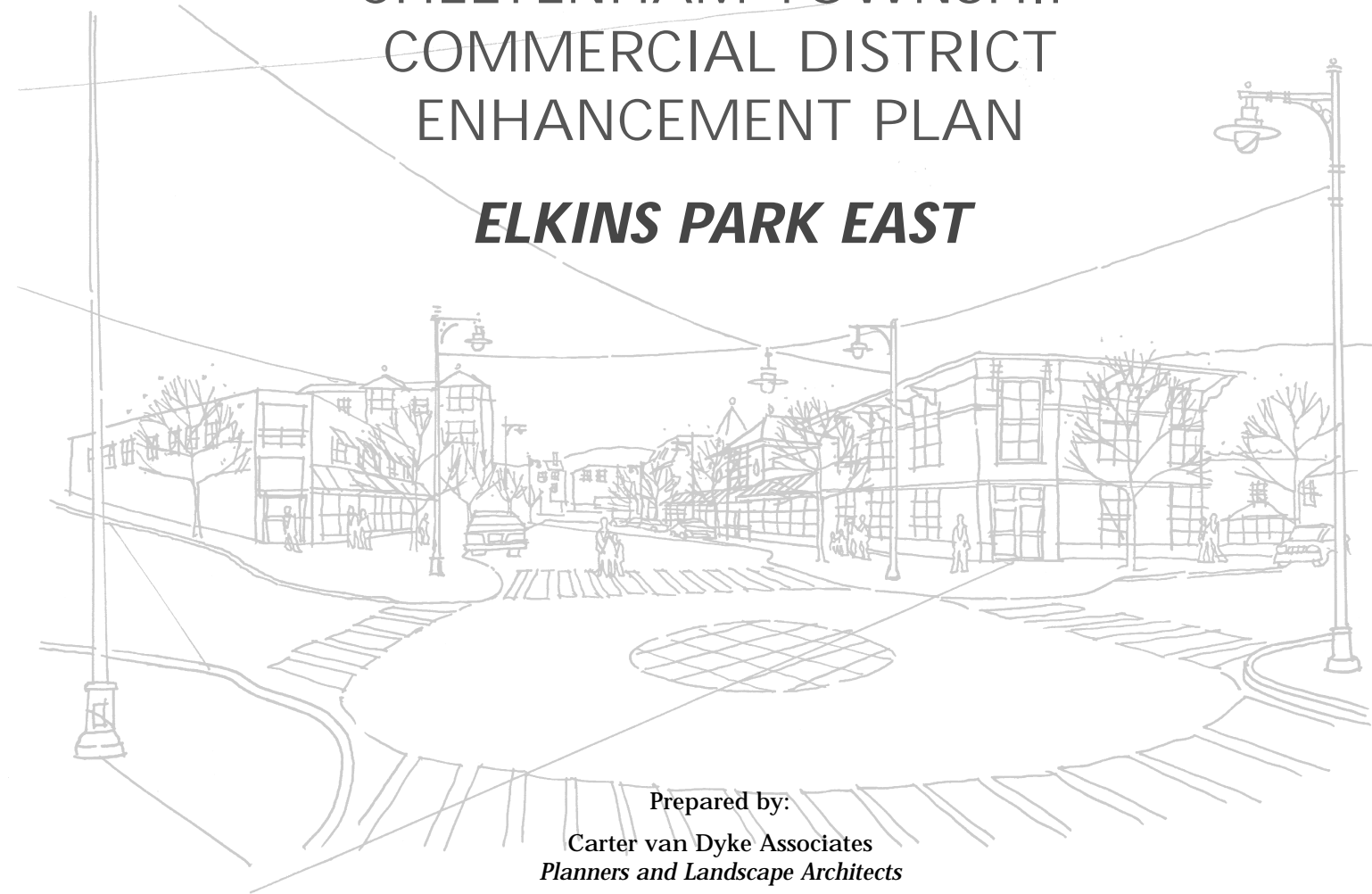


CHELTENHAM TOWNSHIP
COMMERCIAL DISTRICT
ENHANCEMENT PLAN

ELKINS PARK EAST



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Adopted October 23, 2000



The following report focusing on the commercial district of Elkins Park East is an excerpt from the full *Cheltenham Township Commercial District Enhancement Plan*. The complete report identifies policies, costs, and implementation strategies for Glenside, Elkins Park West, Elkins Park East, East Cheltenham Avenue, and Cheltenham Village. The full report and individual district reports are available for viewing at the Township Administration Building and all four public libraries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Numerous individuals and organizations have contributed to this vision plan. Listed below are some of the many people who have helped guide this plan:

- Cheltenham Township Commissioners
Paul R. Greenwald, President
Jeffrey A. Muldawer, Vice President
Thomas Jay Ellis, Member
Robert C. Gerhard, Member
Charles D. McKeown, Member
Harvey Portner, Member
Michael J. Swavola, Member
- Cheltenham Township Manager *David G. Kraynik*
- Cheltenham Township Assistant Township Manager *Brian T. Havir*
- Cheltenham Township former Main Street Manager *Joel A. Johnson*
- Cheltenham Township Main Street Manager *Ruth Littner Shaw*
- Cheltenham Township Economic Development Task Force former Chairman *Jim Butt*
- Cheltenham Township Economic Development Task Force Chairman *Harold Lichtman*
- Cheltenham Township Economic Development Task Force
- Cheltenham Township Planning Commission
- Cheltenham Township Engineer *David M. Lynch*
- Citizens who participated in the 12 Public Forums
- Business and property owners who participated in the 12 Public Forums
- Montgomery County Planning Commission
- City of Philadelphia Department of Economic Development

Township of Cheltenham

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

Board of Commissioners
Paul R. Greenwald, President
Jeffrey A. Muldawer, Vice President
Thomas Jay Ellis
Robert C. Gerhard, Jr.
Charles D. McKeown
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President's Message January 16, 2001

In February 1999, Cheltenham Township embarked upon the development of a vision plan to enhance the economic vitality and revitalization of five commercial districts in the Township: Glenside, Elkins Park East, Elkins Park West, Cheltenham Village, and East Cheltenham Avenue. The planning process involved the hiring of a team of professional consultants with backgrounds in landscape architecture, land use planning, architecture, transportation, and economic trends.

The plan, called the Cheltenham Township Commercial District Enhancement Plan (CDEP), is a blueprint for the renaissance and stabilization of our commercial areas. The final plan has come to fruition under the guidance and cooperation of the Board of Commissioners, Township Staff, Economic Development Task Force (EDTF), Planning Commission, business owners, property owners, community leaders, and many interested residents, all of whom have been an integral part of the planning process.

The recommendations offered in the CDEP represent a workable plan toward commercial improvements and community revitalization. The success of the implementation strategies, however, is dependent upon negotiations to be completed by the Township, property owners, and other parties. Securing cross-easements between property owners for common parking areas, acquiring the rights to certain lands, and obtaining public and private grants are all necessary components of the public sector improvements. In addition, businesses such as Philadelphia Electric Company, Verizon, Comcast, Elkins Park Hospital, local banks, Arcadia University and other institutions of higher education, and transportation organizations such as the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority are all important partners in the task of implementing the CDEP.

One key recommendation towards the economic vitality and enhancement of the commercial areas in Cheltenham is the establishment of an economic development corporation. Envisioned as a non-profit organization to help broker private funds for the implementation of the physical improvements, the Cheltenham Economic Development Corporation would (1) provide a charitable gifting deduction for contributions, (2) provide a vehicle for the contracting of privately supported contributions, (3) establish a source of revolving funds for facade enhancements to commercial properties, provided

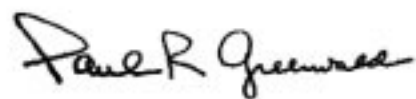
January 16, 2001
Page 2

the changes made are done in accordance with the architectural theme and design guidelines of the CDEP, and (4) provide a focus for future contributions to the historic heritage of our commercial districts.

Another key recommendation is to create a more pedestrian-friendly or "walkable community" by attracting and retaining a good mix of retail shops and quality restaurants. One benefit of this vision would be the opportunity for increased window-shopping at lunch and dinner hours. These types of pedestrian-friendly uses also encourage the promotion of these commercial areas as destination spots, a focal point to host special events on a large Township-wide scale or on a smaller neighborhood scale. The flexibility is there to choose the types of promotions and events that would be applicable to the various commercial areas, in keeping with the ambiance of the surrounding neighborhoods. Obviously, many of our commercial areas could also draw from special events promoted through heritage tourism or eco-tourism.

The recommendations stated herein may appear ambitious, but are achievable. It is anticipated that the scope of work, with the proper resolve, can be completed within a ten-year time frame. The Cheltenham Township Board of Commissioners is pleased with the final vision plan and stands committed to doing its part within budgetary limitations to help the implementation strategies in the CDEP come to fruition. Additionally, the Board and Township Staff looks forward to working with the EDTF, Cheltenham Township residents, property owners, business owners, community leaders, and other stakeholders in implementing this commercial district enhancement plan.

Sincerely,



Paul R. Greenwald
President
Cheltenham Township
Board of Commissioners

Implementation Strategy

Phasing Strategy

The phasing strategy is designed to accomplish two primary goals: 1) Identify easily achievable projects that will have a high and visible impact in the near term and 2) identify the important phases of the more ambitious projects that will require multiple years to implement. The project years shown in the phasing plans are to begin once this plan is adopted. The project years are intended to communicate the year a task might begin. As with any large multi-tasked project, the key is to enlist partners early, keep people informed, and adjust the schedule as necessary to address changing priorities. This is provided as an initial outline with the expectation that ongoing changes will be made by the Township Administration to respond to community concerns, sequential construction and available funding.

Implementation and Phasing Plan

In order to coordinate the implementation of activities recommended for Elkins Park East, the following groups will need to coordinate their efforts:

- Cheltenham Township Commissioners
- Cheltenham Township Manager
- Cheltenham Township Assistant Township Manager
- Cheltenham Township Main Street Manager
- Cheltenham Township Main Street Committees
- Cheltenham Economic Development Task Force
- Cheltenham Township Departments and Planning Commission
- Montgomery County
- Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
- Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
- Federal Transportation Enhancement Programs
- Federal Community Development Block Grant Program
- Local lenders & developers
- Private land owners & business owners
- Township residents

Cheltenham Township
Commercial District Enhancement Plan
ELKINS PARK EAST

Recommended Implementation Plan

| Public Sector Activities | Year to Initiate | |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Detailed Design | Implementation |
| Item Action | | |
| 1 Acquire County, PennDOT, and SEPTA support | | Twp-wide initiative in Yr 1 |
| 2 Recruit businesses to fulfill each District vision | | Ongoing |
| 3 Create a Township-wide non-profit Economic Development Corp. | | Twp-wide initiative in Yr 1 |
| 4 Draft and change zoning ordinances | | Twp-wide initiative in Yr 1 |
| 5 Draft and change parking ordinances | | Twp-wide initiative in Yr 1 |
| 6 Draft and change sign ordinances | | Twp-wide initiative in Yr 1 |
| 7 Create and approve Facade Enhancement Guidelines | | Twp-wide initiative in Yr 1 |
| 8 Implement facade Enhancement Grant Program | | Twp-wide initiative in Yr 2 |
| 9 Study feasibility of CDEP Traffic Recommendations | 1 | 2 |
| 10 Design and implement Gateway and Sign Program | 2 | 3 |
| 11 <i>Phase I:</i> Signs; Traffic Circle & Plaza at Harrison & High School Roads | 2 | 3 |
| 12 <i>Phase I:</i> SEPTA parking lot improvements | 2 | 3 |
| 13 <i>Phase II:</i> improvements along Park & Montgomery Avenues & High School Road | 3 | 4 |
| Private Sector Activities | Detailed Design | Implementation |
| 14 Ashbourne Market site improvements | | |
| 15 Facade enhancement of commercial buildings | Ongoing | Ongoing |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Issues1

 Study Area1

 The Defining Issues for Elkins Park East1

The Vision2

 Economic Development Opportunities3

 Transportation Initiatives4

 Streetscape Enhancements7

 Architectural Revitalization9

 District Theme Architectural Character11

Implementation13

 Policy Issues13

 Recommended Implementation Plan14

 Implementation Strategy15

Acknowledgements16

IMPLEMENTATION

Policy Issues

Economic Development

Elkins Park East has the potential to be a small, friendly community retail and service district. The District's relationship to surrounding residential areas severely constricts any expansion. Therefore, to achieve its potential, the District must effectively utilize the current commercial space by tackling two issues: 1) utilizing its few vacancies, most notably on High School Road near the Ashbourne Market, with businesses that round out the array of available community goods and services; 2) making traffic-flow patterns more flexible and pedestrian-friendly.

The mix of area businesses could benefit from selected additions such as a café (ideally near the Ashbourne Market), a newsstand/candy/ice cream store, a hardware store, a florist, and an optical store. The area might also benefit from personal services other than beauty salons, such as a shoe repair or photo processing store.

Zoning

Overlay zoning creates optional higher standards matched with commercial incentives to create more successful land use patterns. To create a successful mixed use shopping, office and residential districts we encourage the use of Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) principles. Within Elkins Park East we recommend the use of a *Village Commercial Overlay District*.

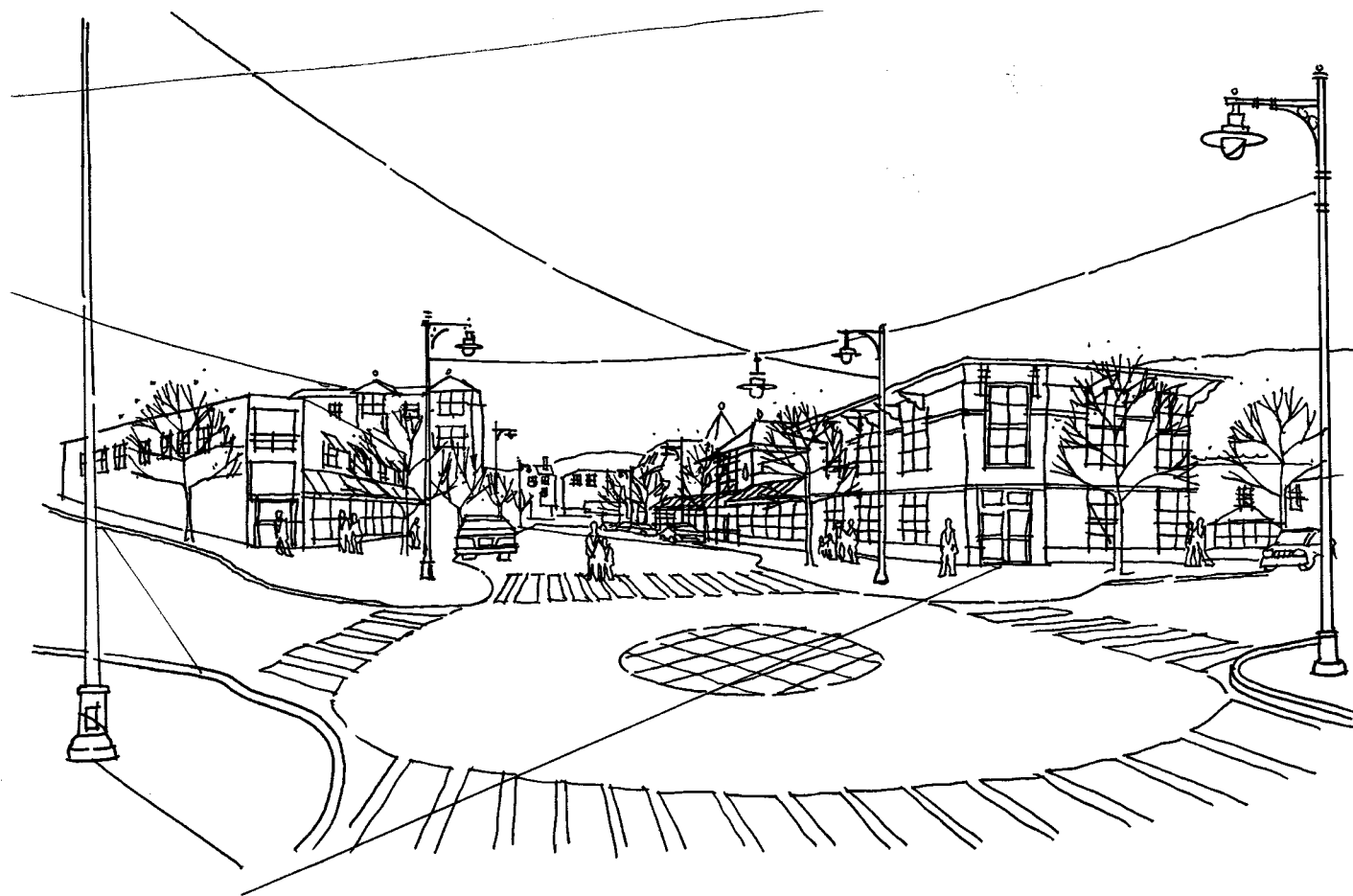
This proposed overlay district would include all of the land now in the *R3* district in this vicinity. Given that all of the commercial lots within this district are fully built out, the emphasis of this district would be to:

- Discourage demolition of existing buildings
- Require new buildings to respect front yard building lines of neighboring buildings
- Require retail uses only at the ground floor to face streets, sidewalks, available on-street parking

- Encourage continuous retail storefronts on both sides of streets
- Encourage mixed-use buildings of two to four floors
- Encourage upper floors as office or residential uses

Parking

- Encourage shared parking behind buildings
- Encourage and allow adjacent landowners to link parking areas



Proposed Vision for Elkins Park at High School Road and Montgomery Avenue

Other Buildings

Description: Non-contributing buildings that are intrusive and not worthy of preservation or restoration; significant rehabilitation or reconstruction is recommended

Example: Building occupied by the Ashbourne Market

- Follow *Detailed Architectural Design Guidelines* (See Appendix)
- Facade enhancements should be consistent with the District Theme Architectural Character
- For economy, reuse existing features, if non-intrusive, such as wall materials, windows and door openings, roofs and special features whenever possible
- Remove non-conforming facade components such as storefront windows, doors, wall materials, roofs and signage
- Preserve any significant features that might exist
- Provide new facade components such as storefront windows, doors, wall materials, roofs and signage
- Facade changes should be consistent with all visible portions of the building

New Construction

- Follow *Detailed Architectural Design Guidelines* (See Appendix)
- Building massing and design should be consistent with the District Theme Architectural Character, sympathetic to late 19th and early 20th century traditional village architectural styles in the District.

THE ISSUES

The Vision for Commercial District Enhancement in Elkins Park East is defined by the challenges outlined below. The resulting Vision Plan for Elkins Park East incorporates economic development, transportation, architectural and streetscape enhancements to effectively respond to the needs of The Elkins Park East District.

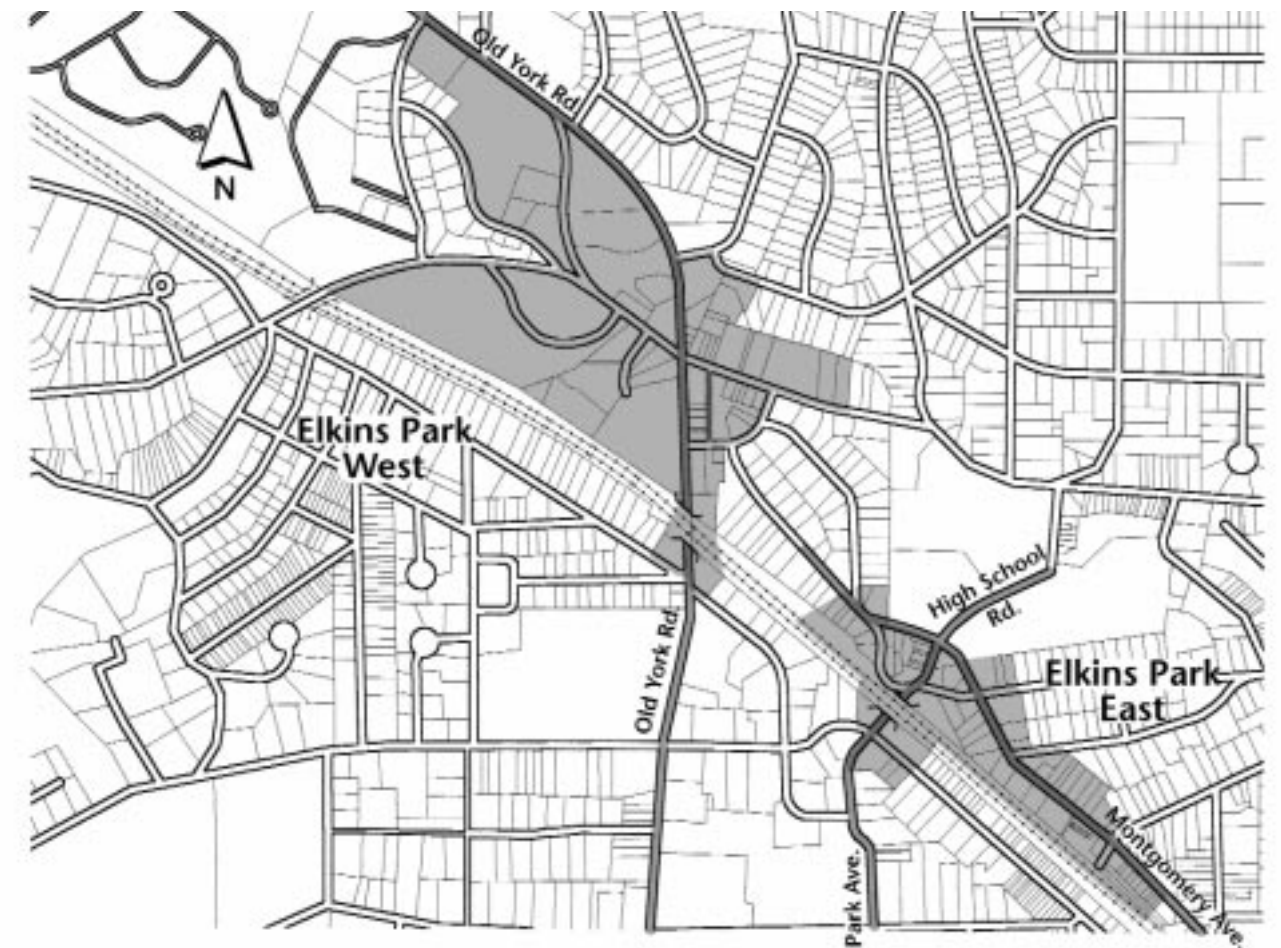
Study Area

The Elkins Park District is comprised of two distinct areas of commercial activity located 2000' apart from each other, Elkins Park East and Elkins Park West. Each has unique historical factors that have defined the land use patterns within each area. It is fortunate to have a wealth of desirable residential neighborhoods, major regional rail station, beautiful parks and recreation areas and village retail area destinations, as well as area parks—Wall Park, Ogontz Park, and High School Park.

The Defining Issues for Elkins Park East

The core issues identified by the consultant team and public are:

- Maximizing parking for shoppers and commuters
- Strengthening streetscape experience to support the economic viability of the neighborhood retail area
- Improving the road network to slow traffic and increase pedestrian safety and linkages



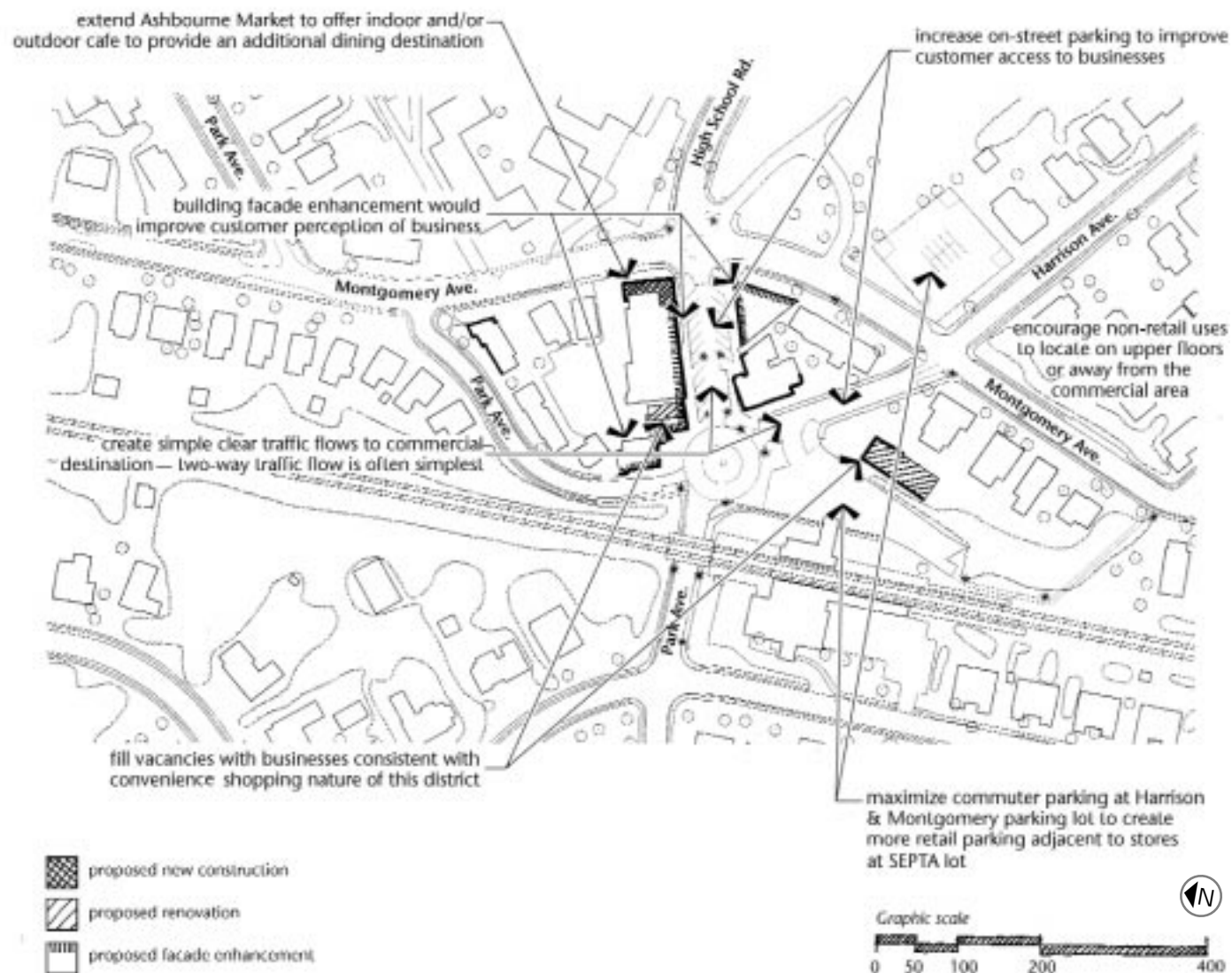
Elkins Park study areas

THE VISION

The Vision Plan for Elkins Park East builds on its existing strengths as a center of recreation areas, a transit destination, neighborhood center and neigh-

borhood retail destination. The plan promotes a vision that improves the commercial district by integrating economic development, transportation, streetscape

and architectural strategies. These recommendations are a starting point, not the final plan for commercial district enhancement.



Economic Development Plan for Elkins Park East

District Theme Architectural Character

1900's Village Theme

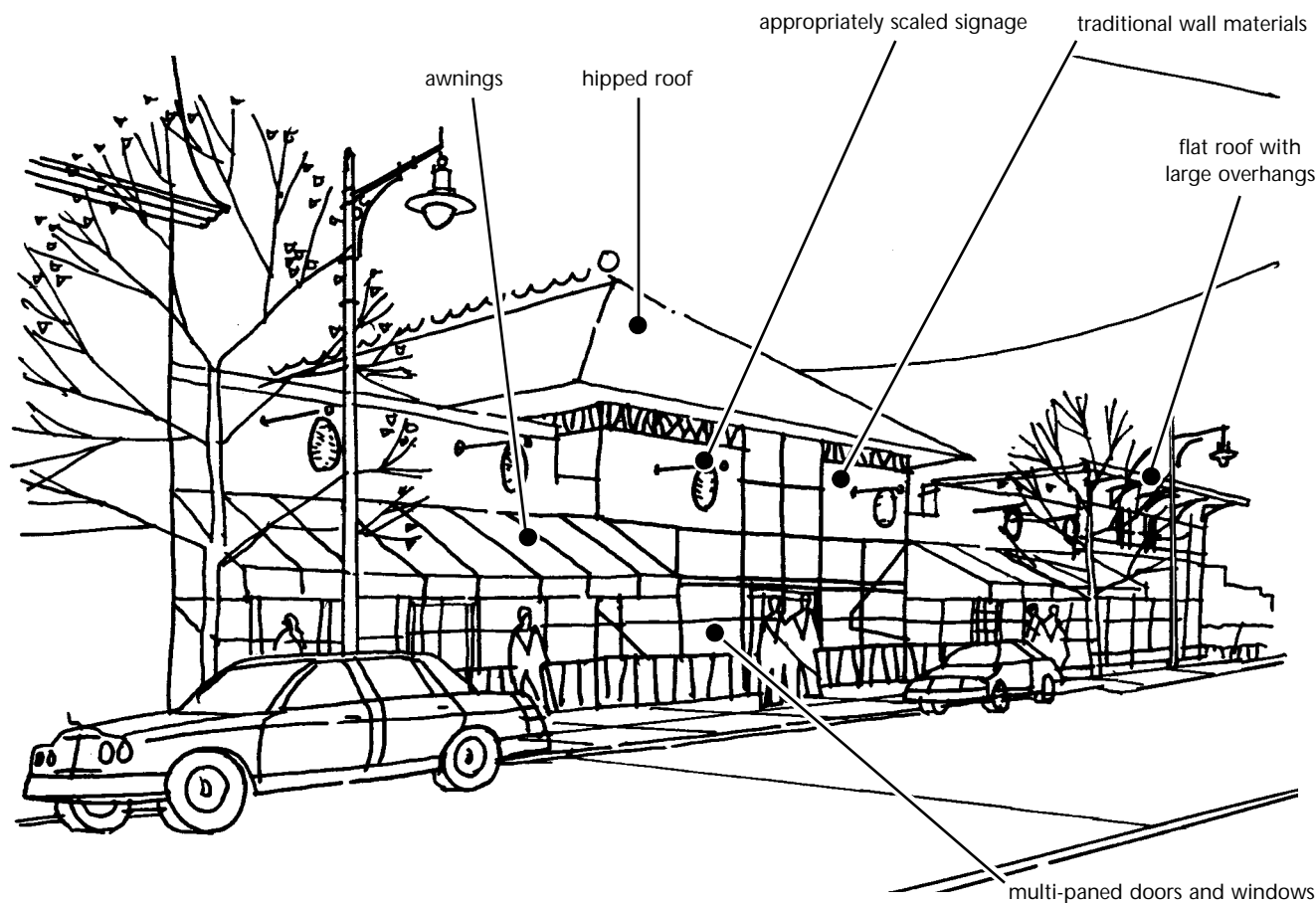
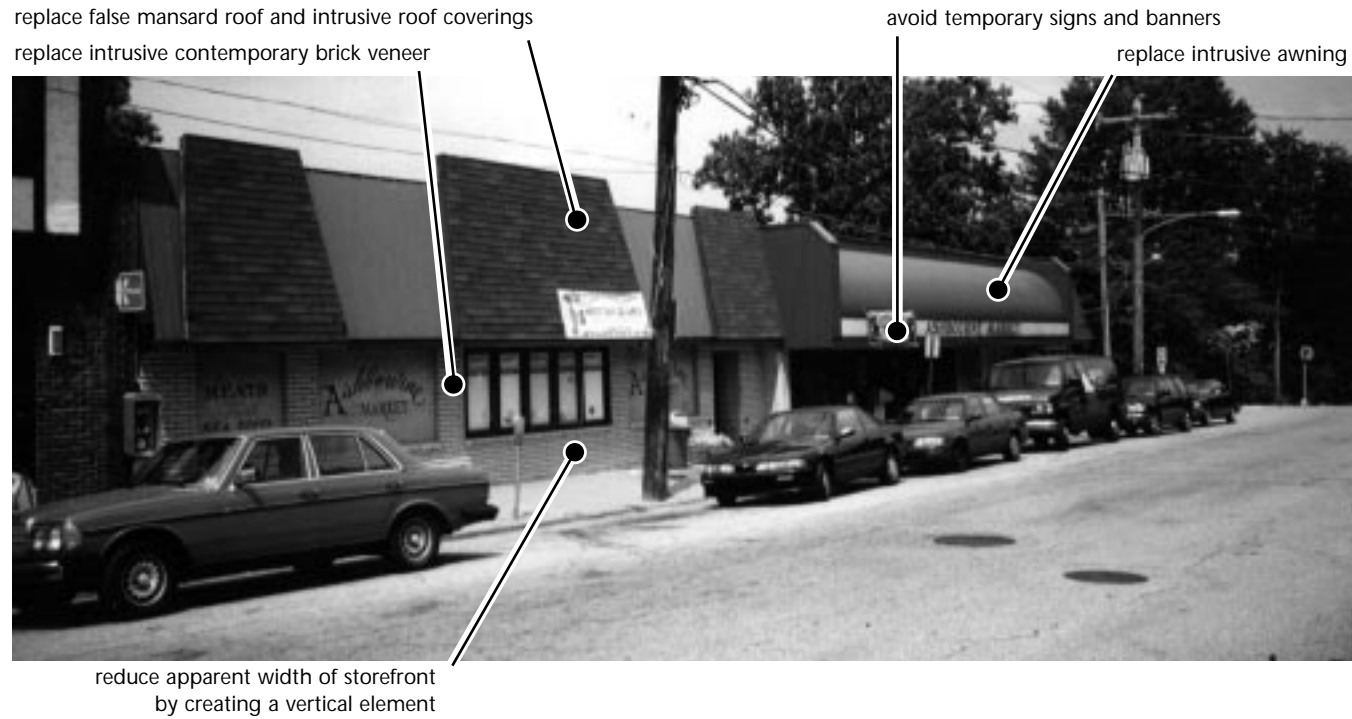
Architectural design is to be in conformance with a 1900's village design theme that generally refers to the late 19th and early 20th century architecture inventory that exists in the District

- Building massing:** 2 to 4 story; locate new construction at street line to define streets
- Exterior walls:** Brick, stucco, stone
- Windows/entrances:** Multi-paned windows & doors
- Roofs:** Slate, tile, or appearance of slate or tile; pitched, hipped, flat and gabled; large overhangs
- special features:** Dormers, chimneys; towers; details featuring quality craftsmanship and hand-crafted metalwork

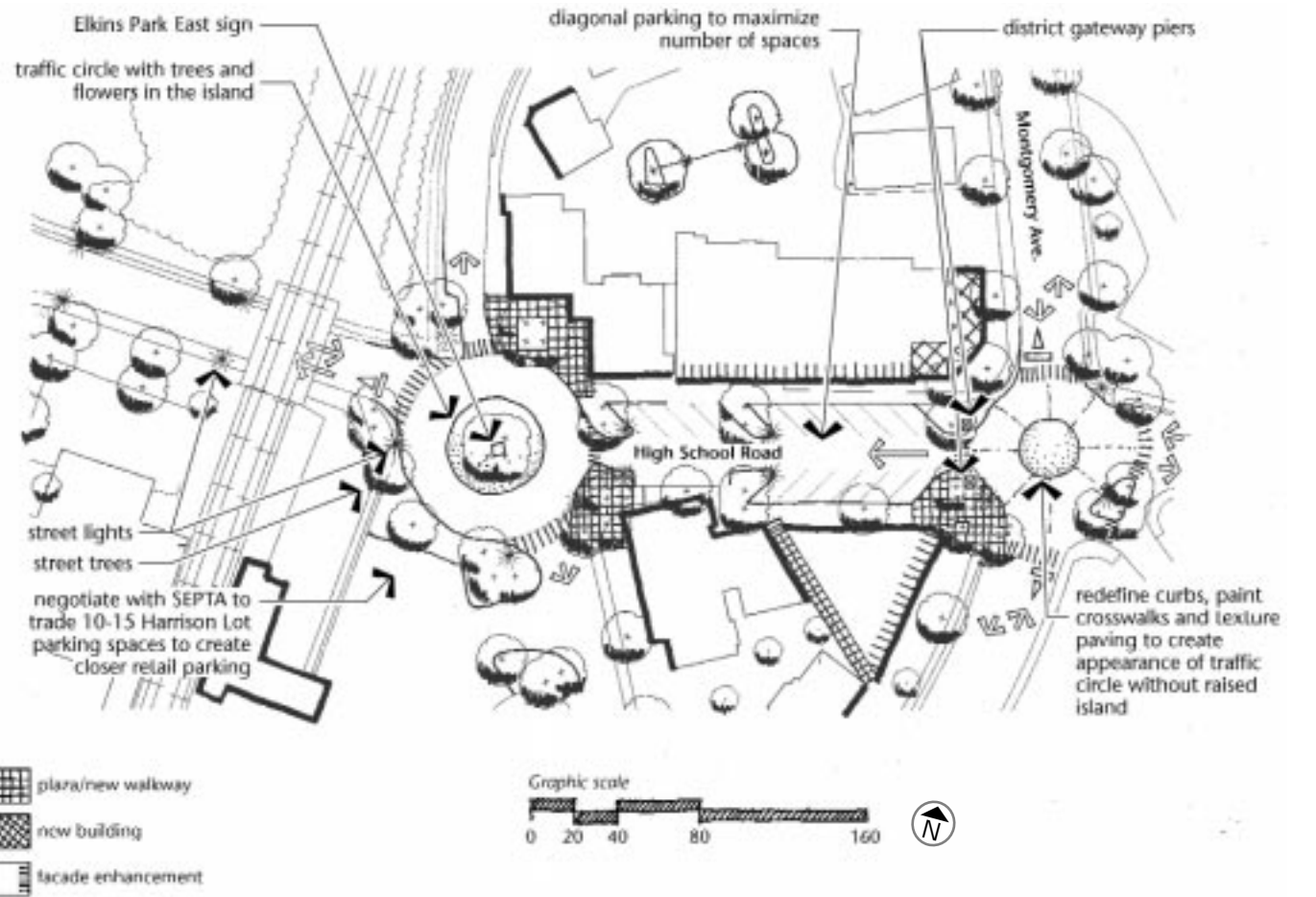
General Architectural Design Guidelines

Historic or Architecturally Significant Buildings

- Description:** Significant or contributing buildings worthy of preservation, restoration and rehabilitation
- Examples:** *Architecturally Significant:* Tudor-styled half timbered building with brick tower featuring a pharmacy
- Follow *Detailed Architectural Design Guidelines* (See Technical Appendix)
- Facade enhancements do not have to be consistent with the District Theme Architectural Character
- Follow the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings"
- Follow Township Board of Historical and Architectural Review (BHAR) guidelines
- Historic or architecturally significant features should not be modified to conform with the District Theme Architectural Character
- Preserve original features; buildings with strong architectural character should be respected
- Repair deteriorated features and replace missing features based on careful research and documentation
- Restoration/rehabilitation is preferable to demolition and recreation of an historically correct reproduction
- Alterations/Additions should not radically change, obscure or destroy character-defining spaces, materials, features or finishes; additions, if absolutely necessary, should be designed to be clearly differentiated from the historic building



Above: View of the Ashbourne Market
 Below: Facade enhancement ideas for the Ashbourne Market



Enhancement ideas along High School Road

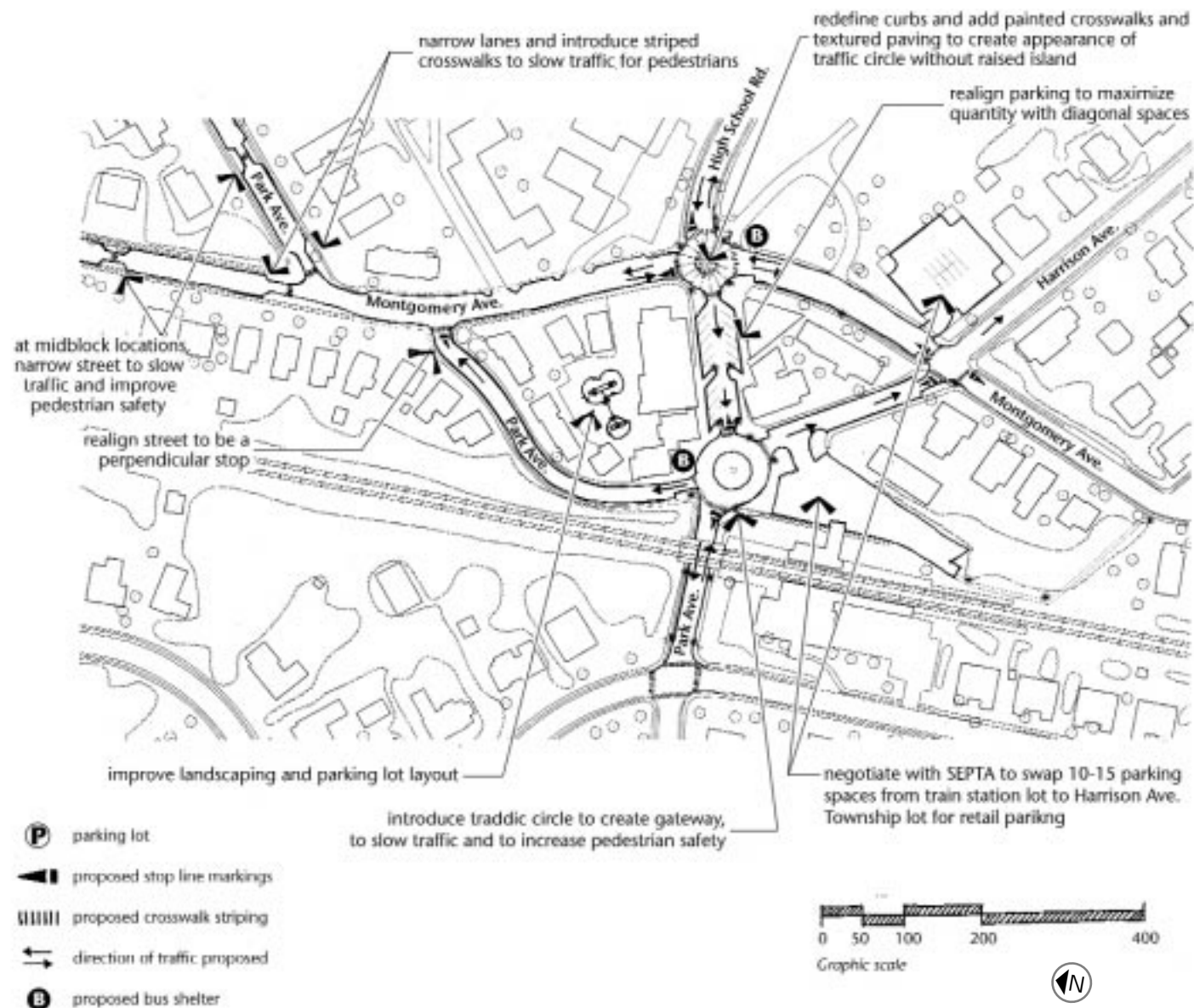
Economic Development Opportunities

To achieve the potential of a small, friendly community retail and service district the District must tackle four issues.

- Within the downtown retail area encourage or require all ground floor uses facing major streets to become retail and upper floors to become office or residential uses.

- Opportunity to enhance neighborhood-oriented commercial uses such as the Ashbourne Market, pharmacy, coffee shop and other retail shops.
- Traffic-flow patterns need to become more flexible and pedestrian-friendly. This area could benefit from selected additions to its retail mix such as a hardware store located on Montgomery Avenue or High School Road, and a café near the Ashbourne Market.

- The area might also benefit from personal services other than beauty salons, such as a florist, health/vitamin store, shoe repair, photo-processing store or variety stores such as ice cream, a newsstand, cigar store or water ice.



Transportation Plan for Elkins Park East

Transportation Initiatives

Elkins Park East consists primarily of residential-scaled streets and a small-scale neighborhood commercial center. In this case traffic control devices are intended to significantly slow traffic down and to promote a sense of safety. Traffic speeds should be very slow, since the residential nature of the area is

likely have pedestrians, especially children moving and playing in close proximity to moving vehicles. To achieve this goal, a concept called “traffic calming” is recommended to slow driving speeds while improving driver awareness of their surroundings and maintaining traffic volume.

Improve Traffic Circulation and Reduce Speeds

- Enhance turning movements at Church and High School Roads. This intersection may warrant improving turning movements along Church Road and should be studied as part of an intersection traffic

A Streetscape Element Design Binder has been provided to the Township to allow the Township and Main Street Design Committee to choose from a selection of streetscape elements. This Binder includes images and product information for benches, bollards, banners, signs, piers, streetlights, trash receptacles and planters.

Architectural Revitalization

District Theme

The Elkins Park East study area offers many examples for developing a unifying architectural theme for the District. This area features a very compact small-scaled and pedestrian-oriented commercial core adjacent to the very handsome Elkins Park regional rail station. Surrounding the Elkins Park train station there are a large inventory of substantial residential structures that reflect Cheltenham’s significant 19th century architectural heritage. Building structures in the commercial core and surrounding area have drawn from a number of architectural stylistic traditions including Victorian, Tudor and Neoclassical.

The architectural theme recommended for Elkins Park East is a 1900’s village theme featuring an eclectic mix of architectural styles related to its railroad station. Elkins Park East should strengthen its strong compact commercial core by highlighting a variety of architectural styles through the restoration/rehabilitation of significant structures, the reconstruction of existing undistinguished intrusive structures and the infill of vacant lots to the street line with new construction that is compatible with the District Theme Architectural Character described herein.

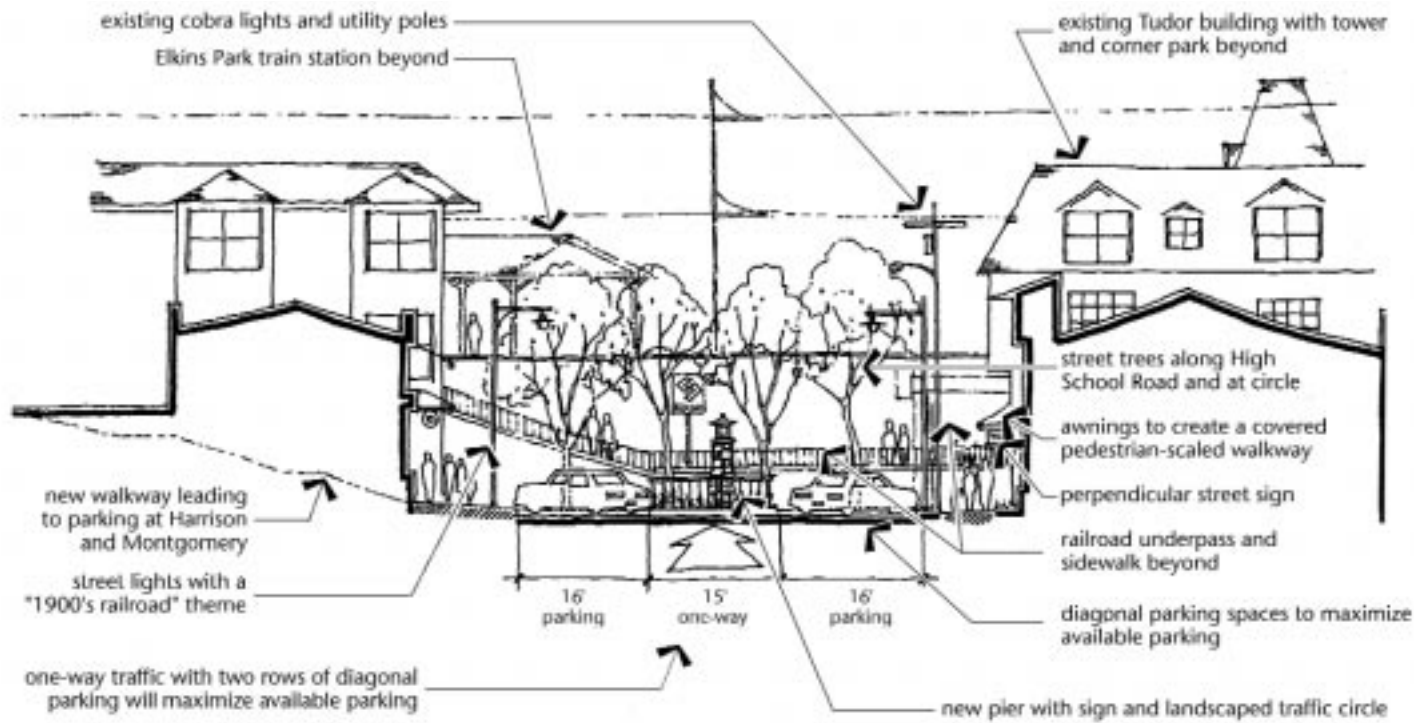
Architectural Design Guidelines

A great deal of the commercial building development in Elkins Park East is not in conformance with the architectural character of the proposed District Theme. Currently the District suffers from a lack of continuity in its physical image. The adoption and implementation of appropriate Architectural Design Guidelines that reflect the District theme is essential for the successful enhancement of the overall townscape of Elkins Park East.

Appropriate building facade and signage improvements reflecting the District theme will create a memorable physical image to both residents and non-residents. Key to the creation of this image is the improvement and reconstruction of as many building facades as possible to at least a basic level, rather than “over-improving” only a handful of buildings.

Storefront design and rehabilitation decisions in Elkins Park East must be made for each building individually and should include an assessment of the building’s architectural or historical significance and how it relates to the District theme. For building owners, tenants, architects, contractors or other parties interested in the renovation or the construction of new commercial buildings and building facades, the following general guidelines have been developed. Buildings or features that are historically or architecturally significant are referred to as “significant” or “contributing.” Buildings or features that are historically or architecturally insignificant are referred to as “other buildings.”

Further Detailed Architectural Design Guidelines are incorporated in Appendix I.



Cross section at High School Road facing Elkins Park Station

Landscaping and Trees

The landscape plan for Elkins Park East includes a program of honey locust street tree planting, landscape buffers along parking areas, flowering shrubs and trees at traffic circles and corner parks, and improved landscape maintenance along existing public trails and sidewalks. Throughout residential and commercial streets the street trees planted in the early 20th century have died. It is now time to reinvest in new street trees. A program for street tree selection and planting is recommended to match the existing maples and oaks.

Along the SEPTA parking lot, Harrison Municipal lot and the

Ashbourne Market lots, low fences, hedges and street trees are recommended to visually buffer the view of cars from the street. Parking lots should have landscaped tree islands every 12 spaces to enhance their attractiveness.

At the proposed traffic circle and two corner parks the plan calls for flower beds, ornamental flowering shrubs and trees to enhance the quality of the District's most public spaces.

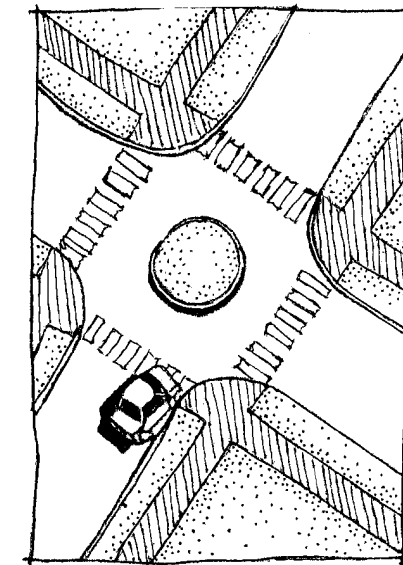
Pedestrian walkways and landscape features along train tracks that connect the Elkins Park Train Station to Gerard Avenue should be upgraded.

Other Unifying Elements

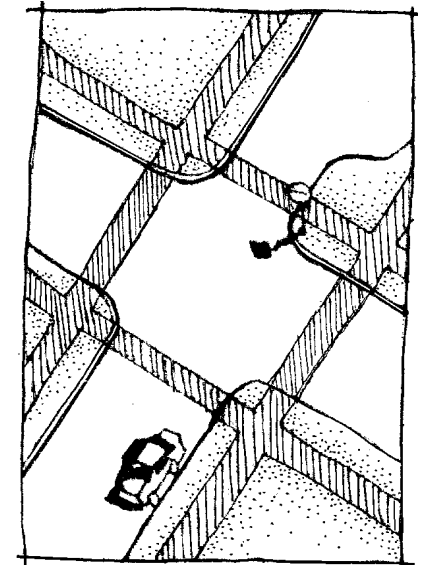
In addition to the streetscape elements listed above, the plan envisions a multi-use trail to link this District with its surroundings, and a range of streetscape furnishings such as benches, banners and trash receptacles to strengthen the District theme and sense of place. The plan recommends creating a multi-use trail to link all commercial, cultural, historic, natural and recreational destinations in Elkins Park East. At key points along this trail create a pavilion to rest and enjoy the beautiful surroundings. This trail would expand the Township's already impressive public park system.

engineering study of High School Road, between Harrison and Montgomery Avenues. Two traffic patterns were investigated: one way traffic northeast with diagonal on-street parking and two-way traffic with parallel parking. The former offered greater parking capacity, while the latter offered easy traffic flow. After careful consideration, we recommend the one-way traffic with diagonal parking to best support the businesses and obtain maximum parking. In both scenarios, the excessive lane widths should be reduced to 10-11 feet preventing all double parking. To successfully address various concerns about truck deliveries and lane widths, we recommend a temporary test using paint and cones to demonstrate a viable scheme. The previously mentioned scheme and additional schemes will require a detailed traffic study prior to implementation. In any case, a more detailed traffic study is warranted.

- Clarify one-way street circulation along Montgomery and Park Avenues. Conflicts occur at the northernmost intersection of these two streets, where traffic becomes two-way. This is especially true for motorists who travel east on Montgomery Avenue. At this location, a curb bumpout should be installed on both sides of Montgomery Avenue, on the west side of the intersection.



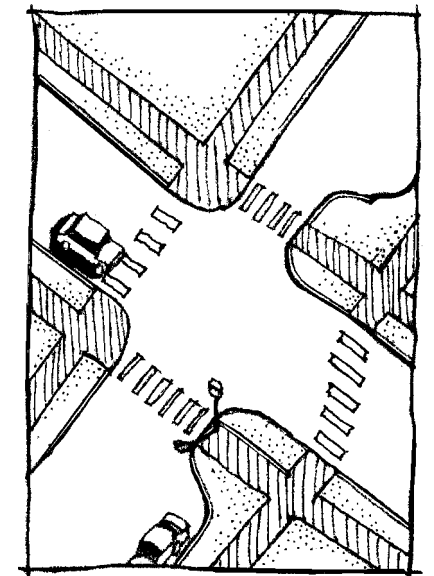
Traffic calming technique: traffic circle with painted crosswalks



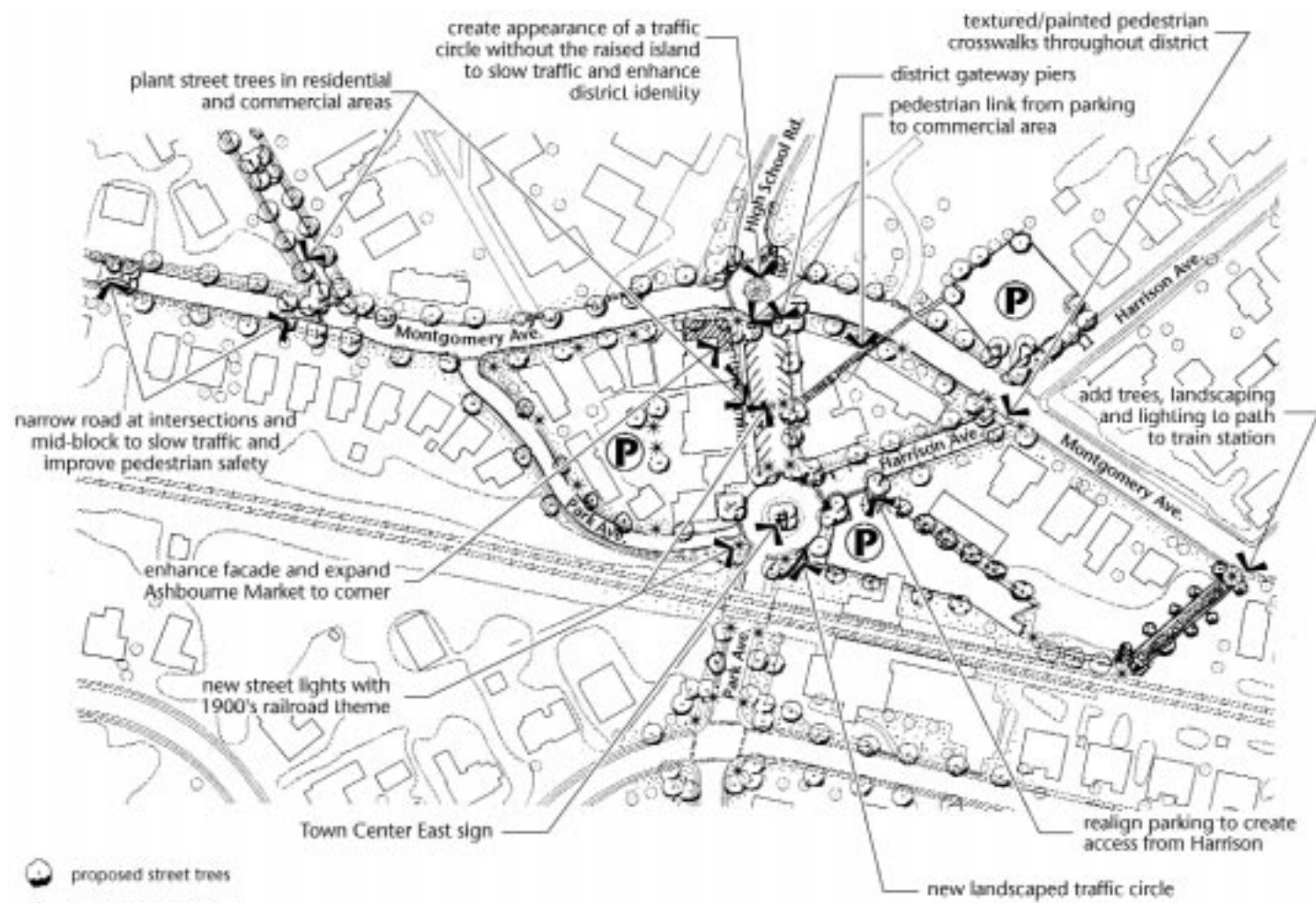
Traffic calming technique: curb bumpouts with painted crosswalks

This would narrow the cartway to one lane as vehicles travel eastbound. It would also warn motorists traveling westbound that it is the beginning of a one-way traffic pattern. Prominent striping should be applied to the roadway that clarifies the introduction of two-way traffic. Additional traffic calming along both avenues would be improved by adding curb bumpouts at each intersection with Stahr Road, at mid-point of these residential blocks and where the two avenues meet.

- The southernmost intersection of Park Avenue and Montgomery Road should be reconstructed to create a 90-degree intersection. This would reduce confusion created by the one-way circulation pattern.



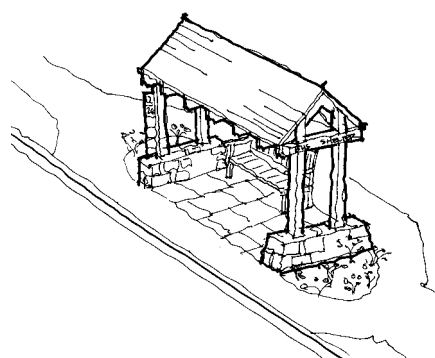
Traffic calming technique: curb bumpouts with textured crosswalks



- proposed street trees
- ★ proposed street lights



Streetscape Plan for Elkins Park



Proposed bus shelter

- Improve traffic circulation at the intersection of Montgomery Avenue and High School Road. This could be accomplished by reducing lane widths, adding prominent striping and a textured surface for traffic calming.
- Improve traffic circulation along High School Road and the train station parking lot. This could be accomplished through the construction of a small traffic circle.

Parking Lot Improvement

- In this compact village, the limited on and off street parking should be managed effectively to support the needs of existing businesses and SEPTA patrons. If SEPTA and the Township can create a cooperative agreement to relocate a portion of long term SEPTA parking to the Township-owned Harrison/Montgomery Avenue parking lot, then a portion of the current SEPTA

parking lot would enhance the availability of short term parking for retail uses throughout the District.

- Improve the parking lot at the Elkins Park train station. The configuration of the parking lot does not allow for a clear designation between the cartway of High School Road and the parking area. Through the reconstruction of the roadway, a sidewalk and buffer could be added without reducing available parking spaces.
- Improve off-street parking in the lot behind Ashbourne Market. This existing lot lacks defined parking spaces and doesn't allow for efficient unloading for the market. Explore opportunities to create shared parking partnerships with other nearby businesses.

Improve Pedestrian Mobility

- Improved pedestrian mobility will reduce parking demand, increase safety and link neighborhoods, commercial and recreational destinations.
- Create a pedestrian walkway between the village center and the Montgomery Avenue and Harrison parking area.
- Pedestrian crosswalks along Montgomery Avenue and High School Road should be constructed to clearly delineate pedestrian areas. This would be accomplished through the use of texture paving materials and reflective devices. In addition intersection curb bumpouts should be employed in the areas with on-street parking to shorten the distance that pedestrians would

need to be in the travel lane and also aid in slowing traffic. All crosswalks should be upgraded to meet ADA requirements.

- Neighborhood streets in Elkins Park should have enhanced pedestrian crosswalks. These crosswalks would include prominent striping and reflective devices. Curb bump-outs could also be employed to define on-street parking areas and promote traffic calming efforts. Recommended intersections include those along Montgomery and Park Avenues and along High School Road.

Enhancements to Welcome Pedestrians, Bicyclists and Shoppers

- Along Montgomery, Harrison, and Park Avenues and High School Road, introduce a series of traffic calming techniques to slow traffic and increase awareness of the pedestrian retail district. Introduce aggressive crosswalk striping, landscape medians, and on-street parking near retail.
- Create shared parking lots and signage to maximize the flexibility of this resource
- Create a bicycle route along the Tookany Creek and along Montgomery Avenue and through some of the less congested streets to link to local and Township destinations.
- Introduce a traffic roundabout and pavilion at Elkins Park Train Station to slow traffic and create a gateway entrance.

Streetscape Enhancements

An effective program of Streetscape Enhancements will enhance property values, District identity and the economic viability of Elkins Park East. The following streetscape elements are recommended to achieve these goals:

District Gateways

To reinforce the sense of place and identity recommended in this plan create a series of signs, piers, graphics and landscaped traffic circles to celebrate important gateways within the District.

- Create a traffic roundabout and pavilion at Elkins Park Train Station to slow traffic and create a gateway entrance.
- At the intersection of Montgomery Avenue and High School Road establish a more defined intersection and gateway entrance.

Street Lighting

This Village commercial area would benefit from 1900's era light fixtures that reinforce the proposed 1900's Village theme. These lights feature tall ornamental poles with projecting scrolled arms and hanging lanterns with a wide canopy. At buildings, private business owners may want to purchase a wall mounted light featuring the same details to highlight their building facade and store windows at night.