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2006: The year in Southbridge -

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...a section from a larger overview of the year

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

This year, several buildings in town either were built from the ground up or received makeovers.

One example is the \$15-17 million renovation and expansion project at Harrington Memorial Hospital, which is slated to be completed by June of 2007. The new plans call for a new laboratory and medical office building, an improved patient registration area, more single bedrooms for patients, the expansion of outpatient surgical units and several new operating rooms.

Another example is the three-story "Cannery" building on Crane Street. The historic building, which has at different times served as a food storage facility and a dog food plant, is being transformed into a large multi-use building, complete with commercial, artistic and residential spaces.

The residential space received a \$465,685 award from the state to turn the 1,300-square-foot units into at least three handicapped accessible and affordable two-bedroom apartments.

In July, the town was awarded \$600,000 from the Department of Housing and Community Development, part of \$31 million in federal grants awarded to 61 communities in Massachusetts.

Specifically, the money will go toward housing rehabilitation in the Chapin Hill District (bordered by Marcy, Dresser, Everett and Hartwell streets) and east of the "Flats" district (bordered by Crystal and North streets and the railroad tracks.)

Finally, in December, the Redevelopment Authority presented a detailed urban renewal plan to revitalize the downtown area. The plan calls for about \$20 million worth of public infrastructure investment in order to stimulate private development.

The plan's objective is to create a "vibrant downtown area" with mixed use development, improved open space, additional residential living options, increased jobs and improved traffic flow.