

*DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
CITY OF HOUGHTON, MICHIGAN*



**U.P. ENGINEERS & ARCHITECTS, INC.**  
*July 1998*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The preparation of this community design guidebook was made possible by the efforts of many individuals with a common vision. It is their undaunted determination to make Houghton, Michigan a safe, friendly livable community within a unique northern environment that serves as the catalyst for development of this guidebook.

Their collective effort to address changing social needs and important community issues with innovative solutions is a reflection of the determined, pioneer heritage that settled this great region.

The following organizations and individuals deserve special recognition for their participation in the development of this guidebook.

### City Council

Mayor Tom Merz  
Mayor ProTem, William Blumhardt  
Robert Backon  
Jim Chappel  
Dorothy Love  
Eric Peterson  
Ingrid Seel

### City Planning Commission

Chairman, Gary Lubinski  
Mayor Tom Merz  
Secretary, Carol Plichta  
Dan Cooney  
Darrell Guitar  
Lee Hauswirth  
Bill Hodge  
Dorothy Love

City Manager, Scott MacInnes

Houghton DPW

Houghton Business Association

## INTRODUCTION

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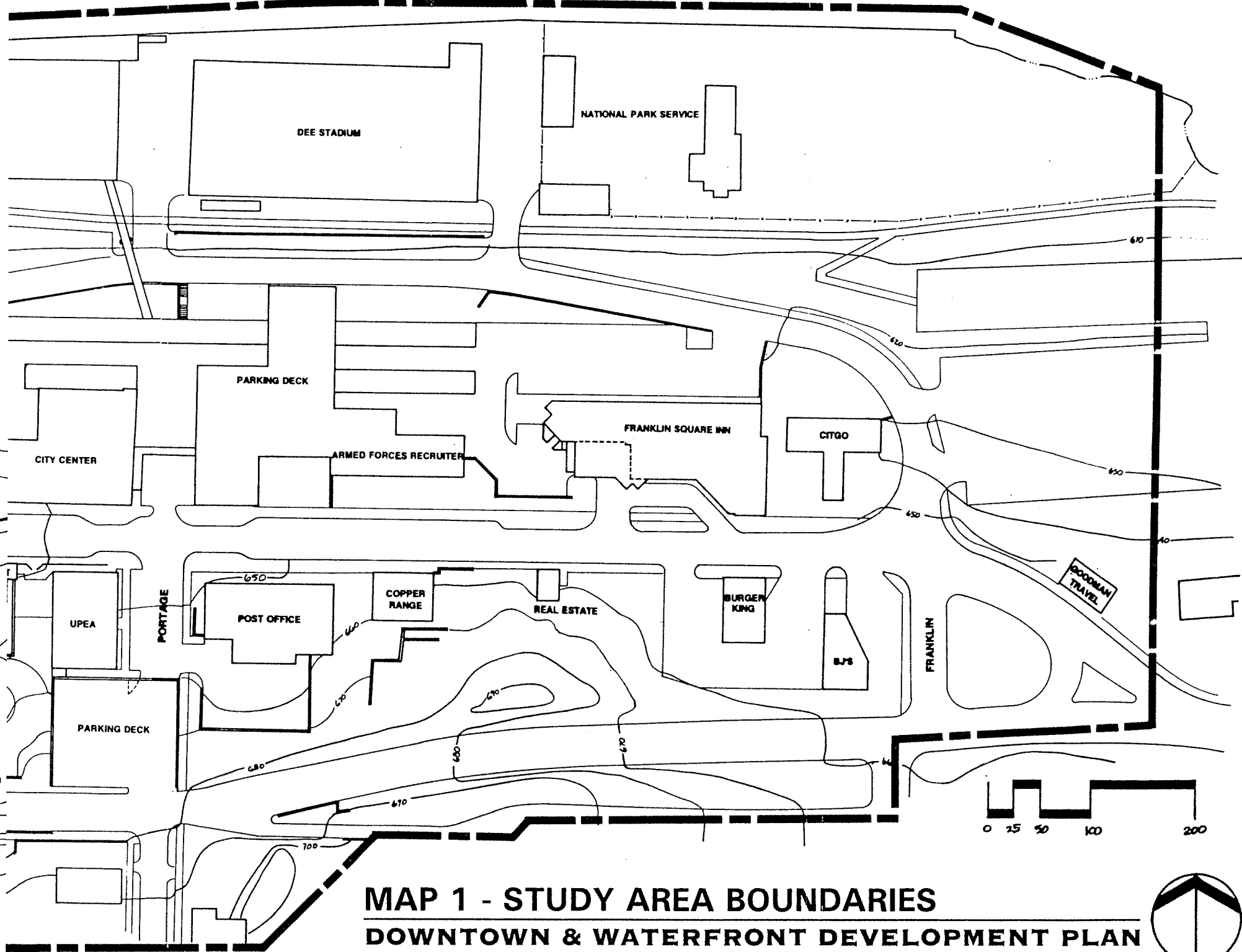
Since the completion of a community master plan several years ago, the City of Houghton, Michigan has experienced a great deal of change. Economic growth, land ownership and use pattern changes and physical improvements to the community and its infrastructure have helped revitalize an area once suffering from the loss of mining industry and the prosperity it brought to the region. Many of the plans outlined in the master plan have been implemented.

City officials and citizens alike are increasingly aware of the need to focus their efforts towards planning for future growth and change in the community. Growth management, ecotourism, strengthening neighborhoods and retail districts and improving circulation throughout the community are just a handful of the issues to be addressed in the near future. How the community deals with these issues determines its own measure of success.

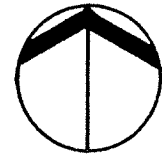
With the completion of a winter cities planning study in May, 1997 several planning issues were brought to the attention of community members that should be addressed within the scope of individual and collective planning efforts. This document builds upon the success of that planning study within a more narrow and focused study area.

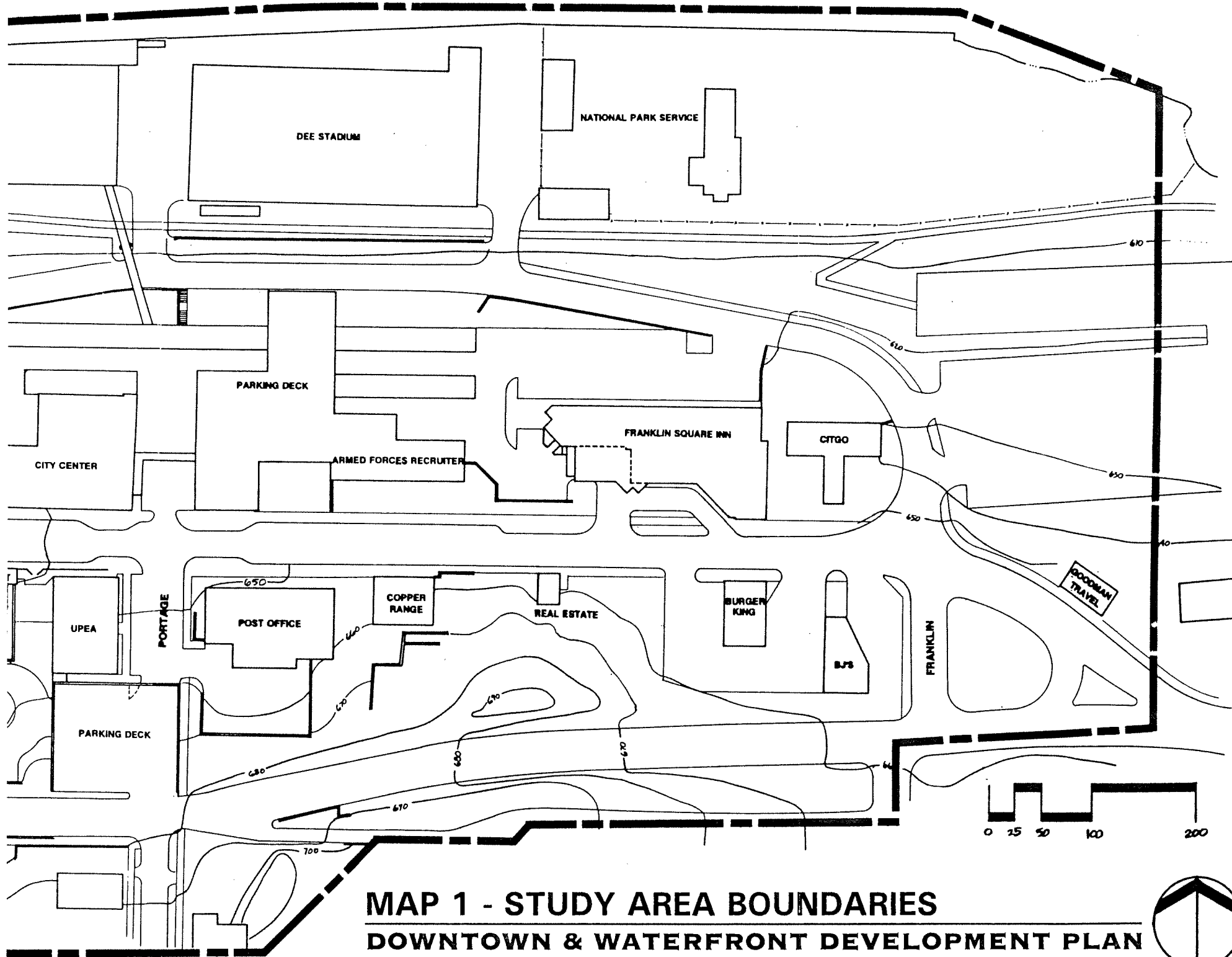
Rather than develop a new community master plan with general guidelines and suggestions, Houghton has elected to take an alternative approach. The city will focus on a specific study area of concern and develop more specific development plans and improvement guidelines based upon the unique geographical setting of the community and the resulting climatic conditions.

The study area encompasses the central business district and the waterfront to the north. See map #1. This area is important to the community for reasons affecting livability and the quality of life, as well as economic prosperity. The pulse of this district reflects the health of the community surrounding it.

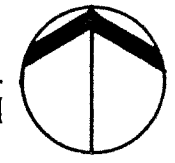


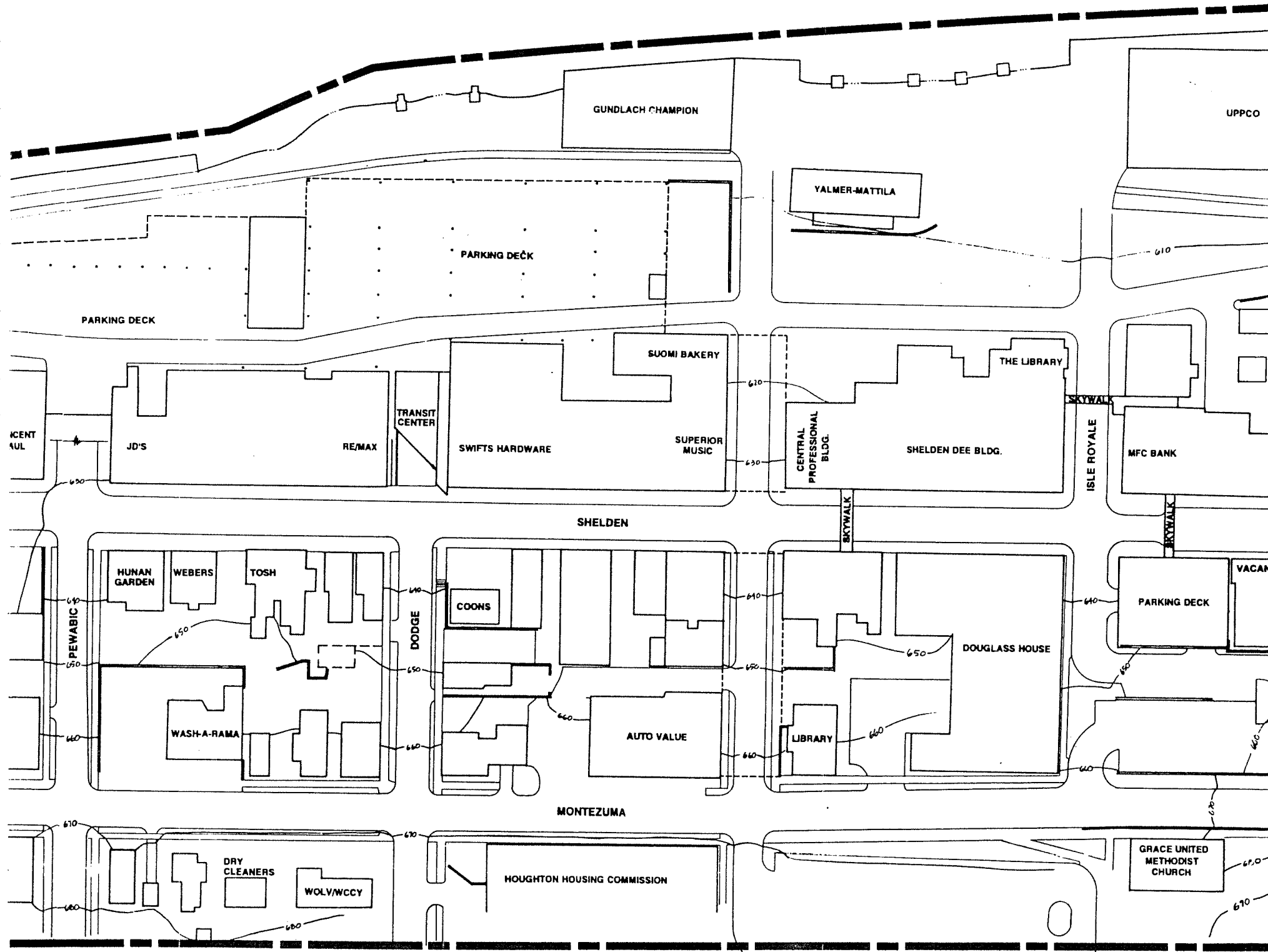
**MAP 1 - STUDY AREA BOUNDARIES**  
**DOWNTOWN & WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT PLAN**  
 CITY OF HOUGHTON, MICHIGAN





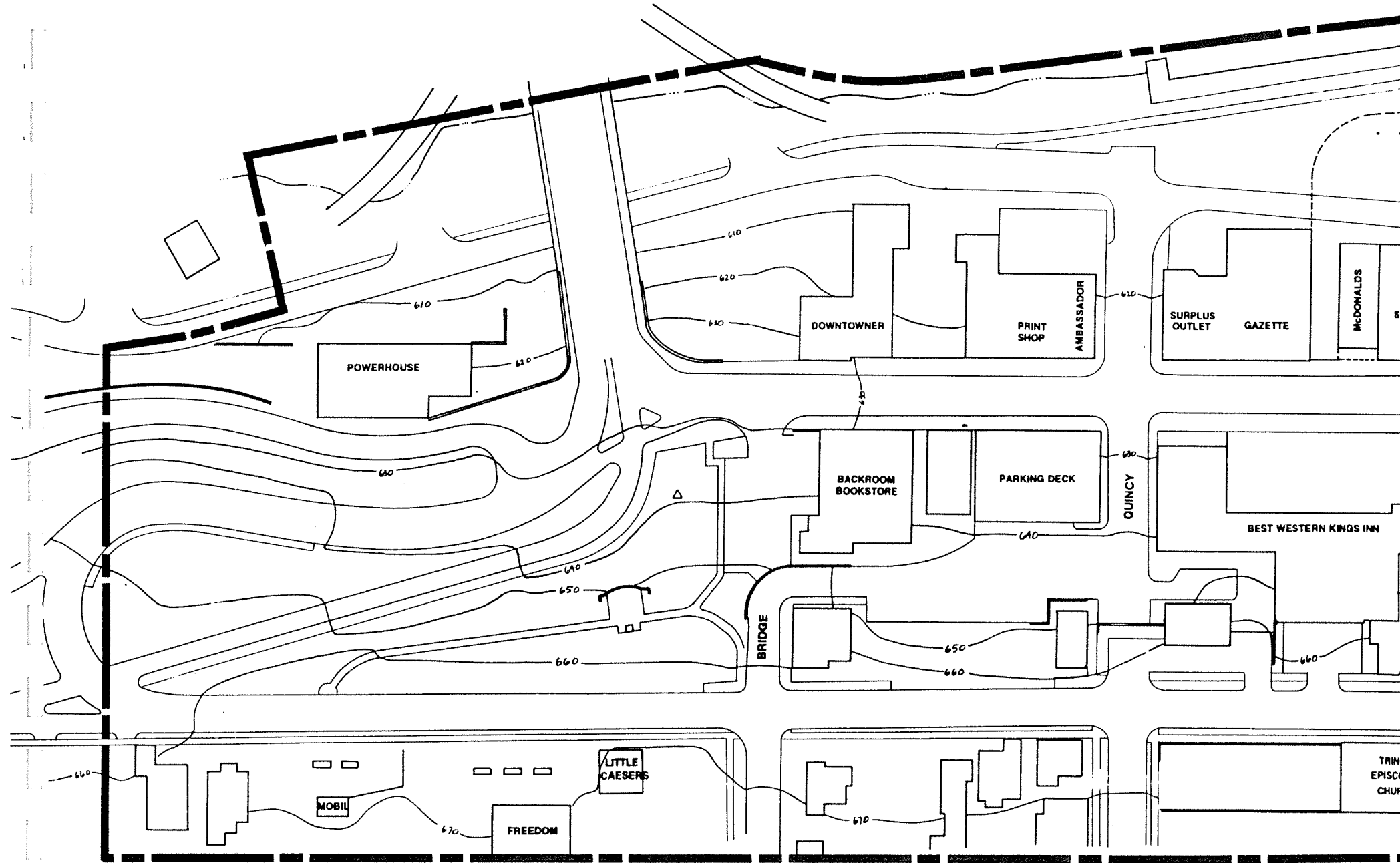
**MAP 1 - STUDY AREA BOUNDARIES**  
**DOWNTOWN & WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT PLAN**  
 CITY OF HOUGHTON, MICHIGAN





# LEGEND

STUDY AREA BOUNDARY





## *PURPOSE*

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The purpose of this document is to provide city officials, residents and potential developers with a framework to guide development within the study area. The guidelines and text within this document are not intended to be used as enforceable local laws, but instead are for advisory and discussion purposes only. The guidelines and development plan are instead aimed at encouraging dialogue between developers professional consultants, city officials and residents.

Communicating a clear vision of proposed improvement projects and specific actions the community can take to improve the study area is the first step towards planning for a thriving retail district linked to an active waterfront.

## OBJECTIVES

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The primary objectives of this document are as follows:

- Define key issues to be addressed within the study area through public meetings and citizen input.
- Inventory existing conditions in the community and provide a thoughtful analysis of important issues related to development within the district.
- Make site specific design recommendations and illustrate proposed design concepts to be implemented by the community.
- Provide useful information to assist community members to make intelligent, informed decisions in the development process and respond to climate specific issues.
- Strengthen the Houghton central business district and waterfront for the benefit of residents and visitors in the community.

## THE COMMUNITY VISION

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From the onset of this project we recognized the importance of citizen involvement in the planning process for community improvements. Residents were encouraged to participate throughout the process to help develop this guidebook. An open house was held specifically for the purpose of receiving comments about the community from Houghton residents. Attendance at this event was quite good and citizens revealed a number of issues and concerns of importance to them. Input from that open house can be found in the appendix of this document. Other meetings with the planning commission and city council were open to the public to attend. This public input was critical to the development of a plan and guidebook that responds to the concerns of local citizens.

### *How residents view their community.*

We used four methods of gathering information about the public opinion of Houghton. The first method of collecting data relevant to the study was an informal open house work session with community residents and leaders present. The second method was review of a recent report outlining community issues and suggestions prepared by the Houghton Business Association Improvement Committee. The third source of information was a 1997 public opinion survey conducted by the Michigan Technological University GEM Center for Environmental Outreach. The fourth and final source of information was a winter cities planning study conducted in 1997. All four methods provided valuable information.

While the community open house was an informal gathering with much discussion about this study and the product to be developed, it was established specifically for gathering specific ideas or concerns residents and community leaders have. Allowing residents an opportunity to provide input to be used for planning and shaping the downtown and waterfront study area encouraged participation in the planning process and helped to define what visitors and community members perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of Houghton. While many residents expressed their appreciation of the existing study area character as a traditional, compact downtown business district with an historic flavor, the overwhelming majority of attendees expressed concerns for existing conditions within the study area. A summarized list of those concerns and comments can be found in the appendix of this document.

The report published by the Houghton Business Association Improvement Committee outlined a number of creative ideas and suggestions for improvements within the downtown and waterfront district. Generally the document addresses concerns in the following focus areas:

- Visual improvements
- Pedestrian and traffic patterns
- Business environment
- Parking
- Other misc. issues

## THE COMMUNITY VISION

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This list of concerns and suggestions closely parallels general public comments received at the community open house despite the independent development of its content. This can be attributed to the business community leaders being in tune with public comments and desires. Their interaction with community members on a daily basis makes them an excellent source for receiving citizen input and concerns.

In 1997 the Michigan Technological University GEM Center for Environmental Outreach conducted a study for Houghton County. The study was a public opinion survey about land use issues within the county. While the GEM center study encompassed a larger geographic region than our study area, responses from Houghton residents were tallied separate from others. This makes it possible to gain insight about resident views on 26 specific questions addressing a variety of issues. The issues addressed include land use planning, community change, private development, property rights and environmental stewardship to name a few.

Residents who chose to respond to the survey expressed concern for a wide range of issues. Items receiving the greatest number of written responses include long range planning efforts, recreational opportunities and scenic roadways. Many of the responses specifically addressed visual conditions and a concern about rapid urban sprawl versus controlled growth. Specific comments, along with a general summary, are included within the appendix of this document.

It is also important to note that the GEM Center study identified several positive things regarded as important by the local citizens. These include the small town feeling of central Houghton compared to that of larger cities, the natural environment and the scenic beauty so important to our quality of life in this region.

The winter cities planning study included public workshops aimed at education and receiving community input. It addressed issues in four specific areas: visual environment, access/mobility, land use/built form, and public space. What we learned from residents echoed sentiments of other studies with the specific need for multi-seasonal awareness in development.

While the GEM Center conducted the most scientific study of planning and land use opinions, the responses gained from the other methods reflected quite similar viewpoints and should not be dismissed. The four methods of data collection used revealed a number of issues to be addressed and serve to validate citizen concerns.

## *THE COMMUNITY VISION*

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### *What residents want*

After much discussion with residents, the Houghton Business Association and the city planning commission, the following points were identified upon as key elements of Houghton's vision for itself in the future.

- Retain the key historic buildings and the existing community character of a compact downtown.
- Create an attractive and unique pedestrian environment within the study area that also meets the needs of other forms of transportation.
- Strengthen the waterfront as a linear park with a variety of spaces and amenities for public use.
- Strengthen the architectural flavor of the area through development of creative improvements in a style unique to the region.
- Require community design improvements and all new development to consider our northern climate and consider multi-seasonal use of facilities.

## *INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS*



In the past fifteen years the city of Houghton has made major development improvements both within and outside the study area boundaries. These improvements are the result of strong leadership, wise use of grants, funding, personnel and available resources.

Downtown revitalization efforts included improving the streetscape on Shelden Avenue, the redevelopment of major historic buildings, the construction of parking decks, and the creation of a pedestrian linkage system. This system of skywalks, interior passageways and doors between stores was recognized with a design award at the 1988 Winter Cities conference in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Houghton's waterfront development involved extensive land acquisition and the redevelopment of abandoned industrial and railroad land for recreational, residential, and commercial activity. A paved pathway along the waterfront extends for more than three miles.

Houghton has also carried out city beautification projects, including extensive flower planting, the flying of international flags, and pedestrian scale street lighting.

Also worth mentioning at this point are activities undertaken outside the study area boundary directly impacting the area.

In response to increasing demand for highway oriented commercial land, the city planned and implemented a highway corridor plan which concentrated commercial activity and provided for a system of access drives to reduce turning

movements and other traffic related conflicts. Although this has accommodated auto-related commercial development, it has also attracted some businesses that otherwise may have located within the downtown study area.

While auto-related commercial enterprise is an issue the city must respond to, the question to be asked of all new development is whether or not it can be included within the urban framework of the downtown study area

The city has been very active in the creation of new residential neighborhoods. Through land purchases and trades, the city has been able to expand the city limits to include land for residential development purposes. By working with private developers and property owners, and utilizing public works crews, the city has participated in the development of new residential subdivisions. The availability of these subdivision lots has resulted in an increase of new home construction within the city.

It is noted that housing within the study area boundary is primarily rental units that have not been negatively impacted by the new privately home construction within subdivisions developed by the city.

Although the result of this effort appears to have many benefits to the community, the continued growth of new residential areas must be approached with caution. If left unchecked, sprawling residential growth can result in higher infrastructure and maintenance costs while consuming large areas of natural resources. Compact traditional neighborhood developments should be considered for new housing developments to build upon

## INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS



the existing community framework and infrastructure. Traditional residential neighborhood development and neighborhood housing rehabilitation efforts are other methods of retaining community character and improving housing conditions within the city.

### Visual Issues

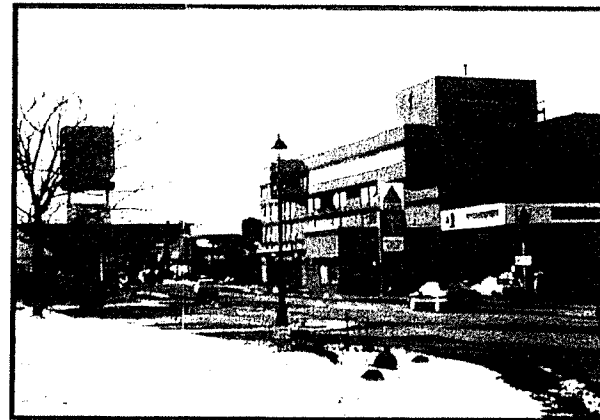
Several aesthetic issues need to be addressed within the scope of physical improvements to this district. It is nearly impossible to separate pure visual issues from other related problems in the landscape as they often relate closely to other issues identified within this document. The following photos are a few examples of visual concerns addressed by community members. They are not all inclusive but instead represent some of the concerns residents expressed in public meetings.

*“The challenge is to enhance visitors’ and residents’ experiences of Houghton by enriching their views of its unique natural and built legacies in all their seasonal forms.”*

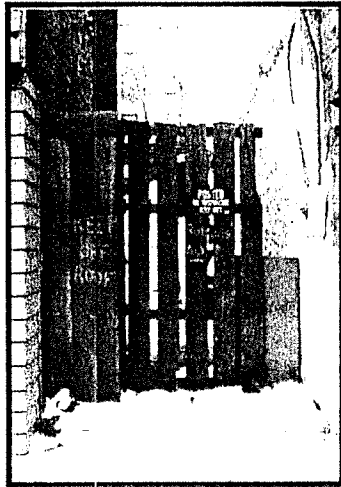
*— Winter City Planning Study*



*The plantings of large trees would help define the edge of the pathway and provide visual interest.*



*Commercial signage at the entry to the downtown does not compliment the scale and character of the district.*



*Vacant spaces between buildings can be improved with low fences, gates and plantings and lighting to improve visibility, aesthetics and create a sense of security.*

*Open storage of refuse in alleys should be prohibited.*



### **Circulation**

The most controversial topic discussed and debated within the community remains the traffic patterns and circulation along Sheldon and Montezuma Avenues. While this issue is important to the development of the study area, a complete study of this situation is beyond the scope of work outlined for this project. It is a topic that demands careful study to examine the pro's and con's of the existing system and proposed alternatives.

While a definitive traffic study has not been completed, we do have some general observations and thoughts regarding circulation issues that apply to Houghton and the improvement of the transportation system.

Comments we received indicate people want a more pedestrian oriented downtown with a thriving retail and business center. This means slowing down automobiles to a speed where pedestrians feel more comfortable.

Pedestrian traffic is important to the vitality and well being of a downtown because it remains the principal means of movement for customers. Customers, in turn, seek goods or services offered by area proprietors. Autos bring people to the study area and from then on they move about on walkways.

Pedestrians seek a safe, comfortable environment in which to shop and enjoy part or all of their day. Comfortable shoppers stay longer and buy more goods.

Conventional two-way streets generally accommodate pedestrian movement with a downtown better than one-way streets. This is



## INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS



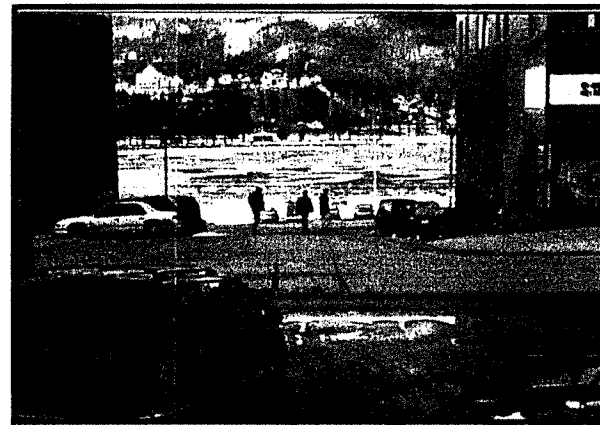
because the opposing lanes of traffic on traditional two-way streets cause drivers to slow their speed and drive more cautiously. This allows pedestrians more time to navigate across busy streets and move between destinations. While we realize that two-way traffic on Sheldon Avenue is an impractical suggestion due to the bridge approach and the volume of traffic, we also recognize the issue of traffic speed should be addressed.

There are two approaches to slowing vehicle traffic that should be considered in the near future: raised intersections or crosswalks that act as “sleeping policemen” and the development of an alternative route for large commercial trucks. Currently these vehicles are required to pass through the narrow retail core of the city. Their noise and speed create serious disruptions and safety concerns.

Two possible truck routing options could be explored further. One is the extension of Sharon Avenue east from the Michigan Tech SDC to US-41. The other is the use of the Chassell-Painesdale road connecting to M-26 and a number of county roads. Offering a truck route could greatly improve the Houghton Downtown as these vehicles are through-traffic only.

Slowing traffic is a benefit to visitors to the area also. They are unfamiliar with the existing city circulation system so making it easier for them to maneuver and move about the city increases the opportunity for them to stop, visit and spend both time and money here.

Obviously these alternatives should be looked at in more detail. The Michigan Department of Transportation should be consulted to determine the requirements and impacts of changing the existing system. Working jointly with this agency could resolve many unanswered questions.



*The absence of walkways forces pedestrians to walk in the street.*

## *INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS*

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### **Parking**

A preliminary parking study has been completed in the past year to examine the actual usage of parking within the district. Funding is currently being pursued for a comprehensive study to further examine specific parking needs in the study area.

While some parking is always needed in front of businesses and along the main street of a downtown, this should typically be regarded as short term parking. It generally satisfies the needs of patrons who have quick errands to run and brief visits to the district.

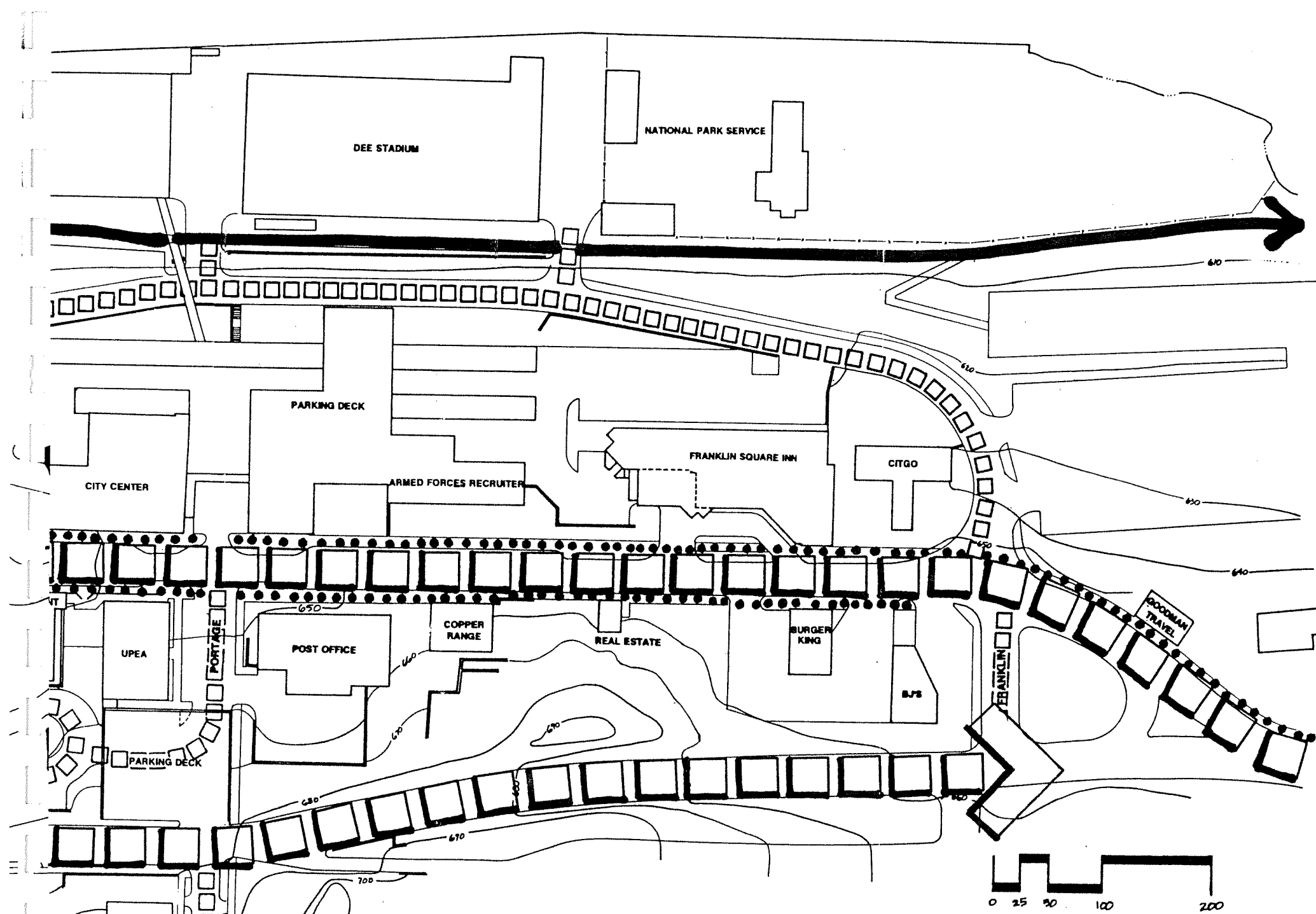
People with a need for a longer stay in the downtown can often find spaces available along side streets, on parking decks and behind businesses. Putting the majority of the parking in town to the rear helps accommodate a larger number of automobiles in the district. Side streets also offer the opportunity to provide some angled parking instead of parallel parking only. This gives motorists a choice if they are not comfortable with parallel parking.

An important thing to remember with parking is to strike a balance between offering only on street parking versus off street parking. Consider parking as a system that offers choice and central locations of higher density. It is not practical or advisable to try to provide the maximum amount of parking in front of every building.

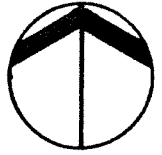
See maps #2 and #3 for circulation and parking information.

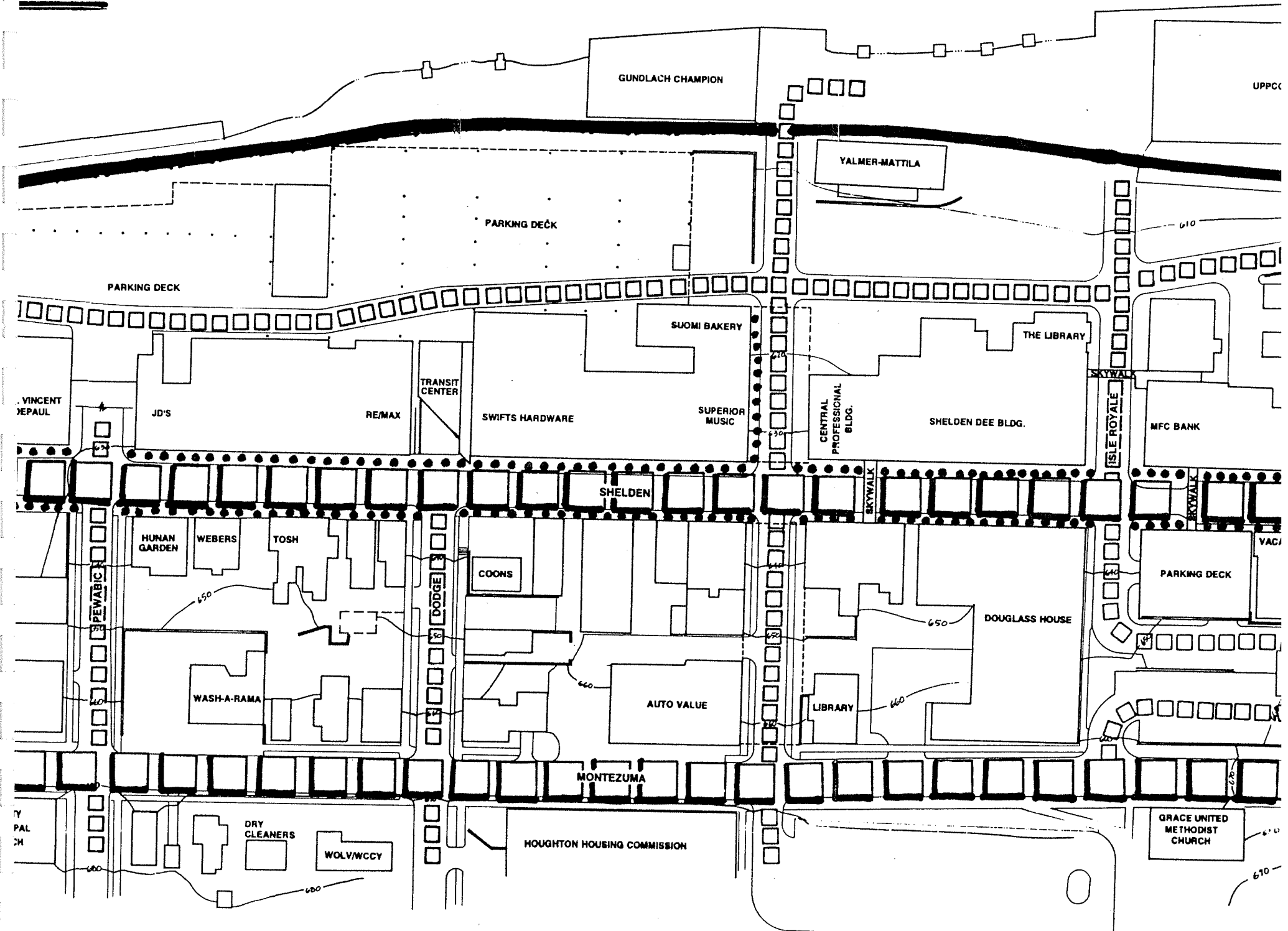
### **Waterfront**

While the continuous length of city owned waterfront property and recreation pathway is a terrific asset to Houghton and the surrounding region, it is an underutilized resource that has not yet reached its potential for attracting public use and development efforts. It still hosts principal building uses along the lakeshore that could be better accommodated in other parts of the study area or the community. The infrastructure of the downtown still turns its back to the water where it should be strengthening views and connections to the lake and making people aware of its presence in the landscape.



**MAP 2 - PRIMARY CIRCULATION ROUTES**  
**DOWNTOWN & WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT PLAN**  
 CITY OF HOUGHTON, MICHIGAN





GUNDLACH CHAMPION

UPPC

YALMER-MATTILA

PARKING DECK

PARKING DECK

VINCENT DEPAUL

JD'S

RE/MAX

TRANSIT CENTER

SWIFTS HARDWARE

SUOMI BAKERY

SUPERIOR MUSIC

CENTRAL PROFESSIONAL BLDG.

THE LIBRARY

SHELLEN DEE BLDG.

ISLE ROYALE

MFC BANK

SHELLEN

SKYWALK

SKYWALK

VAC

PARKING DECK

PEWABIC

HUMAN GARDEN

WEBERS

TOSH

COONS

650

DOUGLASS HOUSE

WASH-A-RAMA

660

AUTO VALUE

LIBRARY

660

MONTEZUMA

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TY PAL CH

DRY CLEANERS

WOLV/WCCY


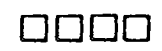


HOUGHTON HOUSING COMMISSION

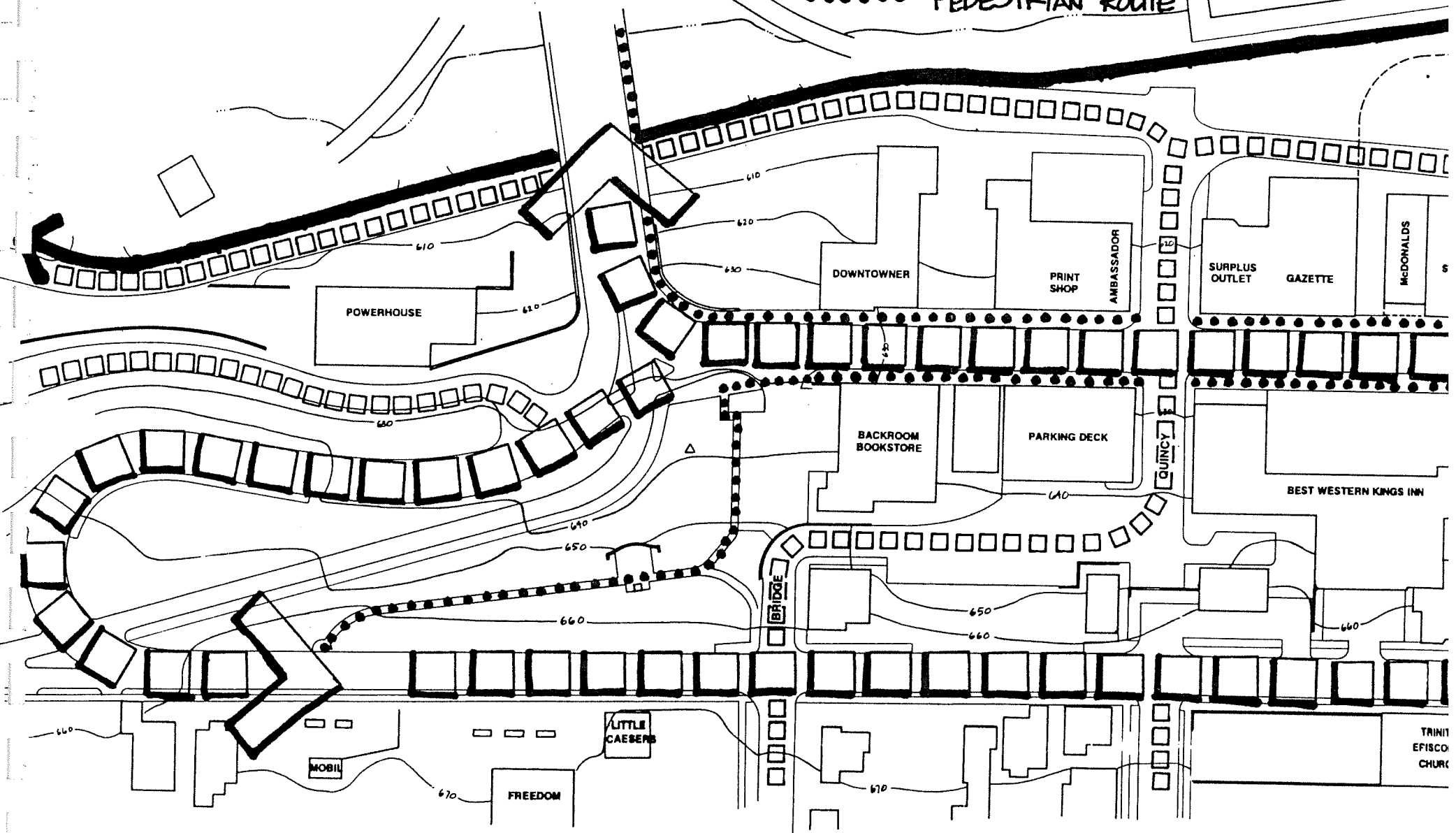
GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

660

670

# LEGEND

-  AUTOMOBILE · PRIMARY ROUTE
-  AUTOMOBILE · SECONDARY ROUTE
-  WATERFRONT PATHWAY / SNOWMOBILE TRAIL
-  PEDESTRIAN ROUTE



## *INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS*



### **Maintenance**

Maintenance within the study area consists of several activities, many which may often go unnoticed but are necessary. The following list of activities outlines City DPW responsibilities within the district:

- Streets and walkways
  - Snow removal
  - Paving and patching
  - Construction and repair
  - Street markings and signage
- Utility repairs - coordination, supervision and some construction
  - Water
  - Storm sewer
  - Sanitary sewer
  - Gas
  - Electric and lighting
- General repair and maintenance
  - Park and waterfront improvements
  - Mowing
  - Seasonal cleanup
  - Painting
  - Planter repair
  - Garbage removal

While DPW has a great amount of responsibility to handle as the list indicates, the items the community expressed the most dissatisfaction with were snow removal in front of businesses and visual issues pertaining to general repair and maintenance within the district.

Snow removal seems to be an ongoing battle and a task which is never complete till spring. The snowbanks form barriers between the road and entries to building. Several options exist to help improve this situation.

Improvements to the streetscape can help eliminate unnecessary clutter between the walkway and the road and ease plowing. Allowing for areas to store snow until removal can be undertaken is another suggestion. Creating openings in the banks along walkways with city snow removal equipment, or with the efforts and assistance from business owners, may help remedy the situation. In any case, a joint effort between business owners and the city will be required.

## INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS



### Business

Of all the items to be addressed in the study area none is as complex as business. While the city can provide the infrastructure necessary for a healthy downtown and waterfront, the most important reason people travel to a downtown is for the retail district. People enjoy an attractive environment but the activity offered is the reason they come. It is up to the business owners to provide leadership necessary to establish and maintain a healthy retail environment with community support.

The most important thing a business owner can do is to provide an attractive storefront and entry that displays the type and quality of merchandise to be sold. Storefronts should have strong visual appeal with lighting, entry design and signage. Merchandise displays can be kept very simple and clean and yet be very interesting and appealing to the customer.

*“Retail follows fashion, and fashion changes frequently. Shoppers will not believe a store has fashionable, new clothing on the inside if it is outdated or worn on the outside.”*

*— Robert J. Gibbs, ASLA*

The Houghton downtown business district suffers from businesses that do not improve their outdated storefronts or regularly change their display of goods. Many of the existing businesses could benefit from addressing this issue.

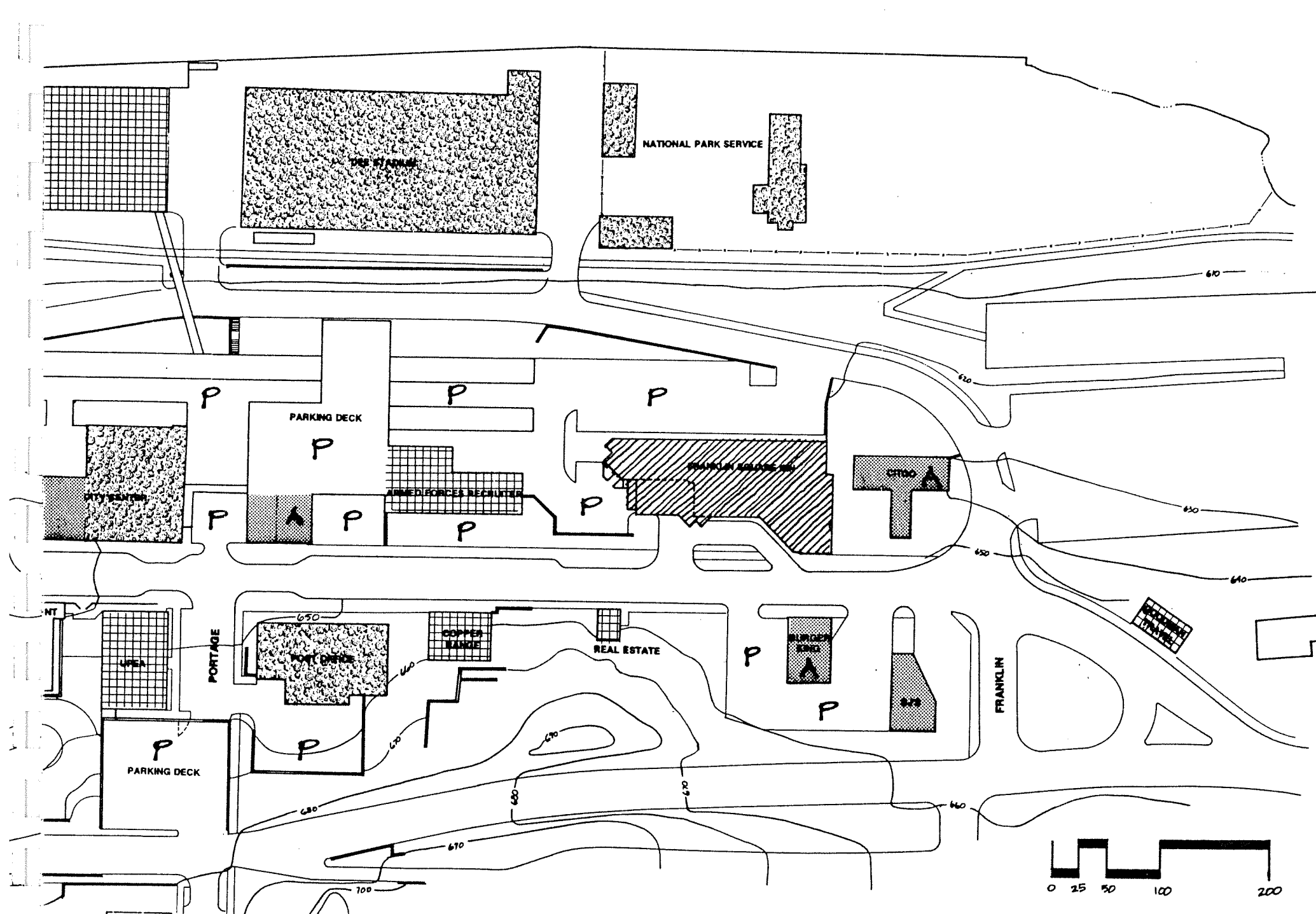
While the downtown district does not contain large retail anchors in the form of department stores, it does have other attractions and businesses that serve as anchors. The convention center, movie theatre and motels serve as attractions to the city. The type of attraction or anchor is not as important as its location. Locating them strategically to help lure shoppers from one end of the district to the other and by shops between them is desirable. In an ideal setting the local attractions, signage and storefront displays will encourage customers to move along the main retail corridor.

One obstacle Houghton must overcome is the existing retail gaps in the district. Dead space is space without retail, including empty storefronts or non-retail storefronts or offices. Too much dead space can cause shoppers to turn around miss part of the downtown district. This can happen with gaps as small as 30 feet. That is why retail uses on the first floor of a building are so important and why other uses should be at the second level and above.

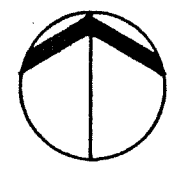
Eliminating dead space along Sheldon Avenue and providing attractive retail storefronts and displays is critical to the health of the district.

Improvement of upper level housing conditions in the downtown district with a mix of moderate to high end rental units is another important element. Successful downtowns encourage high quality residential opportunities within them. Houghton could benefit from this and the convenient location near MTU and recreation opportunities is unquestionable.

See map #3.







**MAP 3 - GROUND FLOOR LAND USE**  
**DOWNTOWN & WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT PLAN**  
 CITY OF HOUGHTON, MICHIGAN


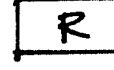
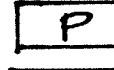



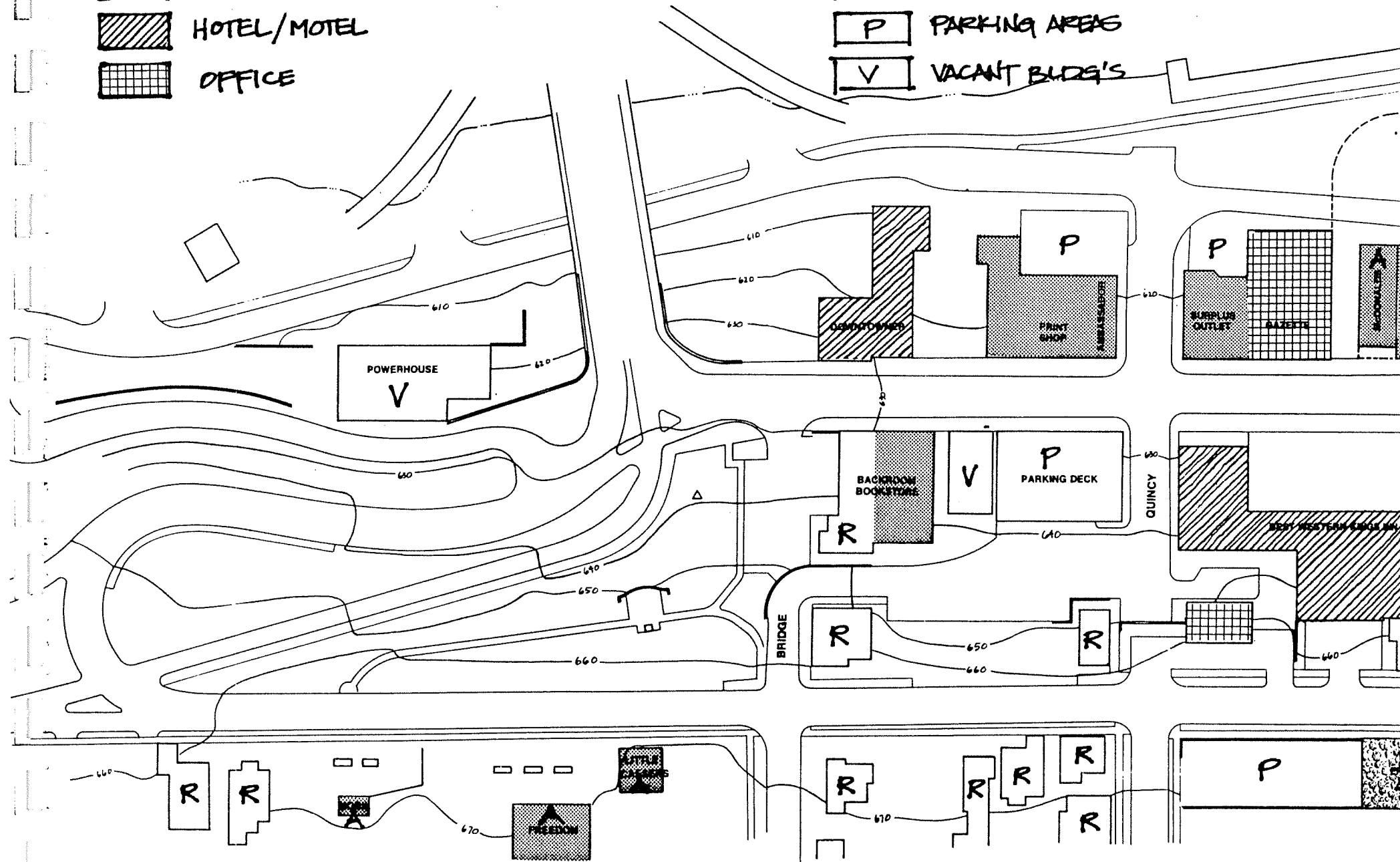




# LEGEND

-  COMMERCIAL/RETAIL
-  AUTO-ORIENTED COMMERCIAL
-  HOTEL/MOTEL
-  OFFICE

-  INSTITUTIONAL/PUBLIC
-  RESIDENTIAL
-  PARKING AREAS
-  VACANT BLDG'S



## INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS



### Development Opportunities

Several unique areas with opportunity for development or site improvements exist within the study area. Map number four identifies these key locations within the urban framework. While each site is unique and should be analyzed independent of the others for site specific projects to occur, they all share some common ground.

All of the sites identified are underutilized within the district. All of them should look towards higher density development and year round use opportunities to increase the appeal of the study area to residents and visitors. All of the sites are located on north facing slopes and all of them have a high degree of visibility by virtue of their location and exposure to high traffic volumes.

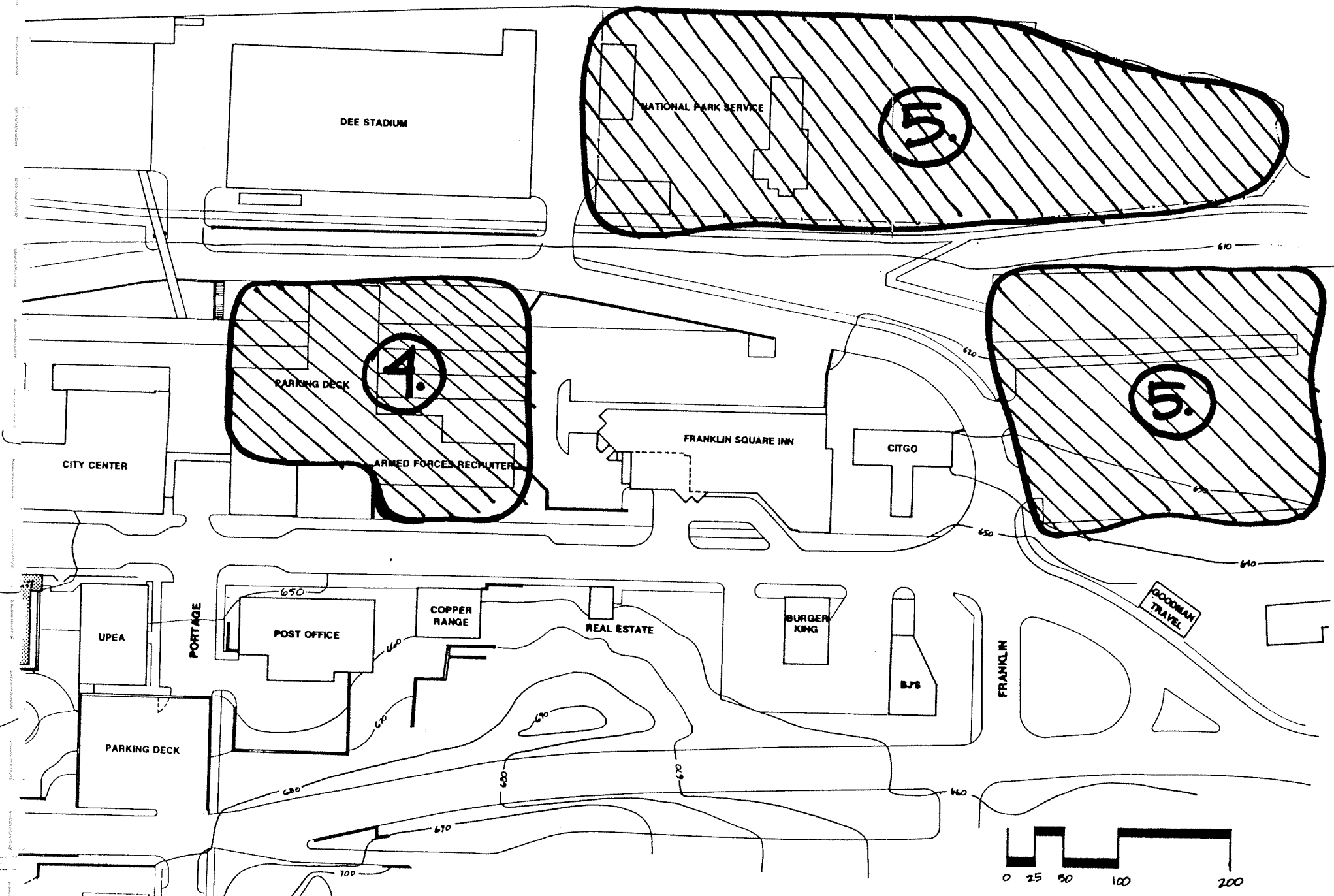
**Area 1:** This area below the Portage Lake Lift Bridge and immediately adjacent to the old powerhouse currently serves as parking for the boat launch and snowmobile trailer parking. While this is desirable use here due to the bridge right of way and limitations on building, a more efficient design could increase the number of vehicles accommodated while improving aesthetics. Additional parking could play a key role in supporting the renovation and development of the old powerhouse. This could help provide an economic boost within the study area.

**Area 2:** The area referred to as Mattila square exists as a sea of asphalt parking. It is confusing to the motorist and pedestrian to discern where autos and people belong to be safe and enjoy the use of this area. A more complete look at this area is offered within the development plan section of this document.

**Area 3:** The area between the Portage Lake District Library and the Douglass House offers some limited parking but exists largely as no-mans land. The lack of maintenance in the area makes even library patrons uneasy and unsure about parking there. This area may be considered for possible expansion of the Library or could be improved as a public space linked to the Douglass house. A more complete look at the possibility of a library expansion exists within the development plan section of this document.

**Area 4:** The entire block containing the armed forces recruiter and a city parking deck should be examined for urban redevelopment opportunities. The structures do not contribute greatly to the character of the district and are a marginal quality. Due to the key location this site offers in the heart of the district a strong redevelopment scheme that includes retaining the businesses should be examined. This issue is discussed more fully within the development plan section of this document.

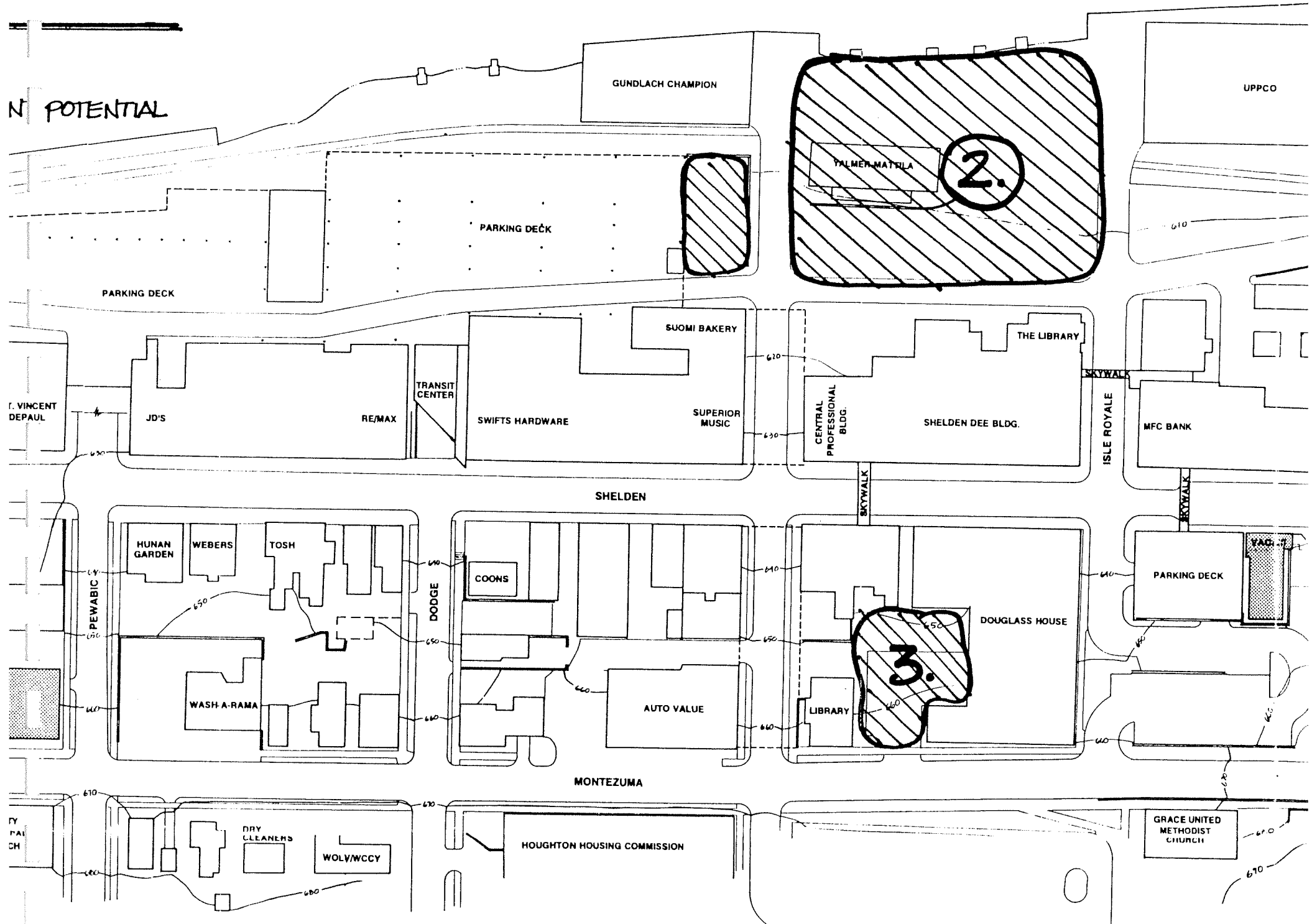
**Area 5:** The last area identified is that of the Isle Royale National Park Facility. While this use is highly desirable within the district, the seasonal use of waterfront property is less than desirable. The large parking areas required to support such a use are necessary but they need not exist immediately on the waterfront. The concepts of offering a remote parking area or a high density parking garage in *Area 4* should be explored to maximize waterfront development opportunities with the district. It is recommended that any new development within this area retain the important waterfront pathway.



**MAP 4 - DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**  
**DOWNTOWN & WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT PLAN**  
 CITY OF HOUSTON



N POTENTIAL



GUNDLACH CHAMPION

UPPCO

YALMER MATTILA

2.

PARKING DECK

PARKING DECK

SUOMI BAKERY

THE LIBRARY

F. VINCENT DEPAUL

JD'S

RE/MAX

TRANSIT CENTER

SWIFTS HARDWARE

SUPERIOR MUSIC

CENTRAL PROFESSIONAL BLDG.

SHELDEN DEE BLDG.

ISLE ROYALE

MFC BANK

SHELDEN

HUNAN GARDEN

WEBERS

TOSH

COONS

DOUGLASS HOUSE

PARKING DECK

PEWABIC

DODGE

SKYWALK

SKYWALK

WASH-A-RAMA

AUTO VALUE

LIBRARY

MONTENZUMA

RY PAI CH

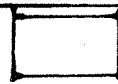
DRY CLEANERS

WOLV/WCCY

HOUGHTON HOUSING COMMISSION

GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

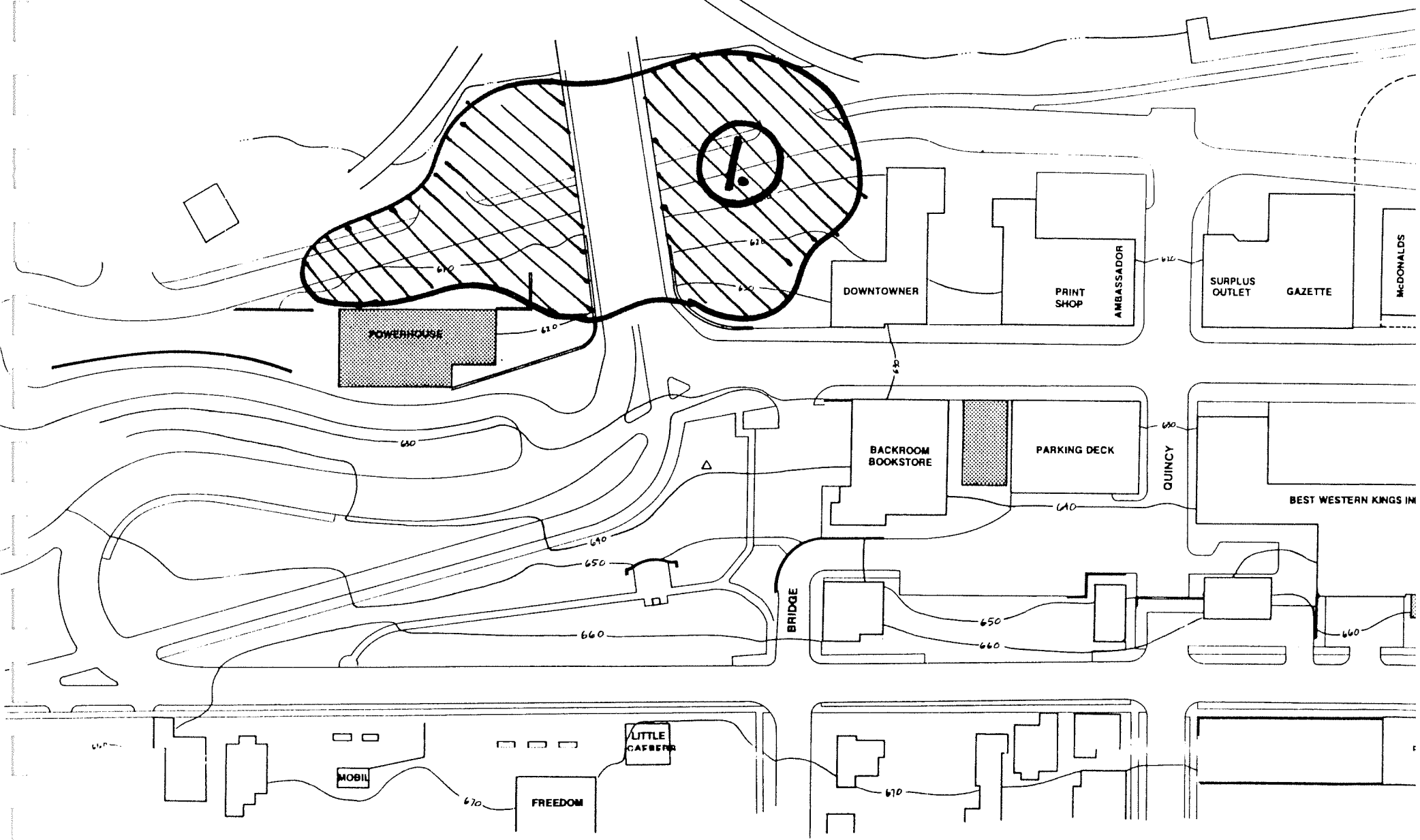
# LEGEND

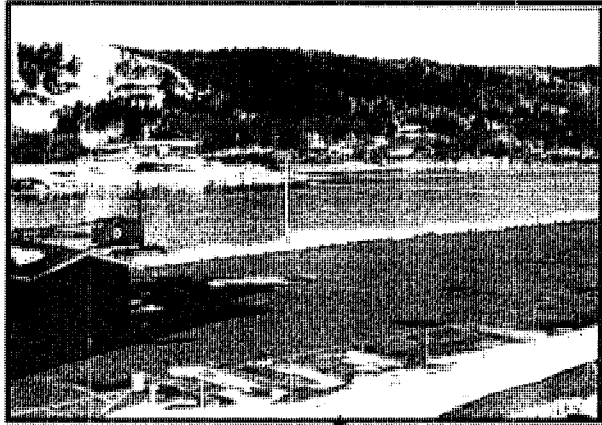


VACANT BUILDING



UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTY WITH REDEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL





*Seasonal parking along the waterfront results in underutilized property with high development potential.*

See map #4.

## GENERAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES □

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The development guidelines outlined in this chapter are aimed at providing assistance to developers, planning commission members, city officials and residents for the study area identified within this report. The development guidelines are intended to suggest approaches to development and design criteria to address several issues of local concern. These issues include but are not limited to:

- Preservation of community character
- Auto and pedestrian circulation
- Architectural and landscape improvements
- Signage and wayfinding
- Visual improvements
- Business climate improvement suggestions
- Safety and security

While the guidelines are not intended to be law, they are developed for discussion and advisory purposes between city officials and developers or private citizens. The guidelines should assist with the following tasks:

- Understanding community goals and objectives as they relate to development within the district.
- Reduction of delays and confusion encountered during preliminary project development and design.
- Maintaining and improving the visual quality of the community.
- Encouraging high quality architectural and landscape design treatments and innovative solutions specifically linked to our northern environment, culture and climate.
- Promoting dialogue between city officials and decision makers, private developers and investors and residents of the community addressing quality of design issues.



## GENERAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES



The following guidelines are intended to apply throughout the entire study area district. The interpretation of these guidelines should rest with the City of Houghton Planning Commission and government officials.

### 1. Implement traditional development pattern principles

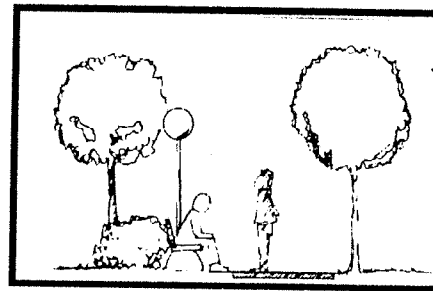
Take advantage of the existing pattern of development in Houghton and the cues provided by past development when building new. Strive to create neighborhoods, districts and places with a unique sense of identity.

- Utilize existing grid pattern established in the development study area
- Build to the street and sidewalk except where pedestrian activities occur.
- Provide windows and openings along the street and minimize blank walls and gaps. Make entryways visible.
- Slow the traffic down. Provide public corridors that emphasize pedestrian comfort and access as the primary mode of transportation in the downtown district.
- Put the long term parking in the rear, side or out of sight whenever possible. Make the front of buildings and the public realm of the street for people.
- Mix uses within the development district. High quality affordable rental housing is as important as thriving commercial and office space.

### 2. Encourage public interaction and socialization.

Provide a safe pedestrian walkway system that invites mobility throughout the community. Without such a system people are denied the opportunity to casually interact with others and are less comfortable in their surroundings.

- Provide seating and public spaces. Provide comfortable places for people to rest or visit.



*Landscape plantings, benches, and lighting create pleasant areas for community members to walk and visit.*

*Sketch courtesy of New York Dept. of State.*

- Create places for outdoor dining and food vendors.
- Provide public art.
- Encourage responsible outdoor activities and events to attract others.
- Link bus shelters to public services like buying a newspaper, a magazine, a warm beverage or using an automated teller. These services require little space and can be provided by enterprising merchants.

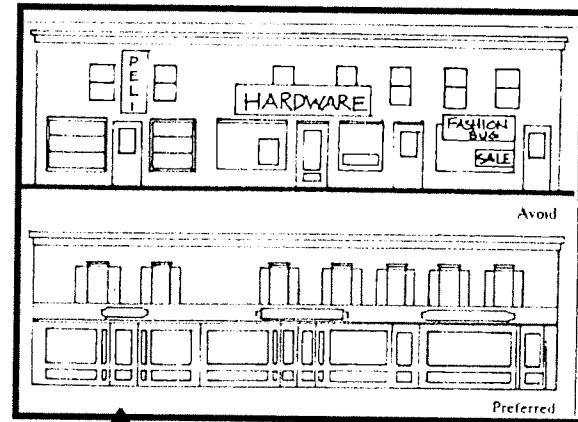
## GENERAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES



### 3. Provide an organized signage/wayfinding system

Make public signage attractive and coordinated using a signage program designed to fit the community. This will bolster community image and pride while improving the business environment.

- Provide signage to orient visitors. Directional signage and identification signage should be unified by developing a program within the district.
- Make signage compatible with and complimentary to building architecture. Signage size should be determined by architectural scale, proportions, the message to be conveyed and the location of the sign.
- Signage placement should be determined by the primary viewing audience. Motorists, pedestrians or both.
- Signage materials should be similar to the structures they represent. Use of materials, color, textures and landscape treatment should be visually coordinated with new development in the study area.
- Provide tactile and audible signals at all designated crosswalks to assist individuals with visual impairments.
- Use trees and plantings to develop patterns and spaces within the development district. This will assist people in movement through those spaces and provide a sense of identity to unique spaces throughout the district.



*Examples of building and signage compatibility.  
Sketch courtesy of New York Dept. of State.*

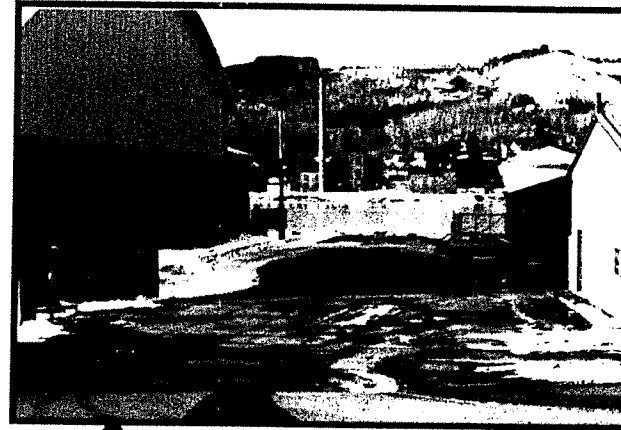


*Consider a pole mounted traffic and pedestrian signal and signage to communicate clearly with less visual clutter.*

## GENERAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES



- Identify what visitors see. Labeling and interpreting things in a sensible and attractive manner makes a visit to our area more interesting for tourists.
- Encourage people to leave their mark. Help them to be remembered by their fellow human beings by providing a community gift program that acknowledges donations made to purchase benches and plantings.
- Create gateways to unique areas in the development district.
- Provide scenic viewing areas and overlooks.
- Help visitors relate to our northern climate and geographic location by providing a few informative but amusing reminders that reference a national or global perspective.
- Designate community posting areas and bulletin boards rather than providing duplicate information in the window of each merchant. Window space is a precious commodity for retailers and eliminating clutter would be an aesthetic improvement and allow for bus shelters and more public spaces to provide the community postings desired.



*This is the gateway to Isle Royale National Park with part of the Keweenaw National Historical Park in the background....improvements could make this a more welcome entry.*