

Downtown Merchants Blasted

By LINDA BOUVIER
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Charging that the "lack of leadership in Milford is appalling," the former coordinator of the Downtown Council resigned her post Sunday as she blasted the Downtown Merchants' Association.

Patricia A. Calistro wanted to turn downtown into a "happening" — a place where tourists and local residents as well could shop and browse, and enjoy the atmosphere of a "quaint,

cared for, and quiet" town.

Instead, with few of those affected by downtown willing to pitch in and do the work, it was a struggle that Calistro found frustrating. The merchants "would love new storefronts, signs, cultural activities, and promotions — if someone else does them," Calistro said.

"Few are willing to ask for responsibility, much less accept it when asked," Calistro added. After she heard that 'the biggest sucker gets to be president' of the Downtown Merchants' Association,

Calistro asked, "How can this be?"

Calistro feels that "physical labor" can restore downtown, but "if neglected any longer, there will be no downtown Milford.

In a letter to the merchants, Calistro listed negative impressions that she caustically claims will "attract people" to the area: ... "Allow the buildings, streets, sidewalks, and property to deteriorate (good tax write-off).

... "Collect trash along the streets.

... "Never, never give anything away.

... "Not provide bathrooms (where do we 'go?').

... "Never solve the parking problem.

... "Make the vacant (and occupied) storefronts so unat-

tractive no one will rent them (or walk through the door).

... "Discourage new (and different) businesses. (This might create 'competition').

... "Ignore the railroad station, harbor and access roads and hope 'the outsiders' will get the message."

Calistro feels that "so much time and energy is wasted meeting, talking, gossiping and discussing. Not one of these does anything." Meanwhile, "most people actually avoid shopping downtown."

In her letter to the merchants, Calistro said, "You have tried, unsuccessfully, to discourage every move I made. I've been gossiped about, snickered at, ignored and judged by too many of you too much. I am not alone. There were others before me. They went elsewhere, too. When will you learn? It's the message, not the messenger."