

75 businesses involved report asks co-operation

About 75 businesses are included in the recently established Business Improvement Area bounded on the west by Park, on the north by Knox, St. Alban's and Bower, on the east by Eastern Ave. and on the south by Agnes and Church.

The B.I.A. board of management engaged Anthrogram to prepare the study, which was received the middle of last week. Copies are being circulated to all the businesses effected.

Questionnaires are being given to all participants, for them to indicate their priorities in the projects recommended and for them to make comments. The questionnaires go to B.I.A. chairman Henry Stachyra by August 12.

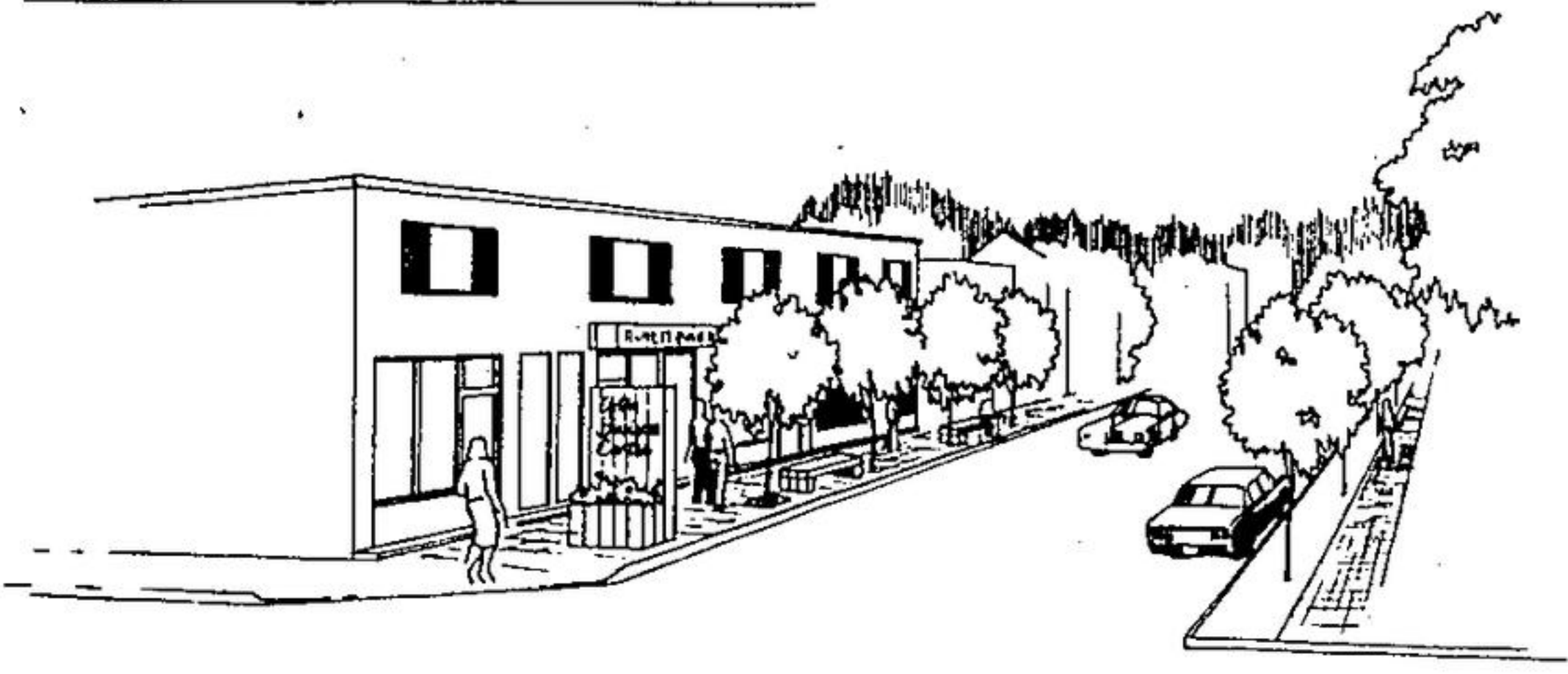
The report conceded plazas are more simply operated, in a dictatorial way. However downtown areas have many advantages. They are not just commercial but social, institutional and recreational. "Therefore the subversion of self-

interest, animosities and jealousies is imperative if the downtown is to progress and remain competitive in the future."

"It is incumbent upon individual members of the downtown community, both property owners and tenants, to complement the public efforts of the Business Improvement Area with privately initiated improvements," the report states.

The report includes a map of the BIA area, map showing parking, explanation of its purpose, an overview of the BIA, illustrations, a commercial land use comparison with different towns, statements on the role of a downtown, suggestions on the approach to be taken for the building improvement program, suggested wording of a sign bylaw, a short study on other farmers' markets, notes, and the survey form to go to all the 75 merchants included in the area.

Some details, taken directly from the report, follow.



Streetscaping on Main St. South

The revitalization of downtown Acton, envisaged in the Business Improvement Area's report commissioned from Anthrogram, includes these main points:

Leather theme

"A theme complemented by specialty goods and services could not be the foundation of Acton's trade, however if developed and promoted diligently it could be a welcome supplement to convenience and comparison shopping. The leather theme is one that has been suggested as offering potential for Acton. Possibly more than any other community in Ontario, Acton can claim to have the most interesting history with respect to leather. The current importance of leather to the community is reflected by the fact that approximately 575 people are employed directly in the industry.

"The development of this theme could involve the establishment of one or more retail operations specializing in leather products, publica-

tion of a pamphlet outlining both the history of the leather industry in Acton and the processes involved from animal to finished product, an annual fair or festival based on the leather theme—the festival involving local leather craftsmen and local leather industries, the development of promotional items to be sold in each downtown store, and promotion of Acton as "The Leather Town" in appropriate regional and provincial media. In contacts with the three major leather companies in Acton, without exception interest and support for the idea was expressed. It is therefore suggested that the Board of Management establish a committee to explore the possibility of developing a comprehensive program around the leather theme.

Streetscaping

"In many shopping areas today, both contemporary and traditional, a concerted effort is being made to better accommodate the pedestrian and to soften the hard surfaces of the area through the use of plant material. The pedestrian is accommodated through the use of street furniture, for example benches, decorative pedestrian scale lighting and decorative garbage receptacles, while the shopping is rendered more pleasant through the use of trees, shrubbery and flowers.

"Since the sidewalks within downtown Acton are too narrow for the purpose of streetscaping, the approach of creating sidewalk projections is essential if a substantial program is to be instituted. The projections, if designed in such a way that they could be placed partially within existing no-parking areas, would eliminate only a few parking spaces within each block. With respect to traffic flow, since parking and un-parking manoeuvres are recognized as being chief contributors to traffic congestion, the elimination of a few spaces in each block should serve to actually expedite traffic flow. The concept of the sidewalk projections was fully discussed with the Halton Hills Engineering Department and the Ministry of Transportation and Communications. Neither party expressed any major objections.

Parking

"Within the business community of downtown Acton parking is perceived to be the fundamental problem. However two studies of the parking situation, one conducted in 1973 by the engineering and planning firm of M. M. Dillon Limited, and the other in 1976 by the Halton Hills Planning Department, concluded that (with the exception of four blocks) there is no inadequacy of parking. Summarizing their findings, the authors of the Dillon study went so far as to claim, "no action toward the provision of additional parking space would be warranted by existing conditions." Both studies accept however that 80 per cent occupancy of a parking space represents overloading and in both studies this condition was found to be approached in the aforementioned four blocks. In recognition of this problem and other problems associated with parking duration, employee parking and illegal parking, the following recommendations are made:

"1. The Hotchen's property and any additional property required to complete a parking lot from Willow Street to John Street should be acquired immediately.

"2. The municipality should rent for a nominal fee, upgrade and mark the parking lot (behind IGA and the Dominion Hotel).

"3. Parking meters should be installed on the 22 spaces within the Trinity United Church lot, the new Hotchen's lot, and on all on-street spaces in the following locations: Main Street, Church Street to St. Alban's Street; Mill Street, Main Street to Frederick Street; Willow

Street, Church Street to Bower Street; John Street, Church Street to Bower Street.

"4. A Bylaw Enforcement Officer should be hired jointly on a half time basis to police parking in both Acton and Georgetown.

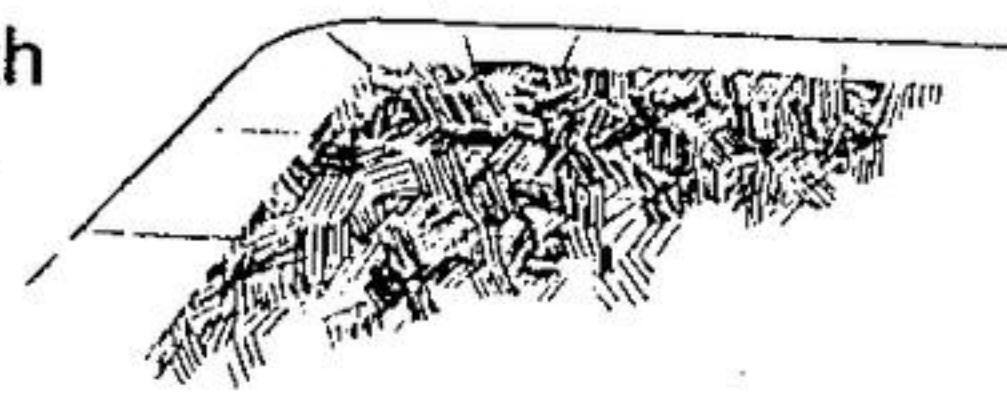
"5. Any business, including a bus company as well as a downtown enterprise, that eliminates parking spaces due to a loading zone should pay a per foot fee for this space.

"6. The requirement of one parking space per one hundred square feet of commercial floor space now enforced by the Zoning Bylaw should be changed to one parking space per three hundred square feet of commercial floor space.

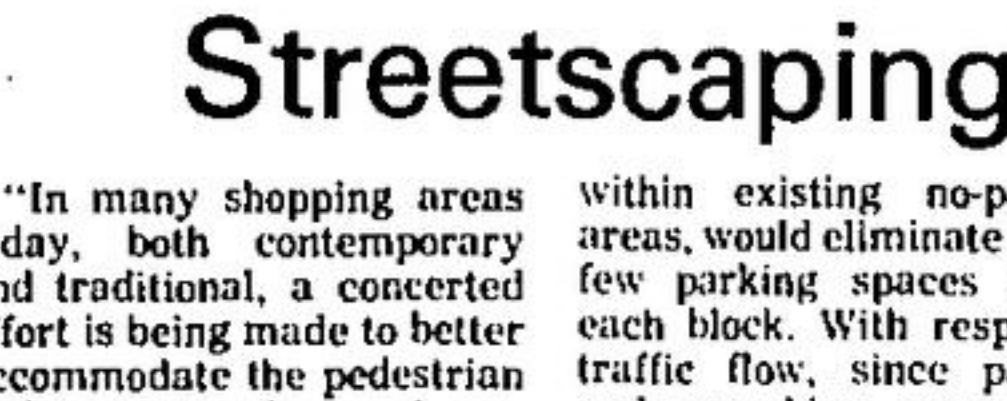
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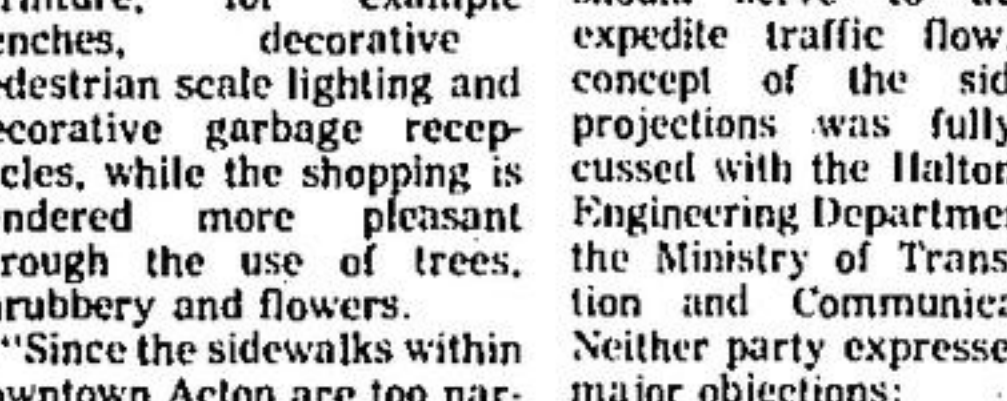
"9. Directional signs relating to all parking lots available for public use should be installed at appropriate locations on Mill Street and Main Street.



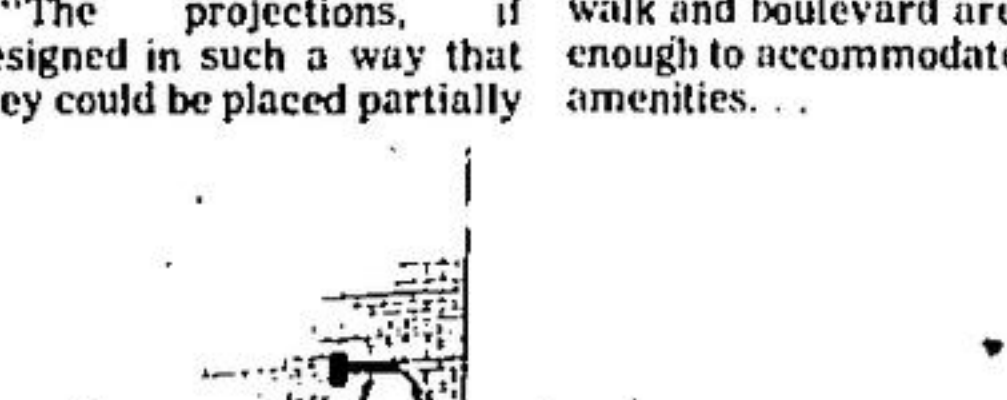
Bench design



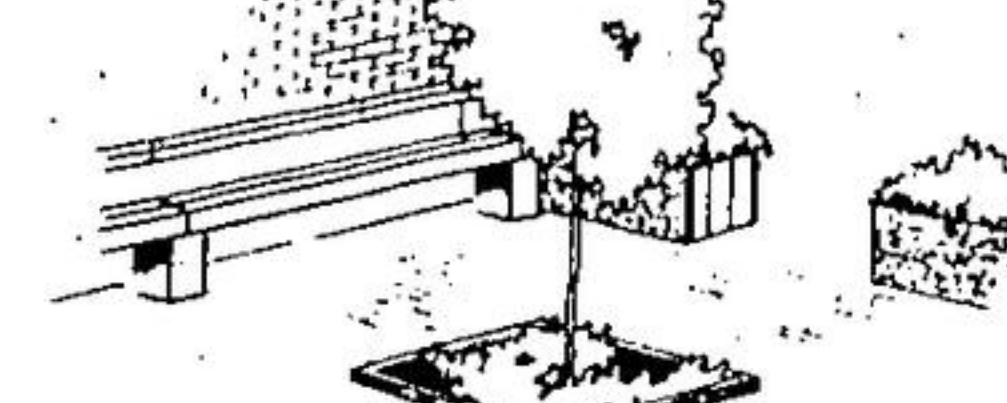
Planters, garbage container



Building improvement



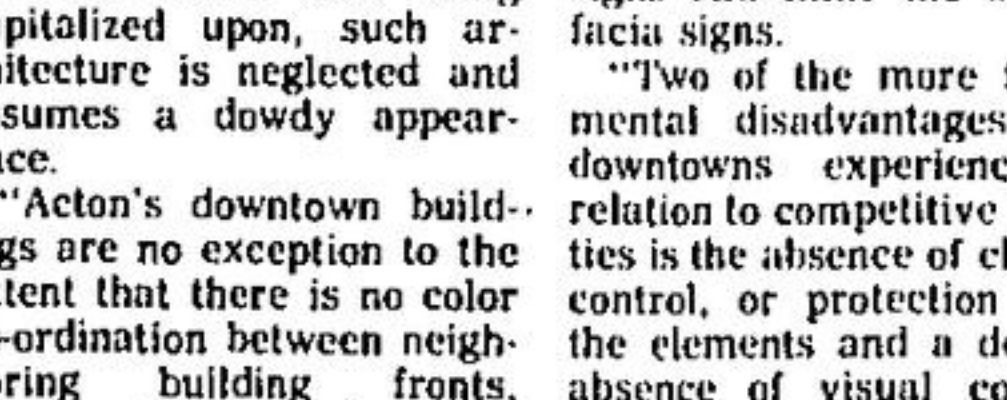
Welcoming sign



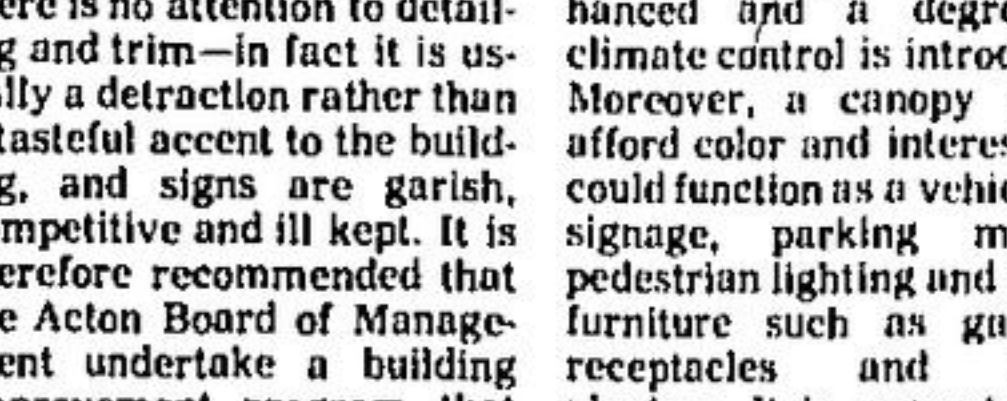
Store fronts could be co-ordinated



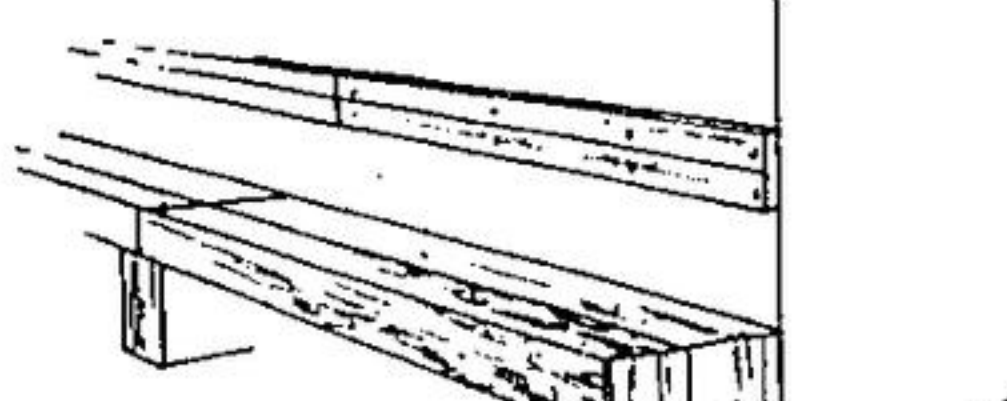
Vacant lot near Mill and Main transformed



United church parking lot



Highlights of B.I.A. study on revitalization of downtown

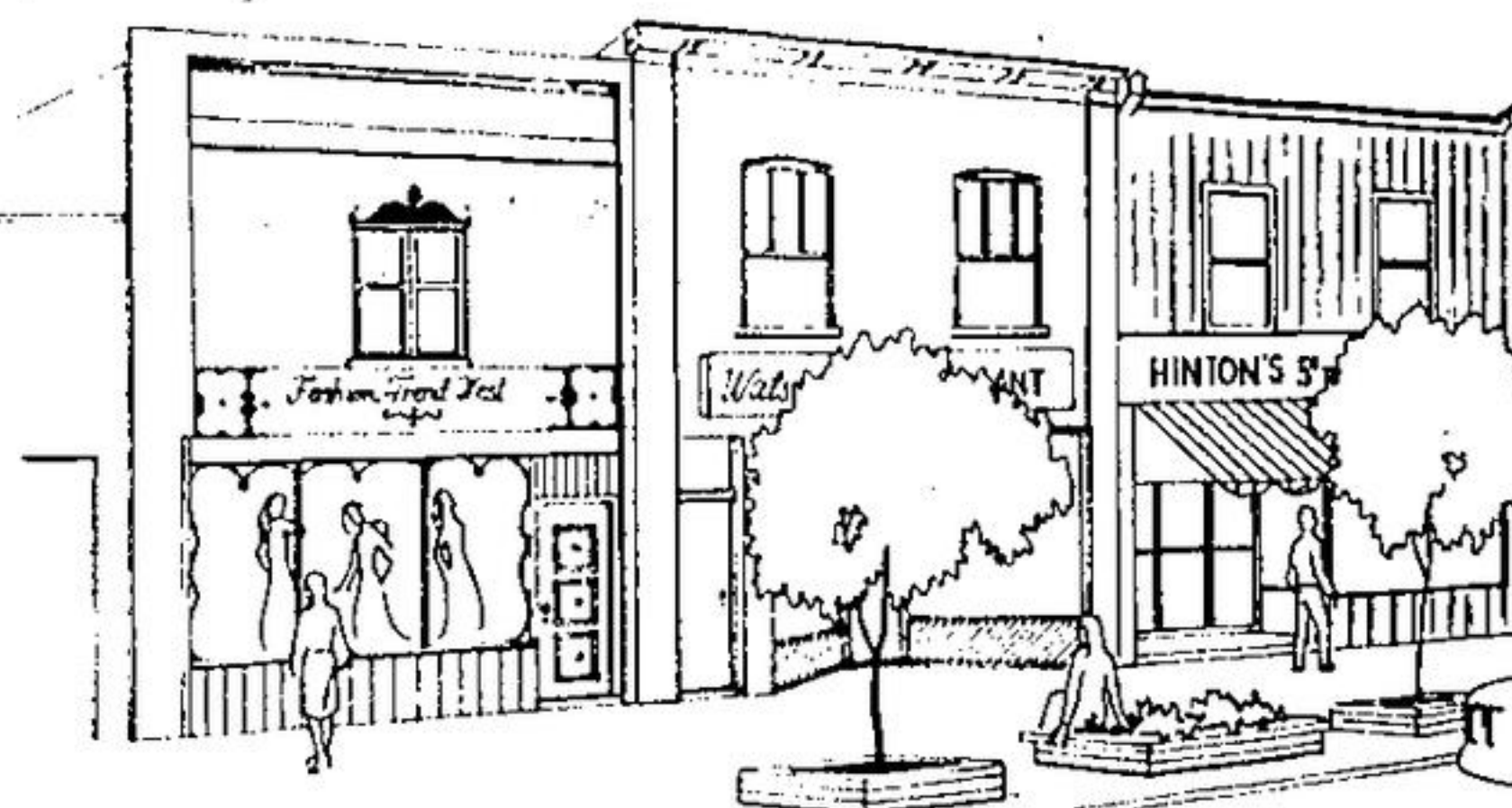


Farmer's market



Another spot for town improvement

Highlights of B.I.A. study on revitalization of downtown



Selected features

"a) the open space at the north-east corner of Mill Street and Main Street;

"b) the entrance to the B.I.A. from the south on Highway 25;

"c) the recessed area in front of the Municipal Building;

"d) The Trinity United Church parking lot.

"The old Town Hall was observed during this study to be a prominent feature within the community. In recognition of the fact that a group is

working to restore the structure, the comments herein are limited to those of noting the importance of such efforts to the welfare of the downtown and suggesting the following possible uses:

—a community centre for various local groups;

—a meeting facility for local groups, including the B.I.A. and Downtown Association;

—an information centre operated by the Chamber of Commerce.



Welcoming sign

Farmer's market

A farmers' market, if located within the downtown area, can add the distinctive flavor, interest and community inter-action that once typified vibrant town centres. A market located within the downtown also provides an attractive draw for other enterprises. In the summer of 1972 a farmers' market was operated under an Opportunities for Youth grant on Willow Street between Main Street and Church Street. The organizers of the market feel it was a success and could have been more so had it been organized by a group of business people rather than students. Had a credible group such as the Chamber of Commerce (as is the case in

Milton) come forward to serve as the organizer, the market could have enjoyed growing success. "The subject of a farmers' market was introduced for discussion by Russ Murray at a recent Agricultural Society meeting. Although the Society felt it was unable to take a primary role in the establishment of the market, it did express interest in the idea and suggested that organizers contact Andy Frank and George Swann for assistance in initiating a market. It is therefore suggested that a joint committee of the B.I.A., the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Association be established to organize a downtown farmers' market.

Store fronts could be co-ordinated

Vacant lot near Mill and Main transformed

United church parking lot