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**THE LEWISTON
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
PRESERVATION PLAN**

DeWitt Hotel, Lewiston, Me.



**A COMPONENT OF THE
CITY OF LEWISTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
1996**

**THE LEWISTON DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
PRESERVATION PLAN**

**A Component of the
City of Lewiston Comprehensive Plan**

Prepared for the City of Lewiston

by

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I. Goals and objectives of a Preservation Plan

The development of this preservation plan for the Downtown Development District as a part of the updating of the City of Lewiston Comprehensive Land Use Plan was partially funded through a National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior matching grant-in-aid, administered through the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The completion of this element of the plan is in conformance with provisions of the Maine Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act of 1988, which established "10 state land-use objectives relating to the environment, economic development, and uncontrolled growth."¹ One of the stated objectives of this act specifically addressed in this project is to: Protect natural, historical, and recreational resources and related economic activities. The preparation of a preservation plan is also recognized as partial fulfillment of a program meeting Federal and State standards for preservation that allows the State Historic Preservation Officer to declare a municipality as a Certified Local Government (CLG). Such a designation allows a CLG "to apply for especially earmarked grants from their State Historic Preservation Officer. At least ten percent of the annual Historic Preservation Fund grant made to States under the National Historic Preservation Act must be distributed among Certified Local Governments."² A CLG may also receive, among other benefits, technical assistance and training from the SHPO and may participate in statewide preservation programs and planning. The City of Lewiston has been certified as a CLG, and has already satisfied its mandated responsibility to:

Maintain a historic preservation commission
Survey local historic properties
Enforce State or local preservation laws
Provide for public participation, and
Enact historic preservation ordinances or zoning restrictions³

While the goals of a preservation plan for a community certified as a CLG should recognize and reinforce the responsibilities stated above, they should go one step further and provide direction to assure that preservation becomes a contributing factor in effectuating the overall Comprehensive Plan. Preservation goals, to be effective, must also be consistent with the overall goals of the Comprehensive Plan and its other components, and must recognize the city's financial ability and its legal authority to carry out the recommendations of a preservation plan on a timely basis. The goals listed below are presented as an outline that incorporates preservation objectives and responsibilities into the comprehensive planning process in a positive manner:

1. Continue to recognize, preserve and protect the visual, cultural and

¹ White, Bradford J., and Richard J. Roddewig, *Preparing a Historic Preservation Plan*, American Planning Association, Chicago, 1994, p.47.

² *Certified Local Governments in the National Historic Preservation Program*, National Park Service, Washington, D. C. ,undated, p.3.

³ *Ibid*, p.2.

historic resources that contribute to and define the unique character of the Downtown Development District

2. Contribute to the vitality and the economic development of the downtown by recapturing under-utilized space for special uses, increasing the real-estate tax base, and re-establishing Lisbon Street to its former status in the region through preservation efforts targeted to enhance the aesthetics and the cultural climate of the district.
3. Recapture the once proud image of Lewiston and its industrial heritage by improving the gateways to the city, enhancing the visual quality of the riverfront and the canal system, and fostering the continued conversion of vacant mill space to productive reuses that will contribute to the revitalization of the entire downtown
4. Work with city, state and Federal programs and local business interests to identify financial and other incentives that will benefit participants in the restoration and rehabilitation of the downtown
5. Insure that needed vehicular and pedestrian traffic improvements and off-street parking requirements are satisfied without significant infringement on the historic integrity of the downtown
6. Increase the desirability of the Downtown Development District as an in-town residential area by removing existing blighting influences, enforcing building and health codes, and identifying potential sites for private residential redevelopment

As stated, the preservation goals have been developed to enhance and compliment the goals of the City of Lewiston Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The preservation goals also recognize and reinforce specific goals and strategies promoted in two recent studies, the Downtown Action Plan, published by the city in March, 1995, and a draft of the Cultural Plan- Lewiston-Auburn scheduled for release in September of this year. Opportunities for satisfying these goals are presented in later sections of this report.

II. A description of the Lewiston Downtown Development District

While settled as early as the late 18th century, the formal development of what would become downtown Lewiston as an important industrial and trading city was not initiated until 1819 when the first of many mills, a small carding and woolen mill, was constructed to take advantage of the manufacturing opportunities afforded by the Androscoggin River. By 1837 a *Plan of a Survey Taken for the Great Androscoggin Falls, Mill Dam, Locks and Canals Company* (later to become the Lewiston Water Power Company, and finally today's Franklin

Company) had been published that laid out mill lots and planned for the construction of an interlocking canal system. In April, 1854 the Franklin Company purchased the land leases, water rights and mill sites previously owned by the Lewiston Water Power Company and immediately set out to complete the canal system started in 1845. The first of the mills that would rank Lewiston as the seventh largest textile manufacturing complex in New England, and the second largest city in the state, were completed and up and running by the close of the 1850's. Most of the new settlers drawn to Lewiston by the promise of work at the mills were transient in nature, and took up lodging in mill sponsored housing blocks along Canal, Park and Oxford streets, or in multi-storied tenements located in the lower Lisbon / Park Street area near the Androscoggin Mill and the Bleachery, along Lincoln Street between the Bates Mill and the Hill Mill, or in an area contiguous to the Continental Mill inhabited primarily by French Canadian workers in a densely developed neighborhood appropriately called "Little Canada." Because of the early concentration of mill workers in the Lincoln Street-Little Canada section of Lewiston, Lincoln Street became the primary shopping area and the social focus for the French speaking community. However, Lisbon Street, subdivided into building lots by the Lewiston Water Power Company in 1846 but undeveloped as late as 1851, was quickly being developed as a retail and service street of one and one-half or two and one-half story, primarily frame, structures, many of which contained residential use at the upper floors.

The development of Lisbon Street as a retail center rivaling Lincoln Street was partially the result of a ready made market provided by the Bates and Hill mills, who by the early 1860's had constructed 26 three-story tenement blocks in a three block stretch between Lisbon Alley and Canal Street. Eventually, Lisbon Street would far outstrip Lincoln Street as the primary shopping area for the growing city, and by the 1870's, when Lewiston's banking community began its migration from lower Main Street to Haymarket Square and Lisbon Street, the shift from Lincoln Street was finalized. A *Bird's Eye View of Lewiston & Auburn* printed in 1875 shows the non-industrial development pattern of downtown Lewiston as an inverted U, with the western stem consisting of Oxford and Lincoln Streets, the top section Main Street from the river to Blake Street, and the easterly stem the two block deep corridor between Canal and Park Streets. The two parallel stems of the development pattern are decisively separated by the block-deep Bates and Hill mills, which at that time only occupied the western side of the upper canal between Ash and Cedar Streets (this wall of mill structures now extends the full length of the Downtown Development District). The last major structure erected by the mills was Albert Kahn's innovative saw-tooth roofed Bates Weaving Shed (1914), situated between the cross canal and Main Street. The tree-lined upper canal was crossed at five separate places in the area occupied by the mills, and with the mill owned tenement blocks on the other side creating considerable pedestrian activity, the canal was not the psychological dividing wall that it is today.

Lincoln Street in 1875, between Main and Cedar streets was almost entirely developed, primarily as residential (tenements) with retail uses often located at the ground floor, but with mill related storage facilities and the Grand Truck Railroad Station interspersed. With the construction of the Dominican Building in 1882 as a catholic school, social center and chapel, the role of this street as the heart of the Franco-American community was established. Conversely, the 1875 *Bird's Eye View*, confirmed by Sanborn Insurance maps, shows the area south of Cedar Street between Lincoln and the Androscoggin as undeveloped except for a row of six dwellings along a

dirt road at the river's edge. This would dramatically change by 1886 when Oxford Street was extended south of Cedar and six two and one-half and three story, frame tenements buildings were built, four along Oxford, two on the earlier dirt road now named River Street. By 1897 virtually the entire length of Oxford Street, to where it presently turns southeast, and River Street would be developed and Little Canada would come into existence. All of the area between Cedar, Lincoln, the extension of River Street, and the west side of River Street parallel to the Androscoggin River would be fully developed with three to five story, frame tenement houses, set so close together that this neighborhood was likely the most densely settled residential area of its size in the city. This density has been lowered somewhat in the recent past through losses caused by fire or serious code violations, but remains a unique part of Lewiston that continues to retain important ties to the development of the Continental and the Lewiston Cotton mills, and especially to the origins of the city's important Franco-American community.

The lower section of Lincoln Street centered around Lincoln Drive and Lincoln Terrace is shown on the 1875 lithograph to have been developed almost to the extent that it is today. Locally referred to as the Gas Patch in recognition of the Lewiston Gas Light Company that occupied a site two blocks further along Lincoln Street, this area was settled for the most part in the 1850's by Irish laborers, who erected "patches" of small, frame shacks on vacant land owned by the Franklin Company (the Franklin Company still retains ownership of most of the lots in this area and leases building rights). Many of these small houses, in various stages of decline, remain today exactly as constructed, except for the pervasive use of artificial siding materials.

Oxford Street east of the lower canal in 1875 ran only, as mentioned, between Ash and Cedar streets, with much of the central part primarily open land used by the Grand Trunk Railroad for its passenger station and freight depot (demolished). The Continental Mills put up three four-story, brick housing blocks across from their mill in 1866, on land owned by the Franklin Company south of the railroad yards. This end of Oxford Street would be completed in 1907 when the Franklin Company sold the large lot at the corner of Cedar Street and the southern mill housing block to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Maine. By 1908, the basement portion of St. Mary's Church was serving the French speaking community in the Lincoln Street-Little Canada neighborhoods (the superstructure of the church would not be completed until 1928). In that same year, St. Mary's demolished the south half of their old mill housing block, added porches to the front and the rear, and reopened the structure as its rectory. The section of Oxford Street north of the Grand Trunk yards was only partially developed for residential as well as warehouse use. Significantly, what appears as an extension of Oxford Street north to the other side of the cross canal (what is now Water Street) is shown fully developed along both sides as residential, creating a full block-long row of houses. Three houses remain today in an area otherwise underdeveloped, especially considering its location along the Androscoggin River at the major entry into the city.

The area west of Oxford Street was occupied by a large industrial complex consisting of the original Continental Mills (south part) and the Lewiston Mills (north part) that ran the full two-block strip between Cedar and Ash Streets, from the lower canal to the river. The area north of the Lewiston Mills, now the site of the Riverfront Park, was occupied by a number of small, independent mills, some of which were served by a spur line from the Grand Trunk Railroad.

The eastern edge of the Lincoln/Oxford Street section of the downtown was clearly

delineated by the Maine Central Railroad tracks that ran parallel to and just behind the rear elevations of the Bates and the Hill mills. The main passenger station was located at Main Street at what had been the intersection of Mill Street, and a large freight depot was situated just south of the main depot, in the vacant area between the rear property lines of the properties on the east side of Lincoln and the new Bates Mill north of the cross canal.

Main Street in 1875, from the river to Canal Street was fully developed along the south side, with three story, frame, mixed use structures extending east and west from the MCRR depot. The north side of the street in this section was fully developed with similar structures up to Mill Street, with much of the land used as open space in front of the Libbey & Dingley Co. Cotton Mills. The area north of Main Street between the river and the upper canal was (and for the most part remains) occupied by the Cowan and the Columbia Woolen Mills, joined prior to 1900 by the National Shoemaker factory. Main Street east of Lisbon to at least Bates Street was known as Haymarket Square, an area developed prior to the laying out of Lisbon Street and was completely developed by 1875 to serve the wagon trade and the traveler on this major east-west route. The United Baptist Church served as the gateway between Canal and Lisbon streets, with the Central Block across Lisbon and other retail uses including a hardware store and a drug store stretching east to the block then and now occupied by St. Joseph's Church, rectory, and during this period, school. The north side of Haymarket Square contained three frame hay and feed stores with livery and horse stable behind, and a number of "tenements" including four four-story brick structures and three frame buildings of the same size. The complexion of Haymarket Square changed at the turn of the century, when the construction of the B. Peck Department store altered the scale of this area forever. The tenements were soon replaced by such uses as a restaurant, a feed store with a meeting hall above, and a grocery with a bowling alley at the second level. The Main Street Baptist Church at the east end of that part of Main Street in the study area was replaced by the United Baptist Church in 1921, replacing its original building that had been demolished for the construction of the Gateway, or Masonic Hall. Three new buildings, including an automotive sales room (as well as open parking lots) replaced smaller retail oriented buildings along the south side of the street..

Lisbon Street in 1875 was completely developed between Main and Ash, with approximately 75% of the street frontages between Ash and Cedar streets built upon---the area south of Cedar Street was still primarily in use as farm land. The 1886 Sanborn Insurance Atlas shows that the first block of Lisbon Street was 100% occupied, and contained seven brick structures two and one-half to four stories in height, and 42 frame buildings, all but five being two stories or less. The 1886 maps also indicate that the street frontage between Ash and Chestnut streets was also fully developed, with this two block stretch containing 45 structures, nine of brick construction (including the large College Block) rising to a height of three and four stories, the remainder frame, 10 of which were only one story tall. Lisbon Street south of Chestnut was only slightly less developed than the northern section, with 70% coverage at the west side, 80% at the east. The structures were spaced further apart than those in upper Lisbon Street and all but two of the 32 structures were frame. By 1897, Spruce Street had been extended to Park Street and the Sanborn maps show that the Lisbon Street frontage north of Spruce had reached 100% coverage. The physical appearance of Lisbon Street was further changed during the fifteen years prior to

World War One, especially in the first block where seven large scale brick structures, including the Sands Building and the "Gateway" (Masonic Hall) replaced small scale frame structures. Both frontages of Lisbon between Ash and Pine streets were now, with one exception, entirely of brick construction, eight brick structures replaced frame buildings in the block bounded by Pine and Chestnut, and the streetscape between Chestnut and Spruce streets reached 100% coverage. By 1914 Lisbon has assumed much of the visual character than remains today, with only ten buildings erected on the street after the War. The new buildings included, however, the seven story Manufacturer's National Bank (The Professional Building), the tallest building in the downtown.

Unlike Lisbon Street, Park Street had been laid out in the 1851 plan to intersect Main Street at Haymarket Square, and included the present-day Kennedy Park, listed as "Public Square." The 1875 lithograph shows both sides of the first block as being almost fully developed, with dwellings and tenements in the southern two-thirds. The northern part of the east side of Park Street was occupied by retail uses (a Chinese laundry and a drug store in 1896) and a large frame dwelling, while the area across the street included a large livery and carriage house, and a carriage factory and wheelwright. The south section of the west side of this first block, below present day Oak Street (Oak Street was not extended to Park until 1922), was filled with frame two-story dwellings, the row terminated by the Park Street Methodist Church and open space that ran to Ash Street. The block between Ash and Pine streets contained only two boarding houses on the west side, with the Episcopal Church opposite at the corner of Ash and the side elevation of the Dewitt House, which faced Pine Street, at the corner of Pine. The next two blocks, opposite the "Public Square" had the original City Building at the corner of Pine, followed by two frame dwellings, with considerable open space between the buildings. The density further decreased at the block between Chestnut and Birch streets, with clusters of residential structures at either end of the street separated by a large open space. The east side of Park Street was 80% developed with frame tenements between the park and Birch Street, and contained nine tenements, arranged in pairs with large open spaces between them. The west side of the street, from Birch to Maple was developed with large tenements, including the three Androscoggin Mill blocks at Maple, with generous side yards separating the frame units.

The 1886 Sanborn maps document a number of changes along the street, especially the infilling of the northwest corner of Ash and Park south of the Methodist Church with a "Hook & Ladder Hq." fire station, a large tenement, another carriage factory, and along Ash Street, three stores with "lodgings above." The northwest corner of Park and Pine was now the location of the impressive Lewiston Opera House, with another livery stable to the north, but there was little other change to the streetscape south of Chestnut. It appears also that with one major exception, little change in density occurred along Park Street during the next decade, the exception being the destruction by fire of the opera house and the city building, with a new city building being constructed in 1892, the opera house site remaining vacant. By 1914, as was the case with Lisbon Street, the character of Pine Street would be established for the next 60 years. Reflecting the newly emerging automobile, both sides of the first block of Park Street underwent re-development, with car dealerships and repair facilities between Main and what would become Oak Street. The fire station was considerably enlarged, the block along the north side of Ash was completely developed into mixed retail/residential use, and, in the next block, the old opera house site was now occupied by the "Carnegie Public Library." The area south of the city building,

opposite the park, was in-filled with tenements and a bowling alley, a large, sixteen unit tenement was constructed in the block bounded by Chestnut and Spruce Street (which by this time had been extended to Lisbon Street), and both sides of Park Street for the next three blocks would be 100% developed as residential.

This change in transportation during the period immediately prior to World War One was exemplified by the construction of a number of automotive sales and service establishments (especially in the 1920's, see below), and by the construction of the Portland, Gray, Lewiston Electric Railroad Terminal at 116 Middle Street in 1914.

A number of important buildings that added to the visual image of Lewiston were erected between the World Wars, most notably the United Baptist Church on Main at Bates, and the classic revival Depositor's Trust, 55 Lisbon Street (both 1921), a large automotive sales and service structure that occupied the full width of the Oak Street frontage (newly extended to Park Street) between Park and Middle Streets, now the Oak Street Apartments (1922), the introduction of the Art Deco style at two new buildings at 181 and 195 Main and at two shops on Lisbon Street (1929-31), the Post Office on Ash Street (1931), Centreville Plaza, built as a Montgomery-Wards in 1933, the Institut Jacques Cartier, 227 Lisbon (1938), the Manufacturer's Trust, now Fleet Bank, on Ash (1954), and the new Lewiston Sun Building on Pine opposite Kennedy Park (1970). In addition to these buildings, all listed as contributing structures in the architectural survey completed as a part of this plan, a number of large scale projects of indifferent design merit were also erected in the Downtown Development District. These buildings, which while listed as non-contributing in the survey because of their post -1945 date of construction, do not detract from the overall character of the area, and include the Salvation Army Building (1959) the new Courts Building (1973) and the police station on Park Street, 54-64 Lisbon Street (now McCrory's, 1955), the Androscoggin Savings Bank, 24 Lisbon (1974) and the changes made to the original Masonic Building, now the Gateway, after a 1977 fire. Time will be the judge of the eventual significance of the design of these buildings.

There were also a number of changes to the fabric of the area during the middle two-thirds of this century that, while done in good faith, seriously impacted the historic integrity of the downtown. The two most important changes were the construction of the Country Kitchen bakery on Lisbon Street, covering the entire block between Spruce and Birch Streets, and the urban renewal project that caused the total clearance of the two blocks between Park, Bates, Oak and Ash streets for the construction of an open, non-landscaped municipal parking lot that overwhelms the entire area in scale and materials. While contributing to employment in the downtown, the block long Country Kitchen bakery is totally out of place regarding scale, massing, fenestration and materials for Lisbon Street, creates significant traffic problems at its loading area on Park Street, and establishes a foreign edge to what is otherwise an impressive four-block long streetscape that is Downtown Lewiston (conversely, the equally massive Country Kitchen structure between Canal and Lincoln streets at Cedar is well sited and is compatible with its neighbors, the Hill Mill buildings). Additional out-of-scale structures erected after World War Two include two rear additions to Lisbon Street retail establishments that extend through to Park Street, 41-45 Park (1955) and 49-53 Park (1946), and a wholesale grocers warehouse, now the Lewiston Food Bank, 427-485 Lisbon (1963). Other detrimental changes include the 1960's

redevelopment of lower Lisbon Street between Willow and Maple, the replacement of all but one structure along the north side of Main Street, Chapel Street to Bates, and the redevelopment of the south side of Main, Lincoln Street to Mill Street. The pressing need for off-street parking caused the loss of a number of historic properties along the south side of Main Street, but most importantly along Canal Street. These blocks, once occupied by the Bates and the Hill mill tenements, were leveled for parking lots (and eventually the municipal garage), most of which occurred in the late 1950's and early 1960's. Also, the Canal Street frontage below Cedar Street was almost entirely redeveloped in the 1970's to provide space for light industrial uses as well as parking, most of the residences on Water Street (the northern extension of Oxford Street) were removed and replaced with light industrial and warehousing structures, isolating the Androscoggin River from public access, and Oxford Street, north of Chestnut Street fell to the same type of industrialization. While Lincoln Street lost a large number of early tenement houses during the post WW II era, reducing its density by about 40%, the most dramatic loss in the Lincoln-Oxford Street corridor occurred in Little Canada. Here the densely knit neighborhood, where non-interrupted rows of frame tenements created wall-like streetscapes, suffered the loss of 14 residential and two retail structures with residential at the upper floors since 1956 alone.

Demolition for open parking lots and the construction of new, non-contributing buildings were not the only actions that helped to diminish the architectural and historic character of downtown---a number of insensitive remodelings to otherwise architecturally important structures has seriously impacted the pedestrians view of downtown. These remodelings include entire facades such as the Music Hall, two structures at 149-155 Lisbon Street now hidden by a single, inappropriate porcelain panel screen with the first floor completely altered, People's Bank at the corner of Lisbon and Ash, with its new glass facade, 152 Lisbon Street, and the Scruton Block (until recently Marcotte's Furniture), 199 Lisbon. In addition, many if not most of the ground floor facades have been changed during the past seventy-five years, some of which only marginally effect the aesthetics of the building, others that totally detract from the structure and the streetscape.

The above described actions have combined over the past half-century to create a downtown that has survived aesthetically only because the large collection of architecturally and culturally significant structures that were erected when the area was the retail core of the entire region was so important to begin with. Despite the numerous insensitive alterations that have been made to this fabric, Downtown Lewiston has the opportunity to re-establish itself as the most impressive small city in the state, especially if city officials pay heed to directions suggested in the recently published *Downtown Action Plan*⁴

"We still have immense needs in the Downtown that must be addressed through elimination of blighting influences, provision of better educational and employment opportunities, redevelopment of important historic buildings, promotion of

⁴ *City of Lewiston Downtown Action Plan*, prepared by the Downtown Study Committee, Lewiston, March 1995, p.5.

new businesses and generally improving the image of the Downtown."

All of these recommendations are in concert with the objectives of this preservation plan, but perhaps the most important action is the recapturing of a positive image for the Downtown Development District. Historically, Lewiston's *raison d'etre* was the Androscoggin River and the construction of the canals that harnessed the enormous water power that in turn led to the construction of the mills. Everything else followed these three inter-related resources. However, with the exception of the recently developed Riverfront Park and the pedestrian bridge over the river, and the establishment of a bicycle path along the riverbank and through the mill sites, there is little recognition of this importance today. The sheer mass and bulk of the mills make them hard to dismiss, and while their potential for re-establishing an image and a link with the past for the city has not yet been fully realized, major ongoing efforts to induce new tenants to the approximately 6 million square feet of available space within the mills will hopefully prove fruitful. Along with the symbolic importance of the mills, the original, almost rural visual images provided by the tree-lined canal system have been lost through the removal of the trees and the recent construction of non-contributing structures, but especially by the removal of the solid walls of buildings along the east side of Canal and Oxford Streets that framed and visually contained the canals, producing unparalleled vistas of up to three-quarters of a mile in length.

Today's image is further weakened by the loss of identifiable gateways to the downtown, both at lower Lisbon Street and at the Lewiston end of the James B. Longley Bridge from Auburn, and by the gaps in what had been fully developed streetscapes, especially along both sides of Main Street and in that section of Lisbon Street between Willow and Maple Streets, extending along the east side to Birch Street. Little Canada, of great importance to the roots of today's Franco-American community and to explaining the growth of the textile mills through the importation of immigrant labor, has lost a great deal of its original image, not only through the recent loss of buildings but by the visual effects resulting from the post WW II wave of aluminum and vinyl siding that caused the removal of much of the original trim and details that gave the tenements character and scale. This same loss of visual identity has occurred along Lisbon Street, where previously mentioned alterations to the ground floors have denuded many buildings of their original character, and where the covering of entire building facades has not only hidden architectural details of merit but has created a new, non-pedestrian related scale along certain streetscapes---witness the Music Hall and especially what had been the Marcotte Furniture store at Lisbon and Pine Streets when compared to the recently saved and restored Pilsbury block across the street. One final detraction from the image of the downtown worthy of mention is the under-utilization of a large number of buildings fronting on Lisbon and Main Streets, especially at vacant upper floors, but with a number of entire buildings now vacant and boarded-up (a problem that unfortunately is not unique to Lewiston). These and other areas where the preservation plan may be of benefit in influencing the positive change in the image, and thereby the future, of the Downtown Development District, are addressed in Section V of this report.

III. Preservation in Lewiston-prior accomplishments

Preservation in Lewiston has been an ongoing concern for at least the past forty years. Official recognition of the need to preserve and protect the essential elements of the city's history as part of its future occurred in August, 1969, when then mayor John Beliveau appointed a five member committee charged with the responsibility of identifying "historical sites and determine ways to preserve and restore them."⁵ The committee was formally established as the Lewiston Historic Commission under the revised city charter of 1970. By 1972, at which time the Commission was enlarged to twelve members, and had started an historic survey of the entire city, a process that continued until 1980. During this period, the Commission maintained an active speakers bureau, initiated an oral history project by interviewing representatives from the many ethnic groups that contribute to the diversity of the city's population, published numerous preservation and conservation articles, prepared a walking tour, and established a dialogue with city officials and private developers by participating in discussions concerning the future of such sites as the Grand Trunk Railroad Station. The Commission was also instrumental in the preparation of a number of National Register nominations, with properties accepted as early as 1975 (Kora Temple) and 1976 (Lewiston City Hall, Oak Street School). In 1982 the Commission worked with the city's planning office to initiate research that led to the establishment of the Kennedy Park local historic district and the Lower Lisbon Street National Register Historic District, and, in the same year, participated in the framing of the various ordinances that would lead to the creation of a local Historic Preservation Review Board.

After receiving a survey and planning grant from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission in 1984, the Commission hired a survey coordinator to carry out a ten week project aimed at completing state forms for 250-300 buildings. At the completion of the ten weeks, 125 buildings in the Lisbon-Main Street area had been documented. While the funded survey efforts were terminated at that time, voluntary survey work has continued to add to the inventory record. These materials are on file at the Commission's offices in the Dingley Building, and were made available for review and updating during this study. In addition to the survey work, the Commission has continued to contribute to the education of the citizens of the entire region and the state, and in 1974 published the first in a series of scholarly publications, including *Historic Lewiston---Franco-American Origins* (1974), *Historic Lewiston---A Textile City in Transition* (1976), *Historic Lewiston---its government* (1981-82), and *Historic Lewiston---its Fire Department* (1989). Each of these reports contributed in large part to the historic research completed as a part of the preservation plan.

Through the efforts of the Lewiston Historic Commission, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and local citizens, 42 individual buildings and sites, and one historic district, Lower Lisbon Street, had been entered into the National Register of Historic Places by the end of 1989. During this same period the city was in the process of developing legislation aimed at creating local "designated historic structures and historic districts" that would be under the jurisdiction of a new Historic Preservation Review Board. This legislation was approved in 1991 as Article XV of the Lewiston Zoning and Land Use Code, "Significant Buildings and Districts" (Ord. No. 90-16,

⁵ *Highlights of Lewiston Historic Commission*, undated typewritten manuscript prepared by the LHC. Last entry dated 1989.

1-11-91). Article XV created a seven member Historic Preservation Review Board, each member to be a registered voter of the city and appointed by the mayor for a three year term. The Article specifies precise guidelines for the "designation of structures and districts for preservation and conservation" (Sec. 3.), criteria for determining the "standards for designation of structures and districts as significant" (Sec. 4), and details procedures for the issuance of "Certificates of Appropriateness" (Sec. 5). Under the provisions of an 1993 amendment, Article XV also lists by name and address all "designated historic structures and historic districts" (Sec. 6) (Ord.92-332, 1-7-93).

Section 3 also lists six potential city agencies or local citizen groups that can initiate the designation of historic structures or districts--- city council, a petition signed by 6 or more residents of the city 18 years of age or older, the planning board, the Lewiston Historical Commission, the Maine State Preservation Commission (MHPC), and at its own initiation, the Review Board itself. A public hearing must be held for each application, and the Review Board passes its recommendation on to the city council, where official designation is contingent on a two-thirds vote.

Two historic districts are designated in Section 6, Article XV: Kennedy Park (a local district certified by the MHPC as eligible to receive benefits under provisions of the Tax Reform Act ---see Section VII, below) that includes 30 individually listed properties, and Lower Lisbon Street (a local and National Register district) with 12 such properties. Section 6 lists 29 sites outside the two historic districts that "are recommended for historic preservation," a number that has been increased since 1993 to 35. Of the 75 structures designated as historic by the city, 37 are located in the Downtown Development District. Conversely, the local register omits six properties currently included in the National Register, one of which, the U. S. Post Office on Ash Street is located in the preservation plan study area.

Along with the designation of additional historic properties or districts, the primary charge of the Review Board is included in Section 5 of Article XV, the issuance of Certificates of Appropriateness which are required if there is to be:

- (1) *Any change in the exterior appearance of a designated historic structure or contributing structure within a designated historic district;*
- (2) *New construction of a principal or accessory building or structure....within a designated historic district;*
- (3) *Demolition or removal of a designated historic structure or contributing structure within a designated historic district;*
- (4) *Any change in siding materials, roofing materials, exterior door and window sash, and integral decorative elements... of a designated historic structure or contributing structure within a designated historic district.⁶*

⁶ Appendix A: Zoning and Land Use Code, City of Lewiston, 1993, pp.165-173.

With this ordinance in effect, the Historic Preservation Review Board can play a significant role in determining the preservation and conservation of the historic fabric of the Downtown Development District. Relying primarily on *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* and *Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Structures* the Review Board has been provided with an excellent set of enforceable criteria to review applications for changes, demolition or new construction within the existing districts or that will affect currently listed buildings. The tools are in place, especially if the proposed Lewiston Mill Historic District and an enlarged Retail District National Register Historic District recommended in Section IV of this report are approved for inclusion in the National Register. If the city council elects to accept the two new National Register Historic Districts as local districts, the city and its Historic Preservation Review Board will have a unique opportunity to influence the future visual appearance of and reinforce the historic and cultural context of the entire Downtown Development District. Along with this opportunity for the review of all work proposed in the three historic districts within the Downtown Development District goes the responsibility for providing a positive atmosphere that will promote rather than challenge sensitive improvements to the existing building stock. As an example of the assistance that should be made available to potential developers before the fact, the proposed Preservation Index, explained in Section IV below, establishes where new development can be channeled to improve, without adversely affecting, the character of the District, and is designed to be utilized in streamlining the review process.

IV: Survey of historic structures

As required in the initial outline for the Preservation Plan, the survey phase of the project was to complete state survey forms at the intensive level, with the direction to "*concentrate on four major areas:*

- 1. The commercial and residential buildings of the non-contributing area within the Lewiston Mill System District (approximately 5-10 buildings);*
- 2. Other historic buildings on Lisbon Street not on the National Register (approximately 25 buildings);*
- 3. Engineering components and hydroelectric elements of the Lewiston Mill System Project;*
- 4. Little Canada Residential Historic District (5-10 buildings)."*

As it had been agreed that the primary planning tool to result from any survey and research effort in the Downtown Development District would be a composite Preservation Index (see below) for use in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, it became necessary to inventory all buildings and structures in the entire downtown study area. This enlarged inventory was also to include the non-mill related structures located within the Lewiston Mill System District (a study being carried out simultaneously with this project), and the six hydro-electric generating plants in

the riverfront area owned by Central Maine Power---the Monty Station, Upper Bates, Lower Bates, Hill Mill, Continental Mill and the Androscoggin Mill. Predicated on the need for the comprehensive data required to prepare the Preservation Index, survey forms provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and black and white photographs were completed at the reconnaissance level for every building in the Downtown Development District. When completed, the expanded reconnaissance level survey recorded 304 contributing structures (not including the mill structures) rather than the 45 buildings suggested in the original outline. A reconnaissance level survey of riverfront archaeological sites was completed under a separate contract and is available for review at City Hall.

Based on prior survey materials, research files and publications made available through the generosity of the Lewiston Historical Commission and the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, map research completed at the Androscoggin County Historical Society, and additional map analyses and important deed research of specific properties completed by members of the Historic Preservation Review Board, 32 individual building survey forms (over and above the 37 buildings in the study area previously listed in the National Register), were raised to the Intensive Level. The 304 buildings included in this new inventory are identified by code number on the accompanying map, Figure 1, the code corresponding to copies of the survey forms on file with the city (a larger scale copy of this survey map is available at the city, while the original forms, large scale maps, photographs and negatives are on file at the offices of the MHPC in Augusta).

A: Preservation Index

The Downtown Development District survey, as complete in coverage as it is regarding an inventory of all contributing structures in the study area, is not pro-active---it is in its present form only a catalog of the man-made historic resources located within the district. To be meaningful as a component of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan under preparation by the city, it is essential that the reconnaissance survey be re-cast to form a basis for establishing preservation priorities on a building-by-building basis for the entire Downtown Development District. The broadened survey, referred to as a Preservation Index, can serve as before the fact guidelines that may influence decisions to be made by city officials that will affect, pro and con, historically, architecturally or visually contributing structures--- building acquisitions, demolitions, facade improvements, and code enforcement and zoning changes (such as conditional uses for historic buildings in the Lisbon Street area), among other actions. The Preservation Index can be especially useful as a pro-active guide to potential developers seeking to acquire property in the Development District, either for rehabilitation (in which case additional financial incentives may be available for contributing structures) or for redevelopment, by identifying areas where new construction within the Development District can and even should take place--- the Index identifies individual or groups of marginal or non-contributing buildings where change, based on historic preservation concerns alone, can take place without impacting the historic continuity or importance of the district as a whole, if such changes are in compliance with city codes and ordinances. Also while any demolition, new construction or alterations proposed at any individually listed building or buildings included in the historic districts currently under the purview of the Lewiston Historic Preservation Review Board will still require review by that

board, the Preservation Index can be used as a guide to the Board by identifying the historic and architectural importance of a specific site. In numerous other towns and cities with a similar review board or commission, the detail and extent of the review process is often based on the preservation value of a specific property, usually utilizing a device similar to the Preservation Index as a guide. Traditionally, those properties ranked in the higher categories are subjected to the most rigorous controls---any changes to the original fabric of a National Register property, as an example, would likely be limited to restoration as opposed to alterations, and the demolition of any such building, other than that required for public health and safety, can be categorically prohibited by the Commission. In the same way, changes to or the demolition of a property in the lowest category, non-contributing structures, can be restricted, at the discretion of the Commission, to the impact of any proposed change in physical appearance on the neighboring structures and on the district as a whole.⁷

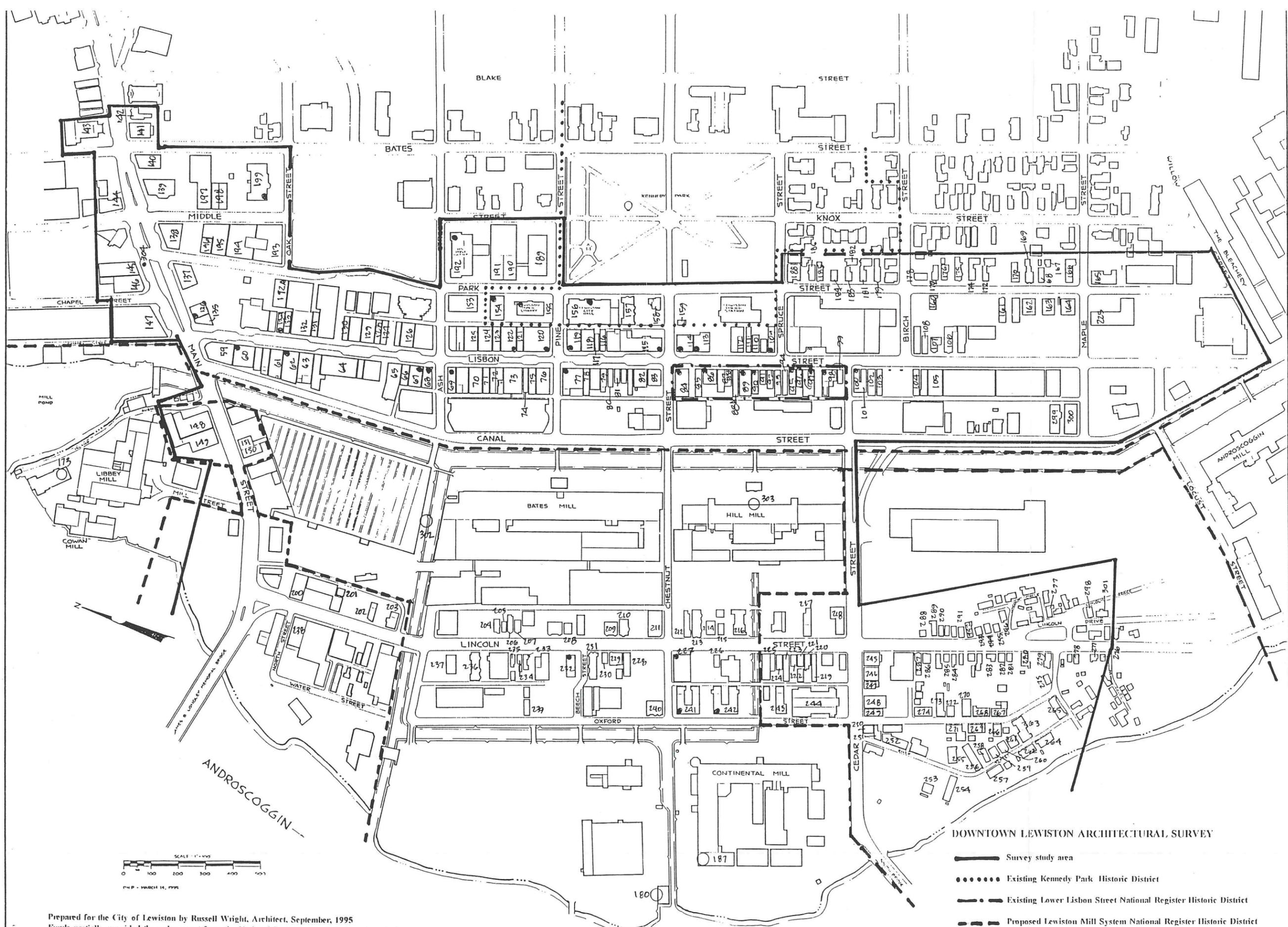
The proposed Lewiston Preservation Index for the Downtown Development district, Figure 2, assigns each property in the district to one of five categories: A (blue)-Currently on the National Register, individually listed within the existing local Kennedy Park or the Lower Lisbon Street National Register historic districts, or individually listed in the proposed Lewiston Mill Historic District; B (magenta)-Buildings of major importance that, based on historic preservation objectives, are essential to the character of Lewiston and must remain; C (red)-Buildings of great importance to the character of the downtown and should remain; D (yellow)-Contributing buildings that should remain unless a compelling reason (such as structural or environmental conditions or major planning proposals that would provide greater benefit to the Development District) dictates their replacement; and, E (green)-Non-contributing buildings that can be replaced without lessening the integrity of the district as a whole. With regard to preservation objectives, buildings in this category are considered expendable.

The Preservation Index is derived from a composite rating of three factors:

1. Architectural or associative value,
2. The importance and compatibility of a particular building to its environment, and
3. Physical or environmental condition and design integrity.

Structures specifically identified within the Lower Lisbon Street and the Kennedy Park Historic Districts, and individually listed buildings in the Downtown Development District but outside the register districts were placed in a separate group, Category A, in recognition of their acknowledged value. The remaining buildings were evaluated in the field for the three components stated above, with the rating then adjusted as required to recognize historic or associative importance---such as activities that took place at the Music Hall, the first Penny Arcade, Le Messenger and other sites important to the development of the city. Architectural values were assigned in a somewhat subjective manner, based on the importance of an individual building as an example of a particular style or period, the number of buildings of that particular period or style that remain in the district (a sole remaining example of a building type, or an example of the use of a material or innovative structural system would score high), the designer or builder, if known (the work of an architect or

⁷ This consultant developed the Preservation Index concept as a part of the preservation plan for the Vieux Carre in New Orleans. It has subsequently been used successfully in such important historic cities as Charleston, Alexandria, Washington, D.C. and Newport.

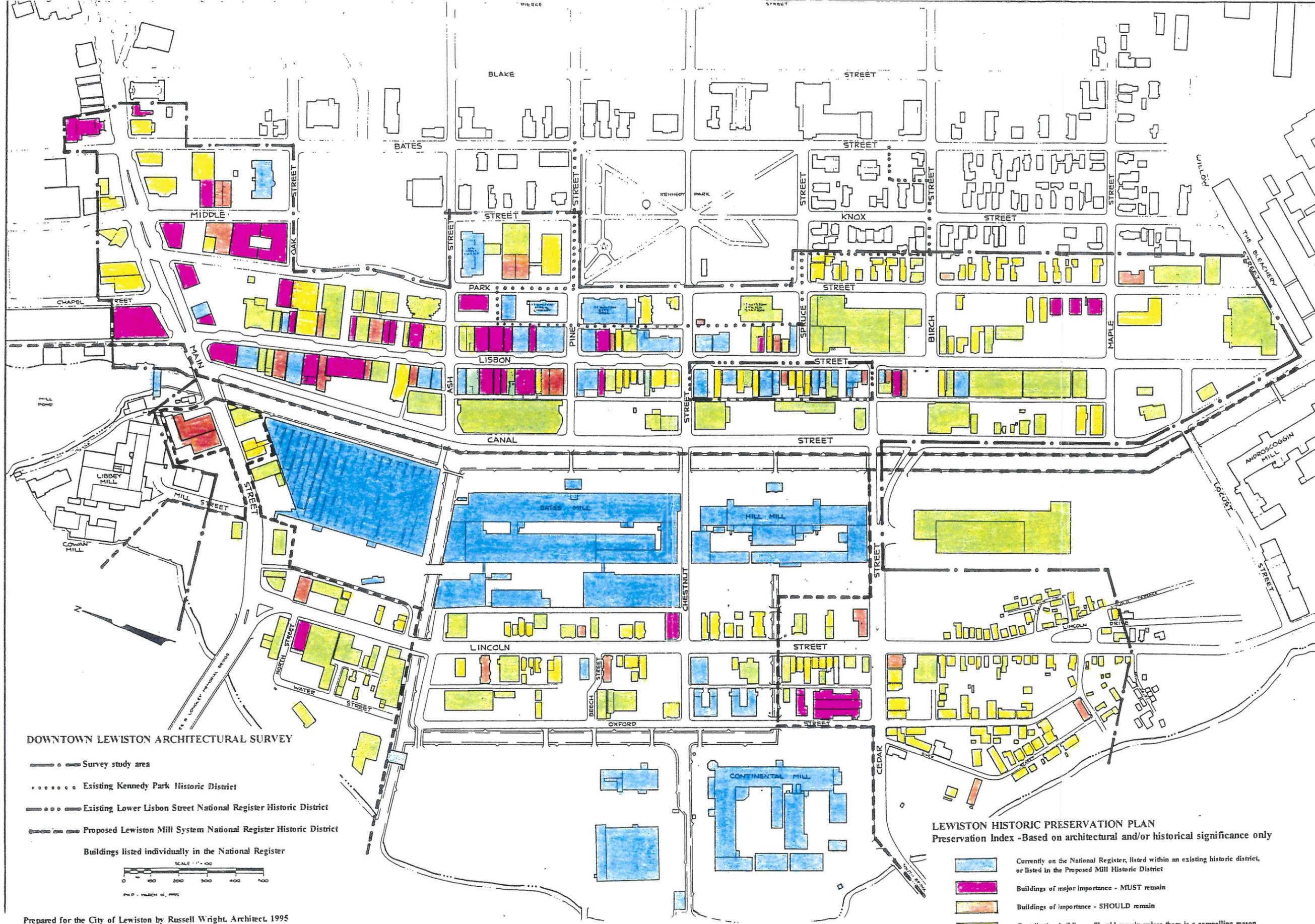


D.P.P. - MARCH 14, 1995

Prepared for the City of Lewiston by Russell Wright, Architect, September, 1995
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DOWNTOWN LEWISTON ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

- Survey study area
- Existing Kennedy Park Historic District
- Existing Lower Lisbon Street National Register Historic District
- - - Proposed Lewiston Mill System National Register Historic District
- Buildings listed individually in the National Register



DOWNTOWN LEWISTON ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

- Survey study area
- Existing Kennedy Park Historic District
- Existing Lower Lisbon Street National Register Historic District
- Proposed Lewiston Mill System National Register Historic District

Buildings listed individually in the National Register



SCALE 1" = 100'

LEWISTON HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN
 Preservation Index - Based on architectural and/or historical significance only

- Currently on the National Register, listed within an existing historic district, or listed in the Proposed Mill Historic District
- Buildings of major importance - MUST remain
- Buildings of importance - SHOULD remain
- Contributing buildings - Should remain unless there is a compelling reason to replace (major planning proposal, structural or environmental conditions)
- Non-Contributing buildings - can be replaced without loss to the integrity of the downtown area

Prepared for the City of Lewiston by Russell Wright, Architect, 1995
 Funds partially provided by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior

firm important to Maine and the nation would affect the rating), or the role of a building that is part of an exceptional row or group of buildings, where the loss of one would lessen the total value of the group. Each structure other than those ranked in Category A was placed into one of four categories, Group 1, Outstanding; Group 2, Important; Group 3, Significant, and Group 4, of no architectural importance to the district.

The importance and compatibility of a building to its environment was judged according to three factors, 1. The size, massing, sighting, materials, fenestration pattern and roof form of a building as compared to its immediate neighbors, 2. The land use comparability of a particular building, and 3. An analysis of the feasibility of converting the building, if it is a non-conforming use, to a more acceptable use. Physical or environmental condition and design integrity was based on the field survey of exterior and site conditions only. Physical conditions included the basic structural condition of a structure, concentrating on primary building components, and were noted on the MHPC Architectural Survey forms as good, fair, or poor. Environmental conditions considered overall density and crowding (Little Canada) as well as site conditions of a neighborhood or an individual property, and the general upkeep of a particular area (ie: unfenced and unkempt vacant lots penalized contiguous properties). Design integrity was scored on the basis of the extent, if any, of changes to a building, especially to the street facade, that altered the original appearance of a structure in a negative way. Changes thought to be reversible, such as aluminum or vinyl siding, new porcelain panel facades that were attached to the building without removal of original decorative features (Marcotte Furniture and the Music Hall on Lisbon Street as examples) were considered less harshly than the complete removal and replacement of ground floor facades, where all clues to the original design were obliterated.

The structural and environmental condition rating of an individual building was influenced to a certain degree by the architectural rating that building received. This was done to recognize the difference in the economic feasibility of replacing a facade on a building rated high in the architectural component of the analysis to that of replacing the aluminum siding on a building of little or no architectural significance, or the difference in reconstructing the roof and gutter system at the Dominican Block versus the same expense at a non-contributing structure. Based on preservation objectives alone (discounting the economic investments that represented by a large number of the non-contributing structures such as the new banking institutions or the bakery on Lisbon Street), it is far more preferable that what limited monies that may be available for rehabilitation, facade replacements or other improvements be directed at buildings that contribute to the visual and historic character of the Downtown Development District.

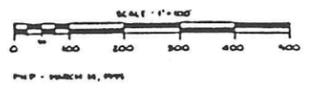
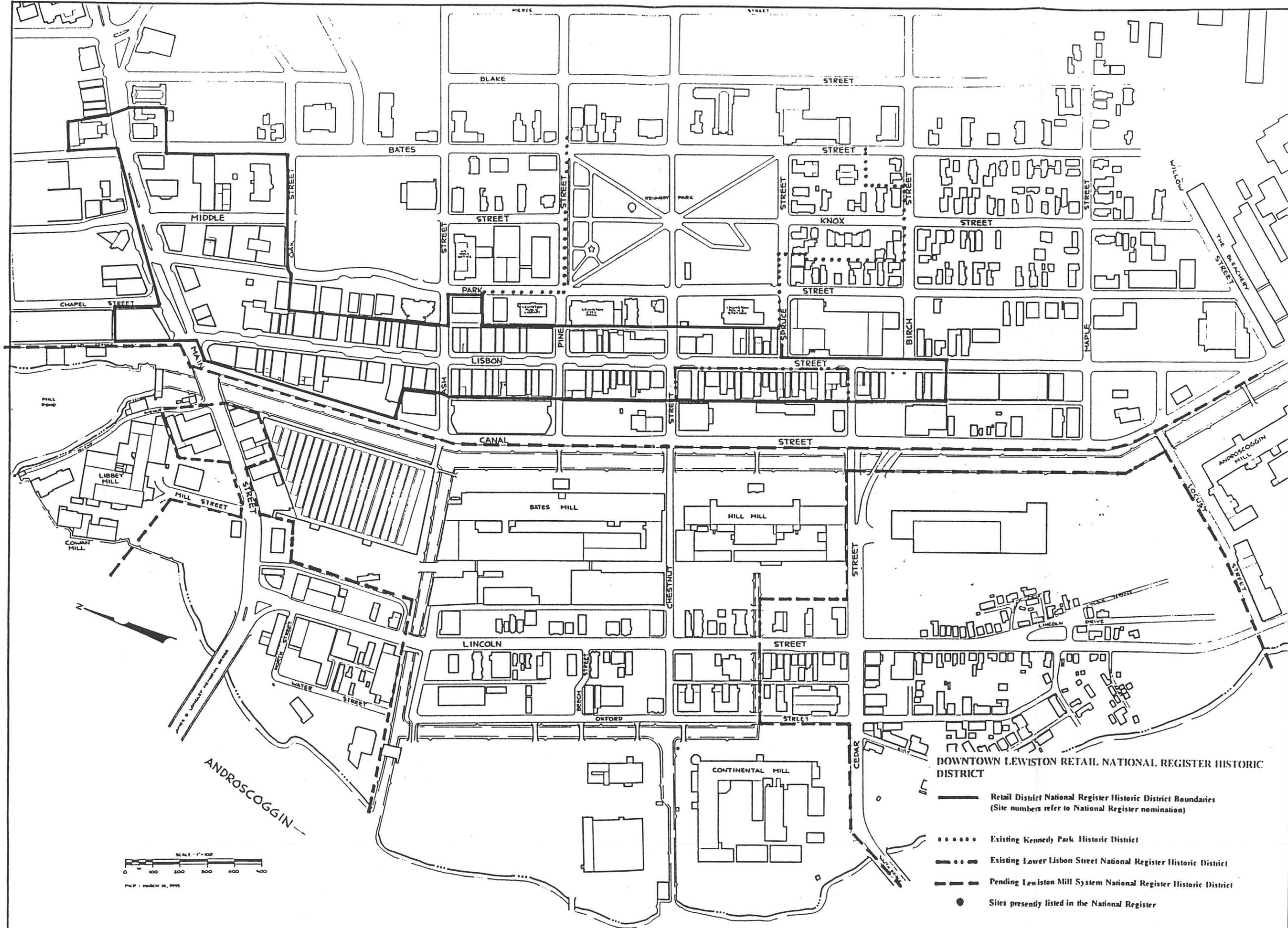
As shown on the map, Category A buildings are scattered throughout the entire length of Lisbon Street, and include the Bates, Hill and Continental mill buildings west of Canal Street. Category A also includes a number of randomly located structures; the City Hall, Library, Knights of Columbus Hall, and the Post Office in the Park Street corridor, the Continental Mill blocks, the Dominican Block, and the Grand Trunk Railroad Station in the Lincoln-Oxford Street area, and, on Main Street, the First National Bank (Central Block). This impressive stock of National Register properties is reinforced by buildings that are of great architectural importance to the city, Category B, many of which are concentrated along Lisbon and Maine streets, but the list also includes St. Mary's Church and Rectory, Marcotte Furniture on Lincoln Street, and the

Androscoggin Mill blocks on lower Park Street, among others. Category C, buildings that should remain because they play an important role as background buildings that help to define the character of the Downtown Development District, occur primarily along Lisbon and Lincoln streets, with additional listings in Little Canada, lower Main Street and on both sides of Middle Street. Buildings regarded as contributing structures, Category D, include all of Little Canada, most of the Gas Patch area, all of the east frontage along lower Park Street and significant concentrations on Lincoln, Main and Lisbon streets. In most cases, these buildings were of marginal significance when built, or have been significantly altered over time.

Non-contributing structures, Category E, are considered as such because of a lack of design merit or an almost total loss of the integrity and importance of their original design (later glass facades, the removal and replacement of original materials), structural or environmental conditions that were considered to render restoration economically infeasible, or because they post-date 1945, a cut-off date imposed by the MHPC under normal circumstances for survey work (later buildings of exceptional or innovative design, or the work of an important architect or firm may be included, and have been in this instance). *It is critical that it be recognized that buildings placed in Category E are not necessarily recommended for replacement at this time. A listing in this group indicates only that, based on historic preservation objectives, they are considered expendable and there will likely be no objections based on preservation concerns to any such action should a public agency or a potential developer entertain such a proposal.* Buildings in this category are scattered along Lisbon, Lincoln and lower Main streets, affording numerous opportunities for quality in-fill development in strategic locations within the parameters of the preservation plan. Importantly, concentrations of Category E buildings occur at the two major gateways to the Downtown Development District, the Longley Memorial Bridge and lower Lisbon Street at Willow Street, and at Lincoln Street (now under consideration as a possible truck route to relieve through traffic on Lisbon Street), in both the densely developed Gas Patch area and between Chestnut and Main streets. The Preservation Index also outlines two groupings of structures that are considered essential to the character of the district, Little Canada and the Androscoggin Mill Housing Blocks at lower Park Street. These two areas, as well as others, are included in a number of specific preservation planning proposals suggested below to illustrate how the Preservation Index can be used to the greatest benefit.

B: Proposed National Register Historic District

Based on the expanded architectural survey (and supplemented by the Preservation Index), a new National Register Historic District nomination package has been prepared as part of the Preservation Plan. The new district, Figure 3, would include all of Lisbon Street, from the north side of Main Street to Spruce Street at the east and mid-block between Cedar and Maple streets on the west, all of the south side of Main Street between Canal Street and St. Joseph's Rectory, the Peck building and the First Baptist Church on the north side of the street, and the two blocks bounded by Main, Bates, Oak and Park streets. As drawn, this new district would be contiguous to the western edge of the local Kennedy Park Historic District and, with the exception of the strip fronting along Canal Street between Ash and Cedar streets, would abut the proposed Lewiston Mill System District. The new district also incorporates the entire Lower Lisbon Street and the Downtown Lewiston Multiple Resources Districts presently on the National Register,



DOWNTOWN LEWISTON RETAIL NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT

- Retail District National Register Historic District Boundaries (Site numbers refer to National Register nomination)
- Existing Kennedy Park Historic District
- Existing Lower Lisbon Street National Register Historic District
- - - Pending Lewiston Mill System National Register Historic District
- Sites presently listed in the National Register

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consolidating all of these fractional districts into one coherent whole. The proposed Lewiston Retail District National Register Historic District would include 95 of the 304 buildings and sites included in the MHPC reconnaissance level survey of the study area. More importantly, if this district and the proposed Mill System District are approved, only three buildings or groups of buildings rated in Categories A and B in the Preservation Index (the Androscoggin Mill Housing Blocks, St. Mary's Church and Rectory, and a commercial-warehouse type structure at the corner of North and Lincoln Streets would not be included in a local or a National Register District. To rectify this, National Register nomination forms for the church and for the mill blocks have been prepared as part of this preservation plan.

A fact sheet prepared by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission summarizes the effects on properties individually listed or considered as a contributing structure in a listed National Register District:

- A. *Listing in the National Register gives official recognition to the historic and cultural importance of a property as part of the Nation's heritage which ought to be preserved.*
- B. *Properties listed in the National Register or deemed eligible for such listing are afforded protection from adverse impact from projects funded, licensed, or executed by the Federal Government.*
- C. *Depreciable properties in the National Register (including contributing properties as well as individually listed properties in a National Register District; ed.) can qualify for certified rehabilitation tax credit incentives (as well as deductions for charitable contributions for conservation purposes of partial ownership--usually facade easements; see section that follows dealing with incentives).*
- D. *Control and authority over the use and disposition of a propertyremain solely with the owner unless he has applied for and received a matching grant or other Federal funding, or is participating in a rehabilitation tax credit prproject. Listing in the National Register does not mean that limitations will be placed on the property by the Federal Government. Public visitation rights are not required by the owner.⁸*

V: Suggested proposals for improving the aesthetic and cultural quality of the downtown

Based on the preservation goals developed for this plan and the presence of strategically located conditionally available sites as delineated in the Preservation Index (Section IV.) a number of planning proposals are suggested in this section for possible consideration for incorporation into the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The proposals represent an effort to explain the use of the Preservation Index in developing urban design and administrative strategies for the downtown,

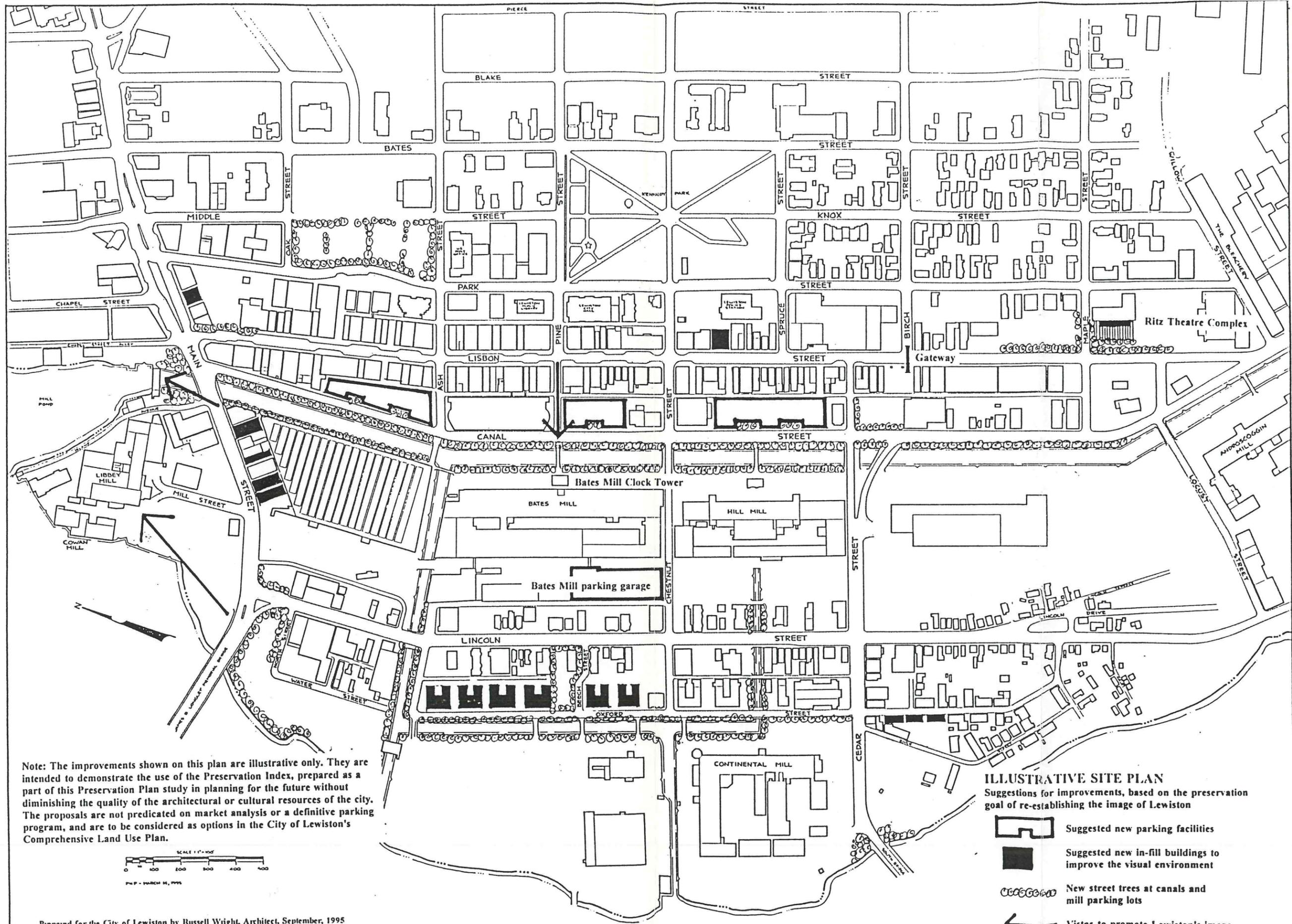
⁸ Undated fact sheet, *The National Register of Historic Places--What are its effects?* Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta

but as no market analysis for the downtown or information regarding specific locations and number of spaces required to satisfy a perceived need for additional off-street parking have been made available at this time, the suggestions should be considered as illustrative only. The feasibility of these suggestions obviously relies on an improved economic climate that is the primary goal of the Comprehensive Plan, and must comply with the overall objectives of that document and meet all city codes and ordinances.

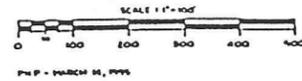
The suggestions are illustrated in sketch form on Figure 4, and are discussed in the same order as the preservation goals stated in Section I.

1. *Recognize, preserve and protect the resources that define the unique character of the Downtown Development District:* Once the proposed Lewiston Mill System and the Retail District National Register Historic District nominations have received approval for inclusion in the register, the city council should designate both districts as local historic districts, thereby affording them the protection offered by the Historic Preservation Review Board. Tax credits and other incentives available to National Register properties, combined with local incentives and the knowledge that any investment in the rehabilitation of a property will be protected through the review process should markedly improve the economic feasibility for the improvement of properties listed in a National Register or a local historic district. Similarly, once the Androscoggin Mill Blocks have been accepted for inclusion to the National Register, they should be added to the city's listing of historic structures. Commendably, the city has already invested in street, sidewalk, curbing, parking and landscaping improvements in this area as a part of the Ritz Theatre Improvement Project, and owns 269 Park Street, the southern most building in the row of three. The city should consider the possibility of placing restrictive easements (see Section VII.) on this property and either selling or transferring title to this building to an owner willing to restore the exterior within a stipulated time-frame to meet the requirements of the Lewiston Historic Preservation Review Board. An obvious recipient would be the Ritz Theatre, but financial considerations may preclude restoration in the immediate future, and while the theatre could be eligible for local financial incentives, as a non-profit corporation it would not be eligible for Federal tax credits as explained in Section VII. (These credits would be available to a qualified private developer, however, who as a condition of the sale might enter into a long-term lease with the theatre, keeping the building on the city's tax roll.) There is no better way to protect a vacant and deteriorating historic structure than to put it back into a productive use, and it is suggested that the city, at virtually no additional cost to the city, might consider the disposal of this mill block for restoration purposes as a demonstration of its commitment to the preservation of Lewiston's industrial heritage. Figure 5 shows the mill block as it originally appeared and shows that only minimal restoration would be required.

2. *Contribute to the vitality and the economic development of the downtown:* The Downtown Development District, and especially Lisbon Street, is seriously impacted by an inordinate amount of under-utilized floor space, the most critical being vacant upper floors that signal the decline of a once prosperous mixed-use residential and shopping area. A good deal of these vacancies are the result of the residential market shifting from downtown to other areas within or outside the city, and the lack of a demand for traditional retail space that was once the



Note: The improvements shown on this plan are illustrative only. They are intended to demonstrate the use of the Preservation Index, prepared as a part of this Preservation Plan study in planning for the future without diminishing the quality of the architectural or cultural resources of the city. The proposals are not predicated on market analysis or a definitive parking program, and are to be considered as options in the City of Lewiston's Comprehensive Land Use Plan.



ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN
 Suggestions for improvements, based on the preservation goal of re-establishing the image of Lewiston

-  Suggested new parking facilities
-  Suggested new in-fill buildings to improve the visual environment
-  New street trees at canals and mill parking lots
-  Vistas to promote Lewiston's image

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backbone of Lisbon Street but has moved elsewhere. However, a contributing cause of the unwillingness of potential residents and renters of retail or service space to relocate in the downtown can be traced to the visually unappealing condition of a significant amount of the existing building stock. New residents and specialty uses like those suggested in the 1995 Development Action Plan and in the draft Cultural Plan that will be required to transform Lewiston into a unique cultural and shopping destination, will not come to downtown unless the visual environment and the economic climate are significantly improved. No amount of new off-street parking or street improvements will outweigh the negative impact of vacant, in some cases ill-kept structures that suggest a lack of concern and commitment on the part of property owners, residents and the city.

The city has continuously demonstrated its concern for the downtown, especially in the last twenty years, through a partnership with local property owners that has resulted in the rehabilitation the Peck Building, the Atkinson Block, and most recently the Bates Mill and the Pilsbury Block. The city has also recently introduced a facade improvement program that can be of great benefit in upgrading the visual quality of a large number of older buildings, especially in the middle and lower sections of Lisbon Street. As part of this study, a number of facade drawings have been prepared that illustrate how the ground floors of certain historic buildings might be restored. The drawings are based on photographic evidence and architectural analysis of the remaining fabric, and would likely stand the test of authenticity required for a property owner to take advantage of available Federal tax credits. The buildings selected for these drawings are typical of a number of altered facades of a complexity and scale where the facade improvement program can have a positive financial impact. Other facade improvements, however, are of such a magnitude that their restoration will likely depend on the ability of the private sector to combine Federal, State, local and foundation grant and gift programs with the resources of local investors. Two of the most important buildings in the downtown that should be restored are the Music Hall and the Scruton Block (the former Marcotte Furniture store). Facade drawings of both of these architecturally, and in the case of the Music Hall, culturally significant structures are also included with this plan. Both illustrations were prepared using readily available, excellent photographic evidence, combined with visual inspections of the original facades that remain behind the new curtain walls. The restoration of the Music Hall as a large scale performing arts center would contribute immeasurably to the vitality of upper Lisbon Street in the time period most needed, after the retail and service uses have closed and downtown becomes semi-deserted. Because of its scale, the Music Hall should compliment, rather than compete with the more intimate Ritz Theatre as cultural attractions to the downtown. The Scruton Block, is in excellent condition despite the incongruous facade, and would be relatively inexpensive to rehabilitate. In combination with the Pilsbury block across the street, the Scruton Block could play a major role in increasing the vitality of the area, especially if it is rehabilitated as a mixed-use facility, possibly with shops or sales rooms at the first floor and studio-loft apartments above providing a twenty four hour a day presence at what is likely the most important intersection of the downtown, Lisbon and Pine Streets.

With the addition of landscaping, street trees and an improvement in pedestrian comfort, which will surely be proposed in the Comprehensive Plan, a program of facade improvements like that promoted through the city's new initiative will greatly increase the

The Music Hall before the application of the curtain-wall facade. This is illustrative of the photo-documentation used in preparing facade restoration drawings for storefronts on Lisbon Street

Music Hall, Lewiston, Me.



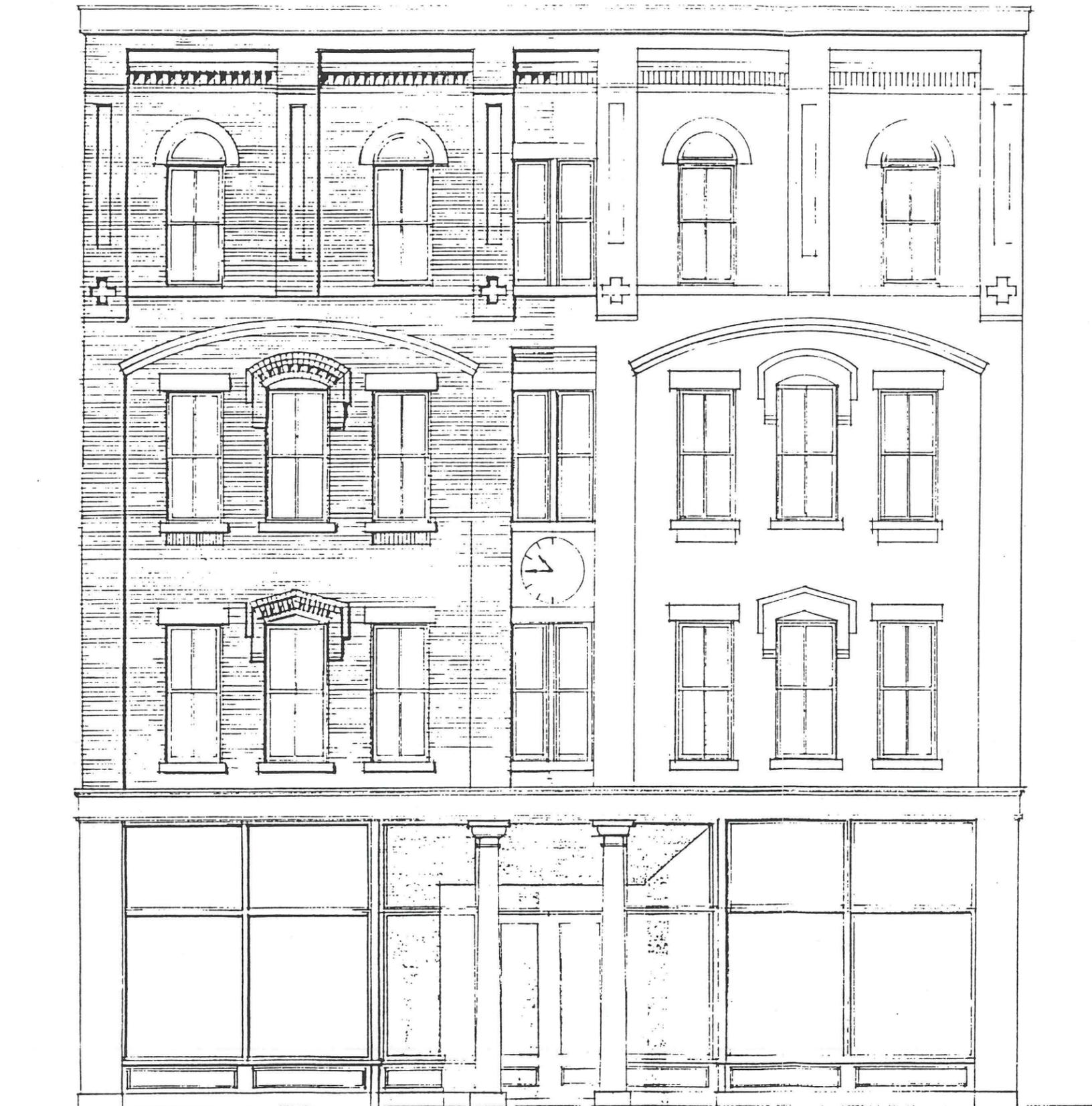


Androscoggin Mill Block, Park		
SCALE	APPROVED BY	DRAWN BY
DATE		
		DRAWING NUMBER



NOTE: FIRST & SECOND FLOORS DRAWN FROM PERIOD PHOTOGRAPHS -
DETAILS TO BE VERIFIED WHEN FALSE FACADE REMOVED.

Music Hall, 69-87 Lisbon		
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"	APPROVED BY	DRAWN BY
DATE MAY 1995		
EXISTING DOWNTOWN PRESERVATION PLAN		
RUSSELL WRIGHT ARCHITECT BRIDGTON, MAINE		DRAWING NUMBER



The Scruton Block, 199 Lisbon		
SCALE	APPROVED BY	DRAWN BY
DATE		
		DRAWING NUMBER

aesthetic appearance of the downtown, and will help to fulfill one of the primary goals of this preservation plan.

3. *Recapture the once proud image of Lewiston:* Perhaps the most important need for the success of the downtown is the re-establishment of a positive image reflecting the vast and diverse range of cultural, architectural and aesthetic resources and the industrial uses that once made Lewiston so unique. Recent improvements like the pedestrian bridge and park and the bicycle trail along the Androscoggin River have contributed a great deal to this goal, but other equally important opportunities have yet to be addressed. Along with the riverfront, the canal system was the lifeline of 19th century Lewiston, offering not only a source of convenient waterpower to the mills but also much need landscaped open space in what were densely developed residential areas such as Canal and Oxford streets. The canals retain their primary function, bringing water to turn the turbines (now operated by Central Maine Power) at the Bates, Hill, Continental, and south of the study area, the Androscoggin mills, but the amenities provided by the tree-lined linear open spaces have been lost. Numerous photographs of the upper and the lower canals bear testimony of this once important and easily recaptured resource. Not only were the canals lined with shade trees, they were visually defined along the edges opposite the mills by almost solid block long walls of three and four story residential structures, walls that increased the awareness of the canals and created vistas unparalleled in this part of the state. While it is unlikely that residential uses will return to Canal Street, there is the opportunity to recreate these contained urban spaces through allocating future sites for the introduction of new condominium or garden apartment scale housing along the east side of Oxford Street. As shown in the accompanying plan, the area between Chestnut Street and the cross canal could be redeveloped as residential, taking advantage of the canal and the riverfront park at the pedestrian bridge (and hopefully some sort of redevelopment at the Grand Trunk Railroad Station) while eliminating a number of non-residential buildings, some of which are sub-standard, all of which conflict with the established neighborhood along Lincoln Street. The new structures would mirror the Continental Mill blocks in scale, massing and setbacks, but should be of contemporary design so as not to detract from the integrity of the originals. It is obvious that at this time the market does not exist for new residential construction of this scale, but if plans for the renaissance of the downtown are realized in the near future, the development potential of this site should be recognized and set aside for new residential uses.

Accepting the city's stated need for an increase in parking along Canal Street, the desired visual enclosure of the upper canal can be effected by the installation of wall-like screening, which would eventually be incorporated into parking structures when parking demands warranted such construction. The planting and screens and the subsequent parking structures should be articulated to reflect the streetscape that existed when the Bates and the Hill mill blocks were in place, breaking the block long facades into a more human scale. The plan illustrates such a pattern, and retains existing structures at Chestnut and Cedar Streets as a part of the mix. Many cities would be delighted at the opportunity to utilize an amenity as extraordinary as the in-town canal system in their downtown design plans (Providence has recently built new canals and re-opened sections of the paved over Providence River, San Antonio dedicated millions of dollars to improving their downtown canal system). Lewiston, with only the cost of street trees and the

The tree-lined canals serving the mills at Lewiston



foresight to identify sites for future improvements that will help to re-establish the European like urban design qualities of the canal system, is in an enviable position.

Next to the canals and the riverfront in importance to re-establishing a positive image for the downtown is a concerted effort to improve the visual qualities of the major gateways to the area. Basically, there are four vehicular entrances to downtown Lewiston, two of which require little if anything in the way of visual improvement. The South Bridge-Cedar Street entrance affords perhaps the most meaningful experience, first crossing the reason for the city being located here, the Androscoggin River, and then opening directly to scenes of Little Canada and St. Mary's Church, symbols of Franco-American culture, and the Continental Mill, one of Lewiston's best remaining examples of the Industrial Revolution. Similarly, the eastern entrance at Main and Sabbattus Streets is an effective introduction to urban Lewiston, especially with the exceptional Kora Temple and St. Joseph's Church as examples of what is to come in the downtown. The other two gateways, lower Lisbon Street, and to a lesser extent, Main Street at the Longley Memorial Bridge, however, are of major concern.

The entrance from Auburn in the west, along the heavily traveled US Route 202, has been impacted over the past half-century with the construction of a number of nondescript structures along the south side of the street, between the river and the upper canal. Like the canals, the removal of a number of buildings that once established a solid streetscape along this side of Main Street has caused a loss of a sense of enclosure, a statement that originally said that this is Downtown Lewiston. The uses and the design quality of the buildings at either side of the north end of Lincoln Street do not create an evocative entrance to the city. In the future, it is hoped that these structures may be removed by attrition if nothing else, exposing the two buildings immediately to the south on Lincoln Street that are ranked high in the Preservation Index. In the same area, a non-contributing, vacant garage and a woodworking shop between Water Street and the riverfront should also be considered for eventual removal, to be replaced with a public open space that relates to the existing Riverfront Park across the canal and provides additional public access to the Androscoggin. The south side of Main Street east of the properties fronting on Lincoln Street might eventually be in-filled with new construction to recreate the early uniform streetscape, with consideration given to the eventual removal of 137-141, and especially 143-145 Main Street to provide a better view of the canal as it passes under the street, and to the removal of a small non-contributing one-story structure at 148 Main Street that lessens the visual importance of the original power and pump house for the Union Power Company. The north side of Main Street, from the bridge to the Central Maine Power Office Building, is undeveloped and provides impressive views of the unfortunately deteriorating Cowan and Libbey mills. The block-long frontage between the river and Mill Street should remain as a landscaped open space.

Lower Lisbon Street, the gateway to the downtown area from the south, is a section of the busy Route 196 that connects Lewiston with Brunswick and is the entrance to the city from the Maine Turnpike. It is also the single greatest detraction to the image of the entire Downtown Development District and presents the least opportunity for visual improvement. As late as c.1950 the entire two-block street frontage between Willow Street, at the intersection of Canal Street, to Birch Street consisted of neatly arranged rows of residential structures. These were somewhat indiscriminately removed and replaced with out-of-scale, undistinguished non-contributing

buildings as shown in the Preservation Index. Given the economic investments made for this new construction, and the important role played by the Lewiston Food Bank, it is unlikely that these buildings will be replaced in the foreseeable future, a fact that makes the creation of a visually attractive gateway at this location all the more difficult. A possible solution is to create two gateways, the first and primary entrance to the downtown centered around the Ritz Theatre complex at Maple Street, the second at Birch Street. The Ritz Theatre area would be greatly enhanced by landscaping the open lot at Maple and Lisbon streets and by dramatically improving the appearance of the west elevation of the theatre and the area immediately contiguous to it. This area might be used as a seasonal open-air theatre offering productions by the Public Theatre (Annapolis has an extremely successful theatre of this type in the heart of its National Landmark historic district), with kiosks and glassed-in pavilions attached to the side elevation that could be used as a cafe and as a promotion, ticket and information booth. The wall area above the pavilions might contain a well designed marquee advertising present and coming attractions, and the entire area lit at night to visually highlight and reinforce the gateway concept.

Additional improvements to the image of the downtown might include the screening and redesign of the large parking lot at Park, Oak and Ash streets with formative landscaping, the screening of the open lots at the Bates and the Hill mills with street trees, new street and welcome signs, perhaps bi-lingual in the Lincoln-Oxford-Little Canada area, and the installation of more appropriate, pedestrian scaled street lighting along the entire length of lower Lisbon Street. A final suggestion, if traffic patterns permit, is the reversal of vehicular traffic on Pine Street between Park and Canal Streets to provide a clear vista to the impressive clock tower at Bates Mill, often regarded as the identifying symbol of Lewiston.

4. *Identifying financial and other incentives that will benefit the restoration and rehabilitation of the downtown:* A number of exiting incentives and tax programs have been mentioned in passing in the above sections of the report. They and others are more fully discussed in Section VII.

5. *Provide needed traffic improvements and off-street parking:* Contrary to some public opinion, it is respectfully submitted that existing and often proposed open parking lots in the lower Lisbon Street area are not the panacea to solve all the problems currently experienced by the downtown. The large lot just north of the new office at Willow Street is site-specific to that building, the others in this area are simply too far away from the retail and office core that is located for the most part north of Spruce Street. Therefore, the Preservation Plan is in conflict with a proposal included in the 1995 Downtown Action Plan that recommends that off-street parking be provided "on lower Lisbon Street through in-fill parking...at empty lots on Lisbon Street."⁹ The Preservation Plan does, however, endorse the city's plan to create a large parking lot (with the possibility that it may eventually become a garage), at the rear of the block bounded by Cedar and Chestnut streets, with access to be provided by two entrances mid-block from Lisbon Street as shown in the plan. The Plan also endorses the Downtown Action Plan recommendation to construct a new parking garage at Canal Street between Main and Ash Streets, and increasing

⁹ *Downtown Action Plan*, p.13.

covered accessways to Lisbon Street from the existing garage one block south. However, based on aesthetic and historic reasons, the Preservation Plan is also in conflict with the suggestion that Buildings 7 and 8 at the rear of the Bates Mill be demolished to provide what is construed to be an open parking area. Rather, it is recommended that further thought be given to removing the roof and glazing of the structure facing Chestnut Street and adaptively re-using this extremely well constructed buildings as an open to the air parking garage---at the very least, the exterior walls should remain in place to reflect the original development pattern of the mill. Finally, the Preservation Plan emphatically endorses the Downtown Action Plan strategies for improving the present day traffic circulation and infrastructure inadequacies.

6. *Increase the desirability of the Downtown Development District as an in-town residential area:* Historically, residential uses were always an important part of downtown Lewiston. Long established neighborhoods in the Lincoln-Oxford Little Canada area, along Park Street south of Kenedy Park, and, with the construction of the Bates and the Hill mill housing blocks, in the Canal Street tier, were supplemented by numerous apartment buildings and tenements with retail or office use at the ground floor along Lisbon Street (including such important structures as the two Callahan Blocks but also including a large percentage of the smaller, frame, mixed use structures) that fulfilled a real need for smaller apartments in close proximity to the retail area. With the exception of the Park Street area, which is part of a much larger, relatively stable neighborhood, the quality of residential living in the downtown has steadily declined. The loss of apartment dwellers at the upper floors of many of the Lisbon Street buildings, a loss not only in rental income (which pays for maintenance) but one of vitality that is a positive side effect of a street with twenty-four hour a day occupancy, should be considered as a major factor in the diminished visual appearance and the integrity of the area. Regaining this residential base, not only in the blocks south of Chestnut Street but along the entire length of Lisbon Street, is one of the primary goals of this preservation plan. While this will not be an easy task, the revitalization of the two residential neighborhoods along Lincoln Street, the first contained by the cross canal and Cedar Street, the second area lower Lincoln Street, known as the Gas Patch. Upper Lincoln Street has suffered from the removal of a large number of residential structures that were replaced by automotive repair facilities, vacant lots and other non-residential uses, so much so that the oldest residential area in Lewiston has lost any semblance of a coherent neighborhood. With the possible re-routing of through truck traffic away from Lisbon Street to Lincoln Street a distinct possibility in the near future, it will be virtually impossible to recreate an environment that would foster new residential construction here. This is especially so in the block immediately behind the Bates Mill, where building coverage has been reduced to approximately 60%, and where less than 30% of the land (the 14 smallest of the 24 structures) remains in residential or mixed residential use. The block between Chestnut and Cedar streets, anchored by the exceptional Dominican Block offers a slightly better opportunity for revitalization as a residential area, but even this block has been recently invaded by non-residential uses. Since it appears that there is every possibility that the entire residential neighborhood along upper Lincoln Street could eventually be lost to non-residential uses, alternative residential areas have been identified in this plan, specifically the suggested redevelopment of Oxford Street as discussed above.

Lower Lincoln Street, the Gas Patch neighborhood, is faced with even greater problems, many of which stem from the fact that virtually all land is owned by the Franklin Company (or the Franklin Trust) with the result that 95% of the primarily single-family dwellings are occupied by tenants-at-will. With an understandable reluctance on the part of the owners to invest heavily in property where they do not own the land, this thickly developed area has steadily declined, with major violations of the city codes that monitor structural and environmental conditions. Unless some kind of a partnership between the Franklin Company and the owners of the individual buildings can be arranged, the city will eventually be required to enforce building, zoning and housing codes, and it is suggested, a number of the properties will be abandoned due to a lack of financial resources to make the needed improvements. While this is primarily a codes and ordinance issue, there are a number of contributing residential structures in the Gas Patch, including a small group of some of the earliest (c. 1850's) single-family dwellings in the city that should be singled out for retention and possible restoration as part of Lewiston's heritage.

Little Canada, where the extremely high density is what makes the area unique, also suffers from problems in ownership, problems that have resulted not so much by tenant-at-will concerns (the Franklin Company owns only 8 of the 46 residential buildings), but by a lack of interest on the part of the primarily absentee landlords. With a likely decline in rental income in relation to the costs of upkeeping these large frame tenements, property owners have begun to reduce the level of maintenance or have delayed needed improvements to many of the buildings. In some instances, owners have allowed their properties to deteriorate to such a point (demolition by neglect) that the city has been called upon to remove a number of structures because of code and environmental violations. Coupled with recent fire losses, 16 of the 46 tenements that were in place in 1956 (Sanborn Map) have been demolished, including almost all of the west side of River Street. In some respects, this has acted as a two-edged sword. In a positive vein, the demolitions have reduced the overall density of the neighborhood, but they have also partially destroyed the visual, and in some cases the unique cultural quality of Little Canada. If Little Canada is to remain as an expression of the heritage of the Franco-American community, an expression critical to the image and integrity of the Downtown Development District, it is likely that a sense of the residential density created by the wall-like rows of buildings along both sides of Oxford Street and along the east side of River Street will have to be re-established as part of an overall plan for the neighborhood. The plan should consider the retention of the existing open spaces at the south end of Oxford and along the river, the possibility of new in-fill structures at what were 119, 125-127 and 133-135 Oxford Street, and a facade improvement program that would allow for the replacement of the visually detracting vinyl and aluminum siding that has impacted the architectural value of the early tenements. As noted in the booklet *Historic Lewiston; Franco-American Origins*,¹⁰ "Few would claim that the individual buildings are beautiful, but collectively they create an 'old world' atmosphere that is markedly different from the rest of Lewiston..." To this statement should be added that the design, construction and placement of these individual buildings are of great importance as a contribution to the history of vernacular domestic architecture in the United States. While literally thousands of similar housing units were built

¹⁰ *Historic Lewiston; Franco-American Origins*, Lewiston Historical Society, 1974, p.39.

during the Industrial Revolution at almost every mill town in New England, their number is rapidly declining, and with their important connections to the Franco-American community, they are of great significance to the image of the city.

VI. A review of city codes and ordinances that may effect historic preservation objectives

Zoning, building and other municipal and state codes can have a significant impact on the rehabilitation or restoration of existing historic structures, and could limit new construction in built-up areas such as the Downtown Development District. A review of the possible effect on historic preservation objectives that might evolve from the various codes and ordinances in effect in Lewiston was undertaken as a part of the Preservation Plan.

A: Zoning: Zoning is regulated under the provisions of the "Zoning and Land Use Code of the City of Lewiston, Maine." The Downtown Development District is divided into four separate areas that are regulated through the provisions of three different Zoning Districts; the Downtown Business District; the Urban Enterprise District; and the Neighborhood Conservation "B" District.

1. The Downtown Business District, the purpose of which "is to encourage a concentration of economic enterprises in the central business district."¹¹ This zoning district includes all of the area in the study area between Canal, Bates and Park streets, from across Main Street to Chestnut Street. The code identifies 25 "permitted uses," all of which are compatible with the Preservation Plan, and through the "conditional use" process, includes the important multifamily dwelling use. The maximum permitted lot coverage ratio (1.0) and building height (120 feet) are also compatible, but the minimum lot sizes (7,500 square feet) and minimum frontages (75 feet) may prove to be a problem when new in-fill construction is considered. Minimum setbacks, for the most part non-existent in this district, are eliminated through Subsection (f)--"In areas where the existing buildings have an established uniform setback relationship to the street, any new building or modification to an existing building may maintain this established relationship." It is **recommended** that this clause be modified by the substitution of the word "must" for "may." Importantly, parking requirements for any locally listed historic building are modified by a section of the Development Review and Standards, Article XIII, as explained below.

2. The Urban Enterprise District, which was established to "encourage the improvement, reuse and redevelopment of older mixed use areas of the city by allowing a wide range of uses with appropriate development standards" is the largest district in the downtown, covering all the land between Park Street and Canal Street, from Chestnut to Maple Street, and all the land between Canal Street, with the exception of the Little Canada / Gas Patch area, to the Androscoggin River at the west. The permitted uses allowed in this zoning district appear to be too broad for most of the area along Lisbon and Lincoln / Oxford streets, and it is **recommended** that consideration be given to relegating the following permitted uses to those requiring a conditional use permit: (11) Wholesale sales, warehousing and distribution facilities; (12) Lumber and building material dealers; (13) Building and construction contractors; (14) Self-storage

¹¹ *City of Lewiston Zoning and Land Use Code*, Article XI., Sec. 11. p.74

facilities; (18) Gasoline service stations; (19) Auto repair garages; (20) Equipment repair garages; (21) Commercial parking facilities; (31) Automotive services, except repair; and (36) New car dealerships. None of these uses are compatible with the preservation goal of re-establishing residential neighborhoods in the Lincoln / Oxford Street area, or will contribute to the effort of re-establishing the image of the downtown that is proposed for lower Lisbon Street. If these uses are made "conditional uses," they would join similar uses in that category that may be allowed in parts of the zoning district but that should be rigorously controlled as to location. Also, it appears that the 80 foot height limit may be too high, as any such building (the equivalent of an eight-story building) would overwhelm any buildings that presently exist in the zoning district. The minimum frontage requirement of 100 feet is excessive where in-fill structures, especially along Lisbon and Lincoln streets, are contemplated. Provisions for setbacks are modified through subsection (f), as are off-street parking requirements for listed historic buildings, under Article XIII. Because of the number of permitted uses that are in conflict with the Preservation Plan, it is also **recommended** that the Downtown Business District be extended the full length of Lisbon Street to Willow Street, between Canal and Park streets, thus replacing that part of the Urban Enterprise District. Such a change would offer better legal control over the uses permitted in this critical area.

3. Neighborhood Conservation "B" Districts, of which there are two in the study area, are meant to "promote the stability and improvement of older multifamily residential neighborhoods by requiring the development of new buildings or the replacement, reuse or conversion of existing buildings to conform with the type and density of housing within the immediate neighborhood. The standards of the district allow multifamily housing while encouraging the upgrading of this housing stock." These two districts represent the half-block deep area along the east side of Park Street that is within the study area, and all of Little Canada except for the mixed uses that front on Cedar Street. A review of the standards for this zoning district indicate that there is no apparent conflict with the Preservation Plan, with the possible exception of Art. XI., Sec. 6 (3) b, which in addressing front yard requirements permits "no more than one (1) parking space in this area." Relative to re-establishing the image of downtown Lewiston, it is **recommended** that front yard parking be, at best, prohibited in Little Canada and along Park Street, at the least made a conditional use subject to review.

4. Resource Conservation District, a fourth zoning district shown on the city's zoning map as occurring only along the river south of Cedar Street is in complete accord with the preservation objectives of this plan, and, it is **recommended**, should be extended the full length of the river to the Falls.

In addition to the above, Article VI., Nonconformance, and Article X., Conditional Uses of the Zoning and Land Use Code were also reviewed to identify any possible conflicts with the goals of this preservation plan. Article VI, rather than being in conflict, offers a number of clauses that will benefit the rehabilitation and restoration of historic structures, including Section 3. Nonconforming Structures. This states that "a structure in lawful existence as of the date of this Code that does not meet space and bulk regulations of the district in which it is located, may be repaired and maintained. Unenclosed porches, decks, stairways and other similar facilities may be added or modified provided that they are located so that they comply with setback and yard

requirements...It may be enlarged and/or accessory structures may be added to the site without a variance upon obtaining a building permit..."¹² This could be especially helpful in plans for restoring a number of multi-storied residential structures that were once provided with full length rear or side porches. Section 4, Nonconforming Uses allows that "the use of land, buildings, or structures, lawful at the time of the adoption of this Code, may continue, although such use does not conform to the provisions of this Code."¹³

Article X, Conditional Uses, outlines the procedure for obtaining a conditional use permit, qualifying the issuance of such a permit with the safeguard "neither the proposed use nor the proposed site upon which the use will be located is of such a character that the use will have a significant adverse impact upon the value or quiet possession of surrounding properties greater than would normally occur from such a use in the zoning district," and requires that "the size of the proposed use is comparable to surrounding uses."¹⁴ Subsection (5) of this same section further emphasizes the compatibility needed for new construction in the Downtown Development District: "the scale and design of the proposed structure with respect to materials, scale and massing shall be compatible with existing structures within five hundred (500) feet of the site in areas where the existing structures are of a similar scale and architectural treatment."

B: Development review and Standards: Development Review and Standards (Article XIII.) are to "provide for the review and approval of development plans for nonresidential and residential developments...to insure that the development of private land occurs in a manner which minimizes the adverse impact on public facilities, the natural environment and neighboring uses."¹⁵ Preservation proposals that could fall under Development Review include (2), the construction of any new nonresidential building or structure; (5), the construction of any new residential structures or development containing five (5) or more dwelling units; and (6), the conversion of an existing building into a residential use with five (5) or more dwelling units. In almost every case, the proposals suggested in the Preservation Plan would be subject to review as "*minor developments*," the possible exceptions being the parking garages at Canal Street and the new housing shown on Oxford Street. This review would be carried out by the Staff Review Committee. It appears that the only criteria for approval that may have had an adverse effect on the goals of the Preservation Plan is the requirement concerning off-street parking. Section 17(4) of Article XII. however, qualifies these requirements with the proviso that "no additional parking spaces shall be required for any structure that has been designated for historic preservation under Article XV, section 3 of this code that is proposed for reuse."¹⁶ If the proposed Lewiston Retail District National Register Historic District is approved by the city as a local district, most of the

¹² Ibid; Article VI. Sec. 3, p 32.

¹³ Ibid: Section 4., p. 33.

¹⁴ Ibid: Article X., Sec.3 (1)and (1) a.,P. 47.

¹⁵ Ibid: Article XIII, Development Review and Standards, Sec. 1, p. CDA:143.

¹⁶ Ibid:Article XII, Section 17(4), p.CDA:133.

historic structures that are likely to be rehabilitated would be covered by this ruling.

C: Building Codes; Lewiston, like most communities in Maine, has adopted the BOCA Basic National Building Code.¹⁷ While this national building code includes a special section dealing with historic structures, Section 513.0, Special Historic Buildings and Districts, the city has deleted this part of the uniform code and substituted Section 513.1, which reads as follows: Provisions for the renovation, enlargement, alteration and demolition of significant buildings or buildings within designated historic districts shall be in accordance with Chapter 31, Article XV of the Revised Code of Ordinances of the City of Lewiston. The review proposals for the improvement of many of the properties in the Downtown Development District would thus be initiated by the Historic Preservation Review Board, but in no case should the provisions of the building code regarding fire and life safety be abrogated. None of the suggestions included in the Preservation Plan, including the return of residential uses to the upper floors of buildings along Lisbon Street, should require a waiver of these requirements.

VII. A Review of Available Incentives for Preservation

While there are a number of Federal, State, municipal and privately sponsored financial and development incentives available to assist in the restoration, rehabilitation and improvement of properties in the Downtown Development District, the requirements, funding levels and availability of such programs are ever-changing. The following discussion presents a range of incentives and other devices that may be of benefit, but this list does not claim to be all-inclusive, nor does it indicate the status of any particular program at any given time.

Federal Incentives include perhaps the best known preservation specific incentive, tax credits under Public Law 99-514, the Tax Reform Act of 1986. The Act establishes "a 20% tax credit for the substantial rehabilitation of historic buildings for commercial, industrial and rental residential purposes, and a 10% tax credit for the substantial rehabilitation for nonresidential purposes of buildings built before 1936."¹⁸ The 10% credit is not available for rehabilitations of certified historic structures, therefore any building within a National register District must be rehabilitated to the Standards of the Secretary of the Interior unless that building is specifically identified as non-contributing, a status that can be determined through the Preservation Index prepared as a part of this plan. Otherwise, all owners of properties either listed individually or within districts in the National Register of Historic Places are eligible to apply for the tax credits. Also, owners of properties located in state or local districts may also apply if the statutes under which the local district was established had been certified by the State Historic Preservation Officer, thereby permitting any owner of a contributing property within the local Kennedy park Historic District to apply, as the statute used in Lewiston, a Certified Local Government, has been

¹⁷ BOCA, Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc., Country Club Hills, Il., 1990 edition.

¹⁸ *Preservation Tax Incentives for Historic Buildings*, Brochure published and distributed by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, undated, p.2.

approved for such purposes. There are a number of restrictions regarding the tax credit, the most important being the requirement that the substantial rehabilitation of a historic structure must exceed the greater of \$5,000 or the adjusted basis of the building (the cost of the property minus the cost of the land). In addition, all work must be completed within a 24-month period if no architectural plans and specifications were prepared, 60 months if such are on record for a phased project, and the use of the credits is dependant on the retention of "at least 50% of the exterior walls as external walls, at least 75% of the buildings existing exterior walls must be retained in place as either external or internal walls, and at least 75% of the building's internal structural framework must remain in place."¹⁹ There has been a strong effort in the past year to increase the impact of the Tax Reform Act tax credits by extending the program to include homeowner occupied residential uses. Despite support for the bill in the House and the Senate, it has been tabled for the time being. Since there are numerous and complex details regarding recapture, transfer of credits and other provisions affecting the use of the tax credits, any property owner contemplating their use should seek specialized tax advice.

The Tax Reform Act of 1986 also allows Federal "income and estate tax deductions for charitable contributions of partial interests in historic properties."²⁰ The new alternative tax provides that "the full market value of a donated preservation or conservation easement on property which has appreciated since the taxpayer acquired it, could be used to reduce the donor's adjusted gross income." Generally speaking, a conservation easement in the case of buildings within the Downtown Development District is a facade easement that restricts the owner's right to alter the appearance of the facade unless approved by a designated body. The facade easement must include the entire property, in this case the entire exterior or interior, or both, of a property, and the easement must be donated to a governmental or qualified non-profit organization. At least two such organizations presently hold easements in Maine, the Maine Citizens for Historic Preservation and the Boston headquartered Society for the Preservation of New England's Antiquities. Also, Section 252 of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 "provides for an investment tax credit for acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of qualifying units of low income housing."²¹

Federal Historic Preservation Grants for properties listed in the National Register are theoretically available under provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, but little of the so-called "bricks and mortar" money has been available in the recent past.

State Incentives offer little help at the present time in the way of grants or other relief to owners restoring or rehabilitating historic properties. The State can participate in Tax Increment Financing (see below), but no enabling legislation has been promulgated to allow any form of direct tax relief such as abatement or tax credits, although a tax credit for the rehabilitation of income-producing historic buildings like that provided by Federal law was proposed during the last legislative session (LD 972). However, the bill's sponsors have decided to withdraw the bill until the upcoming session due to the anticipated short-term fiscal impact on the State's budget.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: p.6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*: p.16.

²¹ *Ibid.*: ,p. 17.

One State program, called Fix ME, may be of some benefit. A joint effort by the Maine State Housing Authority, the Maine Municipal Bond Bank and the Community Action Program, this program offers low interest loans for the repair of low and very low income residential structures. The local CAP is Community Concepts, Inc., which delivers the loans. The loans carry a maximum amount of \$15,000 and a maximum loan period of 15 years at rates that, depending on the type of repairs, vary from 1% to 4%. Maximum income for Lewiston-Auburn homeowners has been set at from \$18,950 for a family of one to \$27,050 for a family of four.

Local Incentives include a variety of municipal and non-profit programs, including the City of Lewiston Loan Program that provides 50/50 commercial rehabilitation loans, housing rehabilitation loans, 50/50 multi-family investor/non-owner occupied loans, 75/25 single family 1-4 unit owner occupied loans, home ownership assistance loans and loans through the Lewiston L.O.A.N.S. program. These loan programs, funded through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program are designed to be used in conjunction with other Federal, State and/or City programs, and may be used for permanent financing as well as construction. Specifically, the commercial rehabilitation loans provide for the rehabilitation of commercial property anywhere in the city, and have a limit of \$50,000 per loan with a maximum payback period of 10 years at 5% interest. The matching 50% of the loan must come from funds secured from a lending institution, insurance company or owner financing. Housing rehabilitation loans are also available city wide, with the maximum based on the number of dwelling units, \$40,000 per single family owner occupied house; \$10,000 per 1 bedroom/congregate unit; and \$15,000 per two bedroom unit. The current interest rate is 2% for owner occupied, 5% for investor properties, and the maximum loan period is 20 years. Matching requirements are the same as for the commercial rehabilitation loans, with the home equity and/or sweat equity also permitted. The home ownership loan program, with a limit of \$7,500 per single family buyer, is available for the down payment and closing costs for first time home buyers at 80% of median income or less. The maximum loan period is 20 years at a rate of 2%, and the loans are available city wide. The Lewiston L.O.A.N.S. program provides loans to first time single family home buyers who wish to acquire and rehabilitate properties within census tracts 201-204 of the city (all of the Downtown Development District is located within these tracts). Financial assistance is provided through the city by eight local banking institutions at below market interest rates, with a maximum life of 30 years. This innovative program can be used to acquire and rehabilitate 1 to 4 unit homes, and properties with more than 4 units, if they are to be converted into 4 or less units.

Preservation activities can also benefit from Tax Increment Financing (TIF), a "financing technique available to all Maine communities that takes advantage of the increase in assessed valuation resulting from a development to pay for public improvements needed to accommodate that development (and) may be used to provide public funds for the development of areas that are blighted, in need of rehabilitation, or suitable for industrial sites. Specifically, tax increment financing can be used for the construction, demolition, or repair of structures; acquisition or clearing of land; professional services such as architecture or engineering fees; relocation costs;

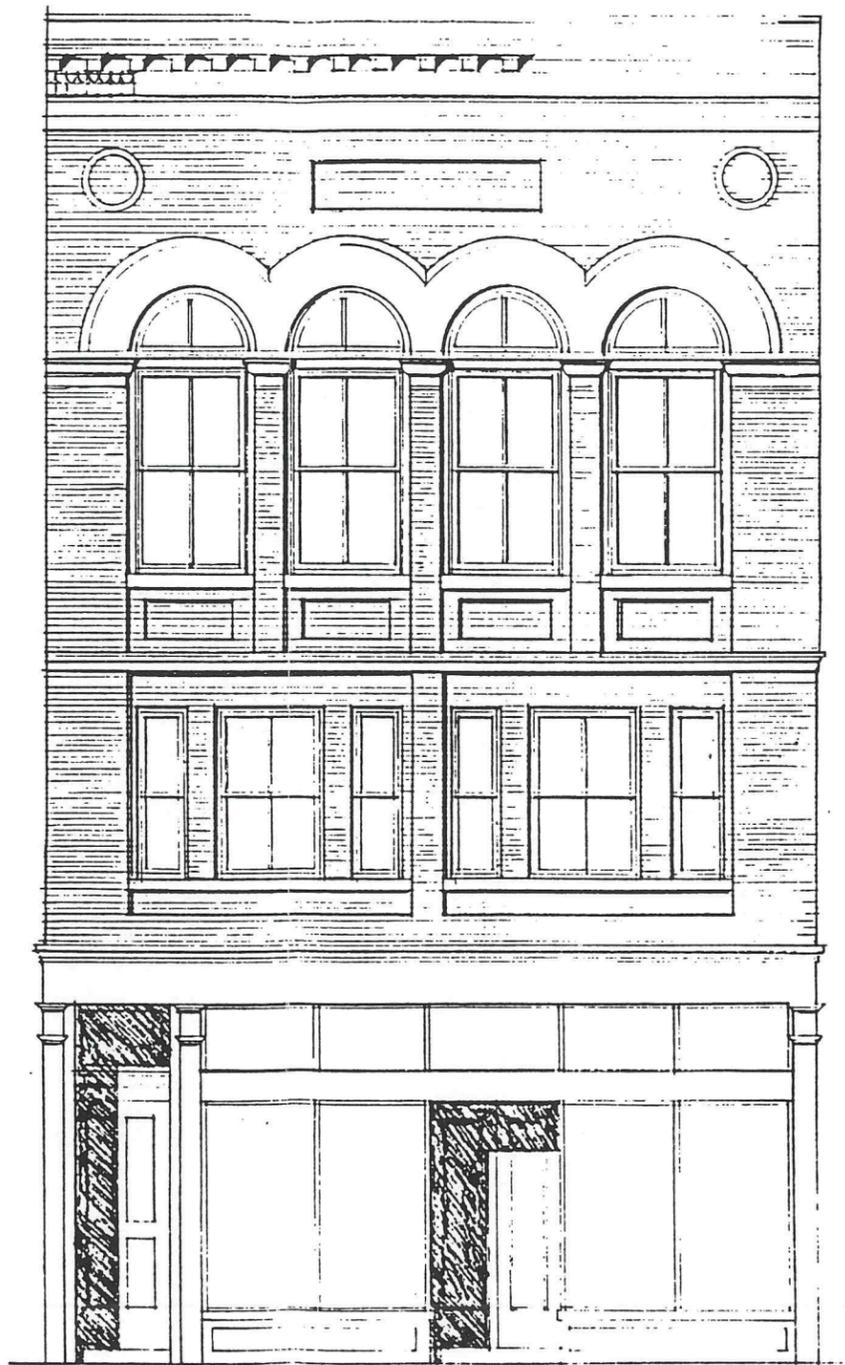
organizational; and or other associated costs."²² Two other city programs can also take advantage of TIF's as a part of their financing, Community Development and Municipal Development Districts. The Community Development Program, which must conform to the comprehensive plan now being prepared for Lewiston, is aimed at identifying and eliminating blighted areas, either through direct acquisition by purchase or eminent domain of any blighted property for the purpose of demolition or rehabilitation and repair, or loaning funds or guaranteeing loans to encourage property owners to voluntarily bring their properties up to code. If used judiciously, this program could be of benefit in such areas as Little Canada, the Gas Patch, and lower Lisbon Street.

Municipal Development Districts are designed to provide impetus for industrial or commercial developments within a specified area of the city. The Downtown Development District, the study area for this preservation plan, is such a district.

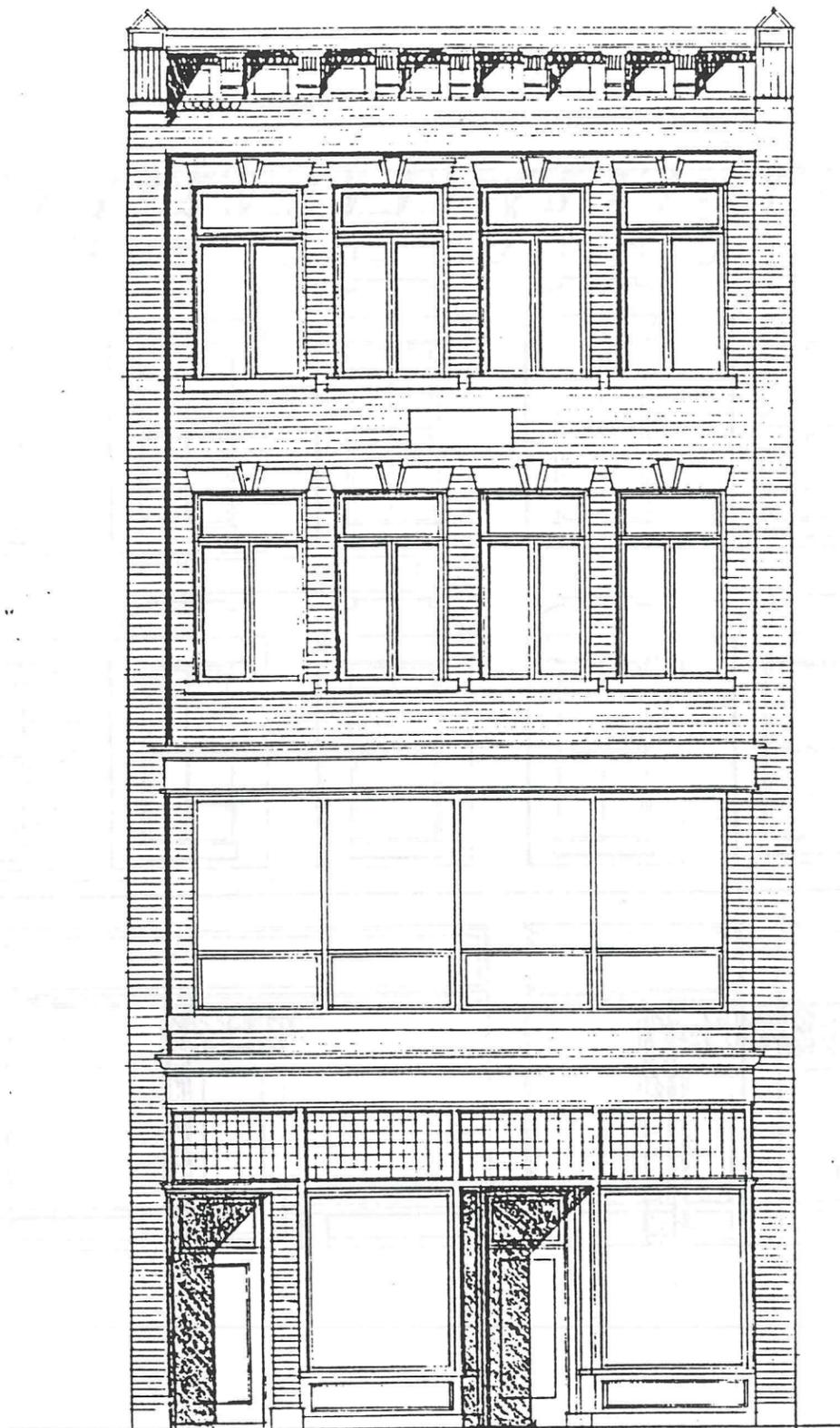
Perhaps the local program offering the greatest benefit in the immediate future to preservation and to recapturing the image of downtown Lewiston is the new Downtown Facade Improvement Program, which went into effect in September of this year. This program, administered by the Community Development Division of the City of Lewiston Development Department, can pay up to \$5,000 as a 50% match for the cost of rehabilitating and improving the facades of commercial buildings within the Downtown Redevelopment District (which includes all of the preservation plan study area), including the costs of exterior signage and landscaping and lighting improvements to the individual property and to areas visible to the public. At this writing, a number of property owners have expressed an interest in this program, and sketch drawings of suggested facade improvements have been prepared as a part of this plan for two commercial properties on Lisbon Street.

Other programs available through the city include project specific grants through the Federal Economic Development Administration (a one-time Economic Development Incentive Grant from the EDA was used in combination with a Section 108 grant to fund the Bates Mill project), and the aforementioned Section 108 Program. Additional assistance can be provided through the non-profit Lewiston Development Corporation, which oversees an Economic Stimulus Loan Program, in which Micro-Loans can provide small amounts of money for start-up purposes, and the soon to be inaugurated One Stop Capital Shop recommended in the 1995 Downtown Action Plan. An additional project that should be considered is the establishment of a revolving fund which would purchase historic properties at risk, add protective covenants that insure rehabilitation to the standards of the city's Historic Preservation Review Board, and dispose of the property at a small profit, plowing the profits back into the fund for future activities. This device, which will require initial funding either by the city, a non-profit group, or a for-profit organization, has had great success in such major historic cities as Savannah, Charleston, S.C. and Pittsburgh, among many others. Bangor has a revolving fund that may prove to be a model for Lewiston.

²² *Tax Increment Financing-A Technical Assistance Guide*, Maine Department of Community Development, undated, p.1.



The Ellard Building, 180 Lisbon		
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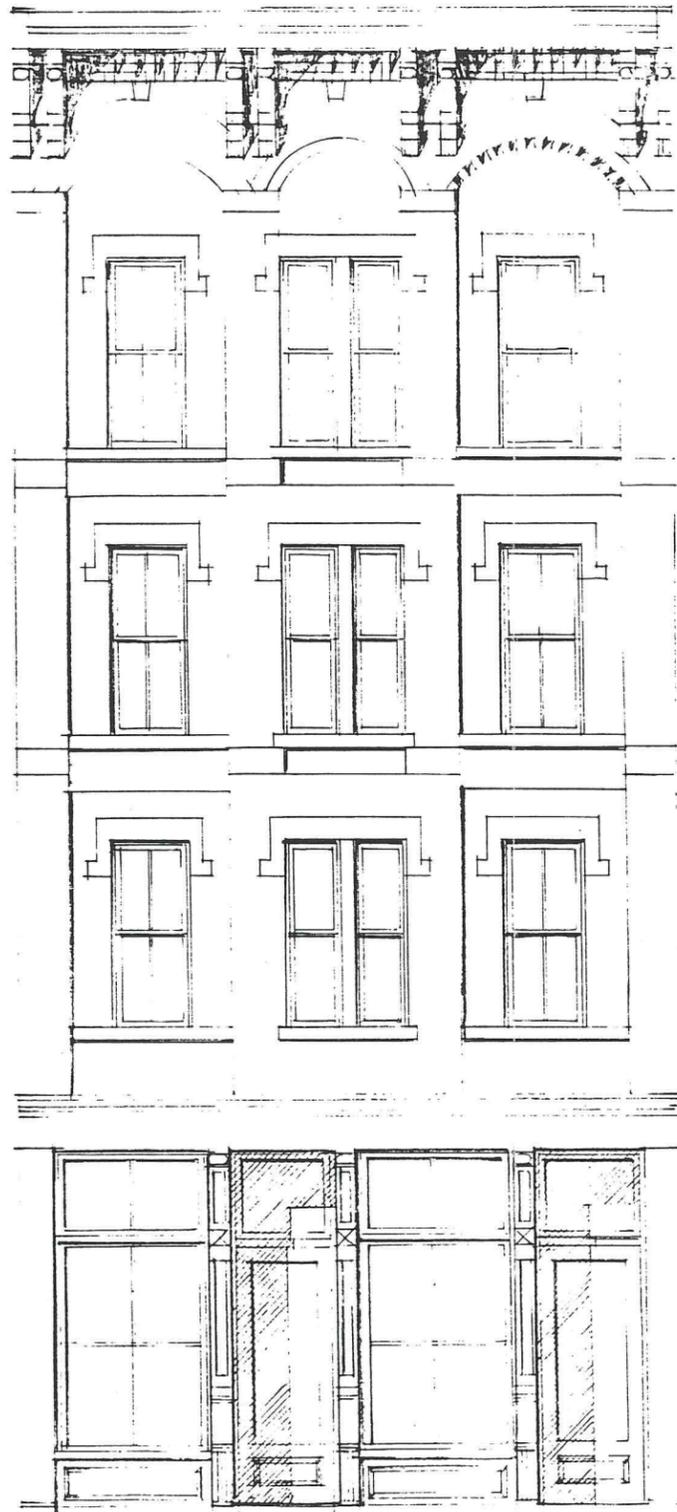
The Singer Building, 112-114 Lisbon

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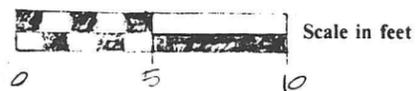
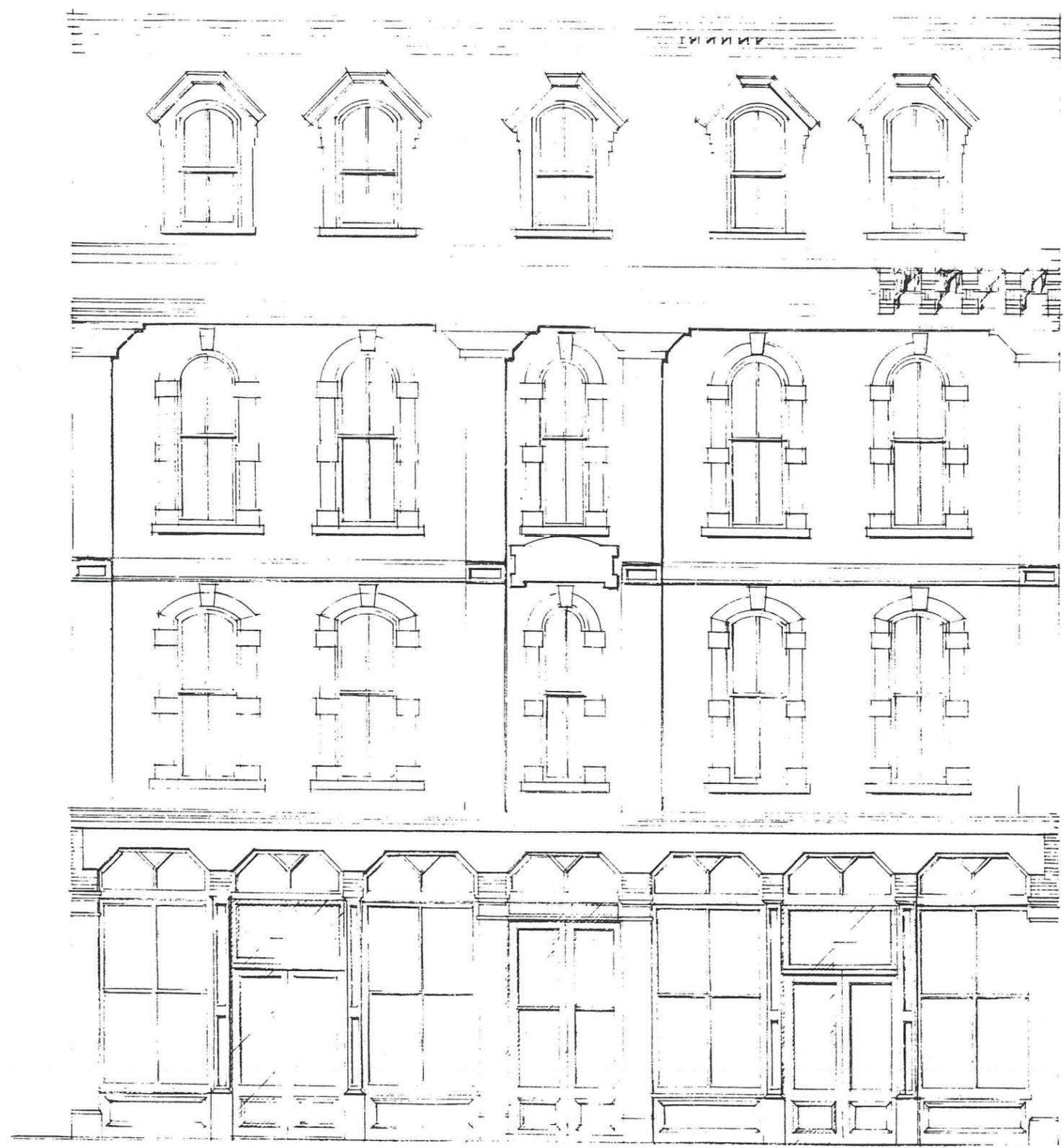
The Union Block, 21-31 Lisbon

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11.

223-225 Lisbon Street		
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12.

Lyceum Hall, 49-53 Lisbon		
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