

Chapter 6.0

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Introduction

Bedford historically has been residential, with most businesses located within the three hamlets of Bedford Village, Bedford Hills, and Katonah, and along a section of Route 22. These businesses, for the most part, serve the convenience shopping needs of local residents. Convenience shopping is characterized by retail goods and services marketed to customers residing or working nearby, and may include personal goods and services (such as hair salons), professional offices, and eating and drinking establishments. Within Bedford, the exception to the convenience shopping pattern is the roadside commercial area along Bedford Road (NY Route 117), located just north of Mount Kisco and reaching nearly to Bedford Hills. This commercial area functions as a part of the regional shopping opportunities in Mount Kisco that serve a mix of convenience and comparison shopping needs. Comparison shopping needs for major clothing purchases, appliances, furniture, and other big-ticket items have traditionally been provided by commercial facilities located in Mount Kisco, White Plains, and in the Connecticut cities of Danbury and Stamford. With the exception of Mount Kisco, these areas continue to expand their business and commercial facilities, and will continue to serve Bedford residents' demands for major shopping facilities.

The retail business areas of the three hamlets are expected to continue to meet the convenience shopping needs of their local residents. This plan does not foresee a need to expand the business zones. The existing hamlet business areas meet the changing needs of the local customer base through the continual reinvestment in the building stock and tenant turnover. No new major commercial areas are planned in Bedford, as this is contrary to the community objectives of maintaining Bedford's predominantly residential character and protecting the economic vitality of the three hamlet business centers. Nor do population projections for the town or northern Westchester County justify the creation of any business center. This development pattern has been the objective of previous town development plans and of Westchester County's comprehensive plan, *Patterns*.

The county plan proposes that the three hamlets remain local centers and that no new centers be created. *Patterns* characterizes Bedford Village as a hamlet and Katonah and Bedford Hills as local centers. Hamlets, according to *Patterns*, are places often "located at the crossroads of historic travel routes, [offering] such basic facilities as a post office, municipal buildings, houses of worship, and local retail stores. Few have in place the infrastructure necessary to support substantial additional development" (p.11). Local centers are "located on major roads. Many are served by the north-south commuter rail lines and almost all are served by the Westchester County bus system. Local centers typically have a well defined downtown business district and include, in addition to the uses found in hamlets, small scale offices, more extensive retail stores, supermarkets, libraries, other public buildings and residential uses 'over the store' and in low-rise multifamily structures" (p.11). This plan concurs with *Patterns'* assessment.

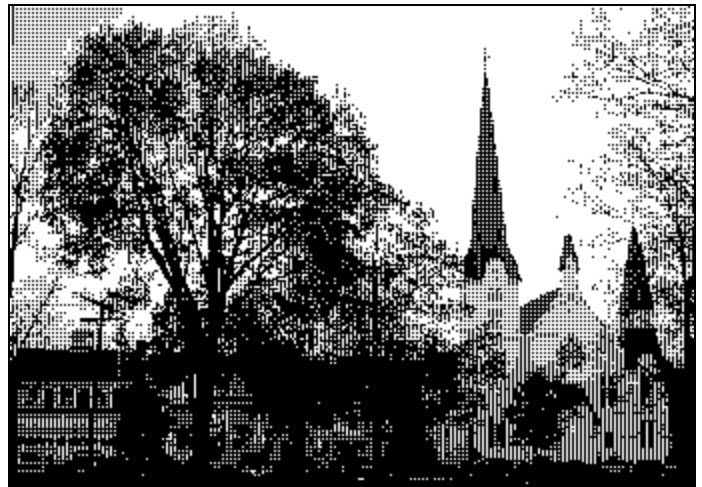
Bedford will continue to encourage a balance between the commercial and residential areas, with the health of the residential areas being paramount. In particular, the Planning Board and the Zoning

Board of Appeals should continue being sensitive to the potential impacts on residences when they adjoin commercial development, as applications come before these boards for change of use, variances, and site plan review. The commercial requirements of a tenant or commercial use are secondary to the town's long term interest in preserving single-family residential uses contiguous to each of the commercial districts. Further, the town will discourage the conversion of any residence to commercial, office, or parking use. In cases where office or commercial uses exist in former residential structures contiguous to single family or multiple family lots or districts, such uses will be considered transition points where less intrusive activities are allowed. Such uses should not expand, as the town does not want to create buffer zones. Further, the town generally will discourage the assemblage of buildings or lots for the purpose of creating a large single use tenant.

This chapter focuses on improving the quality of the shopping, walking, driving, and aesthetic experience of the individual areas, and the critical need for a public sewer systems in Bedford Hills, Bedford Village, and Katonah to remedy the existing serious infrastructure problems. Each hamlet and Routes 22 and 117 are described in terms of their ability to provide a high quality retail and business environment. The proposed recommendations are supported by an annotated aerial photograph for each area. These photographs indicate how the recommended policies and proposals might be implemented. All site plans for new development should be required to conform as much as possible to the objectives and illustrations provided in this chapter.

6.2 Bedford Village

Bedford Village is in the southeast quadrant of the town. The commercial core of the hamlet is L-shaped, occupying both sides of a brief section of Pound Ridge Road (Route 172) just north of where it intersects with the Old Post Road (Route 22) at the historic Green, and Court Road where it intersects with Pound Ridge Road. The zoning is NB-Neighborhood Business and covers six acres. The majority of the business district is fully developed, with no potential for new floor space under current zoning standards. Even should there be a population increase in this part of Bedford, there is no support for extending the business zoning to a larger area to provide more stores to serve the shopping needs of new residents.



Bedford Village's business center, seen from the Green.

Development Policies and Proposals. The 1988 Town Development Plan incorporated a 1986 study by the Planning Board entitled Court Road Business District Master Plan. This plan was undertaken because of pressure to provide more parking in the Bedford Village hamlet. The study discussed alternatives and made preliminary recommendations. These remain the town's proposal for the Court Road business area, and are shown in Figure 6.1. This plan builds upon the major recommendations of the 1988 plan to resolve the need for improved pedestrian and vehicular circulation and a stronger mix of businesses within the existing confines. This can be done by encouraging pedestrian circulation in the hamlet.

Encourage Pedestrian Circulation. The town has three objectives in resolving the circulation problems in Bedford Village. These are:

- Preserve the Green. The Green should be maintained as the village's visual and functional centerpiece. The shape and boundaries of the Green should be maintained.
- Create better pedestrian access between parking areas and the activities around the Green, the business area, churches, and Historical Hall.
- Allow vehicles to turn safely, and better control vehicle speeds.

The Green is the center of a pedestrian-friendly area that extends out one-quarter mile and includes Route 22. The town should encourage walking as the main transportation mode. Pedestrian safety and ease should be the primary transportation objectives. Increased walking will help reduce traffic and parking problems and will benefit retail vitality. Vehicular capacity is a secondary concern. An increase in roadway capacity should only be undertaken if the capacity improvements do not affect pedestrian circulation and convenience and hamlet character.

Adequate and conveniently located parking is vital to the economic health of any business area. In an area such as Bedford Village where the surrounding residences occupy a minimum of two acres, there is likely to be very little custom from shoppers walking from their homes; virtually all customers will be driving. The shortage of parking and the inconvenient location of parking in the commercial core has long been a serious problem for local businesses. A priority system needs to be set up that will encourage



Potential site for municipal parking lot or Fire Department.

shoppers to park-and-walk. First priority should always go to shopper parking. The most attractive spaces for shoppers must be reserved for short-term parking; enforcement of short parking times must be enforced. If shoppers cannot park in a convenient location, they will drive elsewhere and the retail vitality of the hamlet will be harmed. Some of the tools to create parking turn over are the establishment of a short-term core, enforcement of parking duration limits (such as two hours), and graduated fines (where the first three parking fines in a 12-month period are at the same level as today, and the next fines become double or triple to discourage repeat offenders). Beyond the short-term core, parking regulations should be relaxed to allow more long-term parking.

If the hamlet center is to function efficiently as a pedestrian-friendly area, Bedford must create off-site parking. An example of an informal Park & Walk lot is the lot behind the church on the Village Green in Bedford Village. This can be formalized by requiring that a property owner pay in-lieu fees on a per-space basis to the town instead of providing on-site parking. Such fees would be charged to new or expanding developments in the pedestrian-friendly area. These fees can then be used to improve existing or create new park-and-walk lots, to improve pedestrian paths and landscaping, or other costs related to parking improvements including improvements that encourage pedestrians to walk longer distances.

Specifically, Bedford should undertake the following:

- Develop more off-street parking spaces on existing commercially developed properties. Specifically, the Exxon Station and property near the Glasser building could provide possibly 35 more spaces in the heart of the business district.
- Create new parallel parking along the south side of Court Road. Minor widening would be required to accommodate such parking.
- Create more parking behind the main business block. One possible layout is shown in Figure 6.1, where easy pedestrian access and vehicular circulation can be achieved. A separate but adjacent merchants' parking area would eliminate competition for parking spaces between merchants and business employees, and their customers.
- Create neckdowns at pedestrian crossings. These reduce the pedestrian crossing distance and narrow the vehicular travel corridor visually. Pedestrian crossings can also be raised and integrated into speed humps. Neckdowns and safer pedestrian crossings should be created from the Main Street sidewalk to the Green (especially at the Post Office) and from Old Post Road (Route 22) to a location near Court Street.
- Implement strategies to reduce vehicular speed at entries to the Green through some type of historical gateway that would visually narrow the roadway width. Speed limits should be reduced 200 yards before all three gateways to the Green.
- Pedestrian crosswalks should be designed in a pronounced permanent manner which clearly requires vehicle operators to take note.

Update the Commercial Zoning. The NB-Neighborhood Business District should be revised to disallow certain uses and encourage others. The zoning district allows auto-oriented uses, such as gas stations and repair garages. These uses should not be allowed as they are potentially harmful to the groundwater supply and do not provide a retail service or good necessary to the economic vitality of such a small business district. Second, non-retail uses should not be allowed on the ground floor of any commercial building. Currently, the once-predominantly retail character of the hamlet has shifted towards ground floor real estate offices and professional offices. These have replaced businesses that serve the convenience shopping needs of the local residents.



Building with retail on the ground floor, and apartments on upper floors.



Figure 6.1
 BEDFORD VILLAGE BUSINESS DISTRICT PLAN

The Bedford Village Historic District Review Commission has cited the loss of grocery stores, hardware stores, clothing stores, drugstores, stationery stores, and casual or family-style restaurants serving shoppers. The town should consider either revising the NB district or creating a new hamlet district tailored to the needs of Bedford Village in order to promote a greater diversity of retail establishments and businesses. New zoning text should include performance standards to ensure that all uses which rely on substantial water usage (especially restaurants, laundromats and coffee bars) must meet environmental standards necessary to keep the Mianus Watershed healthy. The construction of a stand-alone sewage treatment plan would allow for a greater range of stores and businesses, as planned for under existing zoning, to re-enter the commercial life of the hamlet. (More detail on the Mianus Watershed is found in Chapter 7.0 of this plan.)

Enhance the Appearance of the Business District. The Bedford Village Historic District Review Commission has described the hamlet as an appealing, attractive, and thriving small town base of retail establishments with a lovely, historic center. These qualities would be enhanced if the following actions were taken:

- Existing and all new overhead utility wires for cable, electricity, and telephone services should be placed underground. The town should keep this recommendation from the 1988 plan as a long-term goal.
- Streetlights on Main Street should be designed to enhance the historic quality of the commercial core. This would necessitate replacing the highway-type cobra-head lamps with an old-fashioned type. These should be supplemented with shorter sidewalk lamps to illuminate pedestrian use in the evenings.
- Merchants and landlords should assume greater responsibility for the maintenance, cleanliness, and overall ambiance in the space in front of and adjacent to their establishments. The town can provide an incentive by levying fines for non-compliance.

Route 172/22 Business District. One mile south of the Village Green is a small business district zoned on the west side of Route 22 (Old Post Road). This fifteen-acre district was created in the 1960s to allow a shopping center and is zoned PB-R Planned Business – Retail. Over time, nearly all the parcels have been developed. Redevelopment here is limited due to aquifer protection regulations. Where possible, the town should encourage the development of new uses within the existing commercial boundaries, with sufficient off-street parking, on the remaining under-utilized parcels. Extreme care must be taken, however, in siting the parking lots to avoid wetlands and wetlands buffers.

A minor adjustment should be made to the zoning boundary on the north side. At present, the zoning line here runs forward of the base of the hill rising behind, splitting properties with similar characteristics between business and residential zones. The PB-R line should be moved back to the base of the hill, where it would provide a logical separation between the hillside (to continue in residential use) and the level business-zoned land along Route 22. This would add about one acre of new PB-R land.

Traffic congestion on Route 22 during commuting hours makes turning movements into and out of this commercial area difficult and dangerous. Thus, any new development or redevelopment of the

PB-R area should be required to create off-street access between lots with no additional curb cuts allowed onto Route 22. Chapter 9 on Transportation makes speed reduction strategy recommendations that would affect Route 22 on either side of the business area. Route 22 north of Bedford Village should be designated a scenic route and speeds should be reduced so that through traffic is shifted onto I-684. Lower travel speeds would be achieved by reducing lane widths, widening the shoulder for a bicycle route, installing "Share the Road" signs, and eventually creating a separate bicycle lane. In the Route 22 business area, a modern roundabout is proposed for the intersection of Route 22 and Route 172 near the Shell gas station. The size of such a roundabout would need to be agreed to by Bedford and the NYS Department of Transportation.

6.3 Bedford Hills

Businesses in Bedford Hills are located in two separate areas, one surrounding the reconfigured Station Plaza on the east side of the Saw Mill River Parkway and the second near the Town House at the junction of Cherry Street and Bedford Road (Route 117). Eleven acres of land (excluding road and railroad rights-of-way) are zoned for CB Central Business use around Station Plaza. Nine acres are zoned for CB Central Business use surrounding the Town House. Opposite the Town House, thirteen acres are zoned for PB-O Planned Business – Office use, allowing restricted business and professional office use. Bedford Hills is also one of the town's two industrial locations, here found along Adams Street, Railroad Avenue, and Plainfield Avenue.

Bedford Hills serves several consumer markets. There are convenience retail shops that serve the daily needs of local residents and employees, such as delis, food markets, and florists. Second, there are personal and professional service providers, such as barbers, chiropractors, and insurance, investing, law, and real estate firms. There are specialty shops, such as hobby or sports shops, and antique stores. The industrial and outlying areas provide comparison goods and services for residents and businesses: landscaping, tree service, gravel and stone, glass and mirrors, tiles, appliances, and various mechanics services. Finally, Bedford Hills has a cluster of important community facilities and services: the Town House and Police Department, the Bedford Hills Community House, and the Library.



Stone contractor on Adams Street.



Bedford Hills Community House.



Bedford Hills' business center.

Within the downtown business area of Bedford Hills, there is virtually no developable land. Development that occurs here is the reconstruction or alteration of existing structures into new or expanded businesses. The planning concerns in Bedford Hills are similar to the other hamlets: traffic circulation, parking, and pedestrian safety and ease, and the mix of businesses. During the planning process, residents agreed that their convenience shopping needs were not being met by the current mix of stores in Bedford Hills, despite proximity of homes to the stores. The hamlet serves primarily those who live in the 10507 zip code, rail commuters, and the businesses on Adams Street but insufficient numbers use the local stores to keep them thriving. If the hamlet had the “missing” stores – pharmacy, liquor store, bank, restaurant, and ice cream parlor were mentioned - residents say that they would shop more in the hamlet. The geographic arrangement of the business district and the train station is also an obstacle: ideally, the railroad commuter lot would be on the same side of the tracks as the Station Plaza area businesses so that stores could better serve the commuter market. These issues are compounded by infrastructure problems. More stores would worsen the parking, traffic movement, and pedestrian circulation problems. If there were more stores or businesses with large water needs (such as a restaurant), the town would have to prevent harm to the aquifer.

Development Policies and Proposals. The proximity of the Station Plaza and Town House areas to the extensive shopping facilities in Mount Kisco and along Bedford Road indicates that business development in the Station Plaza and Town House areas should continue to provide the convenience, specialty shopping, personal service, and professional office needs of the local resident and employee population. Development within the hamlet must concentrate on the suitability of new uses in existing buildings, rather than the addition of new space. The town will not support the extension of CB, PB-O, or other non-residential zoning into established residential areas. In the Station Plaza area, the town should pursue having all electrical and communication utilities placed underground to improve the area’s appearance.

Competition between the hamlet and the two larger commercial areas has resulted in the gradual change in the character of Station Plaza to one of specialty shops. This should be encouraged. The economic vitality of Station Plaza and the businesses immediately opposite should depend on specialty or niche businesses that complement one another and do not compete with the large retailers on Route 117. The antique watch and clock business represents the kind of desirable niche business that could co-exist with convenience retailers.



New railroad station, with specialty store in the old station.



Metro-North Line, with office building to the south.

The Station Plaza area is zoned CB Central Business. This allows residences as one of the principal uses. The town wishes to keep the upper floors of the commercial buildings available for apartments, so that the town's housing stock remains diversified and affordably priced housing continues to be provided. A resident population within the commercial district is also helpful in expanding the local resident market. The conflict here is that retail and office are compatible uses in the Plaza area, with office and residential uses competing for the same upper floor space. The town should amend the CB Central Business zoning text to enact the clear community preference for retail and office uses to be restricted to the ground floor with residences allowed on the upper floors. Offices would still be allowed to locate throughout a building in a PB-O Planned Business - Office district.

Station Plaza Area

Encourage Pedestrian Circulation. Following the 1988 plan recommendations, Bedford made significant changes to the layout of the plaza area and pedestrian and vehicular movements. Pedestrian and vehicular movements were separated, crosswalks were installed, and Adams Street was straightened through the hamlet. The common U-turn movement of many vehicles through the hamlet was acknowledged and a safe turnaround (also serving as a kiss and ride) was built within the station parking lot. There remain difficulties. Cars park illegally all day in the lot directly to the south of the station. This can be overcome with ticket compounding: with each subsequent ticket, the driver would pay a larger fine. This financial disincentive would eliminate the value of an all day parking space. Pedestrian crosswalks should be designed in a pronounced permanent manner which clearly requires vehicle operators to take note.

As with Bedford Village, one of the commercial district's problems is the shortage of off-street merchant and shopper parking. Following the 1988 plan, the town acted on a plan recommendation and created 100 parking spaces in the rear of properties located between Main Street and Griffin Avenue. Bedford also created the lot behind the Library for merchant and shopper parking. Despite this, residents still have difficulty finding parking. In response, the town should study a further extension of this lot by constructing a two-story parking deck behind the Library. The bi-level deck would take advantage of the steep topography, with each level receiving adequate natural light and visibility.

In enforcing the zoning code the Planning Board and the Building Department will continue to require that any redevelopment of properties in the Station Plaza area provide sufficient on-site parking to meet its own needs. The code also provides the Planning Board with some flexibility in administering parking regulations in the CB districts. The Board may approve off-site parking for a retail or service use no more than 250 feet away or for an office use no more than 500 feet away. Despite this apparent flexibility, it can be difficult to find such available space in a non-residential district. It is reported that parking variances are often requested. The town should consider amending the parking requirements in the CB district in one or more of the following ways: 1) reduce the number of parking spaces required if the use is located in a CB district, 2) allow the Planning Board to reduce the number of required parking spaces for a particular application (a waiver of say 10 –15%), 3) increase the walkability standard from 250 – 500 feet to 350 to 700 feet if appropriate non-residential land can be found, or 4) allow the applicant to pay into a parking fund in lieu of providing the full number of required parking spaces. If a parking escrow or trust fund were established, Bedford would draw upon it to acquire land, construct a municipal parking facility, or in some other way increase the supply of parking spaces.

Commuter parking at the Bedford Hills station has been expanded since the 1988 plan. Lot #4 was expanded with minor improvements at its northerly end, and town-owned property on the lower level along Railroad Avenue was brought into use.

Traffic Circulation. Aside from parking problems, there are problems of traffic movement and speed. (See Figure 6.2.) The series of closely-spaced intersections around the Station Plaza area are difficult for drivers and pedestrians to navigate. The presence of stores, the post office, and the train station (all local traffic) is combined with through traffic and poorly marked intersections. The area right at the Station Plaza intersection was described so “very bad” that drivers look for an alternate route, shifting traffic onto roads even less able to handle traffic. This includes using the railroad station parking lot as a through road to avoid congestion and confusion at the intersection. The town should investigate whether a stoplight or a modern roundabout is necessary here, and whether the left-turn up Main Street coming east on Route 117 should be prohibited. The size of such a roundabout would need to be agreed to by Bedford and the Department of Transportation.

Other roads in the Station Plaza area that require study are:

Babbitt Road: The intersection of Babbitt and Adams Street is confusing and has a poorly placed stop sign. The order of travel is not clear. Travel speeds up Babbitt from the hamlet are excessive. There is poor visibility at the intersection of Babbitt and Church Street. The combination of Babbitt to Church is increasingly used as an alternate route to get to I-684, with a build-up of speed since this is now considered a through route to a major highway. The intersection of Babbitt and Harris Road is worsening.

Bedford Center Road/Main Street: As drivers leave the hamlet, they build up too much speed going up the Bedford Center Road hill. Parking on the east side of the road, while necessary, has created a traffic hazard. The inadequacy of parking and loading space for the feed and grain store creates congestion. One recommendation is to remove one or two parking spaces near the intersection of Bedford Center/Main with Adams Street. The left turn onto Bedford Center Road is dangerous. The left turn from Main Street onto Bedford Road (Route 117) is also a problem, as there is poor visibility through the intersection when driving from the north.

Green Lane and Woodland Road: The ability to access the Saw Mill River Parkway northbound from either of these local streets has turned the streets into significant traffic routes with congestion caused by the traffic turning left to enter the parkway. With Green Lane, the problem is exacerbated by its being steep and windy.

South Church Street: This street connects Main Street to Woodland Road, Route 117, and southbound access to the Saw Mill River Parkway. Local drivers now use this South Church/Woodland route as a through route.

Truck Route: Trucks driving through on Route 117 ignore the truck route signs. They need to be diverted more clearly away from the hamlet center. Bedford implemented many of the 1988 plan parking recommendations. The next step for the town is to determine how to address Bedford Hills’ primary circulation problem: the confusion and congestion caused by the intersections

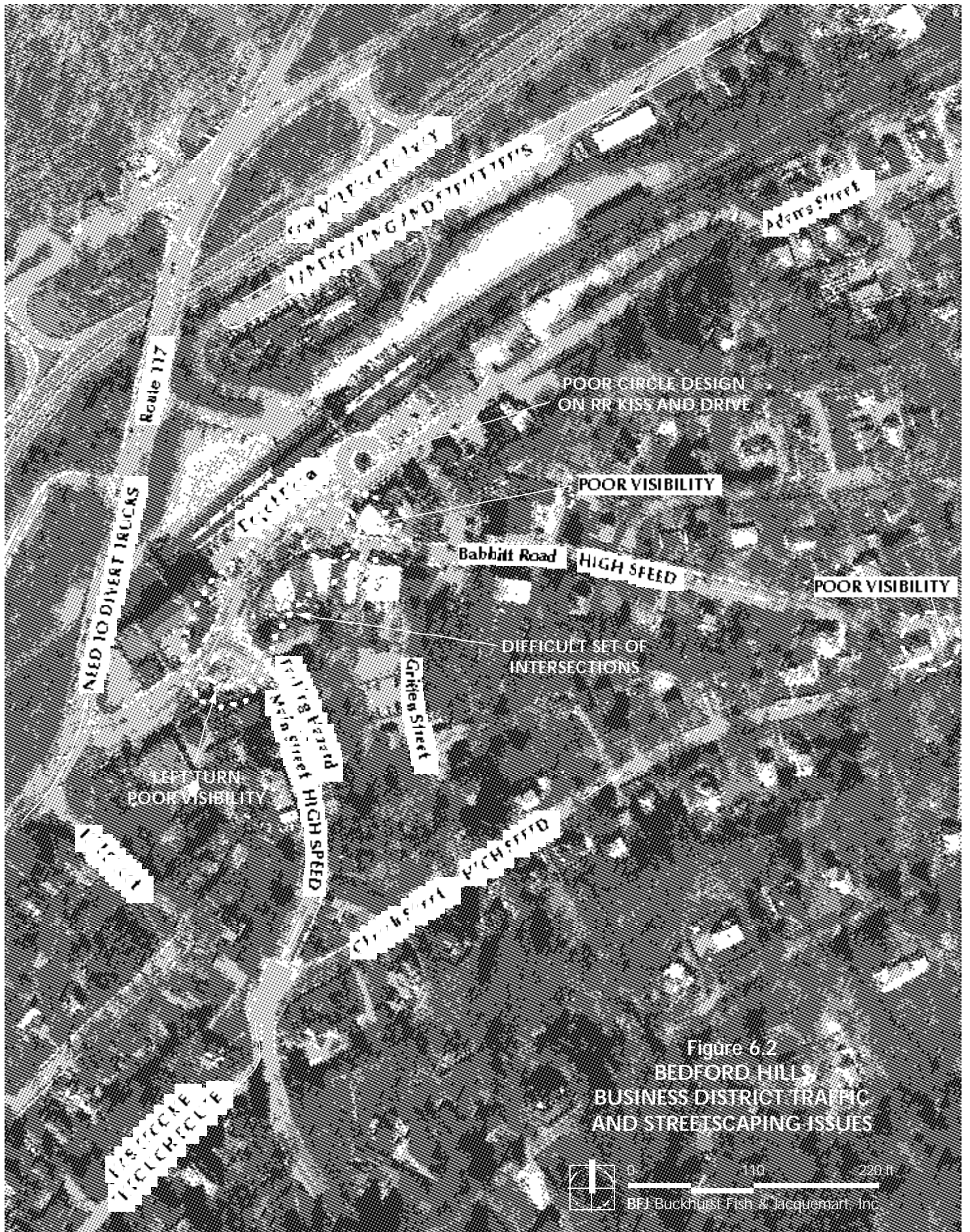


Figure 6.2
 BEDFORD HILLS
 BUSINESS DISTRICT TRAFFIC
 AND STREETSCAPING ISSUES



along Bedford Road/Route 117 and Adams Street in the heart of the hamlet. Each intersection alone has difficulties. With their close spacing, the problems combine and increase in severity. The specific issues that require amelioration are signal, stop sign, and order of travel controls, the visibility of these controls, turning restrictions, pedestrian crossings, travel speeds, and the effect of parking spaces close to the intersection.

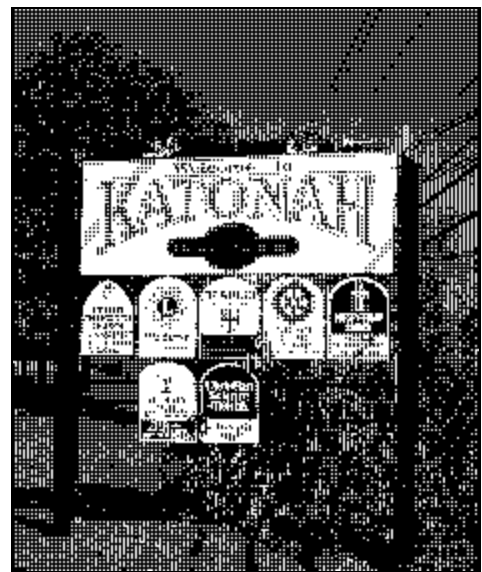
Town House Area

Around the Town House, the non-residential zoning is PB-O and CB, allowing business and professional offices, municipal uses, medical offices, childcare, and retail uses. The town's preference is to have retail uses located in the commercial district on the other side of the railroad tracks where they complement one another and keep traffic away from the already heavily traveled junction of Cherry Street and Route 117. Professional and business uses are more compatible with the municipal uses in the Town House area. The 1988 plan recommended that the town purchase land to provide new and larger court space and related parking. This has been done, and the new court is expected to open in 2001. The town now has sufficient administrative space for the next two decades.

Railroad Avenue requires tree stump removal, landscaping, and the planting of new street trees. Further, the town needs to inventory the businesses here, determine their potential or real environmental impacts, and ensure that these uses are consistent with aquifer protection.

6.4 Katonah

Business development in Katonah is clustered in four locations. The traditional center of the business area extends along Katonah Avenue to the north and south of the railroad station, and is the primary location of small convenience retail and specialty shops, and personal service establishments. This area encompasses about 14 acres of land, exclusive of road and railroad rights-of-way. A second area of business development is located along Bedford Road (Route 117) to the south of the hamlet. It is separated from the traditional center by the large parcel between the two shopping centers at the intersection of Bedford Road and Katonah Avenue. This land is zoned for business but is part of the New York City watershed lands surrounding the Muscoot Reservoir. The eastern side of Route 117 is zoned for CB Central Business retail and is now almost completely developed for this purpose. The western side permits only business and professional offices under PB-O(K) Planned Business – Office District (Katonah), with only about two-thirds



Example of good gateway signage.



Restaurant in Route 35 business district.

of this land area developed for office use. All non-residential uses in this district are allowed only under special permit. The remainder is still residential. The third development area is located on the west side of Woods Bridge Road (also Route 117), just past Edgemont Road. Almost two-thirds of the 4.5 acres in this zone are occupied by commuter parking Lot #3. Other uses in this area are conforming businesses and a vacant commercial building. Aside from the need for a commuter path (see below), there are no land use planning issues created by this area or its development. Finally, there is a small, isolated business district located on the corner of Deer Park Road and Goldens Bridge Road, just north of the junction of Routes 22 and 35. The two properties in this one-acre area are both developed with businesses and a restaurant. There are no land use planning issues created by this area or its development.

Development Policies and Proposals. As with Bedford Village and Bedford Hills, Katonah's commercial districts serve an existing market located in close-in portions of Bedford, Lewisboro, Somers, and New Castle, and no expansion is anticipated or warranted. It would be difficult to expand the commercial zoning because of the amount of DEP-owned land around Muscoot



Shops along Katonah Avenue.



Examples of good signage and exterior design.

Reservoir, and the existing aquifer regulations. Therefore, the issues and recommendations that follow have the underlying objective of keeping Katonah's business districts within their existing bounds and enabling them to achieve their greatest vitality. As with Bedford Village, the primary recommendation is the transformation of Katonah's commercial core into a pedestrian-friendly area. This necessitates a public sewer plan, municipal off-street parking, and improvements to pedestrian crossings and shortcuts. In Katonah's business area, the town should pursue having all electrical and communication utilities placed underground to improve the area's appearance.

Katonah Avenue Business Area

In the nearly twenty years since the railroad station was moved 500 feet north to accommodate Metro-North's electrification of the Upper Harlem line, there has been significant new investment in the buildings around the station's former location and the new location. The pattern of convenience retail buying by rail commuters shifted to areas nearer the new platform, invigorating the once-struggling businesses along North Katonah Avenue. Most commercial uses along and near Katonah Avenue are now oriented towards convenience or specialty shopping.

Encourage Pedestrian Circulation. As in the 1988 plan, the main problem for businesses along Katonah Avenue is the shortage of easily-accessible merchant and shopper parking. The supply of on-street and off-street parking spaces is less than one-half the number that would be required to serve existing businesses if parking were created in accord with current zoning standards. The primary strategy to overcome this is the encouragement of pedestrian circulation. Pedestrian safety and friendliness should be the primary transportation objective. Increased walking will help in reducing traffic and parking problems and will be beneficial to the retail vitality. In Katonah, the pedestrian-friendly area should extend at least ¼ mile from the railroad station. On-site private parking for each land use should be discouraged unless it can be provided without affecting visual and historic character. In no case should parking be allowed in front of a building.

The 1988 plan's policy for remedying this was to look to the backyards of the properties on the west side of Katonah Avenue. As septic fields now lie to the rear of the buildings, commercial property owners need the remaining land area for additions and storage buildings, and reinvestment has improved the abutting residence, there is now little possibility for converting this area to parking. However, the need for additional municipal parking remains and the town should remain alert to creating off-street parking when property becomes available.

Other pedestrianization strategies that the town should consider are:

- Create neckdowns at pedestrian crossings to reduce the pedestrian crossing distance, slow down turning traffic and narrow the travel corridor visually.
- Create gateways or narrowed roadways at major entrances into Katonah's pedestrian zone to reduce speed.
- Improve pedestrian safety and convenience through reduced speeds, pedestrian shortcuts, and seating areas. Pedestrian crosswalks should be designed in a pronounced permanent manner which clearly requires vehicle operators to take note.

Commuters. Lot #1 is not always used to capacity, while Lot #2 frequently has empty spaces due to inefficient space allocation by Somers. A pedestrian path should be created from Lot #3 to accommodate the way commuters walk to the station. Despite the presence of a sidewalk leading from the lot to the train station, commuters take the shortest route and thus are in the road for much of their walk and cross at an unsafe point. A path is needed across NYC DEP land to provide walking commuters with safe transit. (See Figure 6.3.) Lot #1, the closest commuter lot to the tracks, should be improved for greater parking efficiency. Turning movements into and out of this lot should be corrected. More parking spaces could be created with new striping and layout. In recent months, northern Westchester and western Connecticut towns have met to discuss a feeder bus system that would allow commuters to park in their own communities and then ride a bus to a Metro-North station. This plan encourages that operation.



Municipal parking lot with good sidewalk and landscape design, encouraging pedestrian shoppers.

Bedford Road Business Area

The 1988 plan recommended two minor changes to the existing business zoning pattern on the west side of Bedford Road, between the Huntville Road and Katonah Avenue intersections. This has not been done; this plan continues the recommendation. First, the high piece of land opposite the service station at the Katonah Avenue intersection should be rezoned to residential use. This parcel is more closely related topographically to the surrounding residentially zoned properties, and because the land slopes very steeply alongside the road and traffic is already heavy at this intersection, the provision of a reasonably safe access to it from Bedford Road is not considered possible. The second change (also from the 1988 plan) affects the property at the northwest corner of the intersection of Huntville and Bedford Roads. It is occupied by a service station, a non-conforming use in a residential district. This property should be rezoned CB Central Business, the district on the opposite side of Bedford Road. This parcel is not suitable for residential development because it is topographically isolated from the adjoining VA Village Apartment zoned land. It fronts directly onto Bedford Road which is commercial in nature at this point, and is bordered by business and office zoning across both abutting streets. Rezoning this parcel to business use will increase the likelihood that the existing use will be further improved.

The PB-O(K) portion of Bedford Road (Route 117) was created to provide a location for professional offices near but not in the retail concentration downtown. This borders a residential area, and thus all applications for use in this zone are made under special permit. This allows the Planning Board to carefully control the traffic and other impacts created by new business development. Bedford Avenue in this area also serves as the southern gateway into Katonah. The area should be improved with landscaping, and speed humps to slow traffic.

6.5 Route 117 Business Area in Bedford Hills (Bedford Road)

This is the fastest developing commercial area in Bedford. Unlike other shopping areas in Bedford, the businesses along the section of Bedford Road (Route 117) just north of Mount Kisco and directly south of Bedford Hills serve a larger customer market. Together with Mount Kisco businesses, this area has become one of the principal commercial centers serving northern Westchester. The character of the area is highway-oriented retail, with businesses dependent not on foot traffic by local residents, but drivers. The business mix comprises personal services, restaurants, shopping malls and small and large stand-alone retail stores, with warehousing, outdoor storage, and light industrial uses near the railroad tracks. This area is dynamic, with vacant parcels being developed, existing buildings being redeveloped, and small parcels being assembled to create commercial buildings with substantially larger footprints and floor area than found elsewhere in the town. Land use planning issues along Route 117 are concerned with managing the traffic and aesthetic impacts created new development.

Traffic Circulation and Access Management. The main traffic artery, Route 117, is the only means of both reaching the businesses and traveling between them. The road is used beyond its practical capacity



Typical view of Route 117's strip commercial style.

Figure 6.3 Katonah Business District Plan (Aerial Photo) See 11 x 17 format od aerial photos

during substantial periods of the day not only in the commercial zone itself but also along the residential section to the north, causing congestion and air pollution. Due to this heavy usage, together with the left-turn movements required to enter and leave the businesses, serious congestion occurs regularly. The solution is access management. The goal of this strategy is to enhance the arterial function of the road and to minimize the delays and conflicts created by vehicles turning into and out of the driveways found along a typical strip development.

- **Expand The Road Network In The Route 117 Corridor.** Parallel connections or roadways should be provided as much as possible on either side of Route 117. The short section of Plainfield Avenue located between Route 117 and the Metro-North tracks should be extended southward into Mount Kisco and northward to serve the commercial properties located on the west side of the commercial arterial. This extension of Plainfield Avenue could be implemented in conjunction with future applications for site plan approval. Alternatively, the town could proceed with this recommendation by opening the entire potential length of Plainfield Avenue. It could be made accessible via a cutoff north of the Adzam car dealership, and/or to southbound Saw Mill River Parkway traffic via an overpass, underpass, or a surface (at-grade) turning lane with traffic light, permitting cars to cross the northbound lane. Plainfield Avenue is already accessible to northbound Saw Mill River Parkway traffic via Green Lane. These measures would substantially reduce Route 117 traffic volumes.

- **Vehicular and Pedestrian Access between Adjacent Commercial Properties.** The Planning Board should require access easements for adjacent properties when a property is applying for site plan approval. This easement should be required even if the town or applicant can not obtain an easement from the adjacent property owner at that time. Eventually these connections can result in a service road. Any property located along a side street should also be considered for connection to the side street, even if the side street is largely residential. These lateral access improvements can offset access limitations, such as driveway consolidations or turn prohibitions along Route 117.

- **Control And Reduce Turning Movements along the Commercial Arterial.** Left-turn movements in and out of commercial driveways represent major conflict points and safety hazards along the arterials. These turns must be limited and consolidated. A raised median with landscaping along portions of Route 117 will assist in eliminating some left turns. This will also reduce traffic speeds, improve safety, enhance the visual quality of the corridor, and enable pedestrian to more safely cross Bedford Road. Whenever a left-turn movement is prohibited, provisions need to be made for the movement to be made in other safe ways. Sometimes this can be achieved through the vehicular connections between adjacent sites (see second dotpoint above).

As parcels are developed or redeveloped, the Planning Board should require that the site plan conform to the access management strategy as it applies to the particular site. This alone, over time, will improve traffic circulation. More efficient use of available parking spaces will be pos-



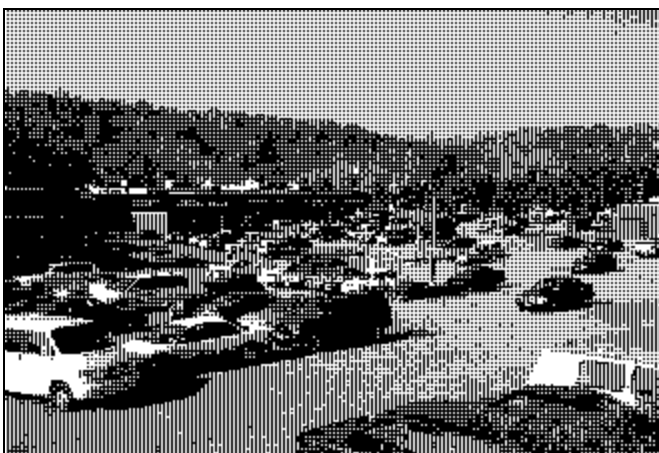
Example of uncoordinated curb cuts and parking lots, and insufficient landscaping in the buffer and parking lot.

sible, the trip required by shoppers wishing to use neighboring stores will be simplified, and traffic – particularly turning movements – on the roads serving these properties will be reduced. The recent actions by the Honda and Acura dealerships to consolidate driveways and add landscaping are examples to other owners of how cooperative access control might be done.

Appearance. Most development along Bedford Road is aesthetically mediocre. There are deteriorated or poorly-maintained buildings and properties, inadequate landscaping, too many signs, and too much glaring light at night. The town can adopt two responses. First, the town should target illegal or ugly signage and blighted buildings, and compel compliance with code requirements. Second, Bedford should rely on the private sector to make the necessary major appearance improvements. As properties come before the Planning Board for a new use or expansion, the site plan process and sign permitting process offer the town opportunities.

The functioning and appearance of large parking lots can be improved if landscaping is intelligently planned within the lots. The landscaping can provide clear definition of parking spaces and aisles, can channel the movement of cars within the lot, control access and egress, offer shade to cars and pedestrians, provide safe walkways to and from the store(s), moderate the rate of stormwater runoff, and provide a green buffer between Route 117 and its developed areas. Painted lines in a lot will not accomplish these objectives. The recent redevelopment by Kohl's is a good example of how landscaping can improve the circulation and appearance of a large parking lot. In the business area of Route 117, the town should pursue having all electrical and communication utilities placed underground to improve the area's appearance.

The zoning code should be amended with stronger language regarding parking lot landscaping. At present the code stipulates that planting islands of eight feet in width may be required if possible. While this size is adequate, the code should be augmented with requirements that 1) a certain percentage, based on a sliding scale, of the interior parking area must be landscaped, 2) the perimeter be densely landscaped, with the exception of vehicular access points between lots, 3) a 15-25 foot landscaped buffer along Route 117 be created to provide eventual coordination and harmony along the length of diverse properties, and 4) the applicant or developer adhere to the town's list of allowed trees, shrubs, and other plants. Bedford should develop such a list, and determine the most appropriate mix of deciduous to evergreen plants. Plants should be hardy in an urban environment, appropriate for the Northern Westchester planting zone, and tolerant of salt, sun, reflected heat,



Example of insufficient parking lot landscaping.



Example of good parking lot design and landscaping.

glare, and drought. The town should make a landscaped buffer of 15 to 25 feet, with no parking, part of the CB Central Business District requirements. If fences, walls, or berms are used around the perimeter, landscaping requirements for these should be established.

A more complete parking control would have the following elements regarding landscaping in new parking lots (American Planning Association's Report #411): purpose, general requirements, landscaping standards adjacent to street right-of-way, landscaping adjacent to contiguous properties, landscaping in interior areas, minimum planting area for trees, sight distances, standards for trees, grade changes, landscape berms, woodland preservation, plan preparation, submittal requirements, enforcement and maintenance, and plant lists and other information. Bedford may also wish to add a more minimal set of controls for pre-existing parking lots. These controls would be enforced if a parking lot expands or if a curb cut changes. The applicant would not be required to dig up the entire lot to bring it into conformance but to create a lot closer to the standard for wholly new lots.

Control over signs and outdoor lighting is also important to improving the appearance of individual properties and Route 117 overall, by providing a sense of order. Signs must be limited to minimum necessary to inform. Sign clutter and distraction should be eliminated over time as properties come forward for redevelopment. Through its zoning code, Bedford controls signs by type, size, zoning district, and use. These controls appear complete; thus, the town should study the specific signs along Bedford Road to determine which are illegal and nonconforming. These should be removed immediately. Second, this commercial road has the same CB Central Business zoning as Bedford Hills and downtown Katonah. If this zoning remains in place, the town should consider a separate sign designation for CB - Route 117. This control can be more specific and precise than the town-wide standards, and should include type, size, height, number, illumination, color, material, and maximum number of items of information on each sign. Bedford should include in its corridor sign study an analysis of public signs – those put up by the town itself and its organizations.

The town's zoning code has at present a brief section controlling lighting in parking lots. As parking lighting is typically the greatest source of site lighting, Bedford should consider strengthening its lighting controls as found in



Example of landscape buffer along Route 117, with parking at the side and rear of the building.



Example of well integrated and attractive signs and facades.

the parking section in the code. Additional controls would comprise illumination levels (as measured in footcandles), maximum height of lamp posts, hours of illumination, and lighting cutoff or shielding. Lamps in use now whose light spills over onto adjoining properties or which have unshaded luminaries are nonconforming and should be dealt with.

At present, the Planning Board does not have the necessary tools to require attractive site planning. The plan recommends that light pollution that destroys Bedford's brilliant night skies be reduced. While community objectives in correcting visual blight might be clear to Board members, they can only negotiate, prod, cajole, and otherwise hope that applicants will design their sites in a way that recognizes the public good. A more detailed set of landscaping, lighting, and signage controls would give both the Planning Board and its applicants clear and comprehensive directives. In the short-term, amending the zoning code does little to correct existing visual blight on individual properties. However, over the long term these problems are corrected as property owners come before the Planning Board for site plan review, whether for new construction, additions, change of use, or redevelopment. This is also true for reducing the number of curb cuts onto Bedford Road and requiring that adjoining parking lots connect. In the mid-term, Bedford can pursue the transformation of its portion of Route 117 into a landscaped boulevard, with separate left-turn lanes and tree-lined rights-of-way.

The Planning Board should require good design, landscaping, lighting, and parking areas for every new use or expansion. The board would be assisted in this if the zoning code provided stronger regulations in Article XI, Signs, Article X, Section 125-106, Internal Landscaping, and Article X, Section 125-109, Lighting.

There should be a landscape buffer of 15 to 25 feet along all Route 117 frontage. Street trees would be planted in this buffer on both sides of the road and planted on close centers. While a minimal amount of parking might be allowed in front of a business, the plan recommends that buildings' front walls come as close to the sidewalk as possible with nearly all parking shifted to the side and rear. This aesthetic improvement wrought by a line of street trees would be enhanced if all utility wires were placed underground.

The Planning Board could require access between parking lots, to reduce the number of drivers entering and exiting Route 117 to get to another business. The Planning Board should use the site plan approval process to compel property owners along Route 117 to design their parking lots so that vehicles can drive from one parking lot to an abutting one. Over time, this will create a circulation system parallel with Route 117, allowing Route 117 to function better as a through road as congestion created by turns out of parking lots is reduced.

6.6 Offices, Research Laboratories, and Executive Office Development

There are many small business and professional offices, as well as retail and personal services shops, in Bedford's three local business centers and along Route 117. The offices generally are small free-standing office buildings, converted residential structures, or large office buildings of up to about 60,000 square feet. These offices are an appropriate complement to the centers, as they provide necessary services for local residents in locations with good access and parking.

Development Policies. Bedford should allow small business and professional offices in the centers where they already exist. Offices generally require more parking than retail or residential uses. Therefore, new office uses should be carefully planned to avoid worsening the parking shortfall in the hamlets. Office uses should be allowed on upper floors only if the applicant can demonstrate that residential use (apartments) will not be eliminated. Bedford prefers that residential apartments and not offices occupy the floors above the ground or street-level retail floor. Such apartments are a critical component in the mix of housing stock in Bedford, as they provide affordably-priced rental housing near train stations and bus service, and are located appropriately in the densest parts of town.

This plan recommends four areas where only office development would be allowed. These are the Town House area in Bedford Hills, an existing office district along the west side of Bedford Road between Sunrise Avenue and Huntville Road in Katonah, properties bordering on Deer Park Road in Katonah, and on the north side of South Bedford Road (Route 172) adjacent to the Mount Kisco border. This latter area is zoned for and already fully developed with offices.

This plan does not recommend allowing executive office and research laboratories in Bedford. This is fixed town zoning policy since 1983, based on the traffic characteristics of these kinds of uses and the increasingly congested road conditions in the town. Research laboratories and executive offices generate most of their traffic during morning and evening commuting hours. To accommodate safely this traffic, local roads would need to handle a larger commuter peak hour volume. All the town's major highways pass through residential areas. Thus, traffic improvements to serve research and office uses would have an impact on the character of and quality of life in residential areas. If improvements were needed to I-684 or Route 35 to accommodate research or office uses, the town would not be able to effect these as these highways are state-controlled. Roadway improvements would likely spur other similar development applications on adjoining properties.

6.7 Industrial Development

Bedford's general types of industrial land uses are 1) storage, distribution, and contractor yards, 2) gravel and blacktop production, 3) truck and related equipment yards, and 4) the public highway department yards. Light industrial development is concentrated on Adams Street, Railroad Avenue, and Plainfield Avenue in Bedford Hills, and on the Katonah By-Pass north of Harris Road. These areas are zoned LI Light Industrial. There is a third such zoned area that is not used for industrial purposes.

This plan recommends that these established areas remain the only ones available for industrial development, with no major changes to the location or extent of the existing general business and light industrial areas in Bedford are recommended. Existing topographic conditions, the limited



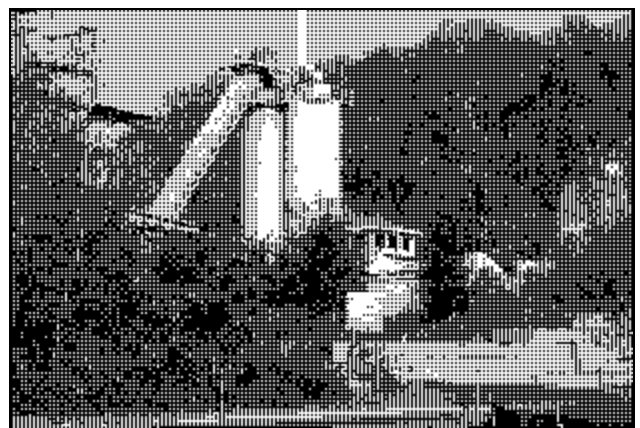
New shopping center near industrial uses.

capacity of most roads, and the established residential development pattern indicate that other sections of Bedford would not be appropriate for light industrial expansion. Further, industry can be a threat to the various water supplies in Bedford and so must be carefully scrutinized. Most of the industrially zoned land is located in the Aquifer Protection Zone which demands such review. The town's regulatory efforts should remain directed at the proper functioning of the businesses located in the Aquifer Protection Zone and in the LI Light Industry District.

Bedford should rezone the former Westchester Colprovia property to LI Light Industry. Extensive earth excavation has left it unusable for residential development. General business and light industrial uses are more appropriate here once the existing operation ceases. Less site rehabilitation will be needed, and it will be more feasible to improve the property so that it can be developed. This site is well-buffered from surrounding areas by watershed lands to the north, the Correctional Facility to the southeast, and steep topography along its southwestern boundary. A minor zoning change is recommended for Bedford Village Memorial Park, south of Washington Avenue. This is currently zoned for industrial use and should be rezoned to R-4A.



Storage facility in construction.



One of the few industries located in Bedford.