

## VI. COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE

The preceding chapters of this Plan discuss three types of land use and the provision of public services and utilities. Recommendations are made as to the best use of land to achieve the goals expressed in the first chapter. However, simply having the most appropriate uses in the most appropriate locations will not itself ensure that the Lewisboro of twenty years hence will appear the same as the Lewisboro anticipated by this Plan.

This chapter proposes that the key to realizing this Plan's vision of the future Lewisboro is, first, to identify the best qualities of the community's character and overall appearance and, second, to commit to maintain and enhance those qualities. This approach applies to every type of land use, development project and public facility.

### A. Residential Areas

Even after experiencing substantial residential growth, Lewisboro continues to have a visual identity distinct from that of neighboring towns. The higher density areas are well separated from each other and major roads by wide areas of wooded lands which conceal more isolated residences. The view south from Lookout Point in Westchester County's Mountain Lakes Camp on the North Salem border is one of seeming forest with only the homes on the edge of Lakes Waccabuc, Rippowam and Oscaleta revealing the presence of a residential community. A similar view is seen from other high points in Town.

Of course the present forested view of Lewisboro is quite different from the days when the Town was an active farm community - in a very real sense the vegetation has taken over. Beneath the undergrowth are the stone walls that delineated growing fields, pasture lands, swamps and farm borders. Now often hidden behind trees are numerous homes from the nineteenth and late eighteenth centuries. Fourteen historic cemeteries dot the landscape. The heritage of Lewisboro is far from lost.

Steps can be taken to insure that the same statement can be made in 2005. Of prime importance is the recommendation of the residential development chapter that the low density residential character of much of Lewisboro be maintained through application of rural and low density development standards. Additional guidelines can be followed regardless of development density. These are:

1. Use of Natural and Man-Made Features. The major features of the natural and man-made terrain should be incorporated into subdivision and site plan design whenever possible. This guideline has long been applied by the

Planning Board but stronger legislative support should be considered. Features of specific concern include:

- a. Intact stone walls should be preserved and used for property line definition when reasonable.
  - b. Natural wetlands and stream corridors should remain undisturbed by new construction or lot development.
  - c. Steeply sloped land should be protected from destructive encroachment.
  - d. Wooded areas should retain their character.
  - e. Remaining open space fields should be maintained for their own unique contribution to the landscape. Consideration should be given to selective clearing where it would serve a landscape architectural purpose or enhance a historical setting.
2. Separation From Major and Collector Roads. All new construction should continue the existing pattern of much of Lewisboro's residential development by being separated visually from major and collector roads. The rural atmosphere of the community is enhanced by open space or green corridors on the most traveled roads while at the same time new homes are best oriented toward quiet neighborhood streets.
- In some circumstances, particularly in the hamlets, it may be appropriate to have new construction front on collector roads. In these situations, the new residences should be integrated with and related to the existing residential character. The use of high solid fences to screen such homes from the roads should not be premitted where it would create a tunnel effect along the road and defeat the green corridor or hamlet concepts.
3. Street Construction. New residential streets should be designed to fit in with the natural landscape. Major grading, excavation, excessive rock cuts and stream/wetland disturbance should be avoided. Limited relaxation of standard design guidelines should be considered as a means to mitigate environmental disturbance when no other option is available.
4. Architectural Review. Single development projects which involve the construction of a large number of residential units within a short period of time can have a dramatic impact on community appearance due to their scale alone. Detailed consideration must continue to be given by the Town to this aspect of any such development. As it has begun to do, the Planning Board should review large single-family subdivisions for architectural variety and

avoidance of repetition in building and site design. Multi-family developments should continue to be subject to more comprehensive architectural review.

## B. Commercial Areas

In 1984, each of Lewisboro's four hamlets encompassed small business areas. The commercial development chapter of this Plan recommends that these areas remain neighborhood business centers. Within this framework, the Plan designates room for growth which is directly related to the likely needs of the Town's present and anticipated future residents. While this commercial growth is both necessary and recommended by the Plan, it could affect the quality of the environment if not carefully reviewed by Town officials. Guidelines which should be applied to all commercial development for the purpose of protecting and enhancing community character and appearance are:

1. Visual Appearance. A visual cohesiveness should be promoted in each hamlet. This requires that all new buildings relate architecturally to existing buildings. It also requires that the visual relation between buildings and road corridors be considered. Establishment of a sense of cohesiveness can best be achieved through strengthening of the architectural review process now conducted by the Planning Board for all new commercial buildings.
2. Circulation. The visual integrity of the hamlets can be further enhanced through the development of a functional circulation system. At the time of site development plan review, vehicle and pedestrian links should be given careful consideration in terms of parking area connections, driveway locations, pedestrian access and sidewalks.
3. Site Development Standards. Detailed standards on elements of commercial site development are contained in the Town's zoning regulations. These include guidelines on such features as outdoor lighting, signing, landscaping, parking requirements and screening. It is critical that these standards be set forth in concise terms and be periodically updated as they provide the basic implementation tool for regulating the appearance of commercial areas.

## C. Areas of Special Character

The above discussion centers on the protection of a general "Lewisboro character" applicable to the entire community. There are several sections of the Town which embody particular aspects of this character in a visually striking manner. Each of these sections encompasses a relatively large land area

which contains a substantial number of contiguous buildings reflective of a period of Lewisboro history. Each is also characterized by well-defined features.

Five sections of Lewisboro are described below as areas of special character. Each one continues today to present a unique setting similar to a specific period of Lewisboro's past. This Plan considers it possible to both protect the significant characteristics of these areas and to allow for new development. Future generations of Lewisboro residents will greatly benefit from the Town's commitment to special preservation policies over the life of this Plan.

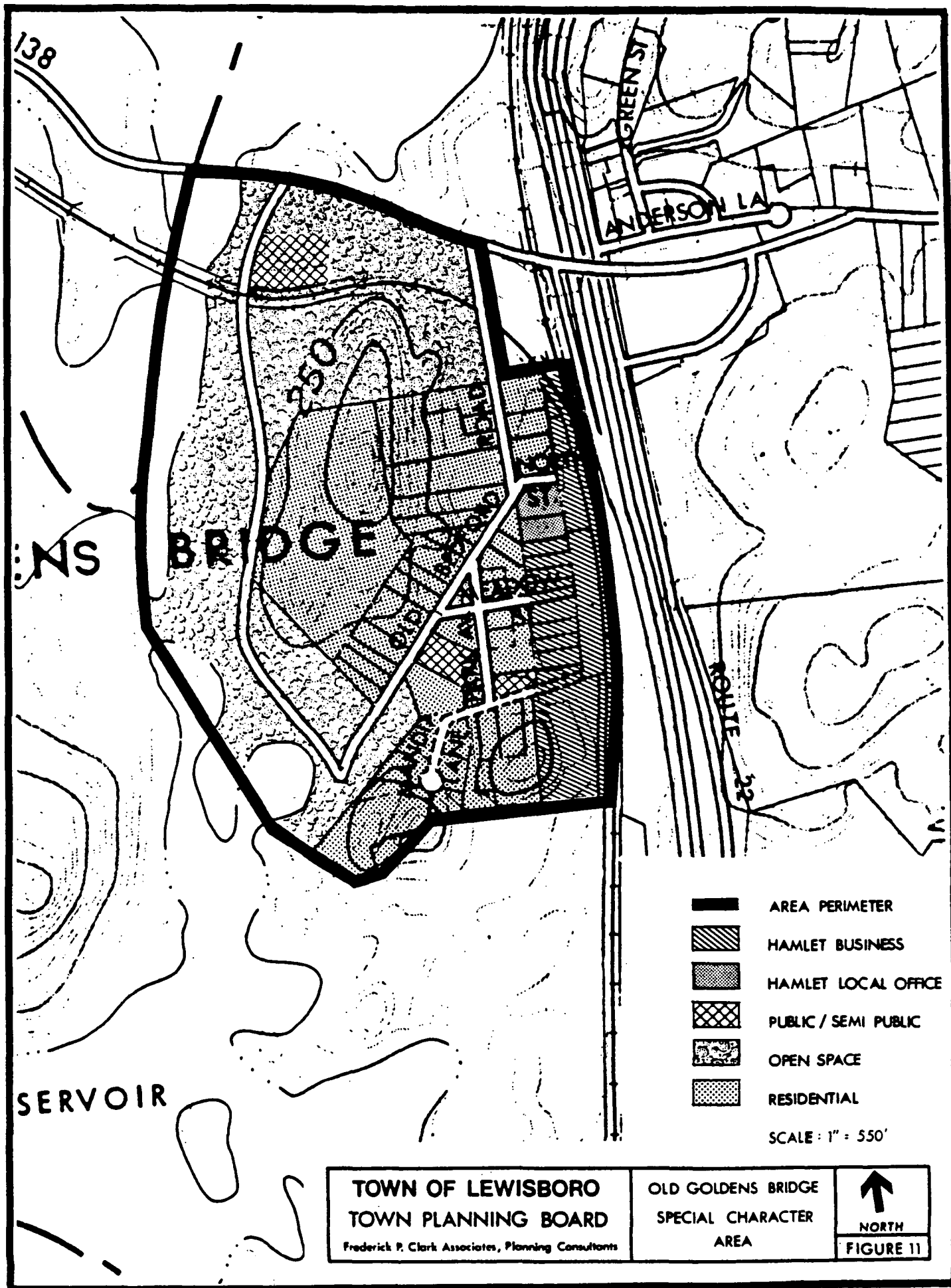
1. Old Goldens Bridge. Considering its history, it is a wonder that there is an Old Goldens Bridge remaining in 1985. Portions of the hamlet were subject to upheaval and destruction on several occasions including the permanent flooding of the Croton River as part of New York City's water supply program, the progressive widening of Route 22 and the construction of a six-lane Interstate highway. Through it all, a residential enclave reminiscent of a turn-of-the-century village has survived tucked between what is now a commuter railroad line on the east and what is still protected watershed land owned by New York City on the west.

Old Goldens Bridge, as outlined on Figure 11, contains many structures dating from the late 1800s to early 1900s. Access to the area is limited to Old Bedford Road which also serves the commuter rail station and several general business uses which line the railroad. Of special concern is the relationship between these commercial uses and the residential area. Preservation of the different period of time quality of this area is dependent on protection of the residential value of structures along Old Bedford Road and Park Avenue.

The following policies are established for Old Goldens Bridge:

- a. Commercial uses are to be confined to the land area presently occupied by such uses except as noted under "b" below.
- b. The two large old buildings (one being the former New York Store) located adjacent to the commercial area near North Street should be preserved.

Preservation can be encouraged by recognizing the potential for these buildings to be an effective buffer between the overtly commercial uses to the east and the residential area to the west. Hamlet Local Office uses, as described in Chapter III, would work well as a buffer and would also provide an economic incentive for continued building maintenance.

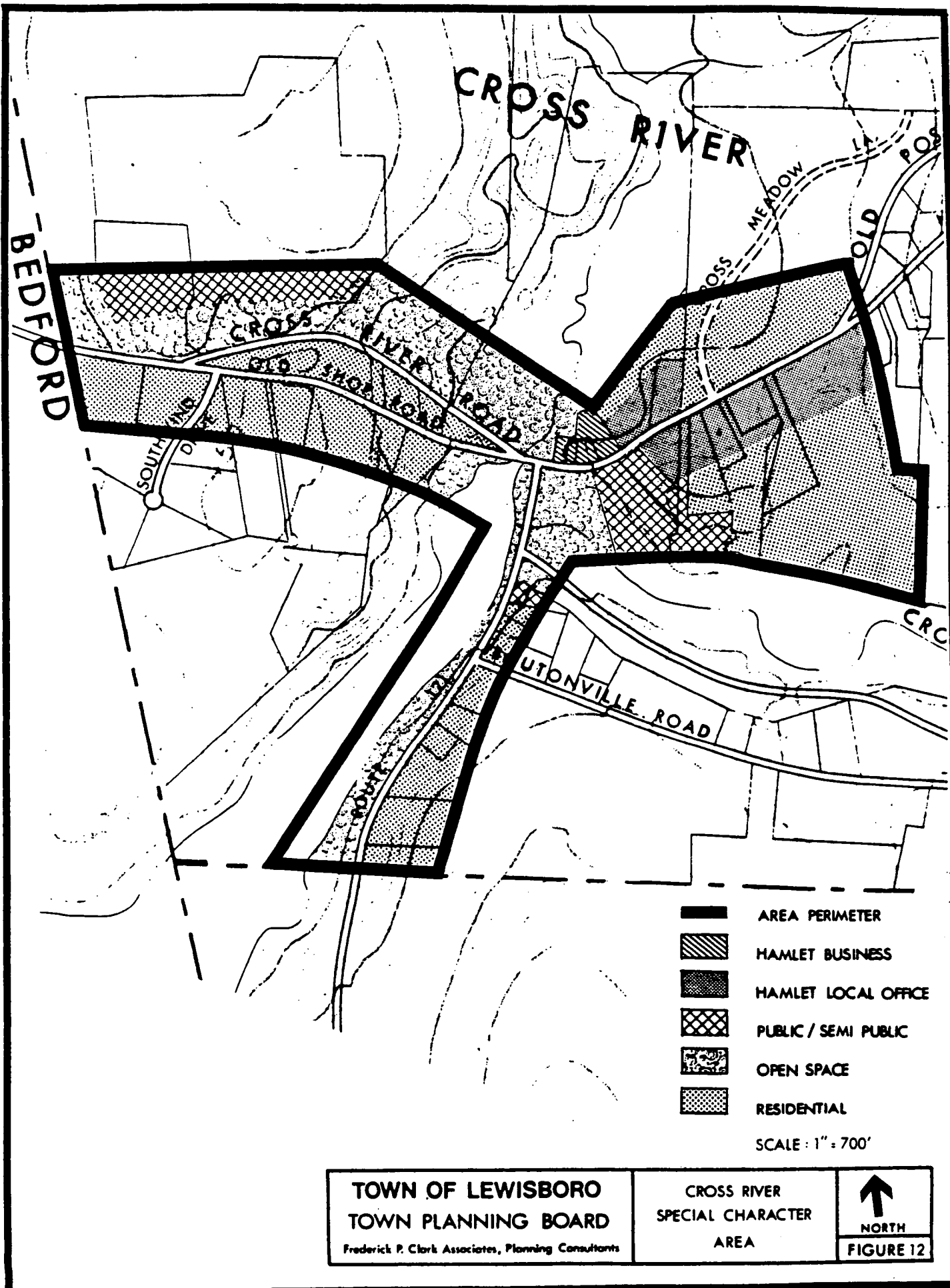


- c. All new construction proposed for Old Goldens Bridge should be subject to architectural review. New residential buildings should be found to be compatible with the area's architectural character and scale. New commercial construction within the existing business area should also be architecturally sensitive to the residential area and not be disruptive to the neighborhood.
  - d. Future residential development of the 10-acre tract located northwest of Old Bedford Road should be subject to the above review policies. In addition, all development should be buffered from the rear of existing residences fronting on Old Bedford Road.
  - e. The old railroad bridge which crosses the Muscoot Reservoir is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is an important community asset now mainly unrecognized. The structure itself, it's setting and the old railroad bed extending to it from Old Bedford Road should be protected and enhanced. Any future expansion of commuter parking facilities or roads should not be permitted to infringe on this area.
2. Cross River. Some of Cross River hamlet's buildings have been facing the main roads through Lewisboro for over 200 years. Although the traffic has increased and some uses of property have changed, the visual image remains one of a nineteenth century village.

Figure 12 shows an outline of narrow corridors along Route 121 and Route 35 centering on their intersection at the Fifth Division Market. Within this perimeter is a remarkable density of historic homes, two church buildings, a cemetery and several retail stores. There is a cohesiveness to the area established by the age of the structures, the stateliness of the large residences and the low profile of the commercial uses. The challenge now is to maintain this antique quality with a mix of uses and increasing traffic volume.

The following policies are established for the Cross River special character area:

- a. All new construction proposed within the area should be subject to architectural review. Inappropriate design, bulk or setback could have a severe impact on the overall setting of the hamlet especially in recognition of the location of most properties directly on a State highway. The context of the entire area must receive priority in the review of individual plans.



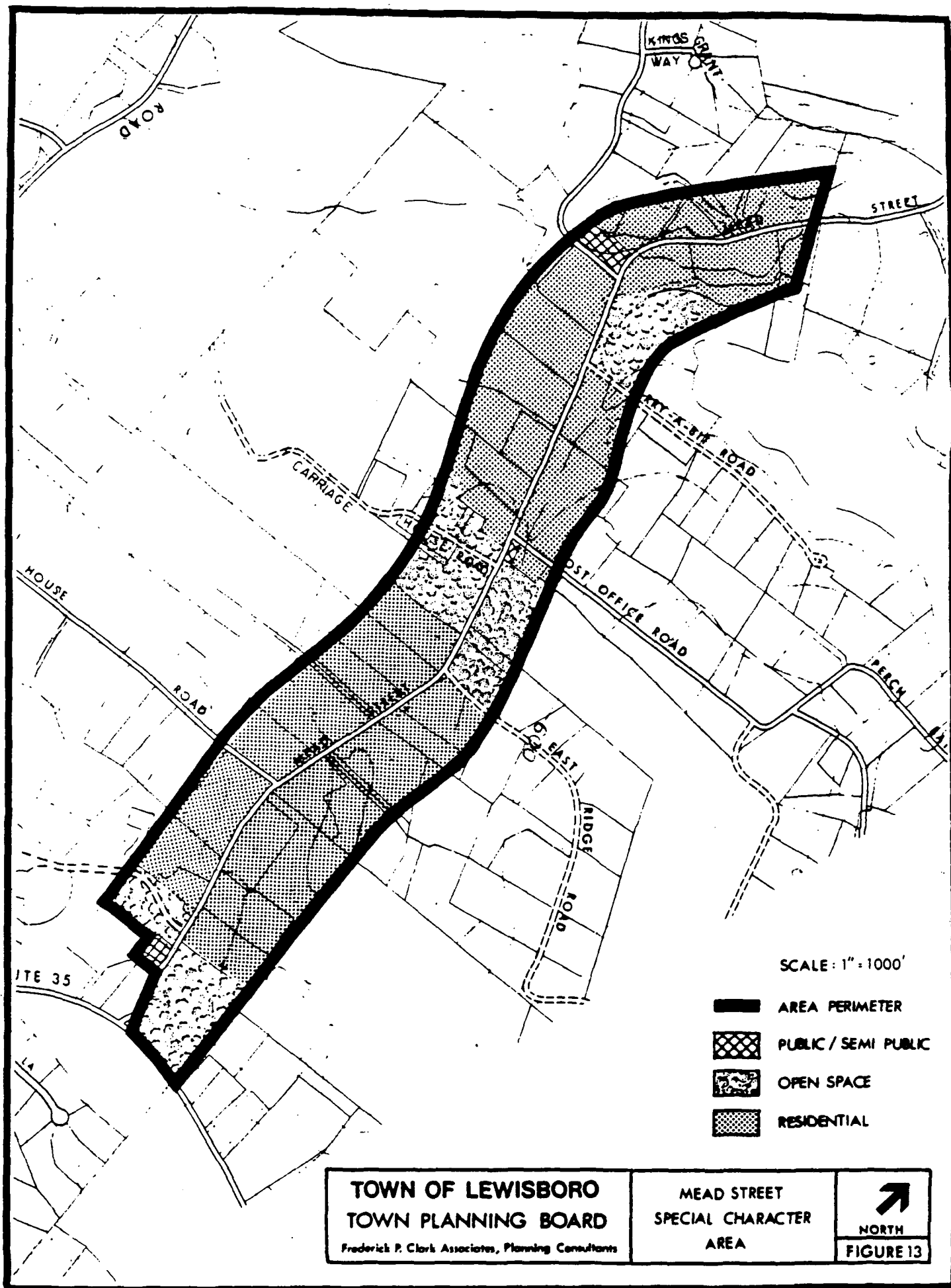
- b. The residential character of the area should remain dominant. To this end, the construction of buildings for commercial use should not be permitted.
  - c. Consideration should be given to permitting Hamlet Local Office uses, as described in Chapter III, in existing buildings which are located directly on Route 35 between Mark Mead Road on the east and Route 121 on the west. Subject to careful site plan review, this alternative use would both provide an economic incentive for preservation of these key structures and expand the range of professional services available within the hamlet to local residents.
  - d. Attention should be given to pedestrian movement through the Cross River area. At present, the lack of walkways makes leisurely strolling unsafe if not quite impossible. This reduces opportunities to appreciate the historic quality and setting of the area. A general walkway plan should be developed. Over time, through Planning Board review of site plans, the individual efforts of property owners and Town and community group programs, a walkway system could begin to emerge.
3. Mead Street. For two hundred years the Mead family has been building homes along this road which carries the family's name. Although in this century the Meads and their decendents have been joined on Mead Street by other families, the history of the old road is seen everyday in the quiet beauty of the street. The farms which were once dominant are gone but the stately old homes and well-tended lawns and meadows are still framed by trees and stonewalls.

There is a delicate balance between the scale of the homes, the road and the landscaping that exists for over a one mile length of Mead Street. Contributing to the overall setting are the Mead Street Burying Ground, the open spaces of the Waccabuc Country Club, the views of Lake Waccabuc and the Mead Memorial Chapel. Once lost, this special character could never be replaced.

The following policies are established for the Mead Street area as shown on Figure 13:

- a. Rural density residential land use is the only type of new development which is appropriate.
- b. Architectural review should be required of all new construction. The existing character could be quickly diminished with the construction of an inappropriate building due to bulk, exterior finish or setting.



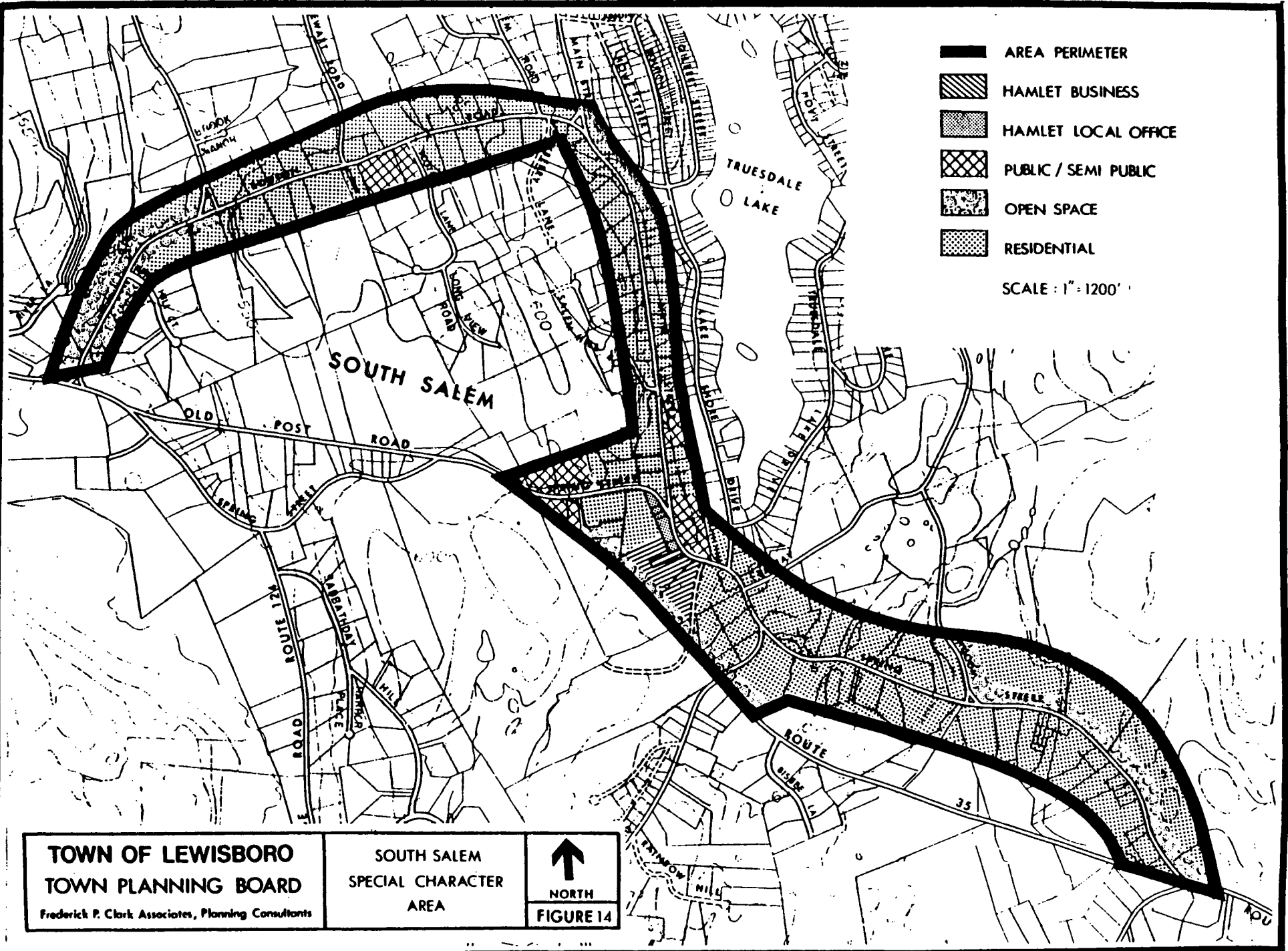


- c. Special attention must be paid to any proposal to develop the large tract located at the northeast corner of Mead Street and Route 35. The hillside on this tract faces the intersection and serves today as a pastoral gateway to Mead Street. All construction should be directed over the crest of the hill.
4. South Salem. "South Salem" is presently used as an address by over half of Lewisboro's residents, many of whom live far from the hamlet center. But for most, the name evokes a special image - a tree-lined village street, an imposing church on a hill, an old cemetery, antique homes both small and large and the Town House, itself once a stately residence. The roads leading into the hamlet - Spring Street, Main Street and Bouton Road, serve as portals to the old village center, lifting the traveler from the modern age of the State highways to the slower tempo of life along former country farm roads. Lining the roads are a remarkable assortment of historic buildings, some dating back to the eighteenth century but whose age is not necessarily apparent in a quick glance.

The center of South Salem and the roads leading into it establish an important community identity. This identity of a link to the farm community of the past should be protected for the benefit of all Town residents who travel through the area regularly.

The following policies are established for the South Salem special character area as shown on Figure 14:

- a. For all but a small part of the area, residential development is the only type of new development which should be permitted. The density of new development should be as shown on the Plan Map and differs by location.
- b. The cluster of buildings which line the west side of Spring Street across from the Presbyterian Church, north of the Salem Market, should continue to be used as residences. Conversion to the types of uses included under the Hamlet Local Office designation may be suitable but the expansion of existing parking to serve more typical commercial uses would destroy the attractiveness of the area. The buildings now occupied by an antique shop and the Horse and Hound restaurant are suitable for such limited commercial use.
- c. The approximately 5-acre area which fronts on Spring Street east of the Salem Market and extends through to Route 35 is designated by this Plan for long-term development as a Hamlet Business site. Any construction must be designed to complement and enhance the existing character and maintain a separation between the hamlet and Route 35.



- AREA PERIMETER
- HAMLET BUSINESS
- HAMLET LOCAL OFFICE
- PUBLIC / SEMI PUBLIC
- OPEN SPACE
- RESIDENTIAL

SCALE : 1" = 1200'

<b>TOWN OF LEWISBORO</b> <b>TOWN PLANNING BOARD</b> Frederick P. Clark Associates, Planning Consultants	SOUTH SALEM SPECIAL CHARACTER AREA	 NORTH
	<b>FIGURE 14</b>	

- d. All new construction, residential and commercial, proposed within the area boundaries should be subject to architectural review. With few exceptions, the existing structures on Spring Street, Main Street and Bouton Road respect the historic setting through design or buffering. If those few exceptions are joined by new discordant buildings, the visual image of a drive through South Salem could quickly change and lose its noteworthiness.
5. West Lane/Elmwood Road. Unlike the previously discussed areas of special character, the key characteristics of the West Lane/Elmwood Road area do not readily stand out. But a drive along these roads produces a feeling of uniformity. That feeling is attributable to the stone walls and large trees lining the roadside and the spatial relationship of several large homes to open fields. Although much of the existing architecture is diverse, the landscape elements are shared throughout the area.

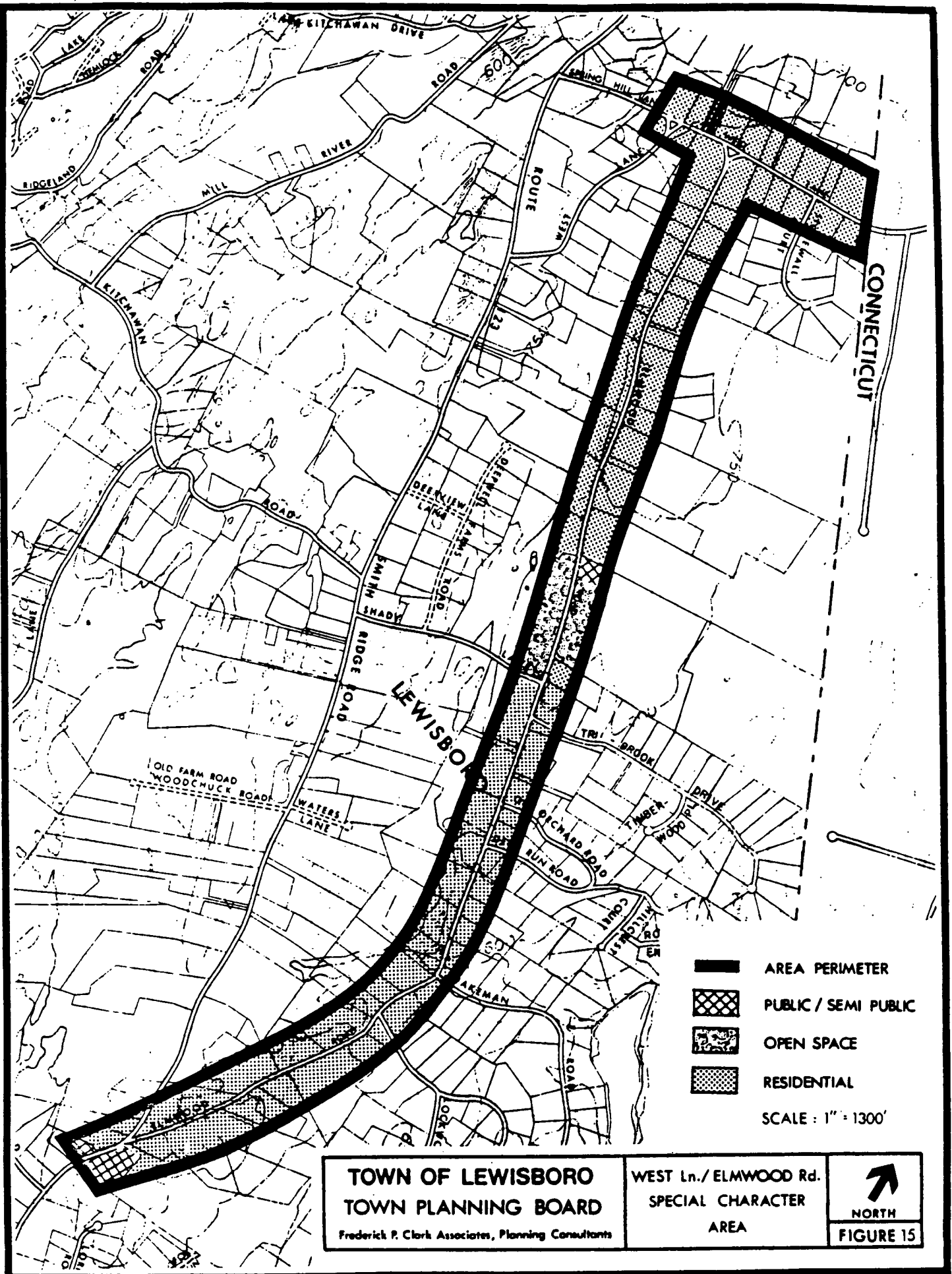
This area, more than any of the others, must be guided to realize its potential as an area of special character. Through the use and maintenance of the landscape elements, much of Elmwood Road can achieve the present visual quality of West Lane.

The following policies are established for the West Lane/Elmwood Road area as shown on Figure 15:

- a. The stone walls and large trees which line much of the length of West Lane and Elmwood Road are to be maintained as key landscape architectural features. Restoration of the many sections now overgrown or in disrepair should be encouraged.
- b. The rural density flavor of this area should be continued. Emphasis should be placed on the separation of buildings, setback from road and protection of open field areas.
- c. There is a diversity of building style in the area which reduces the need for detailed architectural review. However, review of the proposed bulk and exterior finish of new structures should be conducted to ensure compatibility with the immediate area.

#### D. Landmarks

Lewisboro has many notable individual buildings, many of historic interest, which are not located within one of the special character areas outlined above. Their individual and collective importance to the community is fully recognized by this Plan. Community groups have been engaged in efforts to identify these structures and their history. These efforts should receive the encouragement of the Town.



The isolated location and relatively small size of landmark structures prevents individual discussion here. Nevertheless, policies can be established to provide guidance for Town agencies whenever such structures become involved in a development application or public issue.

The guidelines for the protection of landmark structures are:

1. Preservation. The destruction or inappropriate alteration of structures recognized as community landmarks by local historical groups or the Town historian should be discouraged and, when possible, prevented.
2. Zoning. Appropriate zoning regulations, consistent with the goals and policies of this Plan, should be developed and implemented for the purpose of promoting the preservation of landmark structures.
3. Development. When landmark structures are included as part of a subdivision or site development application, efforts should be made to not only retain the structure but to protect an appropriate setting.