile was slightly different: in 2000, Needham’s proportion of professionals, managers, and executives was nearly 10 points higher than Watertown’s, while Waltham’s was nearly 10 points lower. Although these profiles show what appears to be an regular variation between employment categories, there is a less regular variation in median incomes, although the order of increase does seem to correspond—whereas Needham’s median income was seventy-four percent higher than the statewide median, Watertown’s was seventeen percent higher, and Waltham’s was eight. (Table 1)

Table 1. Median household income context (Source: 2000 U.S. Decennial Census)

	Needham	Waltham	Watertown	MA
Median Household Income	\$88,079	\$54,010	\$59,764	\$50,502
% difference median state	74%	7%	18%	

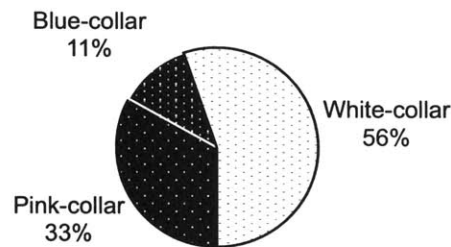


Figure 8. Watertown population profile: 2000 (Source: U.S. Census 2000)

Unlike Needham and Waltham, Watertown Square’s business environment has continued to shrink, losing forty-six businesses in twenty-five years, a thirty percent loss. While both Needham and Waltham have seen some losses in the same period, those were minimal in most cases: only Needham Heights shows a similar contraction with a twenty percent reduction in the number of businesses. Although Watertown Square is further from the highway than Needham Heights, it is close to a regional shopping center at the Arsenal. There is a remarkable relationship between

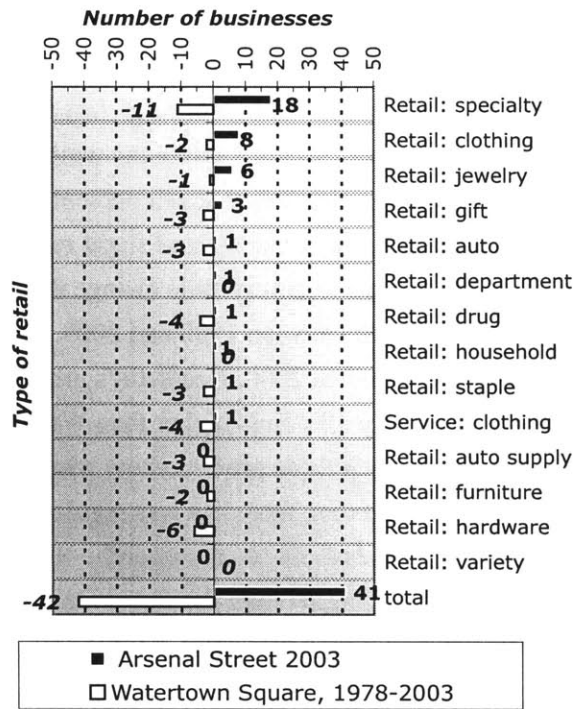


Figure 9. Watertown Square business losses compared to Arsenal business profile

the number of retail establishments lost in Watertown Square between 1978 and 2003 and the number of retail establishments extant in the Arsenal business district in 2003. (Figure 9)

The most dramatic loss in Watertown Square since 1978 has been in the retail sector, which dropped seventy-five percent. (Figure 10) In 2003, there were only fifteen retail stores remaining in Watertown Square. This loss of forty-two retail businesses is comparable to the forty-one retail establishments in the Arsenal area, although the retail profile between the losses in Watertown Square and the profile at the Arsenal see significant variation. Certainly, that variation is related to the regional market of the shopping malls on Arsenal Street, for which the businesses are larger (so a single drug store might have replaced four), and with a larger contingent of specialty goods and clothing. The form of the Arsenal Street business district conveys this regional focus: massive buildings represent large capital investments from non-local sources, generous parking facilities communicate the automobile-centered regional traveler, a retail profile dominated by specialty goods and clothing retail serve the needs of the occasional, rather than daily, shopper. (See Aerial Photo)

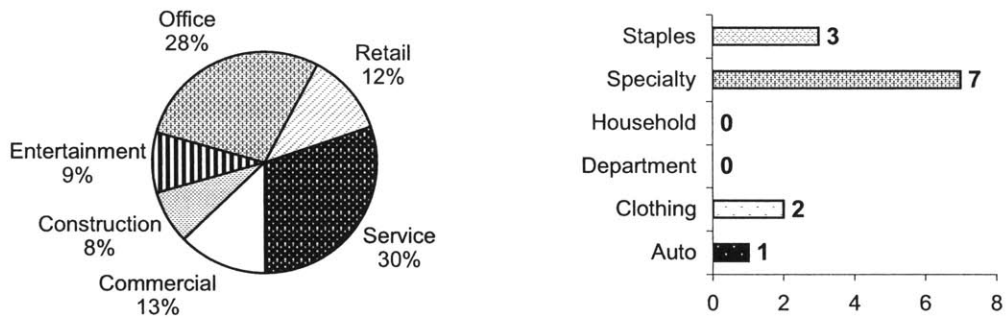


Figure 10: Watertown Square business profile (left) and retail profile(right) in 2003



**Aerial Photo of Watertown Square, 1990's
(Source: MassGIS)**

Aside from retail, the balance of businesses in Watertown Square is dominated by offices, health-care offices, and retail services (including financial). If the district functioned merely as a convenience shopping center in the 1980's, it seems to have lost even that identity in 2003. Even though the Arsenal Street shopping area may have drawn away some of the Square's shopping base, why did Watertown Square lose even its advantages of convenience and civic uses? One explanation may be that Watertown Square has continued to wrestle with traffic, which has only increased with the intervening years. A master plan for Watertown Square completed in 2001 was originated, "because of the unfriendly environment that has evolved due to the enormous flows of vehicles that pass through this regional crossroads."¹⁷ The report goes on to point out that there are numerous civic institutions in Watertown Square (library, town hall, etc.), and recognizes that the district serves a variety of purposes.¹⁸ With the proximity of civic functions, remnants of historic commercial buildings, ready access to the Charles River, and a central park-like space shaded by enormous, old maples, Watertown Square seems to have many amenities that could contribute to a vibrant downtown district. It is remarkable that the flow of traffic can so dramatically alter the environment as to make it uncompetitive. (Photo 1)



Photo 1. Watertown Square in 2004

The 2001 master plan recommends numerous technical solutions to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion as well as a series of modifications to improve the safety and function of the pedestrian realm. Many design elements are suggested to both beautify and identify Watertown Square, including banners, kiosks, and historic markers.¹⁹ As of this writing, there is little evidence that any of these suggestions have been either implemented (design recommendations) or, if implemented, effective (traffic resigalling, which it is not clear has been implemented). Advantageously located at the convergence of travel routes, near civic uses, and with a potentially high business density, Watertown Square seems to have had in the past the elements of an active, if not robust, town center; however, the evidence suggests that deference to the needs of through traffic over the last few decades may have weakened the business, social, and pedestrian functions of the district, making it vulnerable to the competition of the nearby malls.

Notes

¹ Historic Watertown. Videorecording, 1984.

² Ibid.

³ Views of Change: A Study of Watertown Square. Videorecording, 1984.

⁴ Historic Watertown.

⁵ Watertown Home Page, "About Watertown."

⁶ Views of Change: A Study of Watertown Square.

⁷ Watertown Oral History: Frank Lightbody. Videorecording, 1975.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Historic Watertown.

¹² Views of Change: A Study of Watertown Square.

¹³ Politics Center for Public Service and members of the Economics, and Anthropology Departments at Brandeis University, Revitalization of Watertown Square (Watertown Planning Board and the Watertown Chamber of Commerce, 1979).

¹⁴ Cambridge Planning Services Group, MA, The Alternatives for Watertown Square (Watertown Planning Board, 1964). p. 13

¹⁵ Center for Public Service and members of the Economics, Revitalization of Watertown Square.

¹⁶ Views of Change: A Study of Watertown Square.

¹⁷ The Cecil Group Inc. and Bayside Engineering, Watertown Square Master Plan (Watertown Planning Board, 2001). p.1

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 22

¹⁹ Ibid. p.42

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Chapter 6

Synthesis: Lessons from the Cases

It is clear that several patterns have emerged from the analysis of these three towns. All saw similar changes in demographics, business mix, and business types, although to differing degrees. Physical transformation was evident in all three cases as well, although this also varied from case to case. All of the patterns revealed by the detailed study of these cases can be viewed from the regional perspective: they all responded to the changes that were happening at the metropolitan, state, and even national and global levels. Again, it is the degree of change and the relationship between the elements that is of interest.

Demographically, the three cases saw similar reductions in the balance between blue-collar and pink-collar within the working class distinctions, and in the balance between working class and white-collar residents. This was, of course, a state-wide trend related to changes in the economic base of the regions. What it reveals about the downtown environment is that, as the demography shifted, so did the market for goods downtown. In theory, the increasing affluence seen in the towns—especially Needham—should have created the opportunity for increased business activity downtown. What this suggests is that the socioeconomic status of the residents of the town either had little to do with the success or failure of the business districts, or the relationship was converse, with the business districts declining as socioeconomic status increased.

This converse relationship could be explained by something as simple as the access to vehicles or the location of white-collar jobs outside of the towns, which might entice commuters to do their shopping outside of town. However, one would also expect that the town with the most dramatic demographic shifts would also see the most dramatic shifts in the business environment. Of the cases, Needham saw the most dramatic demographic shifts over time, with a cumulative population growth of almost 600 percent and a cumulative loss in its proportion of working class residents of almost 40%. But Needham Centre lost a smaller proportion of businesses over the decades than either Watertown or Waltham, and saw less change between the post-industrial and twenty-first century indices. This suggests that the demographic profile of the towns had only a limited effect on the number of businesses in the business districts.

Another clear trend was the steady reduction in the number of businesses in the downtowns and peripheries since the post-war period. This, combined with the steady erosion of the retail sector suggests that these business districts were used less and less for the daily shopping needs of residents, particularly when considered in the context of steady population growth. The dramatic reduction in the number of retail staples in

all districts is also notable. It also points to less activity in the downtowns by locals. Groceries and other food stores are particularly powerful activators—people shop regularly for food, and, even with the advent of modern refrigeration techniques, most people shop more often for food than, say, shoes. The proliferation of clothing and specialty shops in all the districts indicates that the retail environment was geared towards a large, non-local consumer-shed.

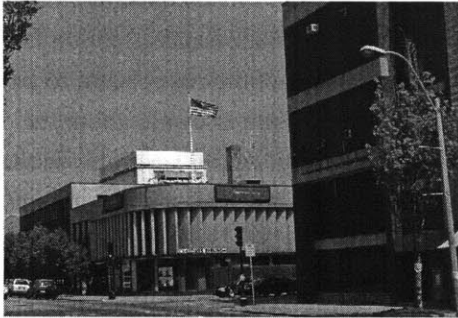
This switch away from the types of retail that generate frequent shopping trips may have contributed to a loss of a sense of territory or ownership in these areas in two ways: first, the regionally focused business attracts many more individuals in fewer trips, so that any individual shopper probably had a weaker connection to the business district. Second, the daily trips of people shopping for groceries activate the street and pedestrian environment, and do so regardless of moderate economic shifts, since shopping for staples is necessary even when times are lean.

That steady backbone of shoppers may have generated the sense of continuity and community that seems to be lacking in shopping malls. Considering the dramatic reduction in the retail staples category over throughout the 20th century, the common assertion that regional shopping malls killed local downtowns seems grossly simplified. Since a single grocery store would have replaced multiple businesses: butchers, bakery, deli, produce, and dry goods,¹ for these towns, it appears that at least equal responsibility for the loss of market share in the business districts can be shouldered by self-serve grocery stores.

As a whole, in all the cases, the more activity-inducing businesses declined in proportion over the decades. Office uses, which increased, do not generate the kind of street life that retail and retail service uses can. Banks, although they might be considered retail services, do not generate heavy traffic either. In both Watertown and Needham, bank buildings, with their massive, large-scale architecture meant to communicate a feeling of safety, security, and stability, also create an environment not particularly suited to creating the sense of comfort and ownership conducive to encouraging shoppers to linger. These large-scale buildings become what Anne Vernez-Moudon called “isolated architectural events” that lose their urban and collective dimensions because they share little with their neighbors.²

A bank or office building’s massive stone or sheer glass façade communicates a territory that is dominated by a nonhuman entity—a financial institution or perhaps just the building itself. It can serve to shift the daily experience of the business district, and adds little pedestrian activity in compensation. Watertown’s core is dominated by banks, to

a degree that makes the district adjacent to these buildings empty and unwelcoming. Needham, too suffers from an overabundance of banks, but they are somewhat architecturally mitigated both by their dispersal throughout the district and by the scale of the roadways adjacent to them. Even Waltham, with its ability to absorb some large-scale buildings, endures several deadened areas in its districts created by office buildings and banks. (See photos)



Photos

Watertown banks and offices (left) and an office block at One Moody Street (right)

The final commonality among the cases involves the accommodation of automobiles. All three cases, following the wisdom of the era, expanded parking, widened roads, and saw dramatic increases in automobile traffic. Although Watertown may have seen the most dramatic affect on its business district from through traffic, both Waltham and Needham have struggled with the issue as well. It might even be argued that the recent success of Moody Street's revitalization has at least a little bit to do with the fact that Moody Street is not a major arterial. Main Street, of course, remains an arterial, and a well-used one with its direct access to Route 128. Of the two districts (Main and Moody Streets) Main Street is by far less pedestrian friendly, and might even be called pedestrian antagonistic. The street is split by the constant stream of cars, the sidewalks made noisy and unpleasant, and the aesthetic environment sere and univiting.

Needham and Watertown each seem to have little respite from the omnipresent automobile. Needham Centre is located at the junction of two arterial roads, one with access to the highway, Neehdam Heights, like Main Street, is immediately adjacent to a direct highway arterial, and Watertown, is at the confluence of at least two primary arterials, depending on how they are counted. The idea promoted in the post war period that the towns would have to accommodate the so-called "shopper on wheels" or "disintegrate" can be applauded for its attempt to embrace new technology and

modernism wholeheartedly, but its remedy may have been worse than the disease it was trying to cure. By accommodating automobile traffic with such fervor, the very aspects of the business district that made it enjoyable were threatened.

It has been noted how the use of front-loaded parking lots interfere with pedestrian traffic, not to mention create eyesores. It has also been noted that the widening of streets to reduce congestion may have led to more congestion as more drivers were accommodated. What has not been noted so carefully is what the accommodation of vehicles does to the shoppers sense of control or territory in the shopping district. When looking at a particularly egregious example, like Watertown Square, so much area and attention is given to the swift passage of vehicles through the district that all other uses seem to be subsumed by the need to accommodate the river of vehicles. What is ironic about the accommodation of vehicle in this way—as opposed to providing ample parking—is that it benefits through traffic as much as local, and, considering the through nature of many of these routes, it may benefit through traffic even more than local. So it not only detracts from the physical and social comfort of the district, it does so for the benefit of nonlocal users. In this way, the territory is lost to the nonlocal.

Conclusions

What all this suggests is that planners and developers should consider the quotidian in their plans to revitalize downtowns. There is little chance that large grocery stores will be suddenly abandoned for small-scale, old fashioned bakers and delis; there is little chance that the automobile will be abandoned for travel by foot and bicycle; there is even little chance that the economy will suddenly reindustrialize and produce a daytime downtown population of blue-collar workers. However, by considering the social and cultural functions of the historic downtown, it may be possible to substitute some of those obsolete uses with contemporary uses that serve the same functions. Cafes already have begun to demonstrate the ability to create a daily, active presence on the street in some districts. Restaurants can help create activity at night, and shops of all kinds generate at least a little activity.

But attention should be given to whether these uses can sustain a regular local activity level. A district of restaurants, while an attractive amenity, may not generate the kind of daily, repetitive traffic that creates a true community amenity. Larger projects should carefully weigh whether or not they detract from the intelligibility and comfort of the street with their physical presence, but should not forget the uses that also contribute to a street's attractiveness. Careful consideration should be given towards promoting the local over the nonlocal, to generate the balance of users and an authenticity that are the foundation of a robust district. While it may be tempting for businesses to try to

harvest the potential of the regional market, there is a potential for that focus to erode the environment, or the territory of the local resident, at which point the downtown might become not much more attractive to consumers than a regional shopping mall.

Notes

¹ Peter G. Rowe, Making a Middle Landscape (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991). p. 136

² Anne Vernez Moudon, Built for Change: Neighborhood Architecture in San Francisco (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986). p. 146

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Rowe, Peter G. Making a middle landscape. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991.

APPENDIX A
Population Profiles

Demographics

Needham

Needham	1980	<i>% change</i>
Total Population	27,901	71%
		<i>% total</i>
Pink-collar	4,499	32.6%
Blue-collar	1,728	12.5%
White-collar	7,585	54.9%
Ambiguous	-	-
Total	13,812	100%
Working class	6,227	45.1%
White-collar	7,585	54.9%

Needham	2000	<i>% change</i>
Total Population	28,911	4%
		<i>% total</i>
Pink-collar	4,020	29.0%
Blue-collar	996	7.2%
White-collar	8,856	63.8%
Ambiguous	-	-
Total	13,872	100%
Working class	5,016	36.2%
White-collar	8,856	63.8%

APPENDIX

Demographics

Needham

Needham	1905	
Total Population	4,284	
Female population	2,260	
		% total
Pink-collar	1,091	30.6%
Blue-collar	1,052	29.5%
White-collar	924	25.9%
Ambiguous	495	13.9%
Total	3,562	100%
Working class	2,143	60.2%
White-collar	924	25.9%

Needham	1950	<i>% change</i>
Total Population	16,313	281%
		% total
Pink-collar	1,898	29.6%
Blue-collar	1,851	28.9%
White-collar	2,664	41.5%
Ambiguous	-	-
Total	6,413	100%
Working class	3,749	58.5%
White-collar	2,664	41.5%

Demographics

Waltham

Waltham 1905	
Total Population	
Female population	
	% total
Pink-collar	27.3%
Blue-collar	36.8%
White-collar	24.9%
Ambiguous	11.0%
Total	100%
Working class	64.1%
White-collar	24.9%

Waltham 1950		<i>% change</i>
Total Population		80%
		% total
Pink-collar		24.6%
Blue-collar		46.9%
White-collar		28.5%
Ambiguous		-
Total		100%
Working class		71.5%
White-collar		28.5%

Waltham 1980		<i>% change</i>
Total Population		23%
		% total
Pink-collar		30.5%
Blue-collar		25.7%
White-collar		43.7%
Ambiguous		-
Total		100%
Working class		56.3%
White-collar		43.7%

Waltham 2000		<i>% change</i>
Total Population		2%
		% total
Pink-collar		40.1%
Blue-collar		14.6%
White-collar		45.3%
Ambiguous		-
Total		100%
Working class		54.7%
White-collar		45.3%

Demographics

Watertown

Watertown 1905	
Total Population	
	<i>% total</i>
Pink-collar	29.8%
Blue-collar	30.6%
White-collar	25.6%
Ambiguous	14.0%
Total	100%
Working class	60.5%
White-collar	25.6%

Watertown 1950		<i>% change</i>
Total Population		232%
	<i>% total</i>	
Pink-collar		28.6%
Blue-collar		41.3%
White-collar		30.1%
Ambiguous		-
Total		100%
Working class		69.9%
White-collar		30.1%

Watertown 1980		<i>% change</i>
Total Population		-8%
	<i>% total</i>	
Pink-collar		29.6%
Blue-collar		24.0%
White-collar		46.4%
Ambiguous		-
Total		100%
Working class		53.6%
White-collar		46.4%

Watertown 2000		<i>% change</i>
Total Population		-4%
	<i>% total</i>	
Pink-collar		33.1%
Blue-collar		11.5%
White-collar		55.4%
Ambiguous		-
Total		100%
Working class		44.6%
White-collar		55.4%

APPENDIX B
Business Inventories

Businesses

Needham 1911

Centre			Heights		
Retail	66	35%	Retail	34	32%
Construction	35	19%	Construction	22	21%
Service	26	14%	Manufacturer	22	21%
Service: health	14	8%	Service	10	9%
Service: office	13	7%	Service: health	7	7%
Commercial	10	5%	Commercial	5	5%
Manufacturer	8	4%	Service: office	3	3%
Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	7	4%	Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	2	2%
Small manufacturer	6	3%	Small manufacturer	1	1%
Auto	2	1%	Auto	0	0%

Centre			Heights		
Retail: specialty	23	32%	Retail: staples	14	37%
Retail: staples	23	32%	Retail: clothing	5	13%
Retail: clothing	7	10%	Retail: specialty	5	13%
Service: clothing	6	8%	Retail: variety	4	11%
Retail: variety	5	7%	Service: clothing	4	11%
Retail: gift	4	6%	Retail: gift	3	8%
Retail: drug	2	3%	Retail: drug	1	3%
Retail: auto supply	1	1%	Retail: hardware	1	3%
Retail: hardware	1	1%	Retail: household	1	3%
Retail: jewelry	1	1%	Retail: auto	0	0%
Retail: auto	0	0%	Retail: auto supply	0	0%
Retail: department	0	0%	Retail: department	0	0%
Retail: furniture	0	0%	Retail: furniture	0	0%
Retail: household	0	0%	Retail: jewelry	0	0%
subtotal	73	100%	subtotal	38	100%

Businesses

Needham 1911

Centre			Heights		
Service: construction	32	17.1%	Manufacturer	22	20.8%
Retail: specialty	23	12.3%	Service: construction	21	19.8%
Retail: staples	23	12.3%	Retail: staples	14	13.2%
Service	17	9.1%	Service: health	7	6.6%
Service: health	14	7.5%	Service	6	5.7%
Service: office	13	7.0%	Retail: clothing	5	4.7%
Service: commercial	9	4.8%	Retail: specialty	5	4.7%
Manufacturer	8	4.3%	Retail: variety	4	3.8%
Retail: clothing	7	3.7%	Service: clothing	4	3.8%
Small Manufacturer	6	3.2%	Service: commercial	4	3.8%
Service: clothing	6	3.2%	Retail: gift	3	2.8%
Entertainment	5	2.7%	Service: office	3	2.8%
Retail: variety	5	2.7%	Lodging	2	1.9%
Retail: gift	4	2.1%	Construction hardware	1	0.9%
Construction hardware	3	1.6%	Retail: commercial	1	0.9%
Lodging	2	1.1%	Retail: drug	1	0.9%
Retail: drug	2	1.1%	Retail: hardware	1	0.9%
Service: financial	2	1.1%	Retail: household	1	0.9%
Retail: auto supply	1	0.5%	Small Manufacturer	1	0.9%
Retail: commercial	1	0.5%	Entertainment	0	0.0%
Retail: hardware	1	0.5%	Retail: auto	0	0.0%
Retail: jewelry	1	0.5%	Retail: auto supply	0	0.0%
Service: auto	1	0.5%	Retail: department	0	0.0%
Service: personal	1	0.5%	Retail: furniture	0	0.0%
Retail: auto	0	0.0%	Retail: jewelry	0	0.0%
Retail: department	0	0.0%	Service: auto	0	0.0%
Retail: furniture	0	0.0%	Service: financial	0	0.0%
Retail: household	0	0.0%	Service: personal	0	0.0%
subtotal	187	100%	subtotal	106	100%

Businesses

Needham 1954

Centre			Heights		
Retail	58	28%	Manufacturer	13	31%
Service	29	14%	Auto	9	21%
Commercial	25	12%	Retail	7	17%
Service: health	24	11%	Service	6	14%
Service: office	24	11%	Commercial	3	7%
Auto	20	10%	Service: office	2	5%
Construction	12	6%	Construction	1	2%
Small manufacturer	12	6%	Service: health	1	2%
Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	6	3%	Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	0	0%
Manufacturer	1	1%	Small manufacturer	0	0%
subtotal	211	100%	subtotal	42	100%

Centre			Heights		
Retail: specialty	15	21%	Service: clothing	3	27%
Retail: clothing	14	19%	Retail: drug	2	18%
Retail: staples	10	14%	Retail: staples	2	18%
Service: clothing	8	11%	Retail: auto	1	9.1%
Retail: auto	5	7%	Retail: hardware	1	9%
Retail: hardware	5	7%	Retail: specialty	1	9%
Retail: gift	4	6%	Retail: variety	1	9%
Retail: variety	4	6%	Retail: auto supply	0	0%
Retail: drug	3	4%	Retail: clothing	0	0%
Retail: auto supply	2	3%	Retail: department	0	0%
Retail: department	1	1%	Retail: furniture	0	0%
Retail: furniture	1	1%	Retail: gift	0	0%
Retail: jewelry	1	1%	Retail: household	0	0%
Retail: household	0	0%	Retail: jewelry	0	0%
subtotal	73	100%	subtotal	11	100%

Businesses

Needham 1954

Centre			Heights		
Service: health	24	11%	Manufacturer	13	31%
Service: office	24	11%	Service: auto	8	19%
Service	17	8%	Service: clothing	3	7%
Retail: specialty	15	7%	Retail: drug	2	5%
Retail: clothing	14	7%	Retail: staples	2	5%
Retail: commercial	13	6%	Service	2	5%
Service: auto	13	6%	Service: commercial	2	5%
Small Manufacturer	12	6%	Service: office	2	5%
Service: commercial	12	6%	Retail: auto	1	2%
Retail: staples	10	5%	Retail: commercial	1	2%
Service: clothing	8	4%	Retail: hardware	1	2%
Service: construction	7	3%	Retail: specialty	1	2%
Entertainment	6	3%	Retail: variety	1	2%
Construction hardware	5	2%	Service: construction	1	2%
Retail: auto	5	2%	Service: financial	1	2%
Retail: hardware	5	2%	Service: health	1	2%
Retail: gift	4	2%	Construction hardware	0	0%
Retail: variety	4	2%	Entertainment	0	0%
Service: financial	4	2%	Lodging	0	0%
Retail: drug	3	1%	Retail: auto supply	0	0%
Retail: auto supply	2	1%	Retail: clothing	0	0%
Manufacturer	1	1%	Retail: department	0	0%
Retail: department	1	1%	Retail: furniture	0	0%
Retail: furniture	1	1%	Retail: gift	0	0%
Retail: jewelry	1	1%	Retail: household	0	0%
Lodging	0	0%	Retail: jewelry	0	0%
Retail: household	0	0%	Small Manufacturer	0	0%
Service: personal	0	0%	Service: personal	0	0%
subtotal	211	100%	subtotal	42	100%

Businesses

Needham 1982

Centre			Heights		
Retail	67	26.0%	Service: office	26	33.3%
Service: health	51	19.8%	Commercial	13	16.7%
Service	43	16.7%	Service	11	14.1%
Service: office	39	15.1%	Auto	8	10.3%
Commercial	18	7.0%	Construction	5	6.4%
Auto	17	6.6%	Retail	5	6.4%
Construction	12	4.7%	Service: health	5	6.4%
Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	8	3.1%	Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	2	2.6%
Small manufacturer	3	1.2%	Small manufacturer	2	2.6%
Manufacturer	0	0.0%	Manufacturer	1	1.3%
subtotal	258	100%	subtotal	78	100%

Centre			Heights		
Retail: specialty	32	41.0%	Retail: staples	3	42.9%
Retail: clothing	9	11.5%	Retail: auto	1	14.3%
Retail: staples	7	9.0%	Retail: auto supply	1	14.3%
Service: clothing	5	6.4%	Retail: department	1	14.3%
Retail: auto	4	5.1%	Retail: drug	1	14.3%
Retail: hardware	4	5.1%	Retail: clothing	0	0.0%
Retail: jewelry	4	5.1%	Retail: furniture	0	0.0%
Retail: drug	3	3.8%	Retail: gift	0	0.0%
Retail: variety	3	3.8%	Retail: hardware	0	0.0%
Retail: auto supply	2	2.6%	Retail: household	0	0.0%
Retail: gift	2	2.6%	Retail: jewelry	0	0.0%
Retail: household	2	2.6%	Retail: specialty	0	0.0%
Retail: department	1	1.3%	Retail: variety	0	0.0%
Retail: furniture	0	0.0%	Service: clothing	0	0.0%
subtotal	78	100%	subtotal	7	100%

Businesses

Needham 1982

Centre			Heights		
Service: health	51	19.8%	Service: office	26	33.3%
Service: office	39	15.1%	Service: commercial	10	12.8%
Retail: specialty	32	12.4%	Service	7	9.0%
Service	30	11.6%	Service: auto	6	7.7%
Service: commercial	15	5.8%	Service: construction	5	6.4%
Service: auto	11	4.3%	Service: health	5	6.4%
Retail: clothing	9	3.5%	Service: financial	4	5.1%
Entertainment	8	3.1%	Retail: commercial	3	3.8%
Service: financial	8	3.1%	Retail: staples	3	3.8%
Retail: staples	7	2.7%	Entertainment	2	2.6%
Construction hardware	6	2.3%	Small Manufacturer	2	2.6%
Service: construction	6	2.3%	Manufacturer	1	1.3%
Service: clothing	5	1.9%	Retail: auto	1	1.3%
Retail: auto	4	1.6%	Retail: auto supply	1	1.3%
Retail: hardware	4	1.6%	Retail: department	1	1.3%
Retail: jewelry	4	1.6%	Retail: drug	1	1.3%
Retail: commercial	3	1.2%	Construction hardware	0	0.0%
Retail: drug	3	1.2%	Lodging	0	0.0%
Retail: variety	3	1.2%	Retail: clothing	0	0.0%
Small Manufacturer	3	1.2%	Retail: furniture	0	0.0%
Retail: auto supply	2	0.8%	Retail: gift	0	0.0%
Retail: gift	2	0.8%	Retail: hardware	0	0.0%
Retail: household	2	0.8%	Retail: household	0	0.0%
Retail: department	1	0.4%	Retail: jewelry	0	0.0%
Lodging	0	0.0%	Retail: specialty	0	0.0%
Manufacturer	0	0.0%	Retail: variety	0	0.0%
Retail: furniture	0	0.0%	Service: clothing	0	0.0%
Service: personal	0	0.0%	Service: personal	0	0.0%
subtotal	258	100%	subtotal	78	100%

Businesses

Needham 2003

Centre			Heights		
Service	52	20.4%	Service: office	22	28.2%
Retail	50	19.6%	Service	16	20.5%
Service: health	50	19.6%	Commercial	11	14.1%
Service: office	40	15.7%	Retail	11	14.1%
Commercial	34	13.3%	Service: health	9	11.5%
Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	14	5.5%	Auto	4	5.1%
Construction	8	3.1%	Construction	2	2.6%
Auto	7	2.7%	Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	2	2.6%
Manufacturer	0	0.0%	Small Manufacturer	1	1.3%
Small Manufacturer	0	0.0%	Manufacturer	0	0.0%
subtotal	255	100%	subtotal	78	100%

Centre			Heights		
Retail: specialty	31	53.4%	Retail: specialty	6	42.9%
Service: clothing	7	12.1%	Retail: drug	2	14.3%
Retail: staples	4	6.9%	Retail: staples	2	14.3%
Retail: clothing	3	5.2%	Service: clothing	2	14.3%
Retail: gift	3	5.2%	Retail: auto	1	7.1%
Retail: hardware	3	5.2%	Retail: hardware	1	7.1%
Retail: jewelry	3	5.2%	Retail: auto supply	0	0.0%
Retail: auto	1	1.7%	Retail: clothing	0	0.0%
Retail: drug	1	1.7%	Retail: department	0	0.0%
Retail: furniture	1	1.7%	Retail: furniture	0	0.0%
Retail: variety	1	1.7%	Retail: gift	0	0.0%
Retail: auto supply	0	0.0%	Retail: household	0	0.0%
Retail: department	0	0.0%	Retail: jewelry	0	0.0%
Retail: household	0	0.0%	Retail: variety	0	0.0%
subtotal	58	100%	subtotal	14	100%

Businesses

Needham 2003

Centre			Heights		
Service: health	50	19.6%	Service: office	22	28.2%
Service: office	40	15.7%	Service: health	9	11.5%
Service	34	13.3%	Service	8	10.3%
Retail: specialty	31	12.2%	Service: commercial	7	9.0%
Service: commercial	30	11.8%	Retail: specialty	6	7.7%
Entertainment	14	5.5%	Service: financial	5	6.4%
Service: financial	10	3.9%	Retail: commercial	4	5.1%
Service: construction	8	3.1%	Service: auto	3	3.8%
Service: clothing	7	2.7%	Entertainment	2	2.6%
Service: auto	6	2.4%	Retail: drug	2	2.6%
Retail: commercial	4	1.6%	Retail: staples	2	2.6%
Retail: staples	4	1.6%	Service: clothing	2	2.6%
Retail: clothing	3	1.2%	Service: construction	2	2.6%
Retail: gift	3	1.2%	Retail: auto	1	1.3%
Retail: hardware	3	1.2%	Retail: hardware	1	1.3%
Retail: jewelry	3	1.2%	Small Manufacturer	1	1.3%
Retail: auto	1	0.4%	Service: personal	1	1.3%
Retail: drug	1	0.4%	Construction hardware	0	0.0%
Retail: furniture	1	0.4%	Lodging	0	0.0%
Retail: variety	1	0.4%	Manufacturer	0	0.0%
Service: personal	1	0.4%	Retail: auto supply	0	0.0%
Construction hardware	0	0.0%	Retail: clothing	0	0.0%
Lodging	0	0.0%	Retail: department	0	0.0%
Manufacturer	0	0.0%	Retail: furniture	0	0.0%
Retail: auto supply	0	0.0%	Retail: gift	0	0.0%
Retail: department	0	0.0%	Retail: household	0	0.0%
Retail: household	0	0.0%	Retail: jewelry	0	0.0%
Small Manufacturer	0	0.0%	Retail: variety	0	0.0%
subtotal	255	100%	subtotal	78	100%

Businesses

Waltham 1910

Main			Moody		
Retail	62	27.4%	Retail	117	42.5%
Service: health	45	19.9%	Service	51	18.5%
Service	32	14.2%	Service: health	28	10.2%
Construction	26	11.5%	Small Manufacturer	26	9.5%
Service: office	24	10.6%	Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	17	6.2%
Small Manufacturer	18	8.0%	Construction	16	5.8%
Commercial	7	3.1%	Service: office	13	4.7%
Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	6	2.7%	Manufacturer	5	1.8%
Manufacturer	4	1.8%	Commercial	2	0.7%
Auto	2	0.9%	Auto	0	0.0%
subtotal		100%	subtotal	275	100%

Main			Moody		
Retail: staples	32	45.7%	Retail: staples	32	45.7%
Service: clothing	7	10.0%	Service: clothing	7	10.0%
Retail: drug	6	8.6%	Retail: drug	6	8.6%
Retail: clothing	5	7.1%	Retail: clothing	5	7.1%
Retail: hardware	5	7.1%	Retail: hardware	5	7.1%
Retail: furniture	4	5.7%	Retail: furniture	4	5.7%
Retail: gift	3	4.3%	Retail: gift	3	4.3%
Retail: specialty	3	4.3%	Retail: specialty	3	4.3%
Retail: household	2	2.9%	Retail: household	2	2.9%
Retail: jewelry	2	2.9%	Retail: jewelry	2	2.9%
Retail: auto supply	1	1.4%	Retail: auto supply	1	1.4%
Retail: auto	0	0.0%	Retail: auto	0	0.0%
Retail: department	0	0.0%	Retail: department	0	0.0%
Retail: variety	0	0.0%	Retail: variety	0	0.0%
subtotal	70	100%	subtotal	70	100%

Businesses

Waltham 1910

Main			Moody		
Service: health	45	19.9%	Retail: staples	39	14.2%
Retail: staples	32	14.2%	Service: health	28	10.2%
Service: office	24	10.6%	Small Manufac- turer	26	9.5%
Small Manufac- turer	18	8.0%	Retail: clothing	25	9.1%
Service: construc- tion	15	6.6%	Service	25	9.1%
Service	12	5.3%	Retail: specialty	21	7.6%
Construction hard- ware	11	4.9%	Entertainment	15	5.5%
Service: personal	8	3.5%	Service: clothing	15	5.5%
Service: clothing	7	3.1%	Service: office	13	4.7%
Retail: drug	6	2.7%	Service: construc- tion	11	4.0%
Retail: clothing	5	2.2%	Service: personal	8	2.9%
Retail: hardware	5	2.2%	Retail: household	6	2.2%
Service: financial	5	2.2%	Construction hard- ware	5	1.8%
Entertainment	4	1.8%	Manufacturer	5	1.8%
Manufacturer	4	1.8%	Retail: drug	5	1.8%
Retail: furniture	4	1.8%	Retail: gift	5	1.8%
Service: commercial	4	1.8%	Retail: jewelry	5	1.8%
Retail: commercial	3	1.3%	Retail: furniture	4	1.5%
Retail: gift	3	1.3%	Retail: variety	3	1.1%
Retail: specialty	3	1.3%	Service: financial	3	1.1%
Lodging	2	0.9%	Lodging	2	0.7%
Retail: household	2	0.9%	Retail: department	2	0.7%
Retail: jewelry	2	0.9%	Retail: hardware	2	0.7%
Retail: auto supply	1	0.4%	Retail: commercial	1	0.4%
Service: auto	1	0.4%	Service: commer- cial	1	0.4%
Retail: auto	0	0.0%	Retail: auto	0	0.0%
Retail: department	0	0.0%	Retail: auto supply	0	0.0%
Retail: variety	0	0.0%	Service: auto	0	0.0%
subtotal	226	100%	subtotal	275	100%

Businesses

Waltham 1953

Main			Moody		
Retail	74	23.1%	Retail	112	46.9%
Service: health	64	19.9%	Service	34	14.2%
Service	55	17.1%	Service: health	25	10.5%
Service: office	49	15.3%	Service: office	20	8.4%
Auto	26	8.1%	Small Manufacturer	16	6.7%
Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	26	8.1%	Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	12	5.0%
Construction	10	3.1%	Commercial	8	3.3%
Commercial	9	2.8%	Manufacturer	5	2.1%
Small Manufacturer	7	2.2%	Auto	4	1.7%
Manufacturer	1	0.3%	Construction	3	1.3%
subtotal	321	100%	subtotal	239	100%

Main			Moody		
Retail: staples	15	16.3%	Retail: staples	15	16.3%
Retail: specialty	13	14.1%	Retail: specialty	13	14.1%
Retail: auto	10	10.9%	Retail: auto	10	10.9%
Retail: drug	10	10.9%	Retail: drug	10	10.9%
Retail: clothing	9	9.8%	Retail: clothing	9	9.8%
Retail: hardware	9	9.8%	Retail: hardware	9	9.8%
Service: clothing	5	5.4%	Service: clothing	5	5.4%
Retail: gift	4	4.3%	Retail: gift	4	4.3%
Retail: variety	4	4.3%	Retail: variety	4	4.3%
Retail: auto supply	3	3.3%	Retail: auto supply	3	3.3%
Retail: department	3	3.3%	Retail: department	3	3.3%
Retail: furniture	3	3.3%	Retail: furniture	3	3.3%
Retail: jewelry	3	3.3%	Retail: jewelry	3	3.3%
Retail: household	1	1.1%	Retail: household	1	1.1%
subtotal	92	100%	subtotal	92	100%

Businesses

Waltham 1953

Main			Moody		
Service: health	64	19.9%	Retail: clothing	45	18.8%
Service: office	49	15.3%	Service: health	25	10.5%
Service	39	12.2%	Retail: specialty	24	10.0%
Entertainment	22	6.9%	Service	22	9.2%
Retail: staples	15	4.7%	Service: office	20	8.4%
Retail: specialty	13	4.1%	Small Manufacturer	16	6.7%
Service: auto	13	4.1%	Entertainment	11	4.6%
Retail: auto	10	3.1%	Retail: staples	11	4.6%
Retail: drug	10	3.1%	Retail: department	8	3.3%
Retail: clothing	9	2.8%	Retail: commercial	6	2.5%
Retail: hardware	9	2.8%	Service: financial	6	2.5%
Construction hardware	7	2.2%	Manufacturer	5	2.1%
Small Manufacturer	7	2.2%	Retail: jewelry	5	2.1%
Service: financial	7	2.2%	Service: clothing	5	2.1%
Retail: commercial	5	1.6%	Retail: drug	4	1.7%
Service: clothing	5	1.6%	Retail: hardware	4	1.7%
Lodging	4	1.2%	Retail: auto supply	3	1.3%
Retail: gift	4	1.2%	Retail: furniture	3	1.3%
Retail: variety	4	1.2%	Retail: gift	3	1.3%
Service: commercial	4	1.2%	Retail: household	3	1.3%
Service: personal	4	1.2%	Construction hardware	2	0.8%
Retail: auto supply	3	0.9%	Retail: variety	2	0.8%
Retail: department	3	0.9%	Service: commercial	2	0.8%
Retail: furniture	3	0.9%	Lodging	1	0.4%
Retail: jewelry	3	0.9%	Service: auto	1	0.4%
Service: construction	3	0.9%	Service: construction	1	0.4%
Manufacturer	1	0.3%	Service: personal	1	0.4%
Retail: household	1	0.3%	Retail: auto	0	0.0%
subtotal	321	100%	subtotal	239	100%

Businesses

Waltham 1977

Main			Moody		
Service: office	66	23.9%	Retail	74	44.1%
Retail	52	18.8%	Service	29	17.3%
Service	46	16.7%	Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	13	7.7%
Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	32	11.6%	Service: office	13	7.7%
Commercial	23	8.3%	Commercial	10	6.0%
Service: health	21	7.6%	Manufacturer	8	4.8%
Auto	19	6.9%	Service: health	8	4.8%
Construction	11	4.0%	Small Manufacturer	6	3.6%
Small Manufacturer	5	1.8%	Construction	4	2.4%
Manufacturer	1	0.4%	Auto	3	1.8%
subtotal	276	100%	subtotal	168	100%

Main			Moody		
Retail: specialty	24	37.5%	Retail: specialty	22	28.2%
Retail: drug	7	10.9%	Retail: clothing	14	17.9%
Retail: staples	6	9.4%	Retail: furniture	7	9.0%
Service: clothing	6	9.4%	Retail: department	6	7.7%
Retail: clothing	4	6.3%	Retail: gift	6	7.7%
Retail: variety	4	6.3%	Retail: hardware	4	5.1%
Retail: auto	3	4.7%	Retail: jewelry	4	5.1%
Retail: auto supply	3	4.7%	Retail: staples	4	5.1%
Retail: hardware	3	4.7%	Retail: variety	3	3.8%
Retail: household	2	3.1%	Retail: auto supply	2	2.6%
Retail: jewelry	2	3.1%	Retail: drug	2	2.6%
Retail: department	0	0.0%	Retail: household	2	2.6%
Retail: furniture	0	0.0%	Service: clothing	2	2.6%
Retail: gift	0	0.0%	Retail: auto	0	0.0%
subtotal	64	100%	subtotal	78	100%

Businesses

Waltham 1977

Main			Moody		
Service: office	66	23.9%	Retail: specialty	22	13.1%
Service	31	11.2%	Service	21	12.5%
Entertainment	30	10.9%	Retail: clothing	14	8.3%
Retail: specialty	24	8.7%	Entertainment	13	7.7%
Service: health	21	7.6%	Service: office	13	7.7%
Service: commercial	18	6.5%	Manufacturer	8	4.8%
Service: auto	13	4.7%	Service: commercial	8	4.8%
Service: financial	9	3.3%	Service: health	8	4.8%
Retail: drug	7	2.5%	Retail: furniture	7	4.2%
Service: construction	7	2.5%	Retail: department	6	3.6%
Retail: staples	6	2.2%	Retail: gift	6	3.6%
Service: clothing	6	2.2%	Small Manufacturer	6	3.6%
Retail: commercial	5	1.8%	Service: financial	6	3.6%
Small Manufacturer	5	1.8%	Construction hardware	4	2.4%
Construction hardware	4	1.5%	Retail: hardware	4	2.4%
Retail: clothing	4	1.5%	Retail: jewelry	4	2.4%
Retail: variety	4	1.5%	Retail: staples	4	2.4%
Retail: auto	3	1.1%	Retail: variety	3	1.8%
Retail: auto supply	3	1.1%	Retail: auto supply	2	1.2%
Retail: hardware	3	1.1%	Retail: commercial	2	1.2%
Lodging	2	0.7%	Retail: drug	2	1.2%
Retail: household	2	0.7%	Retail: household	2	1.2%
Retail: jewelry	2	0.7%	Service: clothing	2	1.2%
Manufacturer	1	0.4%	Service: auto	1	0.6%
Retail: department	0	0.0%	Lodging	0	0.0%
Retail: furniture	0	0.0%	Retail: auto	0	0.0%
Retail: gift	0	0.0%	Service: construction	0	0.0%
Service: personal	0	0.0%	Service: personal	0	0.0%
subtotal	276	100%	subtotal	168	100%

Businesses

Waltham 2003

Main			Moody		
Service: office	65	25.6%	Retail	42	28.0%
Service	56	22.1%	Service	29	19.3%
Service: health	34	13.4%	Commercial	21	14.0%
Retail	28	11.0%	Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	21	14.0%
Commercial	24	9.4%	Service: office	20	13.3%
Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	20	7.9%	Service: health	11	7.3%
Auto	12	4.7%	Construction	6	4.0%
Construction	12	4.7%	Auto	0	0.0%
Small Manufacturer	3	1.2%	Manufacturer	0	0.0%
Manufacturer	0	0.0%	Small Manufacturer	0	0.0%
subtotal	254	100%	subtotal	150	100%

Main			Moody		
Retail: specialty	17	44.7%	Retail: specialty	22	47.8%
Service: clothing	6	15.8%	Retail: furniture	8	17.4%
Retail: staples	4	10.5%	Retail: staples	4	8.7%
Retail: drug	3	7.9%	Service: clothing	4	8.7%
Retail: auto	2	5.3%	Retail: jewelry	2	4.3%
Retail: auto supply	2	5.3%	Retail: variety	2	4.3%
Retail: hardware	2	5.3%	Retail: clothing	1	2.2%
Retail: household	1	2.6%	Retail: gift	1	2.2%
Retail: jewelry	1	2.6%	Retail: hardware	1	2.2%
Retail: clothing	0	0.0%	Retail: household	1	2.2%
Retail: department	0	0.0%	Retail: auto	0	0.0%
Retail: furniture	0	0.0%	Retail: auto supply	0	0.0%
Retail: gift	0	0.0%	Retail: department	0	0.0%
Retail: variety	0	0.0%	Retail: drug	0	0.0%
subtotal	38	100%	subtotal	46	100%

Businesses

Waltham 2003

Main			Moody		
Service: office	65	25.6%	Retail: specialty	22	14.7%
Service: health	34	13.4%	Entertainment	21	14.0%
Service	32	12.6%	Service	20	13.3%
Service: commercial	24	9.4%	Service: office	20	13.3%
Entertainment	20	7.9%	Service: commercial	15	10.0%
Retail: specialty	17	6.7%	Service: health	11	7.3%
Service: financial	17	6.7%	Retail: furniture	8	5.3%
Service: construction	9	3.5%	Retail: commercial	6	4.0%
Service: auto	8	3.2%	Service: construction	5	3.3%
Service: clothing	6	2.4%	Retail: staples	4	2.7%
Retail: staples	4	1.6%	Service: clothing	4	2.7%
Construction hardware	3	1.2%	Service: personal	3	2.0%
Retail: drug	3	1.2%	Retail: jewelry	2	1.3%
Small Manufacturer	3	1.2%	Retail: variety	2	1.3%
Retail: auto	2	0.8%	Service: financial	2	1.3%
Retail: auto supply	2	0.8%	Construction hardware	1	0.7%
Retail: hardware	2	0.8%	Retail: clothing	1	0.7%
Retail: household	1	0.4%	Retail: gift	1	0.7%
Retail: jewelry	1	0.4%	Retail: hardware	1	0.7%
Service: personal	1	0.4%	Retail: household	1	0.7%
Lodging	0	0.0%	Lodging	0	0.0%
Manufacturer	0	0.0%	Manufacturer	0	0.0%
Retail: clothing	0	0.0%	Retail: auto	0	0.0%
Retail: commercial	0	0.0%	Retail: auto supply	0	0.0%
Retail: department	0	0.0%	Retail: department	0	0.0%
Retail: furniture	0	0.0%	Retail: drug	0	0.0%
Retail: gift	0	0.0%	Small Manufacturer	0	0.0%
Retail: variety	0	0.0%	Service: auto	0	0.0%
subtotal	254	100%	subtotal	150	100%

Businesses

Watertown 1912

Watertown Square		
Retail	66	35.5%
Service	49	26.3%
Construction	20	10.8%
Service: office	16	8.6%
Commercial	8	4.3%
Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	8	4.3%
Small Manufacturer	8	4.3%
Service: health	7	3.8%
Manufacturer	3	1.6%
Auto	1	1%
subtotal	186	100.0%

Watertown Square		
Retail: staples	33	39.8%
Service: clothing	17	20.5%
Retail: specialty	11	13.3%
Retail: clothing	8	9.6%
Retail: drug	4	4.8%
Retail: hardware	3	3.6%
Retail: variety	3	3.6%
Retail: furniture	2	2.4%
Retail: gift	1	1.2%
Retail: jewelry	1	1.2%
Retail: auto	0	0.0%
Retail: auto supply	0	0.0%
Retail: department	0	0.0%
Retail: household	0	0.0%
subtotal	83	100%

Businesses

Watertown 1912

Watertown Square		
Retail: staples	33	17.7%
Service	25	13.4%
Service: clothing	17	9.1%
Service: construction	16	8.6%
Service: office	16	8.6%
Retail: specialty	11	5.9%
Retail: clothing	8	4.3%
Small Manufacturer	8	4.3%
Service: commercial	8	4.3%
Service: health	7	3.8%
Entertainment	6	3.2%
Service: financial	6	3.2%
Construction hardware	4	2.2%
Retail: drug	4	2.2%
Manufacturer	3	1.6%
Retail: hardware	3	1.6%
Retail: variety	3	1.6%
Lodging	2	1.1%
Retail: furniture	2	1.1%
Retail: gift	1	0.5%
Retail: jewelry	1	0.5%
Service: auto	1	0.5%
Service: personal	1	0.5%
Retail: auto	0	0.0%
Retail: auto supply	0	0.0%
Retail: commercial	0	0.0%
Retail: department	0	0.0%
Retail: household	0	0.0%
subtotal	186	100%

Businesses

Watertown 1978

Watertown Square		
Retail	44	28.4%
Service: office	30	19.4%
Service	29	18.7%
Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	20	12.9%
Auto	13	8.4%
Construction	8	5.2%
Commercial	6	3.9%
Service: health	4	2.6%
Small Manufacturer	1	0.6%
Manufacturer	0	0.0%
subtotal	155	100%

Watertown Square		
Retail: specialty	16	28.1%
Retail: hardware	6	10.5%
Retail: staples	6	10.5%
Service: clothing	6	10.5%
Retail: auto supply	4	7.0%
Retail: clothing	4	7.0%
Retail: drug	4	7.0%
Retail: furniture	4	7.0%
Retail: auto	3	5.3%
Retail: gift	3	5.3%
Retail: jewelry	1	1.8%
Retail: department	0	0.0%
Retail: household	0	0.0%
Retail: variety	0	0.0%
subtotal	57	100%

Businesses

Watertown 1978

Watertown Square		
Service: office	30	19.4%
Entertainment	20	12.9%
Retail: specialty	16	10.3%
Service	14	9.0%
Service: financial	9	5.8%
Service: construction	8	5.2%
Retail: hardware	6	3.9%
Retail: staples	6	3.9%
Service: auto	6	3.9%
Service: clothing	6	3.9%
Service: commercial	6	3.9%
Retail: auto supply	4	2.6%
Retail: clothing	4	2.6%
Retail: drug	4	2.6%
Retail: furniture	4	2.6%
Service: health	4	2.6%
Retail: auto	3	1.9%
Retail: gift	3	1.9%
Retail: jewelry	1	0.6%
Small Manufacturer	1	0.6%
Construction hardware	0	0.0%
Lodging	0	0.0%
Manufacturer	0	0.0%
Retail: commercial	0	0.0%
Retail: department	0	0.0%
Retail: household	0	0.0%
Retail: variety	0	0.0%
Service: personal	0	0.0%
subtotal	155	100%

Businesses

Watertown 2003

Watertown Square		
Service	22	21.6%
Service: office	15	14.7%
Service: health	14	13.7%
Commercial	13	12.7%
Retail	12	11.8%
Auto	9	8.8%
Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	9	8.8%
Construction	8	7.8%
Manufacturer	0	0.0%
Small Manufacturer	0	0.0%
subtotal	102	100%

Watertown Square		
Retail: specialty	5	33.3%
Retail: staples	3	20.0%
Retail: clothing	2	13.3%
Retail: furniture	2	13.3%
Service: clothing	2	13.3%
Retail: auto supply	1	6.7%
Retail: auto	0	0.0%
Retail: department	0	0.0%
Retail: drug	0	0.0%
Retail: gift	0	0.0%
Retail: hardware	0	0.0%
Retail: household	0	0.0%
Retail: jewelry	0	0.0%
Retail: variety	0	0.0%
subtotal	15	100%

Businesses

Watertown 2003

Watertown Square		
Service	15	14.7%
Service: office	15	14.7%
Service: health	14	13.7%
Service: commercial	13	12.7%
Entertainment	9	8.8%
Service: auto	8	7.8%
Service: construction	8	7.8%
Retail: specialty	5	4.9%
Service: financial	4	3.9%
Retail: staples	3	2.9%
Retail: clothing	2	2.0%
Retail: furniture	2	2.0%
Service: clothing	2	2.0%
Retail: auto supply	1	1.0%
Service: personal	1	1.0%
Construction hardware	0	0.0%
Lodging	0	0.0%
Manufacturer	0	0.0%
Retail: auto	0	0.0%
Retail: commercial	0	0.0%
Retail: department	0	0.0%
Retail: drug	0	0.0%
Retail: gift	0	0.0%
Retail: hardware	0	0.0%
Retail: household	0	0.0%
Retail: jewelry	0	0.0%
Retail: variety	0	0.0%
Small Manufacturer	0	0.0%
subtotal	102	100%

Businesses

Arsenal 2003

Arsenal		
Retail	39	52.0%
Service	8	10.7%
Commercial	7	9.3%
Auto	6	8.0%
Hotel/Rest/ Entertainment	6	8.0%
Construction	5	6.7%
Service: health	3	4.0%
Service: office	1	1.3%
Manufacturer	0	0.0%
Small Manufacturer	0	0.0%
subtotal	75	100%

Arsenal		
Retail: specialty	18	43.9%
Retail: clothing	8	19.5%
Retail: jewelry	6	14.6%
Retail: gift	3	7.3%
Retail: auto	1	2.4%
Retail: department	1	2.4%
Retail: drug	1	2.4%
Retail: household	1	2.4%
Retail: staples	1	2.4%
Service: clothing	1	2.4%
Retail: auto supply	0	0.0%
Retail: furniture	0	0.0%
Retail: hardware	0	0.0%
Retail: variety	0	0.0%
subtotal	41	100%

Businesses

Arsenal 2003

Arsenal		
Retail: specialty	18	24.0%
Retail: clothing	8	10.7%
Service	7	9.3%
Entertainment	6	8.0%
Retail: jewelry	6	8.0%
Service: commercial	6	8.0%
Service: auto	5	6.7%
Service: construction	4	5.3%
Retail: gift	3	4.0%
Service: health	3	4.0%
Construction hardware	1	1.3%
Retail: auto	1	1.3%
Retail: commercial	1	1.3%
Retail: department	1	1.3%
Retail: drug	1	1.3%
Retail: household	1	1.3%
Retail: staples	1	1.3%
Service: clothing	1	1.3%
Service: office	1	1.3%
Lodging	0	0.0%
Manufacturer	0	0.0%
Retail: auto supply	0	0.0%
Retail: furniture	0	0.0%
Retail: hardware	0	0.0%
Retail: variety	0	0.0%
Small Manufacturer	0	0.0%
Service: financial	0	0.0%
Service: personal	0	0.0%
subtotal	75	100%