INTRODUCTION

The Borough of Matawan retained Beacon Planning and Consulting Services to provide technical assistance in the preparation of a revitalization strategy for the borough's Main Street Business District. The borough proceeded with this endeavor recognizing the need for the development of a comprehensive and coordinated long-range plan to guide the growth, development and physical improvements necessary to ensure the continued vitality of the community's business district. The primary objective of this study is to provide a blueprint for enhancing the economic viability of the borough's Main Street business district, which would serve as the basis for guiding physical and programmatic improvements of the district.

The report presents data regarding the demographic characteristics of the borough, as well as existing land use and the intensity of land use and development within the borough's business district. It reviews these existing conditions, including the status of the local commercial real estate market, with those found in other business districts, in order to guide the Main Street business district toward a more successful future economic condition. The report includes information on the number of parking spaces serving the district and an assessment of the actual number of spaces necessary to adequately serve the district. It also includes preliminary comments on the character of the district and physical attributes and the elements that may require improvement.

The report concludes with a summary of the private and public funding programs that may be available to business owners, as well as to the Borough.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS AND ANALYSIS

The Process

The Main Street Revitalization Study commenced with the selection of the boundary of the study area and the preparation of a lot line base map of the selected area. Land use data from the tax office was recorded on the borough tax maps, the data was field-verified, to ensure accuracy, and subsequently recorded on the base map. Data concerning building locations, street widths, parking areas, sidewalks, trees, and other pertinent physical elements were obtained from the Monmouth County Planning Department or through direct observation. These data were then transposed onto a project base map, resulting in a single composite map depicting the area's physical conditions and features.

An existing land use survey and existing conditions survey of the study area was undertaken as part of this assessment. This survey encompassed a review of the uses that comprise the study area, as well as the relationships of buildings, landscape, signage, lighting, and circulation elements.

Study Area

The Main Street Business District study area is that area that presently serves, and will remain for the foreseeable future, as the active commercial core of the community. The boundaries were established through an examination of the distribution of retail-oriented commercial land uses along Main Street.

The selected boundaries of the study area are depicted on Figure 1. In order to ensure a comprehensive analysis, the study area included the Main Street corridor as well as an area extending one block to either side of this street. Spring Street binds the area to the south and the Meadow Road right-of-way to the north.

Selected Population Characteristics

Historic Trends

The Borough experienced its greatest population increase during the 1960's when its population rose from 5,097 residents in 1960 to 9,136 residents; an increase of 79 percent. Since then the Borough's population has been fluctuating at approximately 9,000 residents, The 1980 U.S. Census reported a slight population decrease to 8,837 residents, and a 4.9 percent increase to 9,270 residents in 1990. The population fell again in 2000 to 8,910 residents. Since 2000, the Monmouth County Planning Department has issued population estimates that indicate small annual increases. The Borough's total population is estimated to have increased to 8,967 persons in 2005.

As shown in Table 1, a total of 93,108 people reside in Matawan and the adjoining communities. This indicates a sizable market for the local business district. Matawan comprises 9.6 percent of this total market area population.

Table 1
Total Population Estimates, 2005
Matawan and Adjoining Municipalities

Municipality	Total Population	Percent of Total Area Population
Matawan	8,967	9.6
Keyport	7,627	8.2
Aberdeen	18,732	20.1
Keansburg	10,774	11.6
Union Beach	6,776	7.3
Marlboro	40,232	43.2
Total (Matawan & adjoining towns)	93,108	100.0

Income Characteristics

Table 2 provides data for family and household income by income category. The median Matawan household income reported in 1999 was $63,594 and the median family income was $72,183. Comparable data for Monmouth County was $64,271 and $76,823, respectively.

Table 2

Household and Family Income, 1999
Matawan, New Jersey

Income	Households	Families
Less than $10,000	133	54
$10,000 to $14,999	146	30
$15,000 to $24,999	270	163
$25,000 to $34,999	270	188
$35,000 to $49,999	459	249
$50,000 to $74,999	814	546
$75,000 to $99,999	541	381
$100,000 to $149,999	569	498
$150,000 or more	287	259
Median, Matawan	$63,594	$72,183
Median, Monmouth County	$64,271	$76,823

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Per Capita Income

Table 3 indicates that the per capita income for Matawan is just under the Monmouth County average. The 1999 per capita income for Matawan was reported to be $30,320 while the County figure was $31,149. The borough's per capita income is higher than four of the five adjacent municipalities, as shown in Table 3. This suggests that the borough's population can support additional retail development, and particularly those uses normally found in local business districts.

Table 3
Per Capita Income, 1989 & 1999
Matawan and Adjacent Municipalities

Municipality	1989	1999	Percent Change
Matawan	$20,345	$30,320	49.0
Keyport	$15,050	$23,288	54.7
Aberdeen	$19,544	$28,984	48.3
Keansburg	$12,279	$17,417	41.8
Union Beach	$12,633	$20,973	66.0
Marlboro	$25,349	$38,635	52.4
Monmouth County	$20,565	$31,149	51.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Retail Trade

Table 4 lists the type and volume of business that Matawan attracts.

Table 4
Business Type and Volume
Matawan, New Jersey

NAICS Code	NAICS Sector	Number of Establishments	Sales	Annual Payroll	Number of Employees
44-45	Retail trade	69	92,121	12,483	677
51	Information	5	N	D	B
53	Real estate & rental & leasing	11	7,428	1,318	42
54	Professional, scientific, & technical services	61	38,036	18,561	318
56	Administrative & support & waste management & remediation service	28	47,665	16,730	440
61	Educational services	4	D	D	A
62	Health care & social assistance	43	35,698	14,514	639
71	Arts, entertainment, & recreation	3	D	D	B
72	Accommodation & food services	43	D	D	E
81	Other services (except public administration)	49	D	D	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance

The borough's master plan divides Main Street into a downtown preservation district north of Church Street and south of Little Street on the south side of the street and General Business District north of Ravine Drive on the north side of the street and north of Little Street on the south side of the street.

The Downtown Preservation District promotes education and culture while recognizing the unique 18th and 19th century characteristics of the area. The area's goal is to maintain and preserve historical structures that add to the history and tone of the district.

The General Business District promotes commercial and retail uses. Permitted uses include shops, banks, offices, and various service agencies.

The Borough's zoning ordinance is consistent with the master plan recommendations. The area in the DPD zone permits professional office space and single-family dwellings. Any new construction has to be in accordance with the historic village atmosphere. Residential use cannot be converted to office space unless it is shown that sufficient off-street parking is provided.

The area in the GB zone permits antique gift shops, car sale agencies and show rooms, repair shop, baked goods shops, drugs and pharmaceutical stores, groceries, hardware stores, professional offices, banks, commercial schools and clerical occupations, recreation and amusement facilities, barber and beauty shops, tailors, dry cleaning services, funeral homes, auto repair shops, laundromats, offices of contractors, electrical repair shops, sit-down restaurants and diners, and shoe repairing.

The area and bulk standards applicable to the GB zone are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5
GB Zone Bulk Requirements

Zoning Regulation	GB Zone
Minimum Lot Area (sq. ft.)	5,000
Minimum Lot Width (ft.)	50
Minimum Front Yard (ft.)	20
Minimum Side Yards (ft.)	N/A
Minimum Rear Yard (ft.)	30
Minimum Side Yard (ft.)	5
Minimum Rear Yard (ft.)	4
Maximum Bldg. Ht (st./ft.)	2.5/35

Analysis of Existing Conditions

The analysis of the area's existing conditions reveals a number of particularly noteworthy features that merit attention. One's initial impression is simply that the Matawan business district is a compact, conventional linear business corridor that is typical of many New Jersey municipalities. On the positive side is the fact that this corridor has a number of distinctly traditional downtown characteristics. This is exemplified by a development pattern which includes a combination of small and moderately sized properties, side line to side line building arrangements, compatible building heights, narrow street width and sidewalk dimensions, modest linear dimension of individual blocks, and a complementary retail character of stores. The traditional downtown character of the area is reinforced through the specific mix of retail and personal service establishments and the availability of off-street and on-street parking along Main Street.

The district also contains a number of features that detract from the traditional downtown character and design of the district, thereby diminishing the overall integrity and design of the area and adversely affecting the local shopping experience. These critical elements relate to the area's varied block pattern, single-family residences within the business district and in the adjoining area, discordant design elements, the existing retail mix, and related items that, when taken together, impact the district's perception as a pleasant and attractive place to work, shop, or visit. The areas of concern as are follows:

1. Size and Orientation: The business district is relatively small. It encompasses an area of about six acres and is essentially centered on one street. These features represent significant limitations. These constraints are compounded by the location of adjoining detached single-family residences, as well as several multi-family dwellings to the east and west of the corridor that act to restrict commercial growth.

   The area's small lot arrangement, modest area, and adjoining residential development represent significant impediments to the district's potential growth and expansion. In addition, these factors impede the ability to encourage the development of retail uses with a substantive amount of floor area. At present, the largest retail establishment in the district is the 12,644 square foot Harris Hardware, soon to open as a new C-Town supermarket. The next largest facility is the 6,751 square foot Atlantic Glass Company located at 110 Main St. Most storefronts are less than 4,000 square feet. Table 6 depicts the range of floor spaces in commercial and office buildings in the downtown business district.

Block dimension also impedes growth. The blocks range from 110 feet to 425 feet, but it is the limited depth of the commercial district that acts to restrict the ability to encourage larger stores that can potentially serve as a suitable anchor for the district. Successful central business districts generally draw from an area that is larger than just their own municipality, and typically encompass multiple blocks in all directions. Districts confined to a few linear blocks with an inability to attract a suitable anchor store, are likely to remain neighborhood districts with limited ability to enhance market share.

Table 6
Range of Floor Areas In Establishments
Central Business District

Floor Area (square feet)	Number of Establishments
0-999	28
1,000 to 1,999	36
2,000 to 2,999	16
3,000 to 3,999	16
4,000 to 4,999	3
5,000 to 5,999	1
6,000 to 6,999	2
7,000 to 7,999	1
8,000+	4
Median	

2. Segmented Character of the Business District: The district's lot arrangement and land use pattern effectively segments the character of the shopping experience and further limits its pedestrian scale and orientation. There is what may be referred to as the retail core area (Spring Street to Cartan Lane), which is characterized almost exclusively by retail, service and restaurant commercial uses with some residential units above. Though the storefronts are not interrupted, there are limited shopping opportunities and therefore it is not a heavily foot-trafficked area. The area south of Spring Street is comprised of mostly office buildings spread over a single 400-foot block. In contrast, the area north of Cartan Lane is residential; though some have been converted to office use. In order to make the Main Street district an effective

retail experience a plan needs to be centered around a five-minute, walkable shopping area, which is 1,200 to 1,500 feet. If the center of Main Street is any larger than a five-minute walk, the stores on the periphery will see less foot-traffic and Main Street will function as a throughway rather than a destination.

3. Lack of distinct usage characteristics: Many central business districts are known by their particular usage characteristics. For example, in addition to serving as the County seat and thus attracting professional offices, Freehold's downtown has built a solid reputation on its relatively large number of restaurants. Red Bank is widely known for its eclectic mix of retail shops. Even smaller business districts such as the one in Ocean Grove have developed specific market reputations; in Ocean Grove's case for their eclectic mix of touristy retail shops and restaurants. Matawan, on the other hand, lacks a discernable image or particular market niche that it can trade off of to enhance its image. This is an issue that must be addressed if the Main Street district is to broaden its commercial base.

   Many active business districts contain a variety of uses that complement each other, enabling one business to feed off another. For example, in Bergen County, Westwood's movie theater provides a significant amount of pedestrian movement in the evening hours. Restaurants have geared their menus accordingly, serving after-dinner fare that keeps people in the area after hours. In Piermont, New York, the plethora of restaurants, art galleries, and craft and antique shops has served to complement each other as people combine shopping and dining as part of a day outing.

4. Lack of a Focal Point or Anchor: The district does not have an apparent focal point that draws shoppers to the area. There is no single large-scale anchor store in the business district that would serve as a magnet for people, or more critically, which can attract other stores that feel they can draw sufficient customers from people shopping at the anchor store. This may change with the pending opening of the C-Town supermarket. Red Bank represents a prime example. Their business district had functioned as a primarily localized commercial area until, amongst other things,

several national retailers moved in and served as anchors for the area. Other stores immediately followed, confident that the major retailers would draw people to the area. The district witnessed a profound shift in the type of stores and the extent of drawing power from surrounding communities, and today Red Bank serves as a regional commercial hub known throughout the State.

5. Parking: A review of parking spaces within the Main Street business district reveals that the district contains a total of 978 parking spaces, including 118 spaces on Main Street, and 789 off-street parking spaces located throughout the district. This does not include off-street parking provided at the post office for its employees. It is noted that many of the establishments provide parking lots for customers and employees. The parking lots are generally small, containing an average of five 5 spaces. The larger lots are for post office employee parking, Bart's restaurant, Matawan Tavern, Bank of America, Sovereign Bank, Synergy, a funeral home, a professional office complex and the First Baptist Church.

Surprisingly, Matawan provides 118 parking spaces along Main Street. However, because the spaces are not striped cars often take up more space than is needed, which reduces the potential supply of parking spaces within the area. With the approaching opening of the C-Town supermarket, Main Street parking will be in high demand. The parking lot located behind the C-Town building has only 27 spaces, which is significantly less than other supermarket parking areas.

An analysis of parking need based on standard planning design criteria suggests that the business district requires a total of 1,025 parking spaces for all business uses and apartments in the area. This is the number of parking spaces which would be required based on the gross amount of floor spaces in the district, which is estimated to be square feet of non-residential space (this excludes church and other quasi-public uses parking needs). This shortfall of 47 spaces does not represent a critical deficiency. While it may impact some residents as shoppers park in front of their residences on nearby side streets, this deficit of itself does not act as a deterrent to increased patronage of Main Street businesses. More so the issue is the distribution of parking within the business district. Without an anchor to draw customers to the district, convenience retail shops located in the heart of the business district are hard pressed to compete with similar establishments located along Route 34 or at the north end of the Main Street.

6. Physical Character: The Main Street business district is characterized by a number of nominal architectural features and discordant design elements. Examples are noted below. Photographs that illustrate the accompanying examples are provided in the appendix.

   a. Buildings in the central business district are mixed use retail with apartments behind or above. Buildings on the outskirts of the central business district area are a mix of Colonial and Victorian homes that are used as single-family housing, multi-family housing, business offices, or a mix of office space and rental space. Buildings in the business district generally lack a distinct architectural motif. There is no particular architectural style that defines the area. It is a mix of smaller brick buildings, some with added apartments on top, older homes with markets below, and colonial style residential homes. There are no pronounced elements that could serve to represent an identifying or unifying theme. In many instances, the original architectural features have apparently been covered by facade renovations.

   b. The existing 'cobra-head' light fixtures located along Main Street are more common to highway lighting than a downtown business district. These light fixtures do not complement the decorative, pedestrian scale lighting that is found in the retail core area. The necessity to maintain these light fixtures should be reviewed by the Borough.

   c. The district lacks a common public open space area that can be utilized for public gathering or otherwise limited ancillary space to provide a respite for shoppers.

d. Existing signage is comprised of discordant themes lacking any unifying elements. A comprehensive signage plan can act to complement a

e. The district lacks a unifying physical focal point.

7. Lack of a Marketable Theme: The borough's Main Street business district has no distinct identity in the marketplace that distinguishes it from other downtowns and shopping districts.

8. Existing Land Use Pattern: The analysis of existing land use and physical conditions is designed to provide an inventory of the types of land uses and enable an evaluation of current conditions in the borough's business district. The analysis reveals the following noteworthy elements:

a. The business district extends for nearly 1,700 feet along Main Street between Spring Street and the north end of Lake Matawan. Main Street is an arterial roadway running through the center of the borough. It is a major north-south arterial, providing access to the Matawan train station, as well as to the regional highway system beyond. The areas on either side of the business district are comprised of single-family residential neighborhoods.

b. The land use analysis categorizes uses into eleven distinct categories. These include separate categories for retail, personal services, office uses, restaurants, automotive uses, vacant land, public/quasi public, and a miscellaneous business category, as well as three residential categories. The retail use category was refined more precisely into three subgroups. The classifications used for the study are identified below.

1) Retail sales and services: Retail sales and services generally fall into three categories, as follows:

(a) Shopper Goods. This category includes general merchandise, apparel and accessories, home furnishings, equipment and other durable goods. Businesses of this nature usually serve as a primary shopper destination.

(b) Convenience Goods: Convenience goods include food, drugs and tobacco products. Products like these are generally purchased near a shopper's place of residence.

(c) Retail Services: This category includes businesses not devoted entirely to durable goods or convenience. Included in this category are personal services, such as beauty shops, photography studios, music school and a martial arts school.

2) Offices: This classification includes professional offices, banks, travel agencies, and other business offices.

3) Restaurants: This category includes eating and drinking establishments.

4) Automotive: This category includes gasoline stations and automotive repair shops.

5) Multi-family Residential: This land use category includes all residential developments containing minimally four dwellings, where the use constitutes the primary use of a property.

6) Upper Story Apartments: This category consists of apartments found on the upper floors of buildings that contain a non-residential use at street level.

7) Single-family Residences: This category consists of detached single-family dwellings, which are primarily located in the northern section of the Main Street business district.

8) Public and Quasi-Public: This grouping includes places of worship, private school, post office, and the Masonic lodge.

9) Miscellaneous: This category includes those uses that cannot be classified in any of the above categories, e.g., a funeral home.

10) Vacant Land/Property: This category includes any undeveloped land or vacant property in the study area, such as the former Matawan Tavern and the former Harris Hardware property.

c. There are 107 individual establishments within the Main Street business district. For the purposes of this study, upper floor apartments in a mixed-use building are treated as a separate use from a commercial use at the same property. Nonresidential land uses are categorized in Table 7. These nonresidential uses contain approximately 227,599 square feet of floor area. Table 8 shows the distribution floor area by land use category.

d. The Main Street business district is being slowly transforming from a shopping district into a sub-regional office district. This trend is exhibited through the increased conversion of first floor retail space, as well as single-family residences, to office space. Office uses were found to occupy a substantial percentage of the available first floor space that retail uses are dependant upon. As the environment for retail stores continues to ebb, the district will be left with a small number of retail establishments that do not rely upon or even need the type of walk-in business found in a thriving retail center. The Borough will need to decide whether this is the direction in which it wants the Main Street business district to continue.

Table 7
Land Use by Number and Percent of Uses
Central Business District

CBD Land Use Classification	Number of Uses	Percent of Uses

Retail: Shopper Goods	6	5.8
Retail: Convenience	7	6.7
Retail: Services	17	16.5
Retail: Total	30	29.1
Office	58	56.3
Restaurants	6	5.8
Automotive	1	0.9
Industrial	1	0.9
Public/Quasi-public	6	5.8
Miscellaneous	1	0.9
TOTAL	103	100.0

Table 8
Land Use by Floor Area
Central Business District

Land Use	Floor area (square feet)	Percent of total floor area
Retail Services	53,948	24.8
Office	100,302	46.2
Restaurant	10,713	4.9
Automotive	1,497	0.6
Industrial	6,751	3.1
Miscellaneous	3,789	1.7
Public/Quasi-Public	39,866	18.3
Total	216,866	100.0

9. The following comments are offered with respect to the district's land use pattern and arrangement:

1) There are 30 retail sales establishments in the study area, mostly small neighborhood business establishments. Retail uses represent the second largest single land use in the central business district (after office use) with 53,948 square feet. This category represents 1/4 of all development in the district. Most of the retail floor space is located south of Cartan Lane and north of Spring Street. There is no discernible concentration of particular retail uses, but stores selling items other than food goods comprise the vast majority of retail uses. These retail uses include one liquor store, one pet shop, one check cashing station, one photography studio, one screen printing store, one bakery, one shoe repair store, one interior design store, and one media store. The new C-Town supermarket will be the only large chain retailer, as well as the single largest retail establishment within the study area.

2) There is no store that acts as a retail anchor, drawing people from beyond the immediate area. In addition, the existing mix of retail shops does not exhibit the critical mass necessary to create a pedestrian-oriented shopping district.

3) Personal services comprise 9,832 square feet of floor area. Hair and nail salons, barber shops, and massage therapy are predominant forms of this land use category. There are five hair salons (including one barber shop) and two massage therapy facilities. Other types of retail services include a phone store and a travel agency.

   The number of hair and nail salons is often looked upon as an indicator of the relative economic strength, or weakness, of a community's local business district. In this instance the relatively small number of such facilities does not presage this as an area of concern. On the other hand, the small number of such uses may be related to a perceived lack of parking for customers.

4) Offices constitute the most prevalent land use in the business district, in terms of the number of such establishment and their floor area. There are 58 separate professional office uses encompassing 100,302 square feet of floor area. This represents 34 percent of all floor space in the district. Office uses include business offices, medical, dental, chiropractic and professional offices. Seventy-two percent of all office space is located in six office buildings, 4 of which are located north of Spring Street.

5) The land use survey revealed that there are six restaurants within the Main Street business district, generally located in the central portion of the business district between Spring Street and Cartan Lane. Restaurants constitute 4.6 percent of the nonresidential floor space in the business district.

6) The Matawan library, post office and police station comprise the public uses found within the Main Street business district. In addition, there are two quasi-public uses; the Historic Mansion and the YMCA. These non-retail uses have the potential to help draw patrons to the business districts.

7) There are approximately 93 dwelling units in the study area, of which 50 are apartments on upper floors of mixed-use buildings. The overall housing unit number does not include the Main Street Village apartment complex located on 90 Main Street. Upper floor apartments are found in 38 of the 57 buildings in the central business district. These upper story residences are the predominant use of the upper floors of buildings in the business district.

8) A number of vacant stores were found in the study area. A total of four properties were vacant or being renovated. These properties include a former boarding house, the former Matawan Tavern, a coming sushi and teriyaki restaurant, and the former Harris Hardware store. There is only one vacant building lot in the business district next to the renovated Matawan Tavern.

10) The remaining land uses consist of various uses including the following: a martial arts studio and a school of musical instruction.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of existing conditions:

1) The land use survey found that, for the most part, buildings are well maintained. There are no significant conditions of deterioration evident in the district.

2) The district does not contain a mixture of stores that encourages window-shopping and as such would represent a catalyst for pedestrian movement through the district.

3) The historic district located along Main Street to the south of Spring Street functions as a secondary commercial district. This area contains a significant number of office uses as well as other uses that are not traditionally associated with central business districts, such as funeral homes, multifamily residences, and a church with a community center.

10. Streetscape Elements: The term ‘streetscape’ is a term used to describe ancillary features found along the street. It regards architectural features, street paving, sidewalks, signage, benches, kiosks, trash receptacles, banners, etc.

The following is noted:

a. Architecture: The central business district contains mostly one and two story buildings built in a variety of architectural styles. The buildings are situated in a linear fashion along Main Street. Many of the buildings have been renovated to include new building facades that hide the original building design, at least on the first floor. Renovations with new facades often lack any significant architectural features. An architectural study of the downtown area through Brookdale Community College identified potential common architectural theme that would serve to integrate the district with a unified theme. The scale of development, mostly one and two stories with a few three-story structures, is appropriate for the district. Additional second story elements would add to the character of the district.

b. Sidewalks: The sidewalks in front buildings generally range from 15 feet in the central retail core, to five feet at the northerly and southerly portions of the business district where there is a narrow planting strip between the sidewalk and the curb. Generally, the sidewalks appear to be in good to fair condition. Some areas are beginning to exhibit cracking or discoloration due to weathering and will require replacement in the near future. The variation of the condition of the sidewalks gives the area a somewhat patchwork appearance.

A thematic paving design is found within the Main Street business district in the form of brick pavers framing a central concrete sidewalk, especially in the area between Spring Street and Cartan Lane. This physical feature, as well as the existing decorative lighting and sidewalk benches, can serve as the basis for further design enhancements to both Main Street's streetscape and building stock. As it stands, these sidewalk features have the potential to create a unifying design character for the borough's central business district.

1) The provision of outdoor seating in several locations within the business district is typified by twelve to fifteen foot wide dimensions. This is another element that has been successfully used to enhance pedestrian activity and life to a business district, and should be considered for extension or enhancement.

c. Signage: Each business has its own signage that is unrelated to the signage on adjoining businesses, even at the same building. Consideration is to be given to implementing a coordinated signage system that would serve as another unifying element for the borough's business district. Issues relating to size, color, lettering, wall and projecting signs, placement, and stylized framing should be addressed in a unified signage plan.

d. Banners: The banners along the length of Main Street provide an element of color to the district. They can also be used to identify a particular site, location, special events, or an area of special interest. The banners can be changed on a seasonal basis. Poles used to hang banners may also be used to support other seasonal displays, plantings or lighting. The use of banners should be used as part of a comprehensive plan to advise travelers on Main Street of upcoming special events that also serve to draw potential customers to the retail establishment in the district.

e. Street furniture: The survey found that a number of sidewalk benches and refuse receptacles are provided throughout the area, but that there is no other type of street furniture in the area. Improved coordination between the location of the benches and trash cans should be considered.

f. Street Lights: Two types of street light poles are found in the CBD. Light poles with a stylized design area found within the core retail area. In addition, the length of Main Street exhibits standard cobra-head light poles. Both types of light poles are found in approximately equal numbers in the central business district. Consideration should be given to reducing the use of the cobra-head fixtures, and relying instead on the pedestrian stylized fixtures that are more appropriate to a pedestrian-oriented central business district.

g. Street Trees: The business district includes a number of mature trees. Most of the trees in these two areas are London Plane trees. Some new trees have been planted in the area to the north of Kipp Avenue which has experienced office and residential development fairly recently. The trees help to create a established character for the borough's central business district, and should be carefully maintained.

h. Traffic calming devices: The use of distinctive pavement treatment for pedestrian crosswalks could be used as a means to slow vehicular traffic through the district and provide an aesthetic amenity. In conjunction with the existing traffic signals, this feature would serve to reinforce a desired pedestrian orientation of the Main Street business district, as well as reinforcing a unified streetscape design theme.

III. REAL ESTATE MARKET ANALYSIS

Beacon Planning's evaluation of Matawan's Main Street Business District is based on information obtained from real estate brokers and developers, as well as local and regional business leaders. Beacon Planning reviewed public and private data sources, analyzed demographic figures and trends, and evaluated recent real estate activity.

This research focused on targeted commercial uses located on either side of Main Street, within the area south of the Matawan Train Station and north of the Matawan Historic District. With the intent of revitalizing this business district, commercial uses, such as retail shops and professional offices, were deemed to be the most appropriate uses for this area. Other uses, such as residential are present within this area, and could possibly play a role in its future.

Market Area Description

The Borough of Matawan is located in the northwest section of Monmouth County, and has the potential to be a major commercial hub in the vicinity. It is served by highways, a well-utilized commuter train line and is near the major local population clusters of Old Bridge, Hazlet and Middletown. With a local office workforce, as well as commuter "captive audience," close to the subject, Matawan's location and transportation links can be leveraged into a critical mass, sparking significant commercial development spurring related in-fill uses into the subject.

Matawan is close to the Monmouth-Middlesex Border. Near the Garden State Parkway Exit 117A (Aberdeen), it is primarily served by expanded local roads, and two state highways, of which State Highway 34 is the primary highway arterial. Most of the area's chain retail, such as office supply stores and supermarkets, are located along this roadway. Matawan is also served by commuter train service along the NJ Transit Jersey Coast Line, which provides access between Penn Station in New York to the north and Bay Head in Ocean County to the south. It is estimated that 3,000 riders embark at the Matawan station each working day.

Market Position

Matawan benefits from its proximity to New Jersey employment centers, such as Edison, Bridgewater and Newark, as well as New York City. This proximity generates demand for housing there, as well as demand for various retail and professional services. For one, the 3,000 daily commuters have needs, i.e., personal services, convenience retail, that leverage a desire to fill errands to and from their commute. In addition, once the area surrounding the train station is redeveloped, a critical mass of permanent residents in this location will have needs that will spill over into the Main Street business district. In similar cases of "downtown density development" a local audience that resides in a densely populated the town center desires entertainment, services and shopping within walking distance, which generates a community feel to the vicinity. These needs are what we will focus on.

Market Demographics

The demographic description for the primary market area shows small amounts of population and slightly lower income within a one- mile radius, expanding with 2.5- and 5-mile radii. The income, however, is above the State median of $72,456 (2004). Tables 9 and 10 show these demographic data for 2006:

Table 9
2006 Demographics
Matawan and Vicinity

	1-mile radius	2.5-mile radius	5-mile radius
Population	10,773	55,001	143,288
Households	4,060	20,268	51,224
Median Household Income	$79,626	$81,049	$80,573
Household Income ($75-150K)	39.8	38.3	36.7
Household Income ($150K+)	14.8	17.0	17.8

Household income within the market area is projected to grow at a rate of four percent annually for the next five years, with a significant expansion at the higher end ($150K) of the spectrum.

Table 10
2011 Demographics
Matawan and Vicinity

	1-mile radius	2.5-mile radius	5-mile radius
Population	11,034	56,627	149,383
Households	4,169	20,926	53,436
Median Household Income	$95,191	$97,425	$96,550
Household Income ($75-150K)	40.4	37.4	35.9
Household Income ($150K+)	21.9	24.4	25.4

These estimates do not take new development into account, hence they can be interpreted as a conservative take on future conditions.

When the employment trends of local residents are examined, it shows a community of professionals with a local center, one that has a majority focus on local activities instead of being a satellite for a far away city, i.e., a “bedroom community for New York City. The statistics in Table 11 are revealing in that regard.

Table 11
Employment Patterns of Residents, 2006
Matawan, New Jersey

	1 Mile	2.5 Mile	5 Mile
Total Workers (2000)	5,421	25,960	65,007
Total Workers (2006)	5,641	27,702	70,422
White Collar Jobs (% of total)	70.0	69.5	69.9
Professional/Mgt./ Business Services/Financial/Sales (% of total)	55.7	54.9	54.3
Drove/Carpool to Work (percent)	80.7	82.9	83.1
Public Transit/ Walked to Work (percent)	16.2	14.1	13.9
Worked from Home / Other (percent)	3.0	3.0	3.0
Avg. Travel Time to Work (minutes)	36.2	36.7	38.0
Commute <34 Minutes (percent)	57.6	57.3	55.5

This information points to the potential interest in a local, focused transit village development. It would lead to the success of such a development and the inevitable spill over of retail and service office activity into adjacent areas like the subject.

C. <u>Retail Market</u>

Currently, the retail market in the Matawan area is dominated by the chain retail along Route 34; rents range from the mid teens to $20 per square foot NNN. Retail in the historic district lags behind with rents from $12-$15 per square foot NNN. Office consists of professionals (doctors and lawyers) housed in converted Victorian mansions, 60 percent owner occupied, all intermixed with residences in similar housing stock. Because retail and office are the predominant uses for the buildings lining Main Street the demand for those uses will be evaluated

1. Office

Overall, the office market is doing well. Across 416 Class A and B office buildings studied by Sitar Realtors for the First Quarter 2006, the vacancy rate for direct lease office space is at approximately 9 percent and for both direct and sublet space the vacancy rate is approximately 10 percent. This result is positive compared to the statewide vacancy rate of 16.3 percent, and bodes well for mid-sized users (5,000 – 30,000 SF), the professionals and business service firms that would find the transit village's modern Class A space near a train station quite attractive. Average rent for such space can be as high as $30 per square foot.

The office potential for this area is limited because the building stock, not initially designed for modern office use, does not lend itself to high paying tenants who desire modern business or service facilities. Those who can afford such accommodations tend to locate in the newer buildings (circa 1970's and 1980's) on Route 34, which can rent up to $26 per square foot (translating into $20 per square foot NNN). What remains of the available properties near or in the Main Street corridor, of which there are a number to choose from, are many ownership opportunities instead of rentals. Those few for rent are in the range of $15 per square foot, and consist of small spaces and tend to be infill uses for obsolete buildings. Occupants of the converted Victorian houses and old, anonymous storefronts that dominate the building stock tend to be the mix of uses currently in the historic district: doctors, lawyers and small professional firms. Of those, doctors prefer to be near a hospital (the closest is in Red Bank), while lawyers prefer to be near a courthouse (Freehold is 12 miles away). Other professionals prefer to be near doctors, lawyers and/or other professionals.

The new offices that would be part of a Matawan Transit Village, incorporating convenient train access as an amenity, may also serve to attract any office occupant along Main Street who can afford to pay a full market rent for Class A space ($30 per square foot). Therefore, the modest, low revenue office market could be further weakened with the advent of new, modern competition closer to the train station. Retail is the better, more stable alternative for the study area.

2. <u>Retail</u>

Tables 12 and 13 contain demographic data that demonstrate the need for several categories of retail establishments.

Table 12
Retail Net Demand Sales Estimate for
Matawan and Vicinity

Category	1 Mile	2.5 Mile	5 Mile
Furniture & Home Furnishings	$2,853,675	$12,837,132	$36,084,656
Building Materials, Garden & Supply	$5,918,985	$19,407,613	$60,375,516
Food and Beverage stores	$19,937,309	$50,404,608	$167,556,755
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Books	$970,543	$6,341,008	$7,414,105
General Merchandise Stores	$4,756,924	$42,297,095	$69,753,537
Food Service & Drinking Places	$8,865,506	$71,159,526	$90,007,652

Table 13
Estimated Retail Demand Space
Matawan and Vicinity

Category	1 Mile	2.5 Mile	5 Mile
Furniture & Home Furnishings	5,707	25,674	72,169
Building Materials, Garden & Supply	11,838	38,815	12,751
Food and Beverage stores	39,875	100,809	335,114
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Books	1,941	12,682	14,828
General Merchandise Stores	9,514	84,594	139,507
Food Service & Drinking Places	17,731	142,319	180,015
Totals	86.606	404,893	754,384

Note: One square foot of floor space typically generates $500 in retail sales

Demand estimates, when translated into square footage, result in significant amounts of space that can be broken down into smaller areas that the subject area can readily absorb. Although some total spaces needed are large, it does not mean that one user needs to occupy the entire space to serve a region. It only demonstrates the capacity of need for a vendor of the needed goods or services. Merchants appropriate to Matawan's Downtown are small scale and emphasize local charm character and uniqueness, attracting customers on that basis. Examples of potential occupants for Matawan's Main Street business district include restaurants with distinctive cuisines, boutique shops, custom design shops and purveyors of unique, hard to obtain goods.

Transit Village Development Impact on Retail Market

Assuming the proposed transit village is developed in the area surrounding the Matawan train station by 2011, it would add up to 495 additional consumer households with a median income of $95,191 as well as 700 office workers, i.e., each worker utilizes 286 square feet of floor space. Since the average salary per job is $43,500 in Monmouth County, the estimated additional annual income flowing into the area from the Transit village is:

> $95,191 x 495 Resident Households (100% Locally Spent) = $47.2 million
> +
> $43,500 x 700 Workers (20% Locally Spent of $30.4 million) = $6.1 million
>
> Total amount of added annual local income = $53.3 million

Table 14 shows the added income from this development that would be anticipated to be spent on these targeted retail areas.

Table 14
Potential Incremental Income Impact on Local Retail Demand
One Mile Radius of Matawan

Category	% of Budget	$ Million Potentially Spent	Retail SF Added (@$500/SF)
Furniture & Home Furnishings (R)	3.0	$1.5	3,000
Building Materials, Garden & Supply (R)	2.2	$1.0	2,000
Food and Beverage Stores(R)	7.2	$3.4	6,800
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Books(R)	5.0	$2.5	5,000
General Merchandise Stores(R)	5.4	$2.5	5,000
Food Service & Drinking Places(R)	5.9	$2.8	5,600
Food Service & Drinking Places(O)	80	$4.9	9,800
General Merchandise Stores(O)	20	$1.1	2,200
Totals	100	$19.7	39,400

Note: R = Residents; O = Office workers

The focus of this analysis is the immediate vicinity (1 mile radius or less) because that is most affected by the transit village. It excludes the impact of the projected overall market demand within a one-mile radius for retail, which can be easily absorbed by the 26,000 SF of retail space on the transit village site.

When the district gains the added momentum from new retail, the resulting critical mass and the regional attention that comes from that, these numbers will grow based on the expanding reach of the district. Other revived suburban downtown districts like Red Bank and Cranford, which utilized Special Improvement Districts (SID) and other hybrid government – community organizations, experienced the same sort of growth pattern following their rebirth.

D. <u>Districts Comparable to Matawan that Reinvented Themselves</u>

Reinventing suburban downtowns has been successful in a number of areas and circumstances, all prompted by the initiation of Special Improvement Districts (SIDs) via legislation in 1984. Similar to Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in other areas, including New York City, SIDs are managed environments designated for small subsets of a larger whole, like a suburban downtown within a county. Special Improvement Districts are effective because they concentrate services in the vicinity where they are needed. They provide more centralized, more professional marketing and promotion in an effort coordinate the efforts of the business community to compete against other retail interests such as shopping malls. From establishing the district to choosing and funding neighborhood services and improvements, the goal is to increase businesses' "bottom line." Districts also allow merchants to lobby for city services as a group rather than as individuals, thereby facilitating improvements in commercial corridors.

Since the passage of SID legislation in 1984, then the number of SIDs has grown to approximately thirty-six. The first six SIDs - Cranford, Trenton, Elizabeth, Englewood, Somerville and New Brunswick - were established within a three-year period from 1985 - 1988, and continue to operate. Today, Special Improvement Districts are visible not only in urban communities such as Jersey City and Elizabeth but also in less populated communities such as Bound Brook and Red Bank.

1. Definition of a Special Improvement District

A SID is an organization, management, and financing tool used by local businesses to provide specialized services that complement rather than replace existing municipal government services as part of a revitalization downtown plan. A SID is first created under state law and then enacted by a municipal ordinance. The law permits property owners and businesses to organize and assess themselves in order to pay for the services that are needed. The District Plan and a non-profit District Management Association (DMA), or a municipal commission, are responsible for governing the operations of the SID. The DMA is responsible for all decisions relating to assessments, budgets, and management of specialized services.

2. Special Improvement District Scope of Services

Like BIDs, SIDs can take the form of a formal quasi-governmental institution, or retain the form of grassroots organizations, driven by community support. With little assessment revenue, SIDs can provide a basic framework to unify disparate interests of local business owners, government and residents within the neighborhood. With increased membership assessments a SID can provide the usually expected array of services above and beyond what the municipality would provide. Examples of such services include street and sidewalk maintenance, public safety officers, park and open space maintenance, marketing, capital improvements, and various development projects. The services provided by SIDs in these cases would supplement the services already provided by the municipality.

SIDs can become a conduit for changes in zoning, parking regulations, density and promoting uniform signage. In addition, the SID organization serves well as a framework to promote the central business district as a unified whole through promotion, advertising and coordinated events (i.e. “sidewalk sales days”).

3. The Approval Process for a Special Improvement District

The enabling legislation and approval process associated with establishing a SID differ from state to state. Approval requires various legal and financial classifications. It is important for potential districts to consult carefully with the state agency that administers the process as well as individuals or firms experienced in establishing SIDs when undertaking the process. The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs maintains a Business Improvement District Program that provides assistance and resources to communities considering SIDs.

4. Political Risks of a Special Improvement District

In the areas where SIDs have been implemented there has also been criticism of the governmental reach of such districts. Critics could argue that the SIDs provide services that could be provided by the government such as policing services. Critics also argue that there are services that should be paid for by the individual business owner such as sweeping/cleaning. Other critics believe that SIDs are too large and wield too much power and are taking away power from neighborhood community organizations. In some neighborhoods there are now umbrella groups made up of commercial landowners, property management firms, and condominium dwellers that aim to stop the SIDs.

In some situations, SIDs pose the threat of becoming a powerful lobbying group by themselves, petitioning government for improvements such as new sidewalks, trees, park benches and other restorations. SIDs can also lobby different levels of government for a complete facelift on their area if they feel its necessary to improve business. However if communication remains open between the stakeholders, unity and a community of interest would continue among them. Therefore, there would be no need for a SID to lobby alone to pursue their interest against the other stakeholders.

5. SID Example #1: Red Bank, NJ

During the 20th century, Red Bank was a strong cultural, economic, and political center in Monmouth County, New Jersey, until it was hindered by the economic recession that began in 1987. During this time, Red Bank's economy, based largely on retail commerce, was in decline, leading local pundits and urban planners to refer to the town as "Dead Bank." Beginning in approximately 1991, under the New Jersey Development and Redevelopment Law, the town authorized the creation of an organization to manage redevelopment in what was designated a Special Improvement District. This organization is known as the Red Bank River Center. River Center retains authority over the management and redevelopment of an agreed-upon "downtown business district."

The downtown district includes Broad Street from the post office to Marine Park and from Maple Avenue to one block east of Broad Street. It includes a retail and entertainment corridor of high-end boutiques full of luxury, designer goods, and distinctive restaurants serving the surrounding high-income areas including Rumson and Shrewsbury. The district that was originally proposed was much larger. It originally included the commercial areas west of Maple Avenue, including the antique buildings, the Galleria, and Shrewsbury Avenue. However, some property owners in this area were opposed to the idea because they did not want to pay the assessment. Plans for the larger district advanced but opposition became more rigorous. Therefore the proposed district was amended to exclude those who were opposed, and the district that was adopted stops at Maple Avenue.

6. SID Example #2: Cranford, NJ

Cranford has long been considered a center of commerce. Exclusive of the numerous corporate office parks near the Garden State Parkway, the town has a variety of buildings along North Avenue housing doctors and other businesses. Law offices predominate in other small buildings around town. Banks are also extremely common throughout the town, which hosts at least half a dozen.

Downtown Cranford is the main retail business district for the township. Consisting of a variety of small family owned businesses on both sides of the railroad tracks, there has been a debate in town over the direction of the downtown. With neighboring communities seeing downtown development and a focus on either recruiting chain store or upscale small stores, Cranford has been debating the issue.

In the 1980s the downtown was renovated to take on a Victorian feel. This included the installation of new light fixtures and cobblestone sidewalks, along with decorative planters and benches. A Victorian clock was installed in the center of town, allowing for the creation of a small pocket park in the center of the downtown. The clock park has become a hangout for teenagers who are walking to and from school.

Also in the 1980s, Cranford founded the first special improvement district in New Jersey. The SID allows for the downtown district to have a special tax on building and business owners for downtown development and marketing. The Cranford Downtown Management Corporation (DMC) manages the SID. The DMC has used its budget for development projects, to recruit new businesses and to market shopping in Cranford. Various downtown sales and street fairs are administered by the DMC. The DMC is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of business owners and residents, which is appointed by the Township Committee. The DMC Board appoints a DMC Director, who runs the day-to-day operations of the corporation.

The recent focus of downtown Cranford has been to recruit more restaurants in order to flourish nightlife within the central business district. On the south side of the community, the Cranford Crossings redevelopment project is underway. When completed, this project will feature an Elizabeth Arden Day Spa, apartments, and a parking deck. The Riverfront redevelopment project, which is also underway on South Avenue, will also bring more business into Cranford. Without the SID, the success of these projects, and their integration into the overall community fabric of Cranford would be far from assured.

E. How to Reinvent Main Street as a Revitalized Retail District

According to the Downtown Research and Development Center, the key concepts for a successful revitalization of any small downtown business district are as follows:

- Small downtowns are human scale; are less congested, lack signature projects that dwarf them, have a higher percentage of older, historic building stock, are not divided into sub-districts, and are dominated by small, independent businesses, many of whom patronize other similarly small, independent businesses instead of chains.

- Planned activities preserve the vitality of the district by creating opportunities for increasing foot traffic and massing that are key to its continued health. By attracting retailers, other businesses and attractions continue the momentum.

- To reactivate a downtown and keep it vibrant requires consistent leadership from the top. The Mayor and Council of Matawan, as well as business community leaders should consider establishing a resonant tone, continue to engagement with the initiative, maintain old and establish new open lines of education, and "walk the streets" in the shoes of a SID, or equivalent organization. This requires intention, unified and well informed of the facts and options available, from the top politician to the lowest grassroots leader and shopkeeper, and incorporating all stakeholders including community groups, business, government, civic representatives, property owners, retailers, etc. It also requires "the wind at their backs," in other words momentum, such as that which may be generated from a transit village development, to justify the additional investment to revitalize through additional critical mass, foot traffic, local demand and increasing property values.

- Rather than being an economic center, a downtown like Matawan's is more rooted in urban design and community image…a physical sense of place and identity that ties the varied neighborhoods and community interests together.

- Make the Downtown an example of the "walkable urbanity" desired by many as a replacement of the sprawling suburb. Under this format, the Downtown would have many different uses, from retail to housing to restaurants, work and entertainment venues, local museums and educational institutions, all within a walking distance and in a pedestrian friendly environment.

- A strategic asset management mindset in programming the downtown, which incorporates the desired urban character with addressing current strengths and weaknesses of the Downtown, all tempered by available resources and capital (physical land and buildings, human, financial) as well as the identification of "catalyst projects along with the market and financial reasons for the project to feasibly succeed.

F. Next Steps

In light of the above, it is recommended that the Borough should implement the following:

- Initiate and continue communication and interaction between all the stakeholders: residents, government, retailers and commuter organizations/institutions.

- Establish framework to air and resolve disputes as well as institute initiatives for the overall good (special events, public interest, etc.)

- Explore the possibility of forming a Special Improvement District, or at least a means by which the stakeholders can communicate between each other in a structured and mutually beneficial manner.

- Explore the format and benefits of uniform signage and packaging the district as a whole instead of its occupant "parts." Formulate the benefits of doing this and "sell" it to the businesses and residents occupying the district.

- Identify potential anchors and specific varieties of categorized occupants, i.e., restaurant mix, boutique types, etc., and initiate specific dialogue with them in pursuit of mutual interest (foot traffic, usability and sales in the district). An example of this is C-Town, which has the potential to cater to the high-end specialty food market for upscale districts like Pelham NY, and thus potentially Matawan.

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The study is intended to serve as a general guide for the physical, economic and social development of the Borough. In particular, it is designed to guide the development of the Main Street business district in a manner that promotes the public health, safety and general welfare of the overall community. The following development objectives form the basis for the alternative development scenarios that comprise the latter part of this section of the report. These objectives also serve as the basis for discussion with the community regarding the direction that the alternative development scenarios section of this document is to take.

1. Establish a heightened sense of community pride in Matawan by creating a cohesive and attractive Main Street business district.

2. Provide a comprehensive and coordinated long-range plan to guide the growth, development, and physical improvements that are necessary to ensure the continued vitality of the Borough's Main Street business district.

3. Establish a prioritized list of improvements for the Main Street business district that would be implemented over a period of time.

4. Expand retail activity within the Main Street business district through the following activities:

    - recruit more retail businesses
    - increase customer traffic
    - improve signage within the business district
    - improve the exterior appearance of buildings

5. To enhance the physical appearance of the Main Street business district through comprehensive and integrated streetscape improvements, building renovations, and related physical improvements.

6. Encourage the cooperation of merchants, property owners, residents and government in the overall revitalization of the Main Street business district.

7. To encourage public and private investment in the Main Street business district.

8. To encourage uses and activities that will bring vitality to the Main Street business district, as well as increased pedestrian presence.

9. Enhance the use of existing parking facilities and identify additional opportunities for additional off-street parking facilities so that the demand generated by retail activity can be met in a manner than encourages patronage of Main Street businesses, as well as stopping business owners and their employees from clogging key parking locations and providing more effective parking signage

These represent the planning and design issues that are evident within the Main Street business district, and which require a concerted response if this area is to fulfill its promise as a retail-oriented business district.

MAIN STREET DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Four alternative development strategies were prepared, each emphasizing different components of the commercial real estate market. The alternative development strategies detailed below contain elements that would best meet the development objectives for the Main Street business district.

1. Strengthen Main Street as a Retail Shopping District

In general, Main Street stores are most competitive in retail categories involve specific destination shopping (sporting apparel; gifts and accessories; fruit baskets, travel services) than in areas that involve a comparison shopping experience. Stores catering to the multi-store shopping trip tend to be at the Monmouth Mall, as well as smaller shopping centers located along Routes 34, 35 and 36.

As downtowns evolved from their traditional roles as dominant shopping places, those that have made the transition effectively have tended to capture significant portions of four distinct markets. A strong residential community provides the underpinning for this market segment.

These successful downtown districts have remained strong centers for office employment and offer an array of lunchtime and after work shopping and dining choices to those office workers.

These downtowns have exploited the historic character of their architecture to provide attractive settings for destination retailers to attract customers. This retail niche tends to emphasize men’s and women’s apparel, shoes, bridal and evening wear, furniture and accessories, and cultural retailing (books, art galleries and antique stores).

Finally, these downtowns have developed as centers for arts and entertainment activities including performance spaces, museums, art galleries, performing and visual arts training centers, and movie theaters showing both traditional or vintage, foreign and artistic films.

In each of these last three markets, the availability of a variety of dining options both in the daytime and in the evenings is critical to complement other retail and entertainment activities.

This strategy emphasizes the strengthening of Main Street, from Ravine Drive to Lake Matawan as a specialty retailing area with a regional draw. Convenience retailing opportunities would be targeted for the section of Main Street located between South Street and Ravine Drive. Retail development would be supported by a series of infrastructure investments that would make Main Street more physically attractive as a retailing district.

A. Strengthen Main Street from Ravine Drive to Lake Matawan as a Specialty Retailing Area

This section of Main Street currently includes a number of strong retailers that draw customers from throughout the Matawan area and beyond. Most customers, however, appear to visit individual stores during single destination trips rather than patronizing multiple stores or browsing through other stores in the district. This pattern tends to minimize total district sales capture and fails to capitalize on the drawing power of specific strong stores. Various elements of this development strategy will encourage more extensive shopping within the district. Very large stores will not be able to find a suitable space along Main Street. Instead, the district should focus on establishing a unique niche based on smaller specialty retail stores owned and operated by energetic, independent entrepreneurs.

Retail Recruitment

A broader range of specialty stores should be attracted to fill currently vacant storefronts along Main Street. Several retail categories that would be appropriate for development in the downtown. Aggressive and personal recruitment efforts should be directed at antrepreneurs able to provide the following:

- Quality full-service restaurants open at lunch and during evening hours;
- Expanded specialty food, possibly in conjunction with a full-service restaurant, and including a greater variety of prepared foods attractive to time-pressed two-worker households;
- Casual apparel, especially clothing aimed at teens and younger adult markets;
- Smaller electronics and household accessories;
- Bookstores;
- Jewelry stores, especially lower-priced imported and handmade items;
- Toy, hobby, music, craft and leather stores;
- Antique shops;
- Flower shops;
- Optical store;
- Camera store;
- A variety of art and decorative arts galleries.

Conversion of Residential Properties to Retail Sales Uses

The borough should consider extending the retail sales district along the eastern side of Main Street. As properties come on the market, efforts should be made to find retailers for these specific properties.

Loan Program

Access to capital has historically been a critical problem for independent retailers. Access to small business financing loans should be to encourage specialty retailers to locate along Main Street. The loan program can be administered through local financial institutions, and may include a combination of private and public funds.

Façade Improvement

Certain buildings along Main Street detract from the aesthetic quality of the commercial district because of façade alterations made over time or inappropriate signage. An effort should be made to encourage façade improvements by property owners through access to low-interest loans and architectural technical support.

B. Make Main Street More Supportive of Multi-Destination Shopping Trips

Traffic calming

The speed and volume traffic at times acts to discourage extensive multi-store pedestrian shopping. In order to create a more intimate downtown retail district, alternative traffic calming measures should be investigated and employed. Such measures may include installing raised brick paver walkways as well as symmetric street narrowing at intersections. The street narrowing can be designed to coincide with streetscape improvements such as street trees, planters, and benches. Narrowing the street also serves to reduce the length of crosswalks, thus enhancing pedestrian safety.

Retail Directories

Attractive, well maintained retail directories can be installed at each intersection along Main Street to make customers aware of the range and location of shopping opportunities available in the Main Street business district. The directories can also include announcements relating to the opening of new businesses and provide schedules for ongoing and upcoming festivals, exhibits, and events in the downtown area.

C. Strengthen Main Street from South Street and Ravine Drive as a Service and Convenience Shopping Area

Recruit Resident-Oriented Retailing and Services

Main Street between South Street and Ravine Drive currently provides retail sales and services that are oriented to a predominantly neighborhood-based clientele. Several services are lacking on this block that may be beneficial to local residents include a laundromat. Efforts should be made to recruit these types of retail sales and service providers to this section of Main Street.

Amend Zoning to Preclude Office Uses on Ground Floor

An uninterrupted ground floor retail experience is a key characteristic of many successful downtown shopping districts. As more office uses have come into Matawan's downtown, they have segmented and diluted the potential shopping experience. The borough should consider amending its regulations for the GB district to preclude any office or residential uses on the ground floor of buildings in this district.

Façade Improvement

Certain buildings along Main Street detract from the aesthetic quality of the commercial district because of façade alterations made over time or inappropriate signage. An effort should be made to encourage façade improvements by property owners through access to low-interest loans and architectural technical support.

Improve Business/Borough Communications

Some businesses in downtown Matawan expressed a concern regarding lack of consistency and predictability in borough policies. The majority of concerns appear to be related less to the validity and appropriateness of specific actions then to the lack of business involvement in the formation of such policies. The development of formal and open mechanisms for legitimate analysis of proposed regulations by the business community will help improve investor and business owner/operator confidence in the borough's downtown revitalization effort.

Striping of Parking Spaces on Main Street

The borough should consider striping parking spaces on Main Street in order to allow for a more efficient utilization of the available curbside area for street parking. In conjunction with parking enforcement, parking should become more available to Main Street convenience retailers who rely upon such parking.

Parking Enforcement

The borough should institute a system of parking enforcement that may include recording license plates and time of observation in order to determine when vehicles have exceeded time limits. This enhanced enforcement measure would serve to ensure the availability of parking spaces on Main Street for shoppers.

Parking Signage

Replacement signage, which directs shoppers to convenient downtown parking and clearly explains applicable rules should be considered for placement along Main Street and adjacent streets.

Promotion of Regular Events

Downtown promotional activities should be expanded to build on past successes. Public events programming on Friday evenings, Saturdays, and during holiday seasons should aim to draw customers from the region using attractions such as live music, antique car shows, and events targeted to both senior citizens and children. A "First Friday"-type of promotion could emphasize merchants' late hours.

Regularize Shopping Hours Among Specialty Retailers

A policy can be established to regularize and publicize the store hours of specialty retailers on Main Street.

2. Establish Downtown Main Street as an Sub-Regional Office Center

This development scenario places emphasis on transforming the downtown business district into a professional and governmental office center. The successful implementation of this scenario entails the following:

Former Borough Hall

The former borough hall can either be retained as a ancillary or satellite municipal office space, or sold or leased to other governmental or institutional entities. Such office space should be utilized by entities that draw customers and clients rather than back office operations that draw employees only.

Extend the Historic Professional Office District Up Along Main Street

The professional office district located to the south of the downtown business district can be extended northward to the intersection of Main and Broad Streets. The borough's business district is increasingly becoming a office center, and the applicable zoning standards can be amended to foster this slow transformation.

Related Retail Development

Retailers to be recruited within the downtown business district are those that offer goods and services compatible with the needs of a sub-regional office center. Appropriate retailing should include destination restaurants serving the business community, as well as the borough residents. Provisions should be made to either retain such ancillary retail convenience, within the downtown area, or alternatively to provide a new area for such uses surrounding the Matawan train station. This ancillary retail scenario is dependent on the ultimate plan for the redevelopment plan for the Matawan train station redevelopment area.

3. Establish Downtown Main Street as a Cultural Activities Center

This development scenario envisions the Main Street business district as a cultural activity center, primarily comprised of cultural arts establishments and complementary retail shops and restaurants. This scenario would entail the following development and activities:

Arts Mini-Center Development

A downtown location would be identified by a cultural arts center, with a box office and space for performing arts groups. This may consist of a new building, or renovation of the former movie theater building back to a performing art space. Studio space can be made available for dance, art and music classes as well for individual workspaces, which would complement a schedule of performances and rehearsals. A collaborative gallery located in a visible first floor location of the arts center would be open to the public to display resident artists' work.

Performances and Events

A coordinated effort of all local and regional arts groups would be necessary to achieve maximum benefit from cultural arts programming within Matawan's downtown business district. Efforts would entail an expansion of the number and diversity of performances and events in the northern Monmouth County area, and to develop a uniform, effective promotion mechanism for these activities. An annual downtown arts festival could be developed and promoted. During other times of the year, parades and celebrations held in Matawan would be able to take advantage of a central Main Street location and could be arranged to include participation by community and county-wide arts organizations.

Cultural Arts-related Retailing

Expanded cultural arts retailing would be recruited and promoted within downtown Matawan. Potential retailers would include music stores, art and craft supplies, art galleries, book stores and antique stores.

Performance Space within Eating and Drinking Establishments

Eating and drinking establishment should be encouraged to provide variously-sized performance spaces. These spaces could accommodate a wide range of performances, including but not limited to dinner theater, individual and small ensemble performances in coffee shop (including music or poetry readings), jazz clubs, and nightclubs.

FUNDING SOURCES

The following is a summary of the public and private funding sources that may be available for business development, as well as funding sources for public improvements within the Main Street business district.

1. Private Investment

The experience of many cities suggests that dramatic effects on retail sales have been made when improvements to storefronts by private storeowners are combined with streetscape enhancements made in the overall business district. If private capital is not available, then loans can be pursued through Small Business Administration, or through community reinvestment programs offered by local banks. The New Jersey Economic Development Authority also offers financing programs for small and mid-sized businesses, including low cost loans.

Individual buildings, as well as the overall Main Street District, may eligible for nomination for the National Register of Historic Places. The Monmouth County Historic Sites Inventory lists the eligible properties and notes that the overall district is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Successful nominations are eligible for historic tax credits for commercial renovations. The Borough as well as individual building owners may want to pursue possible building/district nominations after the implications are fully known and evaluated.

New Jersey Economic Development Authority: NJEDA offers a number of programs to assist small and mid-sized firms, including the following:

- Low-interest financing through bonds, loans, loan participations and loan guarantees
- Customized assistance for high-technology and life sciences companies
- Urban and Smart Growth redevelopment funding

- Grants and loans for brownfields investigation and cleanup
- Incentive grants to businesses creating at least 25 new jobs in New Jersey
- Entrepreneurial training for new and aspiring business owners
- Funding for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects

2. Potential Funding Sources for Streetscape Improvements

Streetscape and other public improvements generally rely on the expenditure of public money. Appropriate sources include the federal government (NJDOT and HUD programs), the State of New Jersey, Monmouth County, and the Borough of Matawan. Some particular sources of finding include the following:

Neighborhood Preservation: This program provides direct financial and technical assistance to communities over a three to five year period to conduct activities associated with the preservation of designation neighborhoods based on strategic revitalization plans within those municipalities.

Special (Business) Improvement District Loans: This program provides loans of up to $500,000 for capital improvements within designated downtown business improvement zones.

Special (Business) Improvement District Challenge Grants: This program provides dollar-for-dollar matching grants of up to $10,000 to support the technical and professional services needed to establish a Special (Business) Improvement District.

New Jersey Economic Development Authority also assists municipalities in funding public improvements, such as streetscape improvements, through its bonding resources.

The cost of some streetscape improvements may be significantly reduced if they are completed by the Borough's public works crews and equipment.

A special assessment may be established within the Main Street business district to finance streetscape improvements. Through this mechanism, the Borough would issue a bond to cover the cost of infrastructure improvements that benefit Main Street district property owners whose properties would directly benefit. These property owners would pay an additional assessment as part of their property taxes to pay off the bond over a period of time. This mechanism would allow the district to benefit from necessary infrastructure improvements without area property owners having to front the costs of such improvements directly. Alternatively, if the borough determines such infrastructure improvements would have community-wide benefits, the cost of such improvements may be rolled into a general bond issue to be paid by all property owners in the borough.

In addition, some relatively inexpensive physical improvements, such as benches, street trees and other planting materials, planters, etc., can be financed by individual participants or project sponsors. Local service clubs are typically successful in organizing fundraising efforts for comparably inexpensive and highly visible community projects. Individual businesses may also sponsor these types of improvements, which can serve as an effective additional form of advertising within their area.

3. Potential Designation of the Main Street Business District as an Area in Need of Rehabilitation

The Borough may consider designating the Main Street business district, or portions thereof, as an area in need of rehabilitation. Such designation qualifies the subject area for bond and loan programs offered through the New Jersey Redevelopment Authority.